SINCE THE EARLIEST YEARS of English settlement in Virginia, horses have been essential to transportation, farmwork, and sport. Today, horses are a multi-million-dollar business in Virginia, as well as in Kent County, England. The following are some important dates in Virginia horse history:

1610 The first horses arrived in Virginia.
1674 The first American Quarter Horse races were held in Henrico County.
1752 The most celebrated Colonial race was held in Gloucester.
1770 George Washington, an “excellent and bold horseman,” according to his contemporaries, assigned Peter Hardiman, a slave skilled with horses and mules, to supervise his stables.
1834 The first steeplechase was held in Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C. Virginia later became known for holding the most steeplechases.
1843 The Piedmont Hunt, the oldest recognized foxhunt in Virginia, was founded.
1866 Percheron draft horses, called “The Gentle Giants” for their calm dispositions, were imported to Virginia to serve as work and driving horses.
1910s–20s Foxhunters and horsemen from the Northeast and Midwest resettled in “Hunt Country” (Loudoun, Fauquier, and Clark counties). The area developed an international reputation as a breeding, showing, and racing center for thoroughbreds.
1912 “Eventing” (a three-day competition, including dressage, cross-country, and show jumping) became an Olympic sport.
1957 The Middleburg-Orange County Pony Club was founded to encourage children to learn riding and foxhunting.
1994 The Virginia Horse Industry Board was established to promote and develop the horse industry.
2007 There are over 170,000 horses in Virginia.