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VET'S GUIDE TO COLIC

Lynn Russell's
TRIMMING
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GRID WITH IZZY TAYLOR

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Emma Williams



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Contributors



With the summer events just around the corner, **Georgia Guerin** has been excitedly compiling all you need to know for a great day out at Badminton – read her top tips on p10.



When it comes to ailments, horses are always keeping us on our toes. **Lucy Turner** spoke to an *H&R* reader whose horse had a very unusual eye condition – find out more on p90.



Getting the inside track on how top riders train their horses is all in a day's work for **Jo Thoenes**. She spent the day with eventer Izzy Taylor – read Izzy's gridwork tips on p28.

Welcome

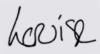
t's official, spring is here! I'm sure, like me, you celebrated the extra hour of daylight and are thinking of what to do with that time. And as I dropped off some winter rugs for cleaning, I found myself picking up a few schedules for local shows. Now I have a young horse, the idea of entering these low-key competitions feels a lot more nerve-racking than I'd expected! Whether you're planning your first competition or finding your nerves are holding you back, <code>Horse&Rider</code> is here to help – we've got the advice you need to enjoy yourself on show day. Turn to page 48 to get started.

While enjoying quality time with your horse is what it's all about, part of being a responsible horse owner is knowing how to deal with different veterinary emergencies. I'll never forget, as a teenager, being alone with a horse with bad colic and being really angry with myself for not knowing quite how to deal with the situation. Eventually help arrived and, after veterinary treatment, the horse made a full recovery. But if only I'd been better informed, the whole experience would have been less distressing for me, at least. Knowing the best way to care for your horse until the vet arrives will stop you feeling so helpless and benefit your horse, too, so don't miss our complete guide to colic (p76).



Louise Kittle, Editor Horse Rider

Louise started riding aged six. She's a qualified BHS IntSM and owns Ted, a fiveyear-old Irish gelding. Ted is just beginning his ridden career, and Louise hopes he'll make a great all-rounder when he finishes growing!





This month with the H&R team...

The May issue gear guide shoot is always an exciting time at *Horse&Rider*. From getting the clothes in to finding the models, venue and horses, there's a lot of preparation, but the results are always exceptional! I love the bright, colourful pieces that are so on-trend for spring/summer 2015 – and there's lots of bling, too! We were

very lucky with the weather – it can be really hit or miss this time of year – but we were treated to brilliant, blazing sunshine. Result!

Céleste, Staff Writer

Horse Rider

Discover our team's wealth of horsey experience at horseandrideruk.com

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Cover photo by Bob Langrish





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Find what you want, from insurance to riding holidays, in our classified ads







Cruising cloned

Cruising, the top Irish showjumping stallion who died last year, has been cloned. Cells were taken from him in 2011, and the DNA extracted and inserted into eggs. These were then incubated before being transferred to recipient mares. Despite being born in 2012, the two colts holding 100% of Cruising's DNA were kept a secret. They are both about to start stud duties and will become the first clones to stand in Ireland.

The clones belong to the McCann family, owners of the Hartwell Stud in County Kildare. They said: "As the traditional Irish horse is sought after worldwide, it is hoped the two clones – Cruising Arish and Cruising Encore – will keep Ireland's reputation of breeding world-class performance horses to the fore."



WIN! Tickets to Bolesworth International and Scouting for Girls concert

Win a VIP experience at Bolesworth International CSI**** at Bolesworth Castle near Chester from 18–21 June. One winner will receive a pair of tickets with grandstand seating, lunch in Bolesworth Bistro and a pair of Scouting for Girls concert tickets, including VIP area access, for Saturday 20 June. Twenty runners up will also receive a pair of tickets to Bolesworth International.

To be in with a chance of winning, answer this question on the competition entry form on page 168 or visit horseandridercompetitions.co.uk to enter online.





Entries close 27 May 2015

When are Scouting for Girls playing at Bolesworth International? For more information, visit bolesworthinternational.com

First British amputee jump jockey

Captain Guy Disney has become the first jockey with an artificial leg to ride over fences in a race in Britain. The 32-year-old finished third in the Royal Artillery Cup on Ballyallia Man at Sandown Park. Guy lost his right leg from the knee down while on duty, when his vehicle was hit by a grenade in Helmand province, Afghanistan, in July 2009. He had twice ridden in the same race before his injury. The annual meeting at Sandown is more than 150 years old and restricted to horses who are owned or leased by those who are serving or have served in the Royal Artillery.



Horseworld A BRIEF HISTORY OF ART

The Uffington White Horse is a 110m-long hill figure, formed from deep trenches filled with crushed,

white chalk. It has been dated back at least 3,000 years. The figure is on the slopes of White Horse Hill in Oxfordshire.



The Bayeux Tapestry depicts the Norman conquest of England in 1066. The 70m-long artwork has 190 horses, and shows them travelling by boat from France and then in the battle of Hastings.



Care about laminitis?

The Animal Health Trust, in collaboration with the Royal Veterinary College and funded by World Horse Welfare, has launched a study to investigate the frequency of laminitis and risk factors. The results will provide owners with evidence-based guidelines to prevent future suffering and reduce the impact of the condition nationwide.

All horse owners are encouraged to sign up – every horse and pony in Britain is eligible to take part in the study, a horse who has never had laminitis is just as important to the research as one who has.

To date, nearly 700 owners have signed up to support the critical research, but many more are needed to achieve the study's aims of really learning more about laminitis.

For more information and to sign up, visit **careaboutlaminitis.org.uk**



Charlotte's new charity partnership

Charlotte Dujardin has announced her first official charity partnership, becoming Global Ambassador for equine welfare charity, The Brooke. The organisation operates in 11 countries, helping to improve the welfare of working horses, donkeys and mules who support the livelihoods of more than 600 million people.

Charlotte says: "I'm very proud to be associated with a cause that is committed to making a real difference to the lives of animals that are less fortunate than those we have here in the UK."

Petra Ingram, The Brooke's Chief Executive, added: "We are absolutely thrilled to welcome Charlotte into The Brooke family and are so impressed with her enthusiasm for The Brooke and her willingness to help, despite how busy she is."

H&R hoof care readers' survey

Tell us what you really think about the hoof care product that you use (oil, balm, dressing or treatment), and be in with a chance of winning a gorgeous Panache bridle. Made using the best quality, full-grain, supple leather, the flash bridle comes with reins and is worth £72. You can also nominate your favourite product for the coveted *Horse&Rider* Readers' Choice award!

To participate, visit bit.ly/hoofcare2015



A date for your diary

This autumn, Bury Farm in Buckinghamshire will play host to a totally new and different event. The British International All Stars will combine top-level showjumping, dressage and para dressage, attracting many top riders. The week-and-a-half long event (22 October – 1 November) will also have a large shopping village to cater for all equestrian shopoholics.

For tickets and more information, visit britishinternationalallstars.com

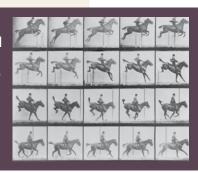
$\star\star\star$ Rate *H&R* and win!

Rate *H&R* and you could win a Mountain Horse Crew jacket, worth £89.95!

