

Saddle Up License Plate Approved By Governor Barbour

For Immediate Release: April 13, 2007 (All Mississippi Dailies and Weeklies)

Governor Haley Barbour officially approved the sale of Mississippi's first "equine appreciation" license plate on Friday in his Capitol office. Mississippi horsemen and horsewomen from all 82 counties will now be able to purchase the attractive vehicular tag through the sponsoring Mississippi State Equine Association.

MSEA President James Rasberry of Kosciusko told Mississippi reporters his organization is very pleased the 2007 State Legislature approved S.B. 2090. Rasberry said the bill includes legislative language requiring the association to pre-sell 300 tags before the State Tax Commission will actually begin the production process.

"That's understandable, and it will require work on the part of our association," Rasberry said, "but we will meet the requirement, and soon." A team-penning competitor and an Attala County stable owner, Rasberry said he anticipates the tag will be available in all County Tax Collectors offices by June or July of this year.

Like most distinctive license plates in Mississippi, the tag will cost \$31 in addition to the normal tax rate for a particular vehicle. For persons seeking one of the first 300 tags, they can request an application by writing MSEA at P.O. Box 5888, Brandon, MS 39047, or telephoning 601-750-1560, and leave their name, mail address and telephone number, or e-mailing jam_watts@yahoo.com and request available information on the tag or association membership data.

"MSEA's new website, www.mssaddleup.com will be 'on line' in May," James Watts of Brandon said. "Considering the website features and MSEA representatives promoting the association and the tag at area horse shows in April, May and June, I think we'll handle the pre-sell requirement soon. It just won't be soon enough for me," he said.

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Watts, who serves as MSEA's Executive Director, says the Mississippi State Equine Association will serve as a link connecting Mississippi equestrians with the American Horse Council in Washington, D.C. among other things. "Our 2007 goals are lofty and varied, but they include things like sponsoring an Animal Science or Veterinarian scholarship at MSU, opening additional areas of public land to trail riding, promoting the events and services of other equine groups, hosting a website that's beneficial to all Mississippi horsemen and sponsoring an equine trade show and horse auction," he added.

Other persons present for Governor Barbour's signing, included: Dr. Terry Kiser, Head of Animal and Dairy Sciences, MSU; Dr. Preston Buff, Equine Specialist and Assistant Extension Professor, MSU; Jud Skelton, Director of Development, MSU; Senator Jack Gordon of Okalona, key author of S.B. 2090; Ruth Hinton of Natchez, popular southwest Mississippi equestrian and the Secretary-Treasurer of the MSEA; George Phillips, Commissioner of Public Safety and a former Mississippi Quarterhorse Association President; W.C. (Son) Rhodes, a former State Senator and a farm owner at Vancleave; David Ashcraft of Madison, notable for field trial participation with Tennessee Walking Horses; and Merle Brunson of Terry, President of the Mississippi Western Pleasure Horse Show Association and a Director of the Mississippi Paint Horse Association.

In addition to the American Horse Council and Mississippi colleges and universities, the MSEA intends to work with the MDA&C, State and regional economic development agencies and county boards of supervisors. The association plans to become a focal point for reliable information regarding the business of Mississippi equine.

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