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EUREQUINE

Excellence and Experience!

by Emily Riden / Jump Media

Technology in a Traditional Industry

Cutting-edge apps and software enhance equestrian lives.

Modern horse sport is based on distinctly old-fashioned traditions. Hunter and jumper riders compete in formal jackets and breeches that mimic those traditionally worn in the foxhunting field. Equestrians of all disciplines mount their horses from the left side because, historically, mounted soldiers carried their swords on the left. No matter the form of riding, tradition runs deep in the way things are done throughout the equestrian industry.

Now however, a new influx of young, equestrian entrepreneurs is disrupting the traditional equine industry in a positive way and finding solutions to age-old problems through the introduction of cutting-edge applications and software, designed to do everything from saving lives to shipping horses.

Recognizing an Opportunity for Better Barn Management

Thirty-year-old Nicole Lakin is one such entrepreneur. The founder and CEO of the stable management software company, BarnManager, Lakin grew up riding and showing horses on the hunter/jumper circuit.

In her late teens and early 20s, Lakin began taking on a barn management role within the competitive show barn where she'd been riding, and she quickly recognized a need for a better means of organization and communication.

While still useful, the traditional white boards hung prominently in the center barn aisle and the large binders of medical records and feed and supplementation notes were no longer cutting it. They did not allow information to be easily shared with everyone involved in a horse's training, riding, and care, and they were often cumbersome and unorganized.

"I had started playing around with Excel and Word documents, making forms that would improve some of the troubles that we ran into managing and trying to communicate," explained Lakin.

Ultimately, in 2012, Lakin launched BarnManager, a cloud-based software designed to streamline and simplify daily barn management responsibilities. By offering everything from storage of medical records to in-application messaging options to lesson and appointment scheduling to a virtual take on the traditional whiteboard, BarnManager fills the need for better communication and organization within barns. Today the application is used in the barns of numerous Olympians and top riders across the nation.

Saving Lives Through Artificial Intelligence

Not long after Lakin's launch of BarnManager to improve the way stables were managed, Alexa Anthony, now 25, saw an opportunity to improve upon something else: the ability to save horses' lives.

On Christmas night in 2012, unbeknownst to Anthony or anyone at the barn, Magic, the horse that had taken Anthony to the highest level of her show jumping career, began to colic. By early the next morning, it was already too late to save the eight-year-old gelding.

"I found him at 8 the next morning, and he had been toxic for 15 hours, so we had to put him down," explained Anthony of Redmond, WA. "But if there was something that had notified me as soon as he was showing symptoms of distress, I could have gone out there, and I could have given him a shot of Banamine; we could have prevented it. He probably would still be here today."

That thought is what fueled Anthony's creation of her Seattle-based start-up, Magic AI (short for artificial intelligence), and the company's first, highly-innovative product, StableGuard, the world's only artificially intelligent, 24-hour monitoring and alert system for horses.

Using a video camera in the horse's stall, StableGuard learns to recognize various signals and behaviors of the horse and can alert the user of any abnormal activity such as restlessness and distress, lack of food or water consumption, a shortage of bowel movements, abnormally high or low temperatures, and more. It's technology designed to improve the overall well-being of the horse and, ultimately, save equine lives.

Time spent assisting in barn management role ultimately led Nicole Lakin, 31, to launch BarnManager, software designed to streamline and simplify daily barn management responsibilities. PHOTO: JUMP MEDIA

After her top show jumper coliced overnight and had to be put down, Alexa Anthony, 25, created StableGuard — the world's only artificially intelligent, 24-hour monitoring and alert system for horses — in hopes of helping to prevent situations like her own. PHOTO: COURTESY OF MAGIC AI

Ongoing Innovations

While Lakin and Anthony's stories – and their resulting technological solutions – are each unique, their shared desire to better the equine industry through technology is not. Today, that aspiration is one shared by dozens of young equestrians with a love for both horses and technology, and the result is ongoing, innovative new approaches to age-old challenges of riding and working with horses.

In 2013, around the time that they were shipping horses from Kentucky to Canada, Steven Bluman and his brother, show jumper Daniel Bluman, became frustrated with the process of shipping horses. They recognized that shipping often meant long hours transporting horses themselves or paying high prices, having to

New applications and software, created by young entrepreneurs and accessible on phones and tablets, are changing the way equestrians do everything from shipping horses to managing the barn. PHOTO: JUMP MEDIA

plan transportation far in advance, and struggling to schedule with large shipping companies. So, in 2017, Steven, now 27, launched Equo, the app dubbed the "Uber and Expedia for horses," which allows for the easy, safe, and reliable transportation of horses at the click of a button.

"If the entire equine world is moving forward, why shouldn't the way we transport horses change as well?" said Steven. "We created Equo to bring horse shipping and technology together in a simple and smart app, making it easier and safer for owners to ship their horses."

The list of equestrian innovators and the inventive technological products they're creating goes on, and while each unique piece of software or new application is aimed at changing its own unique component of the equestrian industry, there is one thing that the young equestrian entrepreneurs can all agree is forever best left as is: the horse itself.

"We are all young entrepreneurs and equestrians dedicated to trying to improve specific, separate facets of the equestrian industry through technology," concluded Lakin. "While our specific areas of focus are different, we all share the same mission of utilizing technology to simplify the lives of horse people, give them peace of mind, and allow them to focus on why we're all really doing this in the first place: the horses."

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