Visit tinyurl.com/RateMay15 to give our features a star rating, and one lucky reader will take home this versatile, lightweight and waterproof fleece-lined jacket, ideal for all-year-round wear. Combining practical features with style, it's designed for in the saddle and on the yard. Colour may vary. **mountainhorse.co.uk**



In the 1870s, English photographer **Eadweard Muybridge** was the first photographer to analyse living creatures in motion. He famously revealed the horses' moment of suspension at gallop.





Norman Thelwell produced his first pony cartoon in 1953. It proved so popular that many more humorous illustrations of children and ponies were commisioned and are now highly collectable.

Britain's oldest three-day event, Mitsubishi Motors Badminton Horse Trials is a spectacular display, putting the world's finest eventing partnerships to the ultimate test. 160,000 visitors are expected to descend on Badminton, ready to witness powerful dressage, daring cross-country and to experience the electric atmosphere in the showjumping arena, where top the riders fight it out to be crowned champion.



DON'T MISS...

16.30 First horse inspection



9.00-17.00 Dressage 12.30 Dressage display



9.00-17.00 Dressage 12.30 Dressage display 17.00 Stallion parade



10.45 Shetland pony Grand National 11.30-17.00 Cross-country test



8.30 Final horse inspection

11.30 Showjumping begins

14.30 Parade of competitors

14.45 Showjumping (top 20)

15.45 Parade of Duke of Beaufort's hounds

16.00 Presentation of prizes

For even more information visit

badminton-horse.co.uk

Did vou know?

- Andrew Nicholson has completed the event more times than any other rider, with 33 successful rides.
- Lucinda Green takes the title for most Badminton wins, winning six times on six different horses.
- In 1995, Mark Todd rode the final two thirds of the cross-country with just one stirrup!
- The greatest number of completions by a horse is seven, shared by four horses (Ballycotton, Over To You, Lenamore and Comanche).



Simple to use safety





Follow **@bhorsetrials** and **#MMBHT** on twitter for updates in the lead up to Badminton



Catch it live on TV

BBC red button – live cross-country on 9 May **BBC2** – Two-hour programme of highlights with live showjumping on 10 May

Need to know

Advance tickets (valid until 27 April)

Wednesday	£6
Thursday & Friday	£14.50
Saturday	£26
Sunday	£12.50
Season (whole event)	£50
12 and under	FREE
Car passes	

In advance/on the gate £10/£12 Season.....£28

You'll need grandstand tickets for the showjumping (from £9.50 – these seats usually sell out in advance). Seats can also be reserved for the dressage (from £6.50).

Shop 'til you drop

With around 270 individual tradestands open every day, the shopping at Badminton is always a highlight. To maximise your day of shopping, here are some of our top tips...

- Use the shop and drop facilities, so you don't have to carry your haul around all day.
- Shop at lunch time when it's a bit quieter and eat earlier or later when the queues are shorter.
- Dressage days are quieter than cross-country, so they are an ideal time for shopping.

H&R's top tips

- Tune into radio Badminton for live commentary and expert discussion while you're queuing in and out.
- Get in early to avoid long queues, especially on Saturday.
- Walk the cross-country after the dressage so you can work out which fences you don't want to miss. This gives you the chance to get an unobstructed view before the crowds arrive on Saturday!
- Take bin bags to sit on if the grass is damp.
- Stay until the end of the cross-country and then walk the course so you can really admire the fences.



One lucky winner will win all these great goodies!

Read more about these prizes on the competition pages of horseandrideruk.com









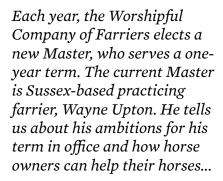
Visit worldofthehorse.com for a full list of exhibitors

Photos: Badminton - FEI/Kit Houghton, Still Water - PlusONE / Shutterstock.com

Meet...

Wayne Upton,

Master of the Worshipful Company of Farriers



British farriery is the best in the world and we shouldn't forget that. All farriers in the UK complete a four-year apprenticeship, with many farriers from overseas coming here to benefit from the high-quality training on offer. And the WCF examines farriers in the USA and Australia, too.

I want horse owners to be better educated.

That will happen with better communication between farriers and owners, and it will benefit the horses. **Developing communication between vets and farriers** is also really important to me. I believe the relationship between a horse's vet and farrier is really important, especially when there is a veterinary problem that involves the hoof in some way.

We're working more closely with vets – the WCF now hosts a course

with seven of the UK's veterinary schools, where vets come for a week to learn more about farriery. It's a big improvement, because many vets only had a half-day of training on farriery while at university. That's not enough. But together we're changing that and improving things for the horses.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Worshipful Company of Farriers was founded in 1356 by the Lord Mayor of the City of London, with a Charter from Charles II. It has overseen the structure of farriery in the UK ever since.

Talk to your farrier. I'd love horse owners to engage more with their farrier and

more with their farrier and learn about their horses' feet. It will help you to better manage your horse.

Find out more about the WCF at wcf.org.uk



What's on TV for horse lovers

Tune in to Horse&Country TV this May on Sky 253 or online at everywhere. horseandcountry.tv Relive Badminton Horse **Trials on Badminton Stunt** Day (all day, 17 May) and on Rudall's Round-Up (18 May). Don't miss Backstage Pass with Monty Roberts (4 May) and FEI Classics: Kentucky (7 May). New series Farming Sunday starts 24 May. For dog lovers, don't miss dog showing on Around the Dog World (7 May). Finish with Rolex Grand Prix from Aachen Live (31 May). For complete listings, visit horseandcountry.tv



Follow Horse&Rider on









Heather Jansch is a British sculptor, famous for her life-sized sculptures of horses made from driftwood. She is a resident artist at the Eden Project, Cornwall, where her work has been exhibited.

still Water stands 10m tall at Marble Arch, London. The bronze sculpture of a horse's head is by British sculptor, Nic Fiddian-Green.





The Kelpies are 30-metre high steel horse-head sculptures in Falkirk, Scotland. Designed by Andy Scott, they are the world's largest equine sculptures and weigh 300 tonnes each.



With Hit-Air vest



Four lucky winners will win...

A Hit-Air vest

Many riders now choose to wear air vests over their body protectors, or alone, as an extra safety measure to reduce the risk of common riding injuries.

The Hit-Air vest provides unobtrusive protection to your chest, neck, spine and lower back. Practical, discreet, lightweight and bulk-free, the lower back protection can be neatly folded away so it doesn't interfere with the saddle. The additional neck protection is unique and sets it apart from other similar jackets.

Inflating outwards, rather than inwards, the Hit-Air vest eliminates the possibility of being winded by the inflation.

The Hit-Air vest is available in black, navy, royal blue, red or fluorescent yellow, in adult sizes S, M, M/L or L.





In which direction does the Hit-Air vest inflate?

Tie-breaker: Why would an air vest be a great addition to your equestrian equipment?

