

## Horses are breathing easy thanks to Louisville man [Breeders' Cup]

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by [Jessie Oswald](#)

You may have given your child a breathing treatment before or even taken one yourself, but did you know that horses get them too?

When Louisville resident Mickey Ballew contemplated working for a New York company that developed silver products aimed at humans, he started thinking horses.

“That’s when I talked about getting into the equine side since I was based here in Kentucky, so that’s when I just started my own business to develop the equine side,” said Equisilver owner and creator Mickey Ballew. Equisilver is a Louisville-based company that provides respiratory treatments to horses and also sells equipment, chelated silver solution, wound care, and even antibacterial water buckets.

When Ballew started the business seven years ago, it was geared more toward silver’s antibacterial and wound care benefits, but it soon became an equine respiratory business. Ballew started out treating about 10 or 12 horses a month and now treats about 100 horses a month. Most of his business comes through referrals from either veterinarians or trainers.

“In the last four years, the respiratory has really become big,” said Ballew. “Kenny McPeck gave me the opportunity to start doing all of his horses and we started seeing some really great results.

Not just on the race side, but the post-race recovery. The horses are recovering better. They're coming out the race doing better."

The treatment works much like a human respiratory treatment, with a mask held over the mouth and nose connected to a nebulizer machine. A non-toxic, natural solution of chelated silver is administered through the mask and breathed in by the horse. The chelated silver solution kills the DNA of harmful microorganisms without harming the animal. Each treatment takes about 30-45 minutes to administer.

The horses don't seem to mind the treatment and generally are very good patients. While the horse receives the solution, Ballew stands beside the horse, talks to the horse, and pets the horse. In addition to the benefits received from the respiratory treatment, the one-on-one attention Ballew gives to each of his patients is an invaluable bonus.

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The benefits of silver have been known for thousands of years. When Hippocrates wrote about its healing and anti-disease properties, the Phoenicians began storing their water and wine in silver containers. Silver compounds were used to prevent infections during World War I, before antibiotics were created. The benefits of silver continue to be found.

Kelsey Danner, assistant trainer to Wayne Catalano who is preparing Ken and Sarah Ramsey's Stephanie's Kitten for the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf, recently began using Ballew's services.

"Coming into this race we wanted her to be 100 percent, so that's why we started using Mickey," said Danner. "Our vet recommended him actually. He's been treating her a couple of times a week since then and we did it on a couple of other horses with allergy problems and stuff like that."

With the banning of many equine medications and the threat to completely ban the most common of medications, Lasix, the horse industry will soon need to look to other options to help with ordinary issues. According to the Equisilver product materials, it contains no ingredients to be known to violate current regulations of the Jockey Club or other performance governing organizations.

"I do a lot of work with horses that are bleeding. We found that three or four days of treatments before a race can prevent a lot of that," said Ballew. The use of Equisilver when Lasix cannot be used will not prevent bleeding, but could still be beneficial. Danner said, "When a horse bleeds, they usually get a lung infection. His machine helps clear that up, so if you have a horse that you can't give Lasix, and it bleeds, you can get treated afterwards."

"I think I've really brought an awareness to respiratory," said Ballew. "If they can't breathe, the rest of it is irrelevant."

For more information about Ballew and Equisilver, visit his [www.equisilver.com](http://www.equisilver.com)

*Photo: Jessie Oswald*