

**'A WAKE UP CALL
Coming Crisis For Eventing: No Land'**

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If one takes projections about the impact of development on land over the course of the next 25 years – the period during which you and I can expect to be personally involved in the sport – the horse faces a future of being a glorified lawn ornament. In that future, we will need to call upon every horse whisperer in the country to teach us how to help our horses adapt to life without gallops and turnout. We will also be calling psychotherapists to help us, the riders, deal with a life in which we don't get to hack out into the countryside.

The Equestrian Land Conservation Resource believes that such a future can be prevented. Just like in a 12-Step Program, the first step is to stop being in denial. We all need to understand that the current rate of loss of land to development in this country is close to exponential.

For example, let's look at Arizona. John Lyons (speaking of horse whisperers) grew up in Phoenix. He talks about cutting school and grabbing a horse to go ride around town, tackless, of course. But for several years now, rural land outside Phoenix and Tuscon, the kind of scrub desert where you can ride for days and days, is being developed at the rate of an acre an hour!

As another example, in Montana just one of several hardware stores sells at wholesale prices a million dollars worth of housing materials every three days. If you have ever built a house, you know that materials represent only a fraction of the total cost. This should give you a sense of how many houses are built in just one rural county each year. I can assure you that the mix of dot.com cash flows and local libertarian values mean that long range, environmentally sensible development plans are not part of the picture.

It is important to realize from these statistics that this crisis does not solely concern the increased development of urban and suburban areas. Even areas that constitute our national "outback" are being turned into picket fenced backyards that no event horse could call home.

There is a lot we can do, much of which is disarmingly simple. Our challenge boils down to three straightforward tasks. First, we need to stop taking for granted access to land. Second, we need to develop and practice a collective ethic of care for the land and for landowners. Third, we need to creatively, aggressively and proactively pursue every means we can to preserve open space and access for the long term. This includes not just conservation easements, but also land purchases, promotion of trail associations, and forming alliances with other user groups (even non-equestrian ones!).

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