Answer the question and tie-breaker on the competition entry form on page 168 or visit
 horseandridercompetitions.co.uk to enter online. Entries must be received by

31 May 2015. Visit horseandridercompetitions.co.uk for full terms and conditions. No purchase necessary.

To enter:

14 HORSE&RIDER

For more information, visit hitairuk.co.uk or call 0845 8942868

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*Forage intake may need controlling

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- → Lo-Cal provides all the essential nutrients* for overall health, muscle tone and healthy hoof growth (which means you can ditch those expensive supplements)!
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- → Fed together, it all adds up to a flexible, easy feeding regime which is healthier than a handful of mix, cubes or chaff

It's affordable & fed in small quantities

Just a couple of mugs per day** alongside forage/pasture make it easier to feed than "fortified chaffs"











Horse&Rider or share your thoughts, then drop a line to Georgia Guerin – address on p18. Remember to include vour contact details and jacket size!

Follow Horse&Rider on







LEAD'S THE WAY

Shortly after Christmas, I was getting my horse, Clyde, in as normal. As I went to shut the gate, I saw a dog running towards us. I didn't worry too much about it as Clyde is good with dogs, but it ran between his back legs, trying to bite his legs and tail. Clyde spun around quickly to see what was going on, causing me to fall over. He then kicked out at the dog but, unfortunately, caught my face and shoulder.

Most people would check that I was okay, however, the dog walkers gave me a tissue and left me to be helped by some other horse owners - luckily, one of them was first-aid trained and she called for an ambulance.

Later that evening, I had X-rays and other scans done. The doctors described the right side of my face as 'like a bowl of cornflakes'. Part of my jaw was detached and floating, my nose was smashed and I had fractures to both my eye sockets.

Two days later, I had more than five hours of surgery to reconstruct my face and insert metal plates, and I will still need more surgery in the future. I can't thank Torbay Hospital enough - including all the staff from A&E and the Forest Ward, and the surgical team lead by Miss Fryer, who all did an amazing job!

To this day, the owners of the dog have not enquired or contacted the yard as to my wellbeing. I wonder if they would have been so reluctant if it had been their dog that had sustained injuries or, even worse, been killed.

This could have been avoided if the dog had been under control - and better still, on a lead!

Kerry Watts, via email

Tweet box

Find out what our favourite horsey people are saying on Twitter this month

@Wanderlust_Lyn

Bliss is two copies of the fabulous @HorseandRiderUK to read on the train.



@EmmaMassingale

(Horse trainer and free rider)

"Little ponies always maintain a great perspective on life... As they are always looking up!"

We asked you on our Facebook page whether, if you've owned a horse for a long period of time, it is fair to then send him somewhere else for retirement.

Lucy Morgan

Never in a million years would I have shipped my oldie off somewhere. I cherished every moment of our time together and I miss him more than words can describe! The thought of sending him away to retire after more than 20 years together is inconceivable. He was my everything, but I do appreciate it is a viable and sensible option for some people.

Anne Quaye

I had my horse for 18 years and for the last two, I kept him in retirement. I was due a series of operations and there was no way I could travel to his field every day, so I made the decision to retire him at an old horses' home charity. I cried every day before he went – I felt I had betrayed him. I see him often and I always go home in tears. If I had my own land he would still be with me. I suffered more than he did, but it's about doing the best for him.

Karen Bush

Doesn't it really depend on the options available? My old boy has a fabulous time living at a friend's farm. I miss seeing him every day, but he has a much better life there than I could provide for him. As much as I would love to have him here, he wouldn't have half as much fun. I'm in tears every time I leave him, but it would be selfish to move him for my own benefit.

Rosemary Nash

I've had my mare for 25 years, she's now 27 and still going strong. When I can no longer ride her, she won't be cast aside or sent away, she will stay with us in the home she knows. We owe her that much as she has given us all so much!

To have your say about horsey issues of the day, visit facebook.com/HorseandRiderMag



STROKE OF LUCK

I bought the November *Horse&Rider* – the first copy I'd purchased for a while. Reading it I came across the 'Tales of the unexpected' about a reader's experience with canker. After reading it thoroughly, I realised that it sounded very similar to something my pony, Alfie, had. I asked my farrier what she thought and she agreed his signs had reminded her of canker, but she hadn't seen it for a very long time. We got the vet out and he diagnosed canker. Alfie is now having on-going treatment in all four feet. He hasn't yet had his frogs scraped out, but that will be our next step.

I would like to thank *Horse&Rider* for publishing this article, because without reading it I would have been totally unaware of what was wrong with Alfie.

Corinne Allen, via email

DREAM COME TRUE

My husband surprised me by hiring a trailer for my birthday – I've always wanted to ride my horse, Mr Basil B, on the beach and it was now becoming a reality! I was filled with trepidation and excitement.

On the day, Basil ran into the trailer with as much excitement as me and we set off to Breen Sands in Somerset. When we arrived, Bas was spinning. I managed to get on and to my surprise, he didn't gallop at full pelt across the open sand – he settled down. Being on-board let him know why we were there. Walking along the sand was the most relaxing riding I had

done in more than 30 years – no traffic, no potholes and no ditches. Basil was alert and enjoying the freedom, so I started to trot. Canter followed, carefree and the safest I have felt at speed. Gallop came naturally and we were travelling along the sand with nothing ahead for miles – a truly fabulous way to ride. With so much space there was no need to slow down rapidly, bringing him back to a walk was no problem at all.

Everyone should experience the beach on their own horse – it was the greatest day we have spent together!

Angie Jones-Moore, via email

I've always wanted to ride my own horse on the beach and it was becoming a reality!



Horse&Rider thank you...

The sender of our star letter will receive a Toggi Clementine jacket, worth £125 – available in black, in sizes 8–20. Waterproof and breathable to protect against showers, while ensuring you don't overheat, this stylish three-quarter length jacket is designed by riders, for riders. With a two-way front zip and extra-wide zip-up side vents, this jacket offers freedom of movement and an easy fit over the saddle. To find your local stockist, see toggi.com or call 0113 2707000.

Toqqi

@GinnyHoweEvent (International eventer) My next Badminton horse! #SoCute



@TapnerEventing

(International eventer Paul Tapner) @BristolUni @BUCSsport team that I train won their home competition today @WicksteadFarm in the @horse_play arena



@MazStretch

Tweedy regularly tests out his new swimwear... might be worth investing in a wetsuit next time!





You got mail?

The Pit Pony Sanctuary, Pontypridd, South Wales, is calling for your help! We can trade in used postage stamps to raise muchneeded funds. Before throwing your post away, please cut out the stamps leaving half a centimetre of paper around the edge and send them to us at: Fforest Uchaf Farm, Penycoedcae, Pontypridd Rhondda, Wales, CF37 1PS

Any help is appreciated! Thank you.

Roy Peckham, via email

A thanks from down under

I live in Australia and every month I look for Horse&Rider in the newsagents. Even though it's usually a month or two out of date by the time it gets here. I just have to have it, and there is usually only one copy so I check regularly to make sure I get it.

Horse&Rider is practical, helpful and realistic. I'm never going to be a 4* eventer, but I do want to do the best I can. I am returning to riding after many, many years and your magazine is the best I have found to help me.

It is applicable to my horse and me, and to all other riders. I do not have access to a selection of trainers, fancy arenas or jumps, so your practical guides are just perfect.

