



Look inside to learn about horses and the Kentucky Derby!

Jr. Animal Scientist

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**The Science behind
Maintaining an
Equine Athlete
(The Kentucky Derby Edition)**



The History of the Kentucky Derby

The Kentucky Derby, also known as “The Run for the Roses” is an American icon and is the longest running sporting event in the United States. It is known for its rich traditions like donning a beautiful hat or joining fellow race fans in singing “My Old Kentucky Home.”

The grandson of famous explorer General William Clark, Meriwether Lewis Clark, was the founder of the Kentucky Derby. Clark began his quest to create the horse racing event with the help of his uncles’ John and Henry Churchill, who gave Clark land to develop the racetrack. However, Clark knew that building the track would be quite costly. Therefore, he organized a group of local race fans, known as the Louisville Jockey Club, to help raise money. It was this club that was responsible for raising the funds to build the permanent racetrack in Louisville, known as Churchill Downs.

Clark developed three races for Churchill Downs; The Kentucky Oaks, The Clark Handicap and the featured event, The Kentucky Derby. The first Kentucky Derby was held on May 17th 1875. There were fifteen three year old Thoroughbred horses who participated in the one and a half mile long race. **Aristides** was the first horse to win the Kentucky Derby, in front of a crowd of 10,000 fans.



Statue of the first Kentucky Derby winner Aristides.

The Triple Crown

During the early days of the Kentucky Derby, the phrase “Triple Crown” was not used. It wasn’t until 1919 when the horse, Sir Barton, became the first ever racehorse to win three of the largest races in the United States; The Kentucky Derby, The Preakness Stakes, and the Belmont Stakes. To this day, the U.S. Triple Crown of Thoroughbred Racing is the highest honor a race horse can attain.



Sir Barton

Photo: <https://abcnews.go.com/US/photos/>

The most Famous Triple Crown Winner in History: Secretariat

Secretariat is one of the most famous race horses in history. He was born on March 30, 1970 in Virginia. He raced for two years winning over 1.3 million dollars. In 1972, he was named the Champion 2 year-old colt – Horse of the Year, as well as the Champion 3 year-old colt – Horse of the Year in 1973! Secretariat won the Triple Crown while not only setting new track records for each race, but also setting new WORLD records. Even today, the greatest race horses are compared to Secretariat’s performance.



Fun Facts:

- Secretariat had a larger than normal heart.
- His length of stride was over 24 feet long.

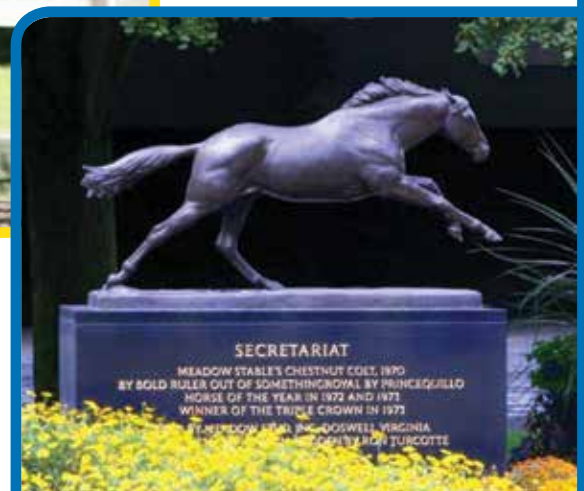




Photo: Morry Gash/Associated Press

Congratulations Justify!!

Congratulations to the winner of the 144th running of the Kentucky Derby! For six years, the favorite has won and this year was no exception. **Justify** became the first horse since 1882 to win the Kentucky Derby as a three-year-old without racing as a two-year-old. In addition, he ran the third-fastest half mile in history, despite the horrible track conditions.



Photo: CBN.com

Mike Smith

We of course have to say congratulations to his jockey, **Mike Smith**, who was the oldest rider in the Derby this year, as well as his trainer, **Bob Baffert**. Although, winning the Kentucky Derby is nothing new to these two, it is still an exciting accomplishment.

The question remains, is Justify up to the challenge of the Triple Crown? We look forward to seeing what Justify has in store for the Preakness!

How do horses train for the Kentucky Derby?

Getting a horse ready for a race like the Kentucky Derby is not easy. To be eligible to race in the Kentucky Derby, a horse must be considered a three year old. This means they have only a year or less of racing under their belt. Preparing a young animal for a race of this magnitude is a tedious task.

Not only is training very important, but making sure they are healthy and sound before starting is key.

Here are some of the things that young horses must learn before competing in a race:

1. People must be able to work with them, including brushing, bathing and leading.
2. They must be comfortable with being tacked up, using the saddle, bridle and girth.
3. Things like the starting gate also must be practiced before they can be ready.



Photo: iStock / MichaelPenhallow

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Fun Fact:

No matter what month a horse was born, all Thoroughbreds have the same birthday, January 1st.

