

Dear Residents, below is the email I sent today to the person who wrote the article in TAP into Horses regarding the proposed helistop at The Ridge.

Best regards.

Rick

Dear Ms. Shupe,

In your recent article titled “Proposed Helistop at Golf Course Worries Equestrians That Use Trails Nearby,” the owner of the golf course that is seeking the helistop license, Joel Moore, said the following:

“I have also heard other horse owners state that the horses quickly get familiar with the sounds of a helicopter and are not bothered or spooked. It should also be noted that when horses are on the various trails in the township that come within close proximity to public roads they are exposed to automobile, truck and motorcycle noise which does not seem to be an issue.”

These comments by Mr. Moore demonstrate a lack of understanding of horses and an indifference to the safety of those riding their horses along the trails surrounding The Ridge.

First of all, while some horses may indeed “quickly get familiar with the sounds of a helicopter,” others will not. Like people, each horse is different.

Second, saying, as Mr. Moore did, that after some exposure to helicopters, a horse may become familiar with the sounds of a helicopter, does not address what may happen the first time the horse is exposed to a helicopter. Upon its first exposure to a helicopter taking off or landing nearby, or flying overhead, a horse may spook, causing injury, perhaps seriously injury, to the horse or its rider. Portions of the trail surrounding The Ridge are narrow and have steep drop-offs. If a horse riding on or near those portions is spooked by a helicopter, attempts to flee, and goes off one of the drop-offs, it is not an exaggeration to say that both the horse and even an experienced rider could be killed by the fall. That risk likely is greater if the rider is a child.

Third, I don't see how Mr. Moore can seriously compare exposing a horse to a car, truck or motorcycle is similar to exposing a horse to a helicopter. Virtually all horses, in their day to day activities, are routinely exposed to cars, trucks and motorcycles. On the other hand, most horses are not routinely exposed to helicopters. Additionally, cars, trucks and motorcycles travel at the same level as the horse – ground level. Helicopters do not. They travel above the horses, thus increasing the risk of spooking the horse. This is particularly problematic in the case of The Ridge, because most of the trail surrounding The Ridge runs through wooded areas, and thus the horses won't see the helicopter until it is directly overhead.

Finally, the noise made by a car, truck or motorcycle is not nearly as loud as the noise made by a helicopter that is taking off, landing or hovering.

In sum, Mr. Moore's thinly veiled attempt to downplay the danger created by his proposed helistop to those who ride their horses on the trails surrounding his golf course, fails miserably. We can only hope that Mr. Moore will put the safety of those riders, many of whom are his neighbors and residents of his town, ahead of whatever small benefit his golf course will obtain from the proposed helistop.

Rick Wolfe
Mayor, East Amwell Township