Even though there are obvious differences between the UK and Australia (weather, breeds, diseases and feed requirements) every issue is still really relevant. I tell all my horsey friends about it and even share it around once I'm done (but always ask for it back).

Sally Sturgess, via email

Emma Bass says horses have helped her daughter, Abbey, defy all expectation

Abbey, defy all expectations

y daughter, Abbey, suffers with scoliosis, which gave her two curves in her spine. One caused her to be hunched over and the other made her hips unlevel - she was told she would never be able to ride horses. At 13 years old, she had surgery to straighten her spine. Abbey came out with 10 pins and two rods on her spine, and a massive smile on her face - she was happy to finally be straight!

Everything was looking good until she woke up one morning and couldn't feel her legs. Doctors told her she would never walk again, but Abbey was determined to prove them wrong. She made small target goals, such as being able to stand unaided, but her ultimate goal was to get on a horse!

We found an RDA group at the College of West Anglia and, even though Abbey was wheelchair-bound, the team got her onto one of their horses. The RDA helped strengthen

the muscles in her legs so that she could walk with crutches. Without them I don't know if she would be walking today. Abbey

then took up a share pony while she studied for a Level 2 diploma in horse care at the College, and competed at dressage for both disabled and able-bodied riders.

Now Abbey is 18 years old and walking with just one crutch. For her birthday we bought Spencer, a 16.2hh warmblood with a heart of gold. Spencer stands while she takes her time to get on him and stays close to her when she leads him. As soon as someone else handles him he likes to take charge, but with Abbey he is completely different. Spencer adores Abbey and she adores him, they're joined at the hip!



Tell us why your horsey inspiration deserves this award, and they could win Ariat Olympia breeches and a Team Waterproof jacket, worth £255!

Send a clear photo, SAE for its return, and contact details for you and your inspiration, to: Ariat Inspiration of the Month, Horse&Rider, Marlborough House, Headley Road, Grayshott, Surrey GU26 6LG or email georgia@djmurphy.co.uk

For full terms and conditions, visit horseandridercompetitions.co.uk

For information on Ariat products: 0845 600 3209, ariat-europe.com or email info@ariat-europe.com

PET OF THE MONTH



My dog Rusty comes everywhere with me and, despite being tiny, she still manages to take up most of a double bed! Owned by Ann

Broadhurst, Oxfordshire



The owner of each pet featured will receive £25-worth of vouchers to spend at viovet.co.uk, the UK's top-rated online pet and equine retailer. VioVet has a huge range of supplements, medications, pet food, tack, rugs and more, all at great prices.

ARIAT

If you want to share your thoughts, send your letters to Georgia Guerin, Letters Editor, Horse&Rider, D J Murphy (Publishers) Ltd, Marlborough House, Headley Road, Grayshott, Surrey GU26 6LG, with photos if they're relevant and an SAE for their return, or email georgia@djmurphy.co.uk. We look forward to hearing from you!

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Fabulous on the flat with Charlotte Dujardin

Small tweaks to the way you ride and train your horse can really help add sparkle to your dressage, as Charlotte Dujardin explains



Start with the basics

To begin the lesson, Charlotte asked Greg to warm Tallie up, focusing on the basics – something that's important for horses at any level. Stretching and warming up correctly prepares your horse for a good, productive training session. To achieve a nice, round stretch through the neck and back, Greg took his hands forward, allowing Tallie to take the contact down and round, which allows his long back muscles to engage and stretch.

To encourage Tallie to become supple as he stretches, Charlotte suggested lots of circles, instead of straight lines, while warming up. Once Tallie had relaxed into a long, low stretch, Greg asked him to add more power into the trot by revving up the engine – his hindquarters. To do this, he asked Tallie to trot forward for a few strides and then slow down for a few strides, all while maintaining an active hindleg.



Our trainer



Charlotte Dujardin OBE holds all three World Records in dressage as well as being double Olympic gold medallist at London 2012, European Champion 2013 and World Champion 2014.

Our model



Greg Smith competes at Advanced level in dressage. He is now based in New Zealand after living in the UK, where he was based with Carl Hester and Charlotte Dujardin. He rides Tallie in our feature.





Gear changes

Spice up your schooling session with lots of tempo changes in the gait. Tempo is defined as the speed of the footfalls and you can vary it by collecting or extending your horse's gait. If he enjoys flicking his toes in medium trot but is weaker when asked to do collected trot, work on his weak point, but then indulge him with a bit of medium trot in-between. When changing gears, Charlotte says: "Use your body to slow down, not your reins. Too many riders only use their reins and all that happens is the horse becomes hollow and loses power from the hind end. Sit a little heavier when you want him to come back and be consistent with your cues to teach him to respond to your seat aid to collect his stride."

Shoulder-in

Your position is crucial to achieve a correct shoulder-in. A common mistake riders often make when giving the aids for shoulder-in is letting their inside leg slip back behind the girth, instead of keeping it by the girth, with their outside leg a little bit behind the girth.

It's also important not to pull your horse's head to the inside, but instead to move his shoulder over with the outside rein. Charlotte says: "Focus on keeping the shoulder-in on three tracks – shoulder-in isn't achieved through bend in the neck, you just need a little flexion through the poll. If the shoulder-in isn't happening the way it's meant to, it's probably because the rider is asking for too much neck bend and trying to create the angle."

Travers on circles

Play with the tempo and angle while riding travers on a circle. This will encourage your horse to listen, and make him quick, adjustable and supple. Riding travers on a circle in canter will also help to strengthen your horse's pirouettes. "Test the tempo and angle. Don't pull too much to the inside and remember it's two reins, not one rein," advises Charlotte.

She also warns riders not to get stuck in the frame and the contact just because you are asking your horse to move sideways. "Feel as though your hands can move so you have a lovely, elastic feeling on the reins. Even if your horse gets a bit strong, you've just got to massage the bit a little quicker in his mouth and then you can soften it," she says.

Travers

Charlotte explains: "Many riders have problems with travers because they end up neck reining their horse over, resulting in him becoming crooked. You need to open the inside rein, but don't put the rein over your horse's neck. Think about bending him around your inside leg and use your

outside leg to ask him over."
Support him with your inside leg
when you push him over with your
outside leg. The inside leg is what
you hold him with, so you wrap him
around it

As a rider, you must concentrate on getting the bend in the middle of your horse's neck so he can soften at the poll. "Don't hold him in that bend, use the travers to make him softer and looser so you can give your hand," she says. Once you have this you can play with the bend. Try asking for a little bend, then a lot of bend and really change the angle. This makes your horse more adjustable and supple, using the

travers as a great training exercise. The same goes for the tempo. Begin by asking for medium strides in the trot or canter travers and then collect it, really mix it up within the travers. Changing the bend and tempo in the canter travers really helps improve the pirouette and gets your horse to work hard with his inside hindleg.



"To activate your horse from behind, focus on asking him to walk with the rein but canter with your leg," Charlotte advises. You need to be careful not to disrupt his rhythm. You should feel as though you're jumping up off the arena as opposed to ploughing flatly through it. "Don't be afraid to soften the rein - remember

feeling

to keep it nice and elastic."



