

*Editor's Note: Bob Helms of Eleven Bar East Ranch in Sanford, N.C., is a recognized industry leader who has proven ideas and methods about how to achieve success in the horse industry. Horse Central is pleased to present the first part of a two-part column by Bob — look forward to more in the next issue.*

## Invest in a Team

**By Robert F. "Bob" Helms II**  
*Special Contributor to Horse Central*

The Eleven Bar East Ranch is honored to be a part of the inaugural edition of the *Horse Central* magazine. We recognize the need for a professional magazine focused on a preferred audience of dedicated, active horse lovers across the Southeast. We look forward to a fresh, new look at a first-class horse publication highlighting the interests, concerns, activities and accomplishments of our region.

*Horse Central's* mission statement says it appreciates the team effort it takes "to breed, raise, train, show, enjoy and strengthen the Southern horse industry" and it will "provide a legacy of unparalleled support and encouragement to endorse and carry on the traditions of the Southern horse and horsemen." This is parallel to the goals and business plan of Eleven Bar East. We at Eleven Bar East also have strong convictions about the horse business. We believe success in any business — including the horse business — starts with an understanding of customers and giving customers what they need and want; not what we would like for them to have. We may be able to influence the customer; but, in the end, the customer makes the decisions and we have to satisfy those decisions.

Those of us in the horse business also have to accept we are not part of a "life-essential marketplace." People have to eat, drive and pay bills. They can cut

some of the costs in these areas but, in the end, they have to take care of them and live. In the current economic environment, the place of horse activities within the overall family budget can be a challenge even for the most dedicated horse enthusiasts. Those of us in the business must work as a team to find innovative ways to help our customers continue to enjoy the thrills and pleasures of horsemanship through these challenging times. At Eleven Bar East, our business plan recognizes these challenges and includes solutions for meeting them.

It takes a business plan; and it takes a team. Our business plan is centered on core values that include members of a professional team working together as partners. The team is complex, and it is high-performing. It includes partners



who work together to produce desired results.

Eleven Bar East's business plan starts with quality stock — the brood mares, the stallions and their resulting progeny. The business plan also includes a commitment to the quality of our facilities and the supporting infrastructure necessary for breeding, foaling, growing, training and delivering a quality horse to a demanding customer.

But this is only the base. Supporting the team "base" are trainers, vets, financial support with approved lines of credit, suppliers of quality feed and medicine at a reasonable price, dependable maintenance people, communications and advertising at the *11bareastranch.com* web site, as well as the publications and professional auction companies that can bring together buyers in one location.

In our view, the local, state, regional and national horse associations are critical in establishing standards and providing opportunities for competing and refining our skills. Other very important team members are the equine research and production centers that improve genetics and develop new techniques for breeding operations. All of these parts are intertwined like a golden

thread, and all perform an important role for the success of any horse operation.

Our Eleven Bar East team members include Chad Shepherd as the lead trainer and Dr. Brian Garrett as the lead vet. Carolina Farm Credit is not only a sponsor of our competition horses, but also the provider of our lines of credit. A truckload of alfalfa hay is brought from Kansas or Oklahoma each month to our ranch by Outlaw Hay; bulk feed is provided by Wilson Farms; and, the Equine Reproduction Concepts research center provides the latest up-to-date information for our operations. We look forward to *Horse Central* being a primary source of timely information and advertising.

The associations supporting our business include the NCQHA, SCQHA and AQHA. We are fortunate to be associated with these quality and professional organizations. They facilitate our networking with other professionals and horse lovers. No operation is an island, and the probability of success greatly increases as we work together.

As you can see, it really does take a team. When you see a winning horse, you don't see the myriad people and products behind it, but they are there. These team members,

among others, understand we all have a stake in our mutual, long-term success. They provide the support necessary to prepare quality horses that meet the needs of our customers.

An accurate analogy can be made with the military 1-to-10 tooth (fighter) to tail (support) ratio necessary to support a soldier, marine, pilot or sailor during combat operations. The horse industry tooth (rider) to tail (support base required for the rider to compete) may also be close to 1-to-10.

Make no doubt about it, the successful horse enterprise is a business operation and has to be operated as such. As owners and operators, we have to make decisions based on business rules and principles. A successful business has to focus on what it does well; it can't be distracted by or chase the latest fad. The products of Eleven Bar East can be described in simple words: versatile, foundation, ranch horses. That's who we are and that's what we are — nothing more, nothing less.

Bottom line — buying a horse is an investment. Our goal at Eleven Bar East is to produce quality horses that meet customer expectations and provide the customer a favorable return on the investment. If we don't meet this basic principle, we certainly won't have repeat customers, and we will never build a solid customer base, which is essential to the long-term success of any business. That success begins with top bloodlines.

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Quality stock combined with honesty, integrity and customer support, set Eleven Bar East apart from the rest. |HCI|

*Next issue, Bob talks about bloodlines and how they affect the success of any operation and the passion it takes to bring champions to the ring.*

Photo: Eleven Bar East Ranch