

# Horse Training, Composting Demonstrations Part Of Ag Progress

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Lancaster Farming Staff  
**ROCKSPRING** (Centre Co.) — Educational demonstrations are a large part of the purpose of Penn State Ag Progress Days, held annually at the Russell E. Larson Agricultural Research Center, in Rockspring.

Among some of the offerings this year were a horse training clinic and a manure composting demonstration.

The horse training clinic drew a large audience as Ward Studebaker, Penn State University Horse Farm manager, used one of the university horses to demonstrate the basic techniques for establishing communications with a horse and training it to react in a predictable way.

Studebaker talked about and demonstrated the use of his physical presence to "push" a horse, and to allow it to come toward him.

Also, using a rope, he demonstrated how a horse is made calm with materials and how to introduce them to the animal. Further,

he demonstrate how a rope is used in conjunction with body movements to nudge a horse into doing something.

Studebaker stressed that the horse learns only through repeated experience and not the whip. He said that while there may be times when a horse may need to be shown firmness by the handler, it is more effective to perform repeated, and consistent simple actions that correspond to specific behaviors in the horse.

He said that the reward for a horse is to be unpressured. For example, Studebaker demonstrated how his walking toward the horse resulted in the horse moving away, a natural horse behavior. Then he demonstrated how when he backed away from the horse and stood, the horse came to him.

Studebaker said horses understand the movement of legs and, without the use of a halter rope or any other means of constraint, he walked the horse around the ring, made it change directions, go away from him and come to him just by

Studebaker's own maneuverings in the ring.

While there were many lessons in Studebaker's presentation, he stressed that horses are dangerous to be around, that they all kick and may bite very quickly and that it's more important to be smart with dealing with a horse than by using force.

Other demonstrations at Ag Progress included a composting educational site, where university personnel and USDA Soil Conservation Service staff discussed the basics of turning manure and other waste into a rich, safe soil amendment.

The key is to combine nitrogen from the manure, carbon from plant material (leaves, woody materials or paper) and moisture in proper combination in order to provide a growing environment for aerobic bacteria and fungus, which use the carbon and nutrients to create a stable form of the nutrients and materials.

The demonstration site was previously a manure stacking pad that Penn State wanted as a remote site to store manure from its dairy facility.

Later, the university decided to expand the site to compost the manure and constructed a gravel-base pad adjacent to two cement storage structures to use as a composting pad. On display this week were two long windrows of composting material. One windrow was a week old, the other a month and a half old.

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Rick Fogal, supervisor with the Pa. Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Weights and Measures, displays the bureau's testing wares and answers questions.



Marian Bowlan, coordinator with Pennsylvania's new program Farm Link, distributes information and talks to visitors about keeping farms in farming by helping retiring farmers meet young want-to-be farmers, and helping both understand and develop a relationship that can transfer the farm to the next generation.



George Herd, a PSU Extension staff member, center, talks about the specifics of composting manure to a group of Ag Progress Days visitors.



Tom Calvert, with the USDA SCS, talks electric fencing with visitors to Ag Progress Days.



Ward Studebaker puts a harness on a horse while assistant Brian Egan helps out. Studebaker is giving a demonstration on training and handling horses.