Half-pass

Once Greg has improved Tallie's suppleness and adjustability in the travers, Charlotte asks him to put it to good use in the half-pass. "It's the same as the travers. Ask Tallie to go forward and back, collect and go, change the angle and get him really working his ribcage," she says. Don't slow down or lose the rhythm when you change the tempo, and try not to lose your good canter or trot because you are going sideways. "Look at the marker and ride to it. Look, commit, turn your shoulders towards it and ride in its direction, looking between his ears."

Charlotte explains that the rider should always "hold the horse with the inside leg, the same as in the travers, and take care of the bend. Use little half-halts to adjust and keep him soft in the rein.

"Once you reach the end of the diagonal in the canter half-pass, it is good training to keep your horse in counter-canter and

only ask for a flying change when you're ready. Don't let him think there is always a flying change at the end of the diagonal. When you do ride a flying change, get him really jumping through. This will make you think of the change as being bigger than the canter stride.

"If he becomes stiff within the halfpass, don't tense up and hold him, instead bend and soften him. Just keep him round and loose and don't fight with him. Correct the problem and move on, rather than trying to disguise it. Charlotte stresses that it is important that riders don't keep doing the same thing over and over again. Sometimes use the long sides to do some more travers and shoulder-in to keep improving the half-pass diagonal.

Charlotte observed that Tallie favours his left side. Therefore, she reasons: "You have to work a little more on his right side to make it as strong as his left side."

Using corners

Charlotte stressed to Greg the importance of using the short sides and the corners to set up for the lateral movements. "If you ride a bad corner, you're going to ride a bad movement." It's important that riders think ahead and get in the corner, setting themselves up for the next movement. This is especially important for lateral work. Riding through the corner is what makes or breaks a movement and, with competition marks becoming closer and closer, it is important to be accurate and make as few mistakes as possible. "You

must ride your

corners," she insists.

TOP TIP

Imagine you're carrying a tray of drinks. If your thumbs aren't on top, you'll spill everything!

Don't slow down or lose the rhythm when you change the tempo, and try not to lose your good canter or trot because you are going sideways















The cause of much irritation in the summer months, flying insects can be effectively kept away from your horse using barrier methods, such as fly rugs and masks. Not only do they greatly reduce the aggravation by keeping the flies off your horse, and thereby reducing the risk of sweet-itch, they can also help your horse stay more comfortable in the sun and protect against sun bleaching.







Straightness and bend

Using shoulder-fore to straighten your horse

A common thing horses like to do is go down the long, straight sides slightly quarters-in. This is because their hindquarters are wider than their shoulders. Charlotte explained how useful shoulder-fore is to correct this: "When you come out of the corner, use the bend to create shoulder-fore and then keep him there down the whole long side," she says. This will create a much straighter, rounder horse with just the right amount of bend. "You should be able to see his eye on the inside rein." That's the perfect amount of bend to take you straight down the long side. Horses naturally have a weaker side, so you might need to bend more on one rein and less on the other.

"Feel your horse, he will tell you what you need to do," she encourages.

The problem with too much neck bend

Some horses and riders over-bend to the inside and Charlotte cautions: "The more you bend your horse to the inside, the more he will fall out through his outside shoulder. So it's a little flexion to the inside, while still keeping your outside rein. Then you can support his outside shoulder."

The easiest way to remember how much bend is needed, is to position your horse's head and neck in front of his chest as you ride down the long side. Then through the corners and on your circles you can correctly adjust the bend. Charlotte suggests looking down if you aren't sure to see where your horse's head is, checking that it is in front of his chest and not curled up to the inside. Don't over-bend the inside rein and lose the connection with the outside of your horse.

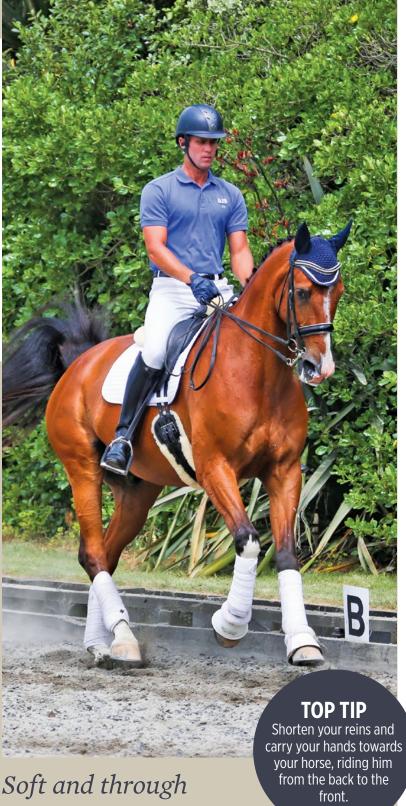
Prepare, prepare, prepare

Charlotte is very focused on precision in her riding and she encourages her students to develop precision, too. "Always be thinking ahead and preparing for the next movement," she says.

"If one movement didn't go as well as you thought, don't get hung up worrying about it. Keep riding ahead and think ahead. Preparation can really be the difference between winning or coming second."

Take a break

"Always reward your horse with a pat and a breather. Once he has done something good, reward and stretch him. Walk breaks are really important. Always give your horse lots of walk breaks so the quality of his work remains. That way he won't become too tired and sore. If you don't reward him, he'll stop trying," explains Charlotte.



Getting a horse truly soft and through can be really difficult, especially if he is tense or likes to take a strong contact. "If Tallie gets a bit strong, try to shake him off the bit rather than holding it. Test the contact, give and retake the reins, trust him and let the reins move. Don't be afraid to let go," she says.

"Don't fix yourself and then try to use your strength against your horse's strength. You will never be stronger than a horse. Ride with a nice feel and time your aids. When you soften and let the rein go, then your horse can soften and let the rein go, and move his mouth around."



A common mistake riders make is to lengthen the rein but then pull back, which defeats the purpose of the longer rein

And stretch...

TOP TIP

let go.

Charlotte places great emphasis on stretching your horse at the beginning and also at the conclusion of a flatwork session. She encouraged Greg not to be afraid to give Tallie a longer rein in the stretch and always to rebalance from the seat and not the rein. "There's no point having a long rein and pulling back on your horse. Give the rein and ride him from the back to the front."

Stretching is important for horses because it teaches them to be adjustable, but more importantly it is impossible to produce supple athletes when they are constantly working in the same outline. Working in a competition outline all the time often creates stiff horses who become strong in the hand and, therefore, harder to ride. Charlotte really emphasised how riders should be able to adjust their horses from the stretch into the competition frame and back into a stretch, at any time without any problem. If you can do this, then your training is correct and your horse is going to be able to become more supple. She encourages riders not to be afraid of letting their horse take the rein and stretch. "Keep your hands down and forward and encourage him take your hand forward, on a longer rein. Be brave and let go, don't be afraid to take a chance," she encouraged Greg.

Always invite your horse to stretch by widening and lowering your hands. Don't pull back on the rein. "Push your hands forward so that you push his neck out, making sure he stretches in the right way, taking your hands forward and not drawing back," she says.

