

Bay State Trail Riders Association Inc.

Betsy MacDonald

The Bugle January 2026

www.bstra.org

2026: Welcoming the Year of the Fire Horse

A spirited year for equestrians everywhere

Every 12 years, the Chinese zodiac cycles through its familiar parade of animals but only once every 60 years does the Horse return in its fiery form. Beginning February 17, 2026, the world enters the Year of the Fire Horse, a rare and dynamic combination known for passion, movement, and bold momentum.

For an equestrian community like ours, it's hard to imagine a more fitting symbolic companion for the year ahead.

What Makes a Fire Horse Year Special?

In Chinese astrology, the Horse represents freedom, energy, independence, and the joy of motion—traits any rider recognizes instantly in a spirited mount. Add the element of Fire, and those qualities intensify into courage, creativity, and transformative drive. It's a year associated with big strides, decisive action, and embracing challenges with heart.

The Fire Horse is often described as a creature that refuses to stand still—restless in the best possible way, always seeking the next horizon. That sense of forward motion mirrors the work we do on the trails, in the ring, and within our community: building, improving, exploring, and riding toward something better.

A Symbolic Boost for Our Equestrian Community

As we plan events, steward our trails, and welcome new riders into the fold, the Fire Horse offers a symbolic tailwind. Its themes align beautifully with our mission:

- **Energy & Momentum:** A perfect year for advancing projects, strengthening partnerships, and tackling long-awaited improvements.
- **Freedom & Exploration:** Encourages us to celebrate open space, trail access, and the joy of riding in nature.
- **Courage & Leadership:** Inspires volunteers, mentors, and advocates to step forward with confidence.
- **Creativity & Renewal:** A reminder to innovate—whether in outreach, education, or community engagement.

A Rare Opportunity

Because Fire Horse years are infrequent, they've long been considered powerful turning points—times when bold ideas take root and spirited communities thrive. As we ride into 2026, we can embrace that symbolism as both a celebration and a challenge: to match the Fire Horse's vitality with our own.

Here's to a year of strong strides, bright sparks, and wide-open trails.

May the Fire Horse carry us forward with purpose and passion.



Slate of Board of Directors for 2026

Kelly Berthiaume	Valerie Clark	Sharron Cochran	Becky Kalagher
Suzanne Nicholas	Karen Parlin	Sue Quirk	Joyce Sandvik
Kelly Shaw	Mary Wood	Rose Zariczny	

How Our Election Process Works

Each year our members play an essential role in shaping the leadership of our organization. The process begins with a membership vote on the slate of Board members. Any member who is interested in serving is welcome to nominate themselves for consideration, ensuring an open and inclusive path to leadership.

Once the membership vote is finalized, the results are announced at our Annual General Meeting. At that time, the newly elected board convenes to elect the organization's officers:

President Vice President/Clerk Treasurer Recording Secretary

This two-step process—membership voting followed by board officer elections—helps maintain transparency, continuity, and shared responsibility in our governance.

If you've ever considered getting more involved, this is a wonderful time to step forward. Your experience, perspective, and passion can make a meaningful difference.

Ambassador Award

Since 1995, this award has celebrated the people whose kindness, camaraderie, and unwavering spirit lift us all. Below is a list of past honorees whose contributions have already been recognized. As you cast your vote, please choose someone not on this list—someone whose generosity, teamwork, and quiet acts of support continue to make our community stronger. Thank you for helping us honor the heart and soul of who we are.

List of past recipients who have been recognized and not to be included in your vote:

Becky Kalagher, Rose Zariczny, Lynn Paresky, Sharron Cochran, Lurissa Marston-Capobianco, Pat Gipps, Karen Fleming-Brooks, Linda Chita, Dan Salvucci, Bill & Angie Knott, Jane Rutledge, Sue Quirk, Deb Deschenes, Karen Parlin, Valerie Clark and Mary Wood.

The voting deadline to submit your votes is 8 pm February 20, 2026. [**VOTE HERE**](#)



Pet Estate Planning Webinar Invitation

You're Invited!

Saturday, January 10th at 4:00 PM

We are pleased to invite you to an informative Pet Estate Planning Webinar scheduled for Saturday, January 10th at 4 PM. This event is designed to provide valuable insights into estate planning, with a special focus on ensuring the care of your beloved pets- including horses-after your passing.