Feeding your Racehorse

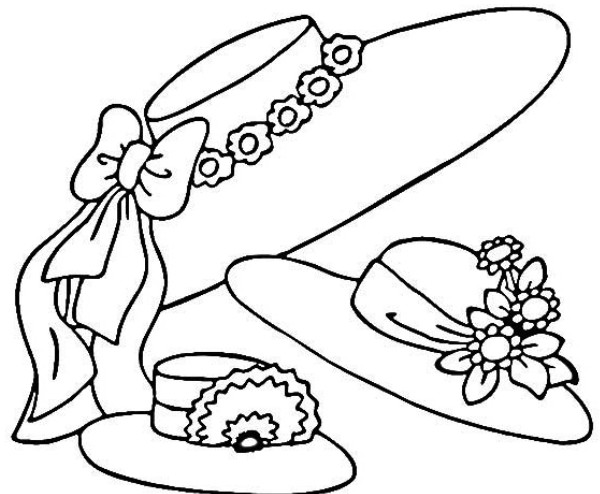
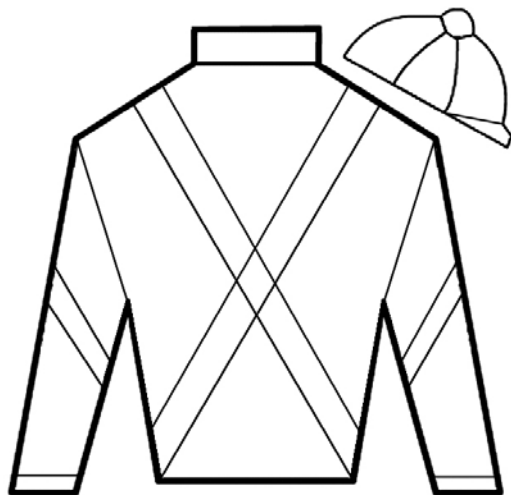
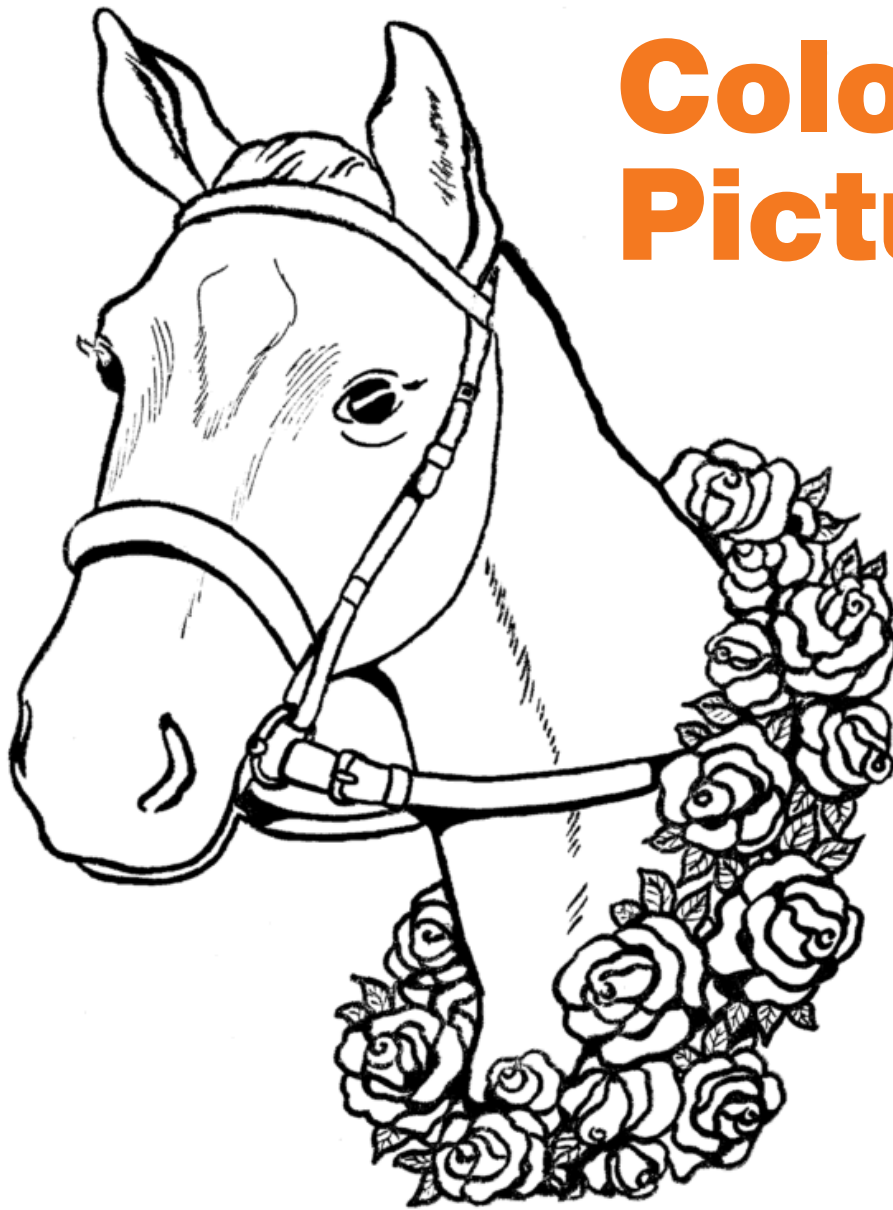
Racehorses usually consume two types of feed: roughage/ hay and grain. Most racehorses will consume at least 2-3 meals a day full of grains. The most common grain given to a racehorse is oats. While other grains like barley or corn are used, they are usually in much lower amounts. Most horses will also have access to hay twenty-four hours a day, minus training time.

Because training schedules can be very intense, it is important that the horse is consuming enough calories to maintain their optimal weight.



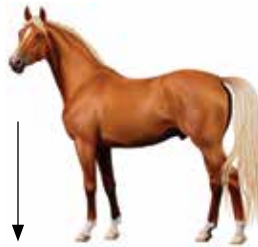
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Color the Pictures!



Help the Horse make its way to the finish line!

START



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