

# The Bernardsville News

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## Mars Essex Horse Trials returns to Far Hills

After a 19 year absence, the Mars Essex Horse Trials, a top equestrian competition, returns with a weekend of outdoor family-oriented events in the Somerset County countryside at historic Moorland Farm in Far Hills. The event takes place from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Saturday, June 24, and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday, June 25.

The trials feature "eventing," often referred to as an equestrian triathlon, a competition that combines the elegance of dressage, the thrill of cross-country and the precision of show jumping.

There will also be a classic car show; the "Farmstand," offering fresh farm-to-table food from local markets and specialties from artisan vendors; and The Essex Market, offering a wide range of shopping from saddles and riding boots to jewelry and artwork.

A children's activity center, sponsored by The Willow School, will offer a fun and creative diversion for younger spectators and their parents. The Willow School, located in Gladstone, is committed to helping children discover who they are, the joy of learning and the wonder of the environment around them.

Moorland Farm, a picturesque 230-acre property, provides the setting for the event. It is the home of the annual Far Hills Race Meeting, a series of nationally prestigious steeplechase races held each October.

General admission is \$10 in advance or \$20 at the gate, and includes admission and free parking for both days.

The Hoopstick Club offers a VIP experience with ringside seating adjacent to the show jumping arena and overlooking the water complex with additional vistas of the cross country course. It includes a continental breakfast, lunch or brunch with a full open bar, and a cocktail party with wine, beer, a specialty cocktail and light hors d'oeuvres. The cost is \$250.

The hillside area provides tailgaters with panoramic views of the entire event. Attendees may bring a picnic lunch or purchase all the fixings at The Farmstand. Tailgating packages cost \$400, and include one reserved hillside parking space and four admission tickets each day.

Proceeds from the event will benefit the Greater Newark LifeCamp, which provides an enriching day camp experience for about 300 Newark-area youths per day for six weeks during July and August.

"We are excited to bring back this iconic event, not just for horse enthusiasts, but for anyone who enjoys a day out in the country," said Ralph Jones, president of Essex Horse Trials. "Morgan Rowse has designed a beautiful course for the equestrian

competition which allows spectators to view the horses up close. And we'll have great vendors and activities that will provide families with plenty to do as they enjoy the spectacular beauty of Moorland Farm."

Mars, Inc. is returning as the event's title sponsor.

Presenting sponsors are Open Road Auto Group, Peapack-Gladstone Bank, Robert Wood Johnson Barnabas Health, and Running 'S' Equine Veterinary Services.

"I am thrilled by the community's positive reception and excitement of having Essex return," said Guy Torsilieri, chairman of Far Hills Race Meeting Association, past chairman of the Essex Horse Trials and current board member of the new Essex Horse Trials. "This is the next step in growing high-level equestrian events in this area."

For three decades, the Essex Horse Trials was one of the highlights of the equestrian calendar, attracting top American and international competitors as well as thousands of fans who enjoyed its social aspects as well. The trials were originally conceived in 1968 as a competition for less experienced riders and horses.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the event continued to grow. It expanded to a three-day format and eventually moved to the U.S. Equestrian Team (USET) headquarters at Hamilton Farm in Gladstone, where riders competed for positions at both the Olympic Games and World Championships. The event ended on its 30th anniversary in 1998 when some of the USET land was developed.

The 2017 Mars Essex Horse Trials will offer competition at the beginner novice through preliminary levels with riders vying for \$25,000 in prize money. Eventing provides a rare opportunity for spectators of all ages and interests, not just in equestrian sports, to witness the unique trust and bond between horse and rider over three distinct areas of competition.

Tickets are available at all Peapack-Gladstone Bank locations and online at [www.essexhorsetrials.org](http://www.essexhorsetrials.org).