"A common mistake riders make is to lengthen the rein but then pull back, which defeats the purpose of the longer rein. The aids for stretching are a wide, lower hand, therefore you open your hand and push his neck down, and then push your hand forward, so you aren't pulling back and pulling his nose in." She also explained that with a younger horse it's important to teach him to stretch. Often young horses aren't so good at it at the beginning of the ride, while they are fresh. But the end of a flatwork session is a perfect time to work on this more because your horse will naturally want to take the stretch correctly.

★★★ Rate this issue

Go to tinyurl.com/RateMay15 for a chance to win a Mountain Horse Crew jacket (see p9).



Our trainer



Izzy Taylor is the latest in an eventing dynasty. Her grandmother was placed at Badminton, her mother rode for Britain at Young Rider level and her aunt won the firstever Burghley horse trials. But Izzy's success speaks for itself - she rode as an individual for Team GB at the 2013 European Championships and was selected for the British squad at the 2014 World Championships before her mount, Allercombe Ellie, picked up a minor injury in training. Izzy's season finished in amazing style, with a 7th place at Burghley and overall 5th in the 2014 British Eventing rankings.

Our models



Six-year-old, 17hh **Bugbrooke** is beginning his second season eventing. He arrived as a weak five-year-old and is now showing real talent as he grows into himself.

In the gym

Gymnastic jumping benefits all horses and riders. Top eventer Izzy Taylor shares her exercises to develop your horse's way of going over a fence and improve your position, too



Create a more athletic horse > Exercises to try at home > Tackle bounces safely



ymnastic jumping – often called gridwork – is an important part of my training toolkit. It can improve your horse's balance and flexibility, develop your position and reactions, and even help you to see a stride. So what are you waiting for? It's time to give it a go!

Whether you're a showjumper or eventer at heart, it's important to teach your horse to think on his feet and adjust himself without relying on you to make every decision. While it's your job as the rider to present your horse at the optimum take-off point for a fence, and to communicate to him what sort of jump you need from him, he must be quick-thinking and react instantly to any questions he is faced with. This

might mean shortening his stride if he jumps too big into a combination or stretching for a longer stride to help him clear the back pole on a big, square oxer.

When you're in the showjumping ring, you need every stride your horse takes to count and that means having him totally focused. It's the difference between a winning clear round and four faults. And while you don't need to worry about four faults out on the cross-country course, this adjustability and focus really comes into its own when you need to capture your horse's attention after a long gallop or before a tricky combination. A glance-off is very expensive! There are some simple exercises you can set up at home to improve your horse's way of going and your riding, too.



What does gridwork help develop?

- ✓ Rhythm
- ✓ Impulsio
- ✓ Accuracy
- √l Balance

Gridwork is good for horses who...

- are on the forehand
- ✓ are lazy
- ☑ lack confidence

Gridwork is good for rider

- ✓ Confidence
- 🗹 Balance
- ✓ Seeing a stride
- ✓ Position

A better way of going

While gymnastic jumping is a great exercise for all horses, those with certain bad habits or weaknesses will benefit even more. If your horse is prone to falling onto his forehand, you'll find gridwork invaluable. To complete the line of fences, he will have to balance himself, work through from his hindquarters, engage his hocks and develop his self-carriage. You'll see the effects after a couple of sessions and it will carry over into your flatwork, too.

Gymnastic exercises also help to build up confidence for both horse and rider. Whether your horse is green, you're a bit rusty, or you have been having problems with refusals, getting back to basics with some simple gymnastic jumping can help to build your trust in one another.

Position pointers

Gymnastic exercises are great for working on your position and technique. This is because once your horse has jumped in over the first element of a grid, he should meet every fence at the right take-off point, allowing you focus on your position and deal with issues such as a wobbly lower leg or getting ahead of your horse's movement.

Your centre of balance has to be just right and your reactions also have to be quick – folding forward over the jump, then snapping back up as he lands so your weight isn't tipped over his shoulders, which will throw him onto his forehand. The more you practise, the better your seat will become, which will help your horse to jump cleanly and in better balance himself.

Top tip

Always have a person on the ground with you – aside from the safety aspect, you will need someone to adjust the distances according to how your horse is going.



Begin at the beginning

Start every gymnastic jumping session with a series of three or four trotting poles where the fences will eventually be (see p11 for the *H&R* stride guide). The best place to set up your grid is on the centre line, so you can easily approach it from both reins – this allows you to work your horse evenly. Most horses tend to be naturally stronger on one rein, so it is your responsibility to work to develop his strength and suppleness on both sides equally. Don't be tempted to focus on his stronger side because it's easier, and don't overdo things on his weak side because it will be really tough for him.

Once you have your horse's attention through the poles, introduce a small cross-pole after the last trotting pole. Don't forget about your landing. The poles will help you to keep an even rhythm on the approach, but it is your responsibility to ride away in a straight line and with plenty of impulsion before making a balanced turn at the end of the arena. Don't allow your horse to fall in or collapse into trot when he lands – be purposeful. This is the basis for every gymnastic exercise, but from here you can vary what you do, depending on what you want to achieve, and how experienced you and your horse are.

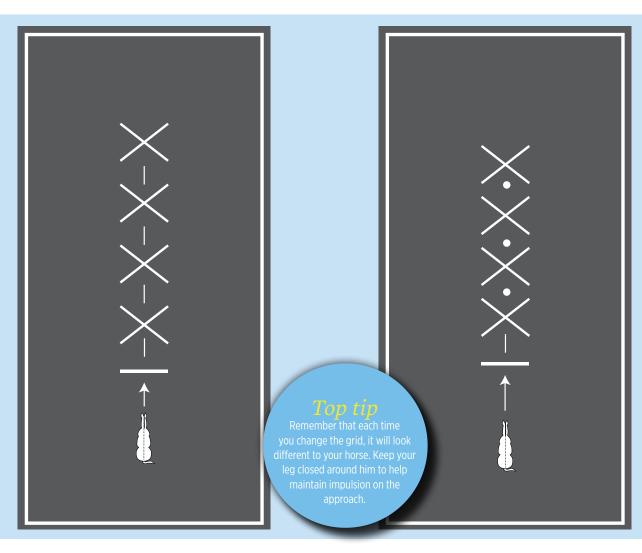
The importance of placing poles

A placing pole in front of the first fence will help ensure you meet the fence in the right place to take off. It's important not to look down at the pole or to try to position your horse in front of it. Instead, focus on the rhythm and balance of your approach, and allow him to work out where to put his own feet. Keep your eyes up and look to the far end of the arena. Inexperienced horses might look down at the pole the first few times, which can make them round more than normal over the subsequent fences. While it might feel a bit different, don't worry – it will not only help your horse to develop a good outline to his jump, but will strengthen his neck and back. Just sit quietly, close your legs and keep squeezing forward.



Focus on the rhythm and balance of your approach, and allow your horse to work out where to put his own feet





Exercise 1>>>

Once your horse is warmed up over the cross-pole, replace the closest trot pole with another fence one stride before it. Approach a couple of times from each rein, then replace the next trotting pole with a jump, and so on. Build up this way until you have four fences, still with a placing pole on the ground before the grid. Then increase the height of each fence. Help boost your horse's confidence by only changing one fence at a time.