Webinar Overview

Estate planning involves more than just preparing documents; it is about safeguarding everything and everyone that matters to you. During this presentation, we will explore the significance of establishing an estate plan and discuss thoughtful ways to incorporate provisions for your pets' care. Attendees will gain a better understanding of how proactive planning can offer peace of mind for both family members and cherished animals.

Presented by Allison T. Poirier

Allison T. Poirier, a partner at KKC Law in Vernon, CT, has generously organized this event for BSTRA. Allison brings a wealth of experience as a former President of the Tolland County Bar Association, a board member of the agricultural non-profit Land For Good, and the Chair of the Windham Hospital Foundation Planned Giving Council. In 2023 and 2024, she was recognized as a Super Lawyer Rising Star in the Estate Planning and Probate category—an honor awarded to less than 2.5% of lawyers in each state. Allison graduated cum laude from both St. Lawrence University and Western New England University School of Law.

How to Join

A Zoom link will be provided during the week of January 5th, enabling you to participate in this valuable webinar. We hope you can attend!





MARCH 1, 2026
**Annual General Meeting
& Awards Banquet**



LUNCHEON BUFFET:

Time: 12 to 4PM

Tossed garden salad, seasonal fresh fruit salad, warm rolls
& butter, Pasta Primavera, Chicken Florentine, Baked Haddock,
Chef's Medley of Vegetables, Roasted Red Bliss Potatoes,
assorted dessert display, freshly brewed coffee and tea.

COST: Adults \$35

Age 12 and Under: \$15

DEADLINE: Paid reservations must be received by Feb. 19th

Location: Pleasant Valley Country Club

95 Armsby Road, Sutton MA.

12:15 Present results of election of the Board. Election of the officers

Cash bar opens

12:30 LUNCH

Following lunch will be the presentation of year-end awards
and the BSTRA raffle.

All members, friends, and families are invited!

Come enjoy an afternoon filled with delicious food, celebration, awards,
officer elections, and a fantastic raffle with plenty of prizes

Register online here: [AGM](#).

AGM March 1		Adult or Junior	Amount
Name			
Name			
Street			
Town, St. Zip			
Will bring something for the raffle table			

If you are registering by mail, send registration form and check payable to BSTRA to:

Suzanne Nicholas, 96 Mountain Gait Road, Ashland MA 01721

Start the New Year with These Quick To-Dos

- Renew your membership to continue enjoying all the benefits, programs, and opportunities we offer.
- Submit your volunteer hours by January 4.
- Membership update: going forward the Barn Membership category has been discontinued due to declining participation.
- Top Trail Horse: If you wish to compete for mileage in 2026 make sure you renew your membership before you start accumulating your riding miles in 2026. BSTRA will award a prize for the top mileage in 2026.



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Sponsor Spotlight

At J.R.Liggett's we are proud to support the Bay State Trail Riders Association and their ongoing efforts to preserve, maintain, and protect New England's beautiful trail systems. As a company rooted in natural living and sustainability, we understand the deep connection between animals and the land. Supporting BSTRA is a natural fit for us-not just because we love the outdoors, but because we believe in responsible stewardship of the spaces that bring us joy and freedom.

For over 40 years, we have been handcrafting all-natural shampoo bars and personal care products that are safe for people, pets, and the planet. Our products are biodegradable, zero waste, and made with simple, honest ingredients-perfect for trail riders who want to tread lightly. We are thrilled to be a sponsor of BSTRA and to stand alongside a community that shares our passion for nature, horses, and a cleaner, healthier world.

