

University of Minnesota's Leatherdale Equine Center

(St. Paul, MN) - The University of Minnesota welcomed horse lovers into its new, state-of-the-art, \$14 million facility on Monday, October 15, at the grand opening celebration of the Louise and Doug Leatherdale Equine Center on the St. Paul campus. Located at 1801 Dudley Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota, the Center is situated in the northeast corner of the University of Minnesota, St. Paul Campus.

St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman, Falcon Heights Mayor Susan Gehrz and Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak proclaimed the date "University of Minnesota Leatherdale Equine Center Day" in the metro area.

The public was invited to the free event that featured a procession led by the Ames Farm six percheron horse hitch and official ribbon cutting. The University equine clinic staff provided demonstrations of the new high-tech systems in the 60,000 square foot facility.

"The comprehensive Equine Center has been designated as a Program of Excellence at the College of Veterinary Medicine and is squarely aligned with the University's goal to become one of the top three public research universities in the world," said

University of Minnesota President Robert Bruininks. "But more than that, it meets a growing need of our state: Minnesota ranks among the top 10 states in horse population and the equine industry contributes almost \$1 billion annually to the state economy, sparked by the passion and support of horse lovers like us."

The facility will be named in honor of Louise and Doug Leatherdale of Medina who made a generous lead gift to the University of Minnesota. Tad and Cindy Piper of Long Lake made the lead gift for the Piper Performance Clinic, a performance medicine and reproductive clinic in the facility, which will be christened in their names.

The Center's new technology includes computerized gait analysis and high speed cameras to test for lameness, an aqua treadmill used in rehabilitation, a state-of-the-art reproduction wing and a high speed treadmill that allows a horse's every breath and heartbeat to be monitored while galloping up to 30 mph.

The University Mounted Police unit will also be housed in the facility, which offers a conference center and a 100 by 200 ft. indoor

arena and a similar size outdoor arena for demonstrations, meetings and programs by community horse organizations.

"This state-of-the-art facility will become a home for the Minnesota equine community," said Dr. Stephanie Valberg, DVM, PhD, Director of the Equine Center. "No other facility has been designed to give such compassionate, comprehensive care and to give so much back to horse owners. The Equine Center represents our dedication to an expanded equine program, including undergraduate equine education, continued devotion to educating the next generation of equine veterinarians, and a focus on equine research that will change the lives of horses worldwide, all while providing cutting edge care for horses. Horses will benefit from some of the best in equine care, research, and veterinary education found anywhere in the world."

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Further Advances at the Leatherdale Equine Center

By Heather Carlile, staff reporter

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ST. PAUL -- The University of Minnesota recently celebrated the grand opening of the Leatherdale Equine Center on its St. Paul campus, which it hopes will become the home for the state's horse community.

In January, the university's large animal hospital installed a 3.0 Telsa Magnetic Resonance Imaging machine. The \$3.5 million MRI project will become part of the equine center's repertoire for care and will be the largest magnet used in veterinary medicine in the world, according to Trevor Ames, interim dean of the U of M's College of Veterinary Medicine.

With these technologies, staff can pinpoint an injury and determine the best course for rehabilitation. Treatment could involve stretching exercises and physical movement, electrical stimulation, therapeutic ultrasounds, time in the aqua treadmill or on the high-speed treadmill -- which reaches 30 mph.

The center includes a state-of-the-art re-

productive wing and a surgery room. A nutrient center for research is under construction.

The center will house horses of university research, the U of M Mounted Police and the We Can Ride program, which helps people with mental and emotional disabilities. Its existence shows the university's commitment to a strong equine program, said Stephanie Valberg, DVM, PhD, Director of the Equine Center. That's important because a large majority of Minnesota's horse veterinarians graduate from the university. Undergraduates studying animal science with an equine option will visit the center and graduate students will have rotations there in their final year.

U of M president Robert Bruininks stated in a press release that the center will help the university reach its goal of becoming one of the top three public research institutions in the world.

Valberg and Professor Jim Mickelson will lead the first Equine Consortium for Genetic Research. This group brings together multiple scientists from many institutions and countries to study how genetics contribute to diseases in horses. The Morris Foundation pledged to raise \$2.5 million to fund the work.

While the center will help advance education and research, Valberg said a major focus remains on providing compassionate attention to horse owners and their animals.

"We want everybody to be impressed when they leave here," she said.

The entire building was designed with horses and owners in mind -- from drop-off, when the owners don't need to back up their trailers to park, to an air mattress that keeps a horse comfortable and off its feet as it recovers from anesthetic after surgery.

The same people responsible for the cozy feeling of Caribou Coffee designed the lobby with slate tiles on the floor and comfortable couches. There's a client communication room so visitors can use wireless Internet and a plasma television.

Horse comfort is also a priority; each stall has a wire-mesh door for adequate ground-level ventilation. Most stalls have a window because "horses love to see what's going on in the world," said Valberg. The clinical stalls were designed to allow room for expansion.

"I think it's the best facility for sports medicine right now," said Valberg.