Exercise 2 >>>

Once you and your horse are happy, you can increase the difficulty. Bring in a second cross-pole to make a bounce – which is when your horse has to take off immediately from where he lands, without taking a stride.

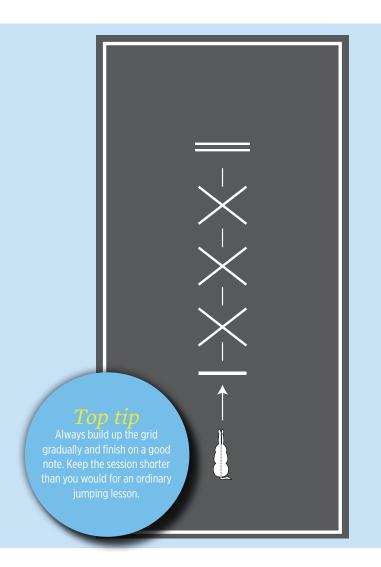
It's great for sharpening horse and human reactions, and for teaching your horse to engage his hindquarters. Keep sitting up into the first element with your shoulders back. Don't fold too much – it's more important to be light in your seat and soft with your hands than to fold from the hips when you're getting used to riding a bounce.

A bounce will help to sharpen up a horse who is lazy with his front legs. A series of bounce cross-poles will encourage your horse to be quicker in snapping up his legs over the fence, and will discourage him from trailing a leg and knocking a pole.









Exercise 3 >>>

Whether you choose exercise one or two, you can finish off your gymnastic jumping session by making the final fence into a spread, one stride from the end of the grid. The oxer will help your horse learn to adjust his stride, and encourage him to jump out and forward after the quick 'up and down' action of the rest of the grid.

It's important to build up gradually. To begin with, build the oxer as a cross-pole with a rail behind, then once you are confident over this, make the front rail straight, so it's an ascending spread. Only turn it into a square oxer when both you and your horse and confident through the grid, and fit enough for the test.

Remember

and physically. Each time you ride through the grid you are asking your horse for four or five jumping efforts. Be very aware of his fitness and remember that even a short session will give him a good workout. Because of this, it's really important to carefully build up to the final exercise – and the first few times you try gridwork you might not even complete an exercise.

Stop before your horse becomes tired and save him for another day – it's really important to always end on a good note.

Horse Rider

stride guide

Unsure about spacing poles or jumps in a grid? Every horse has a slightly different stride length, but our simple guide will help you get started. Remember, you will need a helper on the ground to adjust the poles and fences to be exactly right for your horse.



Jumping distances

		Approach in trot:	Approach in canter:
Between jumps 1 and 2:	Bounce	9-11ft	11-14ft
	One stride	18ft	24-26.5ft
	Two strides	30-32ft	34-36ft
Between jumps 2 and 3:	One stride	22-24ft	24-26.5ft
Between jumps 3 and 4:	One stride	22-24ft	24-26.5ft
pole distances:		4.5-4.75ft	11-14ft
Placing poles:		9ft from base of fence	18–20ft from base of fence
Average stride lengths:		4.5-5ft	varies by size 9–12ft

Top tip

Pace out your grid before getting on. Then, with the wings in place, you can work down the corridor before adding the new elements, without having to waste time relocating wings and poles at each stage.



Basics that reall

Do you feel mystified by the art of dressage? Horse&Rider listened in to The Dressage Convention to get simple advice from world-class riders and trainers to help you turn that 6 into a 7, or 7 into an 8

successful performance in the dressage arena is not just about how wellschooled your horse is. Your riding technique is important, too. British Pony Team Trainer, Peter Storr, explained: "It's important you're light in your seat and use your core muscles to hold you in balance. Riders should go to the gym to help develop their suppleness and strength. It's not good only working on your horse's flexibility and power!"

And there's work to be done in the classroom as well as the gym, said Olympic dressage rider and trainer, Richard Davison: "As a rider, it's important to understand your horse's musculature. It's all about his reaction responses. Take the time to learn what muscles your horse should be using for each exercise, then think about what muscles he is actually using. This tells you a lot about where you need to improve."



Focus on the detail

All the trainers at The Dressage Convention agreed that attention to detail is completely key at any level. There is no substitute for maximising the quality of your horse's movement and how straight he is.

British Olympic dressage rider, Carl Hester, explained the importance of considering your horse's anatomy when riding different movements: "Conformationally, all horses are wider behind than they are in front. But you need to be able to ride in a straight line, with your horse's head in the centre of his chest. To achieve this, it's okay to ask your horse for a couple of subtle strides of leg-yield to help keep him straight, but resist the urge to move his neck to the inside, because this just pushes his shoulder out and that's not at all what you want."

Richard Davison agreed, explaining: "These subtle changes will help you develop your horse's straightness. It's easy to forget about straightness when you're thinking about riding different movements or his overall way of going. This is when you really need someone on the ground to watch and help you - it's no good always schooling on your own."

Carl emphasised the importance of thinking about the clarity and quality of your aids: "If you're consistent with your cues, your horse will always know what you want. For example, when I want a downward transition, I flex my horses a little to the outside, sit deep and whisper 'whoa'. That's what works for me.

"And, as a thinking rider, every 20 metres or so you should be tweaking something - for example, pace or rhythm - to keep your horse focused. It's important that you never lose sight of the importance of self-carriage for your horse's way of going."



Carl explained the importance of using the whole arena when schooling: "Too many people get stuck on the track. Don't let this happen to you – spend time working away from the wall and using the centre line.

People also forget about using their corners. For me, everything is happening from the corner. If the corner isn't good, then you will struggle with all movements. Try riding deeper into the corner, then ask for a stride or two of invisible shoulder-in to help get your horse engaged behind and lighter in front.

"Remember, dressage is supposed to look nice and easy. Less power and more balance is better than more power and less balance, which is when you end up riding with your hands. That's not a good picture, and

Remember that horses don't know what a dressage movement is. They only know the reaction their rider expects to an aid

is bad for your marks and your horse's way of going."

Richard emphasised the importance of creating an adjustable horse: "To produce a horse who goes well and create a pleasing picture for the judge, you must be able to adjust your horse. But what is adjustability and how do you teach it? It's when he moves bigger, shorter or smaller. Learn when to apply your legs and when not to. It will help you get that adjustability. You can improve your horse's adjustability by working on groups of four or five strides. Ask for big, small or short for just a few strides, then change. It will keep your horse focused and working."

When it goes wrong

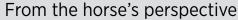
The atmosphere at Bury Farm proved too much for Phoebe Peters' ride, five-yearold Tom. But Peter was on hand to help resolve Tom's rearing. He advised: "Don't stay still. If he won't go forward, turn instead. And if he won't turn one way, then turn the other. Keep riding a circle all the time that he won't go forward in a straight line. This means he is still moving forward, even if it's not in your ideal direction."





If it all goes wrong, don't stop riding. Focus on maintaining forward movement until vour horse





Richard Davison explained: "It's important to remember that horses don't know what a dressage movement is. They only know the reaction their rider expects to an aid - for example, stepping away from the rider's leg. Every other movement is a pick-andmix of your horse's reactions to the different aids in combination. It's as straightforward as that - don't over-complicate things in your head.