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Betsey MacDonald



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BSTRA 2026 Events Calendar

Date	Event/Location/Sponsor	Contact	Phone	Email
Jan. 10	Pet Estate Planning Seminar Zoom	Joyce		
March 1	AGM & Awards Banquet, Sutton MA	Suzanne	508-380-2124	hc07645@gmail.com
March 21	Trailer Parking Clinic, Thompson Speedway			
April 25	Fort Hill Farms Ride, Thompson CT	Valerie	508-864-8432	valerie.clark@snet.net
May 2	Nancy Maenzo Memorial Ride, Douglas MA			
May 17	Livelark Acres Ride, Thompson CT	Valerie	508-864-8432	valerie.clark@snet.net
May 23-25	Memorial Day Campout, Carver MA			
June 7	National Trails Day, N. Brookfield MA			
July 12	Spirit of America Ride, Upton MA			
July 18	Goddard Brunch Ride E. Greenwich RI			
Aug. 22	Northfield Mt. Ride, Northfield MA			
Sept. 13	Sue Brainard Hunter Pace, Douglas MA			
Oct. 4	Wyndham Land Trust Ride for Open Space			
Oct. 18	Red Rail Farm Ride, Lincoln MA			
Oct. 25	Big Pumpkin Ride, Upton MA			
Nov. 1	Larry Underwood Classic, N. Brookfield MA			
Nov. 15	Thompson Raceway Ride, Thompson CT	Valerie	508-864-8432	valerie.clark@snet.net

*NEHT Affiliated Rides

1. Unless otherwise, noted all rides start at 10:00 am and trail workdays at 9:00 am.
2. Most rides require advance registration and payment to receive lunch.
3. Riders 17 and under, accompanied by a guardian, ride **free** (lunch included if pre-registered). (There may be exceptions on some rides)
4. Alcohol is prohibited on State property. No smoking allowed while riding. A current Coggins within a year of the ride date is required.
5. Please leave the trail & parking areas better than you found them and be considerate of others! Clean up your hay & manure at all rides.
6. Year end awards require a member in good standing to have a minimum of 4 hours of volunteer time completed.






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Rec. Secretary: Rose Zariczny

Kelly Berthiaume

Sharron Cochran

Valerie Clark

Suzanne Nicholas

Kelly Shaw

Sue Quirk

Mary Wood

**Trailside Tidbits: How Much Is Your Horse
Really Eating?**

Greetings, Bay Staters

Most of us are familiar with the basic rule of thumb for daily hay intake: horses generally need about 2% of their body weight to maintain a healthy condition. For a 1,000-lb horse, that works out to roughly 20 lbs of quality hay each day—more if they're working hard or braving our New England winters.

But here's something fascinating.

While reading the Winter 2025 issue of EQUUS Magazine, I came across a study from Scotland that takes forage monitoring to a whole new level. Researchers there weren't satisfied with simply turning horses out to pasture. They wanted to measure exactly how much grass a horse consumes while grazing.

Their solution is ingenious: a "field-safe" halter equipped with a small device that records the sounds horses make as they eat. Horses produce two distinct noises;

1. the ripping sound of incisors tearing grass, and
2. the grinding of molars as they chew.


By capturing and analyzing these sounds with specialized software, researchers can estimate how much forage a horse consumes on pasture.

Remarkable, isn't it?

Reference: Taylor et al., "The use of sound recorders to remotely measure grass intake behavior in horses," *Animals*, August 2025.

Submitted by Mary Wood

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Saddle for Sale: Custom Circle Y. Older, but in great shape. The fully hand tooled saddle leather is a mahogany color. It is accented with a rope edge with silver lacing. The horn is braided rawhide with silver lacing. The gullet is 6-3/4" wide which is considered semi-quarter horse bars. Set up for double rigging. The sheepskin is really good. 15" seat. Floral engraved conchos and matching pieces on saddle. One of a kind saddle. \$1,000. Pictures available. Email Becky.BSTRA@protonmail.ch

For Sale: Black rope loop reins, 10' long. Red rope loop reins, 10' long, Orange rope loop reins (great for hunting season), 10' long, Black and White rope loop reins, 10' long. Each \$10
Hunter Orange-high visibility orange bands. Two for the cheekpieces of your bridle (has velcro to take on and off) and two that slip on your reins. All four have reflective strips for extra visibility. \$10 for all
Black 12 1/2ft lunge line with twist snap. \$12.
Deflecto Early Warning Triangle Kit. Kit contains three warning triangles in a compact storage box. The fluorescent orange triangles with red reflectors are visible day or night to alert drivers well in advance of potential danger.. Each triangle is made from non-flammable material and features a weighted base with grip pads that provide maximum stability. The collapsible design is perfect for easy storage and quick setup. Never used. \$20
Blue bridle bag with white trim, Green lined bridle bag with black trim and white piping, Black with red trim extra long bridle bag. Each \$10. Please contact Suzanne at HC07645@gmail.com

