

## Good Morning!

By Leslie Potter

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I am not a morning person. I've never been a morning person. Sure, I'll get up at the crack of dawn for the occasional horse show or something fun and out of the ordinary. But for the daily grind, I am very much one of those people who abuses the snooze alarm until the last possible second.

A couple of weeks ago I actually decided to start getting up an hour or two earlier. By my own choice, even! It had been so hot that I'd practically stopped riding. I'd feel like I was swimming out to the barn in the humid evening air, and then I'd find Snoopy already sweaty just from standing in his stall. It seemed downright cruel to put a saddle on his back, so I'd feed him a carrot, make sure his fan was turned on, and head for the nearest air conditioned building.

My initial reason for going riding before work was to avoid the heat, but I've found a lot of advantages. Still, there are mornings when the bed wins the battle against the alarm clock. As much as I want to be a dedicated rider and make sure my old pony stays somewhat in shape, it's hard to ignore my inner night owl, who would rather be snoozing away than pulling on paddock boots at 6:30 in the morning.

So, here are some of the pros and cons I've found to riding in the morning.

**PROS:**Avoiding the morning lull. As desk jobs go, mine is pretty sweet. Still, it is a desk job, and sometimes that first part of the day is a black hole of productivity while my brain still struggles to wake up. By spending the beginning of the day outside doing something physical instead of settling into an office chair, I find the transition from dreamland to the real world to be much easier. Getting exercise. Sometimes I have these great intentions of going for an afternoon bike ride or jog and, y'know, getting in shape...or something. But by the end of the day I'm usually tired and unmotivated to do anything but bond with the living room sofa. So by starting my day with a morning ride, I can at least guarantee that I'll do something active during the day, even if I end up sacrificing my evening hours to bad network television. These things happen. Fostering workaholicism. When I've got deadlines looming, I sometimes end up staying at work later than I plan to, and on those days I normally would have to skip the barn. But if I go for a ride in the morning, then I can work late without feeling guilty. Creating free time. Afternoon rides often turn into drawn out evenings at the barn, and it's not unusual for me to lose track of time and end up staying there until 9pm. That in itself isn't a bad thing, but it does mean that by the time I get home I really have no hope of accomplishing anything else. With the barn out of the way, I actually have evening hours available for fun stuff like, I dunno, having a social life or going for a jog (it could happen!) Coffee! Like most night owls, when I have to be conscious in the morning I often turn to my friend coffee. Sometimes I'm motivated enough to make it at home, and sometimes I'd rather just trade some of my hard-earned cash for coffee that someone else makes for me. During my regular commute from home there are no coffee retailers, but there's one very conveniently located between the barn and the office. I'll take mine with an extra shot of espresso, please.

**CONS:**Laziness. As much as I like starting my day by seeing my pony's smiling(?) face, it does take all my willpower to get out of bed earlier than absolutely necessary. I've accepted that at my age, my nocturnalism is not likely to be a phase that I will grow out of. Eau de barn. No one here at Horse Illustrated HQ minds the scent of horses, but it is a little awkward stepping into the office knowing that you're bringing with you the distinctive smell of the barn, and it isn't going to vanish just because you've changed your clothes. Helmet hair. This sort of goes along with the last point, but I'm giving it its own bullet because my helmet hair can be pretty epic. Sometimes I think I look a bit like a cavewoman, but thus far my coworkers have been polite enough not to say anything. It's all downhill from here. I'm not gonna lie, my day-to-day life isn't super exciting, and sometimes going for a ride is the high point of my day. So if the high point of my day happens first thing in the morning, what does that mean for the rest of my day? (By the way, has anyone else noticed that the saying "it's all downhill from here" has two separate and completely opposite meanings?) Coffee! It's delicious and makes my morning easier, but commuting past the temptation every day is not good for my bank account.

In the end, I think riding in the morning wins over not riding in the morning, so I'll be showing up at work with helmet hair and a \$2 cup of coffee for a while.

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