

The Tabb Family – Jane and Cam Tabb

The Tabb family, which has lived and farmed in Jefferson County since 1872, has never raised horses, but cares about the fate of live thoroughbred horse racing as much as their neighbors who do own horses. Lyle C.



Tabb III, who goes by the name Cam, runs a family-owned agriculture business called Lyle C. Tabb & Sons in Kearneysville. The operation includes grain crops, 500-head of hormone and antibiotic free Angus beef cows, a large scale recycling of yard trimmings, wood and food waste, and a manure/compost management business.

If live racing dates were cut, Cam Tabb says the entire agricultural community would suffer. “This would cause hardship to small farms which board horses for turn outs, and lay ups; many small straw and hay

farmers would probably go out of business. It would mean less manure bins picked up from local farms, causing many farms to turn to chemical fertilizers and less straw manure for the mushroom growers.”

His wife Jane Tabb, a second term Jefferson County Commissioner, sees live racing as critical to the overall health and sustainability of the local economy. “Horses are not just pretty to look at, they bring in tourism dollars, supporting restaurants and hotels– people don’t just come to Charles Town for gambling; the horse racing industry also attracts solid businesses like Southern States and Tractor Supply both of which weathered the most recent recession.”

The county is facing a budget crunch in 2015 largely driven by a drop in revenue from video lottery and casino gambling, which in the past used to make up 30 percent of the county’s budget. To compensate for the revenue loss, fees for some basic services will go up, putting extra pressure on everyone who lives and works in Jefferson County.

Both Jane and husband Cam strongly believe that supporting live thoroughbred racing is not just an economic issue; it’s an environmental one too. Horse farms help keep other local farms in business and maintain the beautiful vistas that people far and wide come to see and experience. Currently, 4,028 acres of Jefferson County farmland are in the Voluntary Farmland Protection Program: a conservation program by which typically farmers agree to maintain the land as open space in perpetuity in exchange for a payment for the sale

of their development rights. The Tabbs are convinced that open space will be reduced if the profitability of horse farms is eroded by a cutback in racing days.

The Tabb family is on a mission to jolt people out of what they see as complacency, “a false sense of security.” The fate of the community, they argue, is intricately connected to the fate of live thoroughbred racing. “If you care about our local economy and you care about open space, then the time is *now* to make that call to legislators in Charleston and tell them to stop reducing the number of racing days at the track.”