

# KERRY O'NEILL IRWIN '98

## EQUINE LAWYER

Lawyer Kerry O'Neill Irwin '98's interest in equine law emerged while working as a riding instructor at Chatham Hall after graduating from University of Virginia. Because it's one of few law schools that has an equine law focus, she applied to University of Kentucky, and fell in love with Lexington—a horse heaven—on her first visit. She remains in Lexington today, where she currently works as a corporate attorney with Dinsmore & Shohl.

Corporate law involves a great deal of transactional work, including mergers and acquisitions, corporate governance, and various commercial contracts. With a focus in equine law, Kerry, also does a good bit of gaming (or gambling) work, due to the connection between horse racing and wagering. Kerry has also been able to assist with the formation of stallion syndicates for some major stakes-winning Thoroughbred race horses and has had a chance to appear before the Kentucky Horse



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Racing Commission for a client.

Equine law is a quite broad area of law because it involves all aspects of law. There is a litigation side (like lawsuits for breaches of contract or disputes among Thoroughbred stallion co-owners), a transactional side (like boarding agreements, bills of sale or lease agreements, syndications of race horses or sport horses, or even equine lending), an employment side (like hiring farm employees), and a regulatory side (i.e. representing clients in front of the United States Equestrian Federation or a state horse racing commission). And that's just a start. "The common thread is that you have to know horses and horse people. It matters to the client that I can speak the

language and that I understand the industry. Horse people have a strong work ethic based on the early hours, discipline and hard work that horses involve, and also an innate sense of patience that comes from working with horses. You can't get upset when your horse does something unpredictable, you have to find a solution. The same can be said with clients!"

Kerry's Chatham Hall experience, both as a student and an employee has prepared her well for a challenging career. "As a riding instructor, I learned how to balance a lot of tasks, from caring for 50+ horses, to teaching beginners how to ride, to keeping everyone safe," and as a student, Chatham Hall fostered independence in her along with a belief that she could do anything she set her mind to. "I work in a very male-dominated industry, but that has never bothered me, and I'm confident that I belong and that I can succeed. The Chatham Hall network has been an important factor in my life and career, because it has provided me with friends and business connections all over the country and all over the world."

