

## Kristen Gonsoir Biography

The American Quarter Horse has been a part of my life since I was a young girl. My involvement in AQHA, SDQHA, and SDQHYA has allowed me to combine several of my life passions- the American Quarter Horse, education, youth, and public speaking. I want to guarantee that future generations have the same opportunity to enjoy the American Quarter Horse and the Western lifestyle. My husband Tim and I live on a ranch in Groton, SD where we raise American Quarter Horses and cross-bred cattle. We have two grown children and two grandchildren.

One of the greatest threats to the equine industry and the agricultural industry as a whole is the Age of Agricultural Ignorance. According to the National Institute for Animal Agriculture “a majority of today’s consumers are at least three generations removed from agriculture.” This report goes on to say that it is these consumers that are greatly influencing today’s agricultural regulations and they know little to nothing about agriculture. Animal welfare is fast becoming the largest concern of the equine industry and Western lifestyle. The outcome of battles with animal rights groups such as PETA has left circuses and other activities void of real animals for future generations to connect with. As more animal activities become things of the past, there are fewer and fewer opportunities for people to connect with animals. It becomes harder to educate those not in the equine industry about horses. Cowboy, poet, and former large-animal veterinarian Baxter Black argues that one of the causes of increased agricultural ignorance is expanding science ignorance in the US. The average American receives information about agriculture from ignorant media and pop culture stars who have limited knowledge about agriculture.

As a group we must help educate others about the equine industry. We must stand united in the equine industry. We cannot become fractured groups of barrel racers, reiners, ranchers, ropers, eventers, mounted shooters, halter exhibitors, trail riders to just name a few. We must unite within the equine industry to protect the whole equine industry.

I believe my skills as a global educator and coach, public speaker, and equine professional would be an asset as an AQHA Director. I have taught chemistry for over twenty-eight years earning many local, state, and national education awards. I love to combine my passion for teaching science with the American Quarter Horse. Over the past thirty years I have had the privilege to work with many different youth and adults, preparing them for local, regional, and national horse related contests. Many of these youth still keep in touch. They often reflect that their time spent preparing for these contests gave them valuable skills they still use, whether it is preparing for their MCAT exam or working as a human resource manager for a large corporation. These former students may not all continue to directly own American Quarter Horses, but they will always be American Quarter Horse supporters due to these experiences. While coaching a national champion quiz bowl team and national champion horse judge was certainly an exhilarating experience, I find just as much joy in helping a novice youth learn to lope their horse for the first time. The ultimate lesson I hope all my students learn-- equine and chemistry-- is that you never stop learning. I would love to continue my lifelong learning serving as a SD National AQHA Director.