Women's Lace Up Packer Boots: Size 8 M. Oil Resistant sole. Worn once. Golden tan color. \$50. Becky.BSTRA@protonmail.ch

For Sale: #1 Black blanket storage bag with velcro closures, handle strap to pick up, and 2 velcro straps at the top to attach to stall fronts. Approximately 20" wide, 26" tall. \$15
#2 Black blanket storage bag with zippered top. Has a handle strap and 2 velcro straps to attach to stall fronts. Approximately 19-20" wide and 10" deep at the bottom. \$15
#3 Green blanket storage bag with zippered top. Has two side straps and a handle strap that has come out on one side but could be repaired. Approximately 20" wide, 10" deep at the bottom and 22" long. \$10
#4 Soaking boot size large. \$15
#5 Tredstep Ireland paddock boots. They lace up the front with a rear zipper and reinforced snap keeper. Tan. Only worn a few times. Size 10. \$45
#6 Off white lined Boss cowhide leather gloves. Size M/L. Never worn. \$15

#7 Shangri-la messenger bag. Waxed canvas purse, waterproof crossbody shoulder satchel bag sling pack. Black w/brown trim. Has a flap that snaps over the bag to close. Pocket on the back with magnetic snaps and one in the front. Zippered compartment inside with zipper pouch to keep valuables. Overall size: 13.5" x 9.7" x 3.5". I used it for trail marking and trail work. \$20
#8 Tucker High Plains Two Tone (brown/black) Trail Saddle. 17 1/2 seat, extra wide saddle. Horn height 3", round skirt, 14 1/2" swell. Has tie straps in the front and back. Comes with Tucker's Santa Fe Trail Bridle, Tucker's standard 3 piece breast strap, Tucker rear cinch and round skirt wool felt saddle pad. \$800
#9. Dover Saddlery light weight blue/gray trim turn out blanket. 100 fill, 1,680 denier. Size 82. Just had it professionally cleaned. \$45.
#10. SmartPak Rockin Classic medium weight waterproof turnout blanket. Navy with mint trim. 220 fill, 600 denier. Size 82. Just had it professionally cleaned. \$45
#11 Walnut/cherry dining room table with extension under the table 40"L x 60"W x 36" H. Six cloth chairs are counter stool height 21"W x 22" d x 47" h. Make an offer.
Contact Suzanne at HC07645@gmail.com

Business Classifieds

Short Term/Vacation Boarding: Walking High Farm has two run in sheds with separate fencing available for your short term needs. Going on vacation? We can take care of your horse, or both if you have two of them. Please call Becky for details at 508-476-3960 or Becky.BSTRA@protonmail.ch

Horse Training, Horsemanship Lessons, Riding Lessons; Do you struggle with loading your horse onto the trailer? Want him to self-load? Need assistance with keeping your horse on the lunge line, overcoming stall or food aggression, catching a hard-to-catch horse, or improving your horse's whoa command? Enhance your relationship with your horse and develop new horsemanship and riding skills with our expert training. We offer versatile and liberty training, among other services, to help you and your horse achieve your goals. Call Cathie (508-479-5266) bobcatfarm.com and check us out on Facebook @ Bobcat Farm

Looking To Sell Or Buy Horse Property: I service Central and Western MA from backyard farms to full equestrian facilities helping you to create life long memories. Why not have a Realtor that has been in the horse community for over 30 years. Sharron Cochran 413-668-7606 Sharron@equinehomes.com

"The Adventures of BB, the Wonder Pony" is an illustrated, first chapter children's book that will be enjoyed by readers of all ages. My Connemara Pony "BB" tells his life story in his own pony voice. BB talks about life as a foal, learning to be ridden, going to a variety of shows and having adventures with his big brother Cody. The illustrations are by a 12-year-old artist – really cute, on every few pages. You can contact me at sue.perry@charter.net to purchase a book, \$5.00 each plus shipping. You can also order the book on-line from Amazon at \$7.99.



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