



Jody L. Keever

September 19, 1958 - April 3, 2026

Jody Keever, 67, passed away peacefully in her sleep at her home in Wantage on Friday, April 3, 2026. Born on September 19, 1958, to Walter and Patricia Keever, Jody attended Lafayette Consolidated School and High Point Regional High School.

Raised in the saddle and immersed in the horse world from day one, she developed a lifelong passion for riding at an early age. As a child, she competed in barrel racing at many 4-H horse shows and professional rodeos, winning numerous prizes and blue ribbons. As a young adult competing on the rodeo circuit with her father, she earned a reputation as an accomplished and reliable hazer in steer wrestling events; a role very rarely held by women. Her upbringing in this world gave her an encyclopedic knowledge of Quarter Horse bloodlines and livestock behavior. By her early twenties, she possessed a level of expertise that rivaled veterans twice her age.

This lifelong immersion proved an indispensable asset when she made the natural transition into her professional career, serving nearly 25 years as an Animal ID Coordinator for the USDA. Her role required constant travel throughout the United States, often for weeks or months at a time, inspecting both large-scale operations and small livestock farms, as well as meatpacking plants. Working closely with producers and veterinarians, she was instrumental in identifying and containing disease outbreaks while ensuring strict humane oversight. Yet beyond the formal inspections and regulations central to safeguarding the industry, it was the people who truly defined her

career. Her decades of travel to every corner of the country allowed her to cultivate lifelong friendships rooted in a deep mutual respect for the way of life she sought to protect.

Despite a career that took her across the nation, her heart remained firmly rooted on her own farm in Wantage. There she found her greatest joy, surrounded by the animals she loved so dearly. Her home was a sanctuary for her fur babies: her horse, Itch; her dog, Cody; and her goat, Popsicle. Most especially, she cherished Lambie, a baby lamb she rescued through her work from certain demise — a final, personal testament to the life of compassion and protection she led.

A trailblazer in a man's world and a protector of the American livestock tradition, Jody moved through life with a servant's heart and a master's eye. Whether in the dust of the horse arena, the offices of the USDA, or the quiet pastures of her Wantage farm, she lived a life defined by grit and grace. Hard working and straight talking with no apologies given, she leaves behind a legacy of strength, compassion, and an unbreakable bond with the people, animals, and land she loved. She finished her ride exactly where she wanted to be; at home on the farm, surrounded by those she loved most.

Jody was predeceased by her father, Walt Keever (2007); her mother, Patricia Keever (2016); and her sisters, Katie (1978) and Patti (2021).

Left to cherish her memory is her devoted life partner, Dave Del Sardo. She is also survived by her brother, Walter Keever, and his wife, Colleen, of Lafayette; her step nieces, Kirsten Herman of Wantage and Selena Herman of Lafayette; her aunt, Kathleen Scalera of Teaneck; and her uncle, Bob Blomquist of Nutley.

She also leaves behind several cousins and a wide circle of dear friends, both in the local Sussex County community and across the country, who became family to her over a lifetime of common ground and shared horizons.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Justin Cowboy Crisis Fund, which lends a helping hand to professional rodeo athletes and their families when catastrophic injury sidelines those who have dedicated

their lives to the sport. One hundred percent of all contributions are given directly to eligible recipients.

Donations may be sent to:

Justin Cowboy Crisis Fund

101 Pro Rodeo Drive

Colorado Springs, CO 80919

Donation forms and online giving options can also be found at justincowboycrisisfund.org.

Funeral services will be held at 11 a.m. on Thursday, April 9, 2026 at the Pinkel Funeral Home, 31 Bank Street (Route 23), Sussex. Interment to immediately follow at Frankford Plains Cemetery. Friends may pay their respects to the family on Wednesday, April 8, 2026 from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the funeral home. Online condolences may be offered to the family at www.pinkelfuneralhome.com

Cemetery Details

Frankford Plains Cemetery

Plains Road
Frankford Twp, NJ

Previous Events

Visitation

APR 8. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Pinkel Funeral Home, Inc.
31 Bank Street (Route 23)
Sussex, NJ 07461
(973) 875-3272
alexis@pinkelfuneralhome.com
<https://www.pinkelfuneralhome.com/>

Service

APR 9. 11:00 AM (ET)

Pinkel Funeral Home, Inc.
31 Bank Street (Route 23)
Sussex, NJ 07461
(973) 875-3272
alexis@pinkelfuneralhome.com
<https://www.pinkelfuneralhome.com/>

Tribute Wall

LR

“ My condolences to family and friends. I had the pleasure of working with Jody at USDA VS in New Jersey. She had a remarkable "can do" attitude and was a friend to all.

Lynne J Riley - May 05 at 12:27 PM

KG

“ We lost a Legend when we lost Jody. Prayers and hugs to her family. May God and her memories wrap you in love. - Kimberly Gish

Kimberly Gish - April 08 at 08:46 AM

EW

“ I'm deeply sorry for your loss. Jody will be missed. Your family is my prayers. - Elisha Wal

Elisha Wall - April 08 at 07:44 AM

KV

“ Kever Family and Friends ❤️ I met Jody and her family at local horse shows at “Chammings Ring” in Stillwater and a few other Shows in the 70’s and 80’s. We immediately sparked up a competitive and wonderful friendship and always were leaning on the rails of the Ring giving each other support and encouragement when we were on our horse, riding for the Blue Ribbon and Trophy, doing our Best and having a blast 🏆🎉. Walt Sr.always had a smile and a cold drink for me!! Miss The Kever family and very sad learning about losing your loved ones. Stay strong and positive thoughts ❤️❤️



Karleen VanDright - April 07 at 07:00 PM

SW

“ *Passion is a trait that is not widespread and sometimes hard to come by. Jody displayed an immense amount of passion in all she was involved in and especially her personal convictions. As the saying goes, "10 toes down." The connection of Jody to that mantra will reverberate throughout the APHIS VS family for years to come. Off into the sunset but not to be forgotten.....*

Sheba Williams - April 07 at 06:50 PM

BC

“ *I'm so sorry, Walter, to hear about Jody. My thoughts are with you and your family.*

Barbara Cashen - April 06 at 08:43 PM



“ *In Heaven's Arms Bouquet was purchased for the family of Jody L. Keever.*



April 06 at 09:33 AM



“ *A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Jody L. Keever.*

April 06 at 09:33 AM

MK

“ *My friendship with Jody began as small children with our fathers in the rodeo arena. She was a treasure. Prayers for her family, treasure the memories not the loss.*
Mona Lee Fina Kreutziger

Mona Lee Kreutziger - April 06 at 07:38 AM

JW

“ *Incredibly sorry Walt and family. You are all in my Prayers - Jill Wardle*

Jill Wardle - April 05 at 09:52 PM

AW

“ *Jody was a fiercely loyal friend. She knew who she was, had her convictions and exhibited true grit! I will miss her very much. AC Welsch*

AC Welsch - April 05 at 06:53 PM