Excerpt from the book
"Eco-Horsekeeping: Over 100 Budget-Friendly Ways You and Your Horse Can Save the Planet"
By Lucinda Dyer, Author of *Back to Work*

"Green in the Real World:
Nothing Equine Goes to Waste in San Juan Capistrano, California

If you're the Solid Waste and Recycling Coordinator of San Juan Capistrano, California - a city that proudly calls itself "The Equestrian Capital of the West Coast" - it's hard to ignore the amount of trash generated by equestrian activities.

When Ziad Mazboudi took over the job in 2002, it didn't take him long to realize that the city's 3,000 equine residents (and thousands of show attendees at elite venues like the Oaks Blenheim) were responsible for a staggering amount of solid waste not normally dealt with by city recycling programs: manure, shavings and grain bags, and horseshoes - lots and lots of horseshoes. Mazboudi estimated some 108,000 pounds of horseshoes were bring dumped into the local landfill each year.

"Since every city in California is mandated by law to divert 50 percent of its solid waste from landfills," says Mazboudi, "it was essential that we find a way to capture and divert anything that could be reused or recycled." the thinking-out-of-the-box solutions Mazboudi found have been so successful that the city's diversion of equine-generated waste went from 0 to 17,743 tons per year, and is still increasing.

"When one stable hears that another stable is not just reducing their trash bill, but actually making money, it doesn't take long for them to jump on the bandwagon," explains Mazboudi. "But I have to say that money is not the only issue; the community as a whole has really embraced the environmental message and taken it to heart. And other cities in Orange County and in neighboring counties are now contacting us to find out how they can create similar programs."

So how has San Juan Capistrano don't it?

Horseshoes: Adams Steel, a scrap metal recycling company headquartered in Anaheim, California, now provides bins to local stables that can be filled with horseshoes, nails, used rasps - anything steel. Adams picks up the bins and actually pays the barn for the steel. Note: area barns that are too small to be a pick-up center are encouraged to drop their horseshoes at participating facilities.

Shaving bags: Mazboudi asked Trex® (the country's largest manufacturer of plastic lumber, a wood-alternative used in decking, railing, and fencing products - www.trex.com) if it might be possible to recycle the plastic wrappers on shaving bags. Testing by Trex scientists found the answer was a resounding "Yes," and Trex now supplies balers (machines that compress and bind the wrappers) to several area barns, sends a truck to pick up the wrappers, and like Adams, pays particpating barns for their "trash." Note: as with horseshoes, smaller barns may drop their shavings bags at larger faciliteis serving as pick-up centers.

Manure: All the city's stables are provided dumpsters for manure collection. The largest barns get a 40-yard dumpster and small barns in residential areas a 3-yard. Manure from the the dumpsters - about 18,000 tons annually - is removed by the city and stored in its composting faciltiy, and twice a year, free compost is distributed to city residents.

Local support: Finally, the San Juan Capistrano Equestrian Coalition, a nonprofit foundation established to preserve the city's equestrian lifestyle and recreational trail system, encourages a green frame of mind by providing muck buckets and pitchforks to all the stables in town. The buckets are emblazoned with an illustration of two horses - one wielding a shovel and the other a trash can - and the message: "Let's help Marco and Polo Keep Our Oceans and Creeks Clean."