

# Student donates horse for research

BY ELIZABETH KOCH  
Staff Reporter

Cassidy, the horse, is no longer residing in his stall at the University Farm after being put down yesterday, but some agricultural science students will be seeing parts of him in the classroom.

Sophomore Emily Fahey is donating her horse's legs to the Equine Exercise Physiology class for dissection. She decided to put Cassidy down because he had grown old and his health was declining.

A mare's uterus and legs were donated to the ag science department last year, which inspired Fahey's decision to donate Cassidy's legs. She said she didn't see any reason not to donate them.

"Some people have a problem with [donating], some people don't," she said. "I feel like it's important for other people to learn, and if [it] provides opportunity, why not let other people learn?"

Fahey said Cassidy was her first horse so the decision to put him down was difficult, but that she based her choice on what was best for his quality of life.

Farm Manager Bill Kuntz said Cassidy suffered from a past leg injury and had trouble maintaining a healthy weight. The decision to put him down was reached after discussing options with a veterinarian, he said.

"It's better for [Cassidy] because he's in significant pain, and there's no chance of him getting better," Kuntz said.

Horses normally are put down at the farm only if they are injured or have no chance at recovery.

Horse-part donations are most valuable for teaching purposes and giving students hands-on experience, Kuntz said. Horse legs are the most common parts used in classrooms, he said.

"It's kind of hard to visualize the anatomy of a horse just by looking at the outside of a live horse or looking at a picture," Kuntz said. "They do make models, but they're not completely realistic and they're very expensive."

Examples of past donations at Truman include an entire horse skeleton, such as the reconstructed skeleton displayed in Magruder Hall, and fowls from community members used for dissection. All donations from the farm stay within the ag science department.

Agricultural science professor

Abdo Alghamdi, who teaches Equine Exercise Physiology, said the legs will be kept in a freezer until they are ready to be used in next semester's class. The legs will not all be dissected at once but saved for future classes as well.

Alghamdi said the department uses horse body parts when they are available from someone locally who puts their horse down, like Fahey. He said local donations are more beneficial than the more expensive, preserved parts that can be ordered from companies.

"Sometimes [preserved parts] may not give you the fine detail if you are trying to show [students] a very clear example, because the preservation changes the color and shape of the tissue," Alghamdi said.

Alghamdi said horse parts can be difficult to obtain because horse slaughtering is illegal in the United States. When using donated animal parts, specific guidelines must be followed to ensure the parts are used in an educational way.

"I believe in [donation]," Alghamdi said. "You're going to be rotting in the soil anyway."

Reproductive organs, hearts, lungs and the digestive system are other horse parts Alghamdi can use in class. Donations are determined on a case-by-case basis.

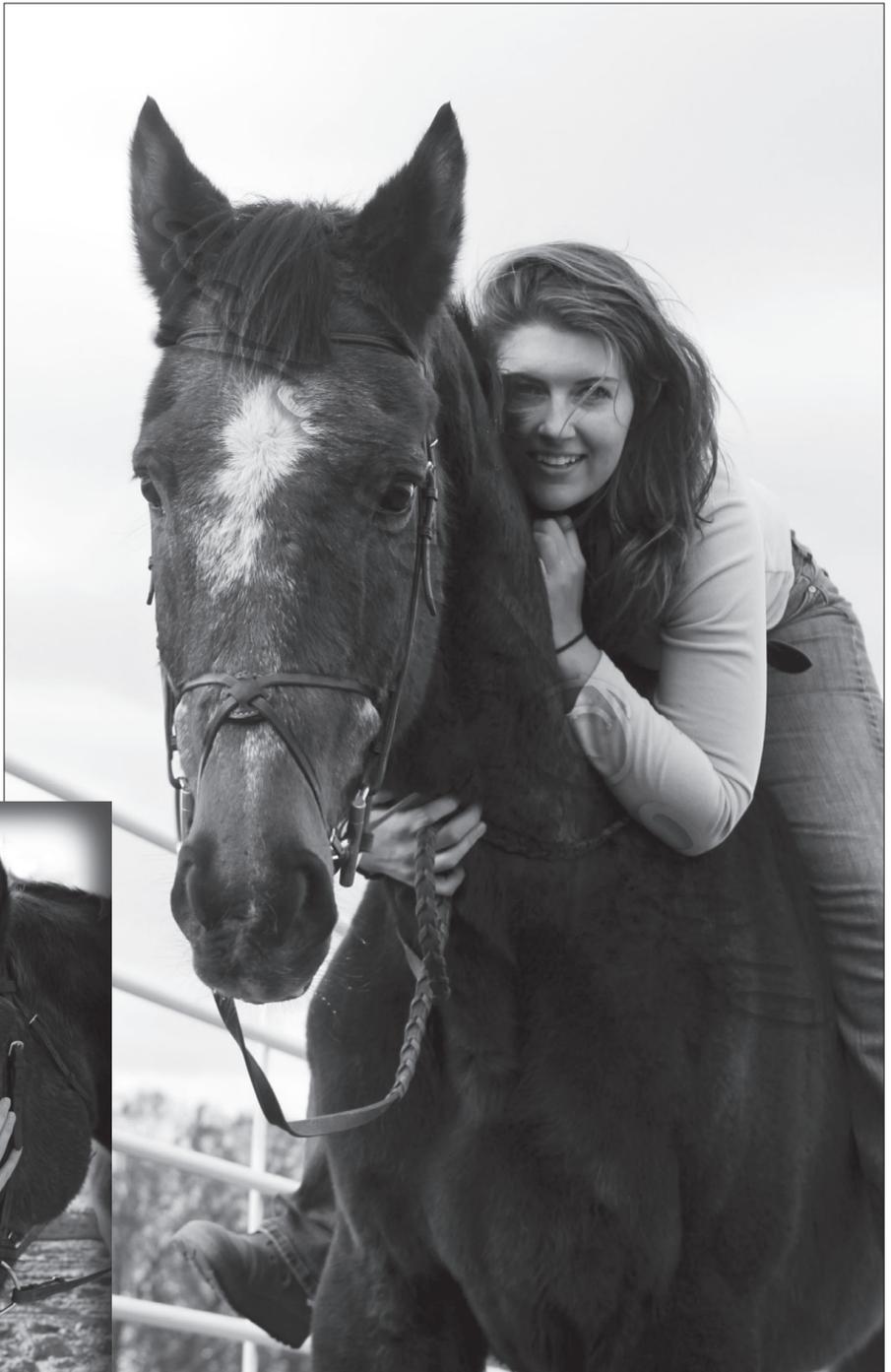


Photo Submitted  
Sophomore Emily Fahey's horse Cassidy was put down yesterday because his health was declining. Fahey is donating his legs to the agricultural science department.

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