Sports Medicine for Horses
A horse is slowly gaited in the parking lot, back and forth, and then a bit faster at the request of an athletically built man. He is casually dressed, shirt sleeves rolled up and has an easy-going, relaxed manner. "That's enough," he calls, "bring him in."

The horse is led into a huge examining room, the clip-clop of the hooves silenced by heavy rubber matting. The man in shirt sleeves carefully examines the front leg and then orders x-rays.

This is William Moyer, D.V.M., at work, doing what he does every weekday—examining and treating horses. He is head of the Equine Outpatient Clinic at New Bolton Center. "I am basically involved in sports medicine for equine athletes," he explains. "My patients are race horses, jumpers, hunters, and carriage horses. You name a sport a horse is engaged in and we have seen its participants.

"The concept of an outpatient clinic for horses is a reasonably new one at a large hospital," Dr. Moyer said. His patients travel great distances. They are brought from as far away as California and Canada as well as all the states in between. The facility at New Bolton Center is quite new. The examining room was first occupied eighteen months ago and is part of the George D. Widener Memorial Hospital. It is equipped with facilities for minor surgery and among its equipment (continued on page 4)
Sports Medicine For Horses

"The beauty of horses is that they can be recycled," Dr. Moyer said. "They can do other things besides racing or jumping. They can become a carriage horse or a pleasure horse for someone. Many of the injuries manifest themselves only if top speed is demanded time after time. So a retired competition horse can still have a useful, enjoyable life.

Dr. Moyer also has to keep in mind the economics of the situation. The owner or trainer may not be able to afford what may be considered the ideal therapy. Race horses are professional athletes and time away from competition can be very costly. Therefore, it is important to be realistic with the owner. "The beauty of horses is that they can be recycled," Dr. Moyer said. "They can do other things besides racing or jumping. They can become a carriage horse or a pleasure horse for someone. Many of the injuries manifest themselves only if top speed is demanded time after time. So a retired competition horse can still have a useful, enjoyable life.

The majority of injuries presented to Dr. Moyer involve the legs. Horses injure their bones, tendons, joints, and muscles. They are prone to joint damage due to the wear and tear from rigorous training and competition. Another problematic area is the foot. Foot problems are probably the leading cause of lameness," Dr. Moyer said. "That's not surprising when you think about it. A foot has an area of five to seven square inches which touches the ground. This supports the entire weight of the horse throughout its activities." He explained that wild horses are less prone to hoof injuries as they run continually and keep hooves and feet in shape. "Domestic horses do not exercise continually, and so their feet are weaker and their shoes are used as support." Horseshoes are a big part of therapy, and according to Dr. Moyer, cor- rective horseshoes are vital to the industry. "Each shoe is tailor-made for the foot and for the problem."

In addition to special shoes he may prescribe swimming as an exercise to keep the animal in shape. "It's a very good way to keep a horse fit, while decreasing weight bearing on the limbs."

Dr. Moyer also has to keep in mind the training or competition, the horse is referred to another specialist. "We have here the largest number of specialists of any facility treating horses in the world," he said. "We are centrally located, only a few hours from major Eastern racing centers and areas of other horser racing activities."

Dr. Moyer obviously loves his work and cares very much for the animals. "I have a great interest in athletics and am involved in competitive sports. It was natural that I gravitated to animal athletes because I understand a little more about it and have empathy."

Appointments for the Equine Outpatient clinic, which is open Mondays through Fridays, can be made by calling (215) 444-5800, Ext. 405 or 406.

Bellwether