"All this means that responsiveness is the key to a good dressage test. So what does it mean if you're told your horse needs to be more responsive? Well, you must get a reaction from a touch of your leg. If you don't get a reaction, then you need to question whether you're consistent in training your horse in how he should respond to your leg aid.

"Be honest with yourself - if you're not consistent with your horse, it will explain why he is not in front of your leg - because he doesn't know quite what you want and has given up trying to work it out."

A judge's eve view

If you've ridden a dressage test, the chances are you've wondered what a judge is thinking. International dressage judge, Stephen Clarke, shared some insights into his approach to marking a test: "As a judge, I must think first of all that the rider is trying 100% to get the best marks she can. I start from that point of view, but then to find the right mark for each movement is a balance of positive and negative aspects of the movement itself. Even when I give a 10 it's not 'perfect', it means 'excellent' - so there's still room for improvement.

"To me, there is no difference between a cob and a Hanovarian - at least in theory. If the cob can fulfil the criteria of the movement, he will get the points. That's all that matters.

"One thing I'd advise all riders is not to react to your mistakes in a test. Just keep riding your horse and don't back off. You must take the risk to get the marks - if you don't, then there's no chance of achieving them. Of course, if your horse drops you in it then correct him, but don't let the chance of that happening stop you riding for the movement."









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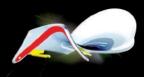


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Our trainer



Tom Davison is the son of Olympic Dressage rider Richard Davison. Having represented GB on numerous jumping teams, he now focuses on running the business and coaching clients across Europe and the USA.

Our models



Gillian Davison is Richard's wife, and Tom and Joe's mum. She's a former pointto-point and National Hunt jockey, and event rider. Gill produces the family's young dressage stars and competes up to Grand



Prix level.

Joe Davison is Tom's younger brother. He has been a member of Team GB's Junior and Young Rider teams, and is currently competing a string of seven horses across Europe.

Our equine pupils

Alfranco is a 10-yearold gelding who competes in dressage at Grand Prix.

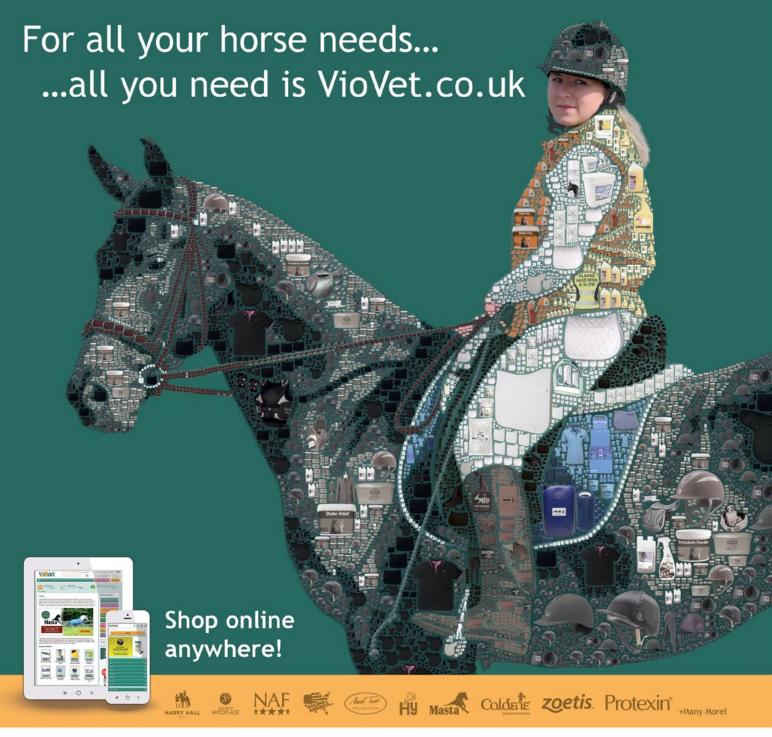
Frederick is an eightyear-old gelding who showjumps at 1.40m

Hit the mark

Want to earn top marks in the dressage arena or ride tidy showjumping courses? Accuracy is key, says Tom Davison

n the dressage arena, riding accurate figures can mean the difference between a seven or an eight on your score sheet. Likewise, in showjumping, riding accurately can produce a quick, tidy jump-off that wins the class. And riding accurately at a show starts with training at home. Using simple exercises, you can prepare yourself for success in the dressage or showjumping arena.





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Exercise 1

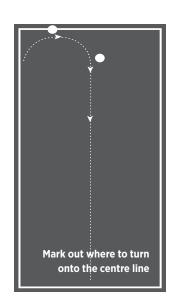
Turn down the centre line

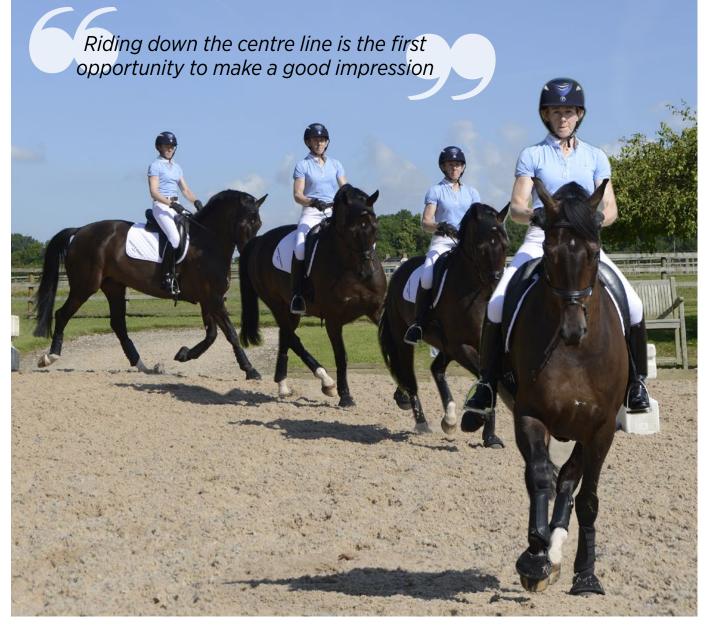
Riding down the centre line in a dressage test is the first opportunity to make a good impression on the judge. The quality of the movement depends on your turn onto the centre line. To practise your turns you need two markers. Place one on the short side of the arena, five metres before A and the other just wide of the centre line, five metres after A (see right). Begin your turn at the first marker and ensure you're straight on the centre line by the second marker.

Ride the turn onto the centre line like you would ride a quarter 10-metre circle. Start at the first marker and

make a round turn to the second marker on the centre line. Look where you're going and, as you straighten up on the centre line, add a bit of impulsion to your walk, trot or canter. Adding some 'oomph' to the gait is something that the judge will really like to see. When you're starting out, don't worry too much about adding the extra impulsion and just concentrate on being as accurate as possible to the markers.

This exercise isn't just useful for dressage – it can also benefit your jumping. Maintaining your horse's rhythm around turns can help you to meet fences smoothly, so use this exercise to your advantage.





Exercise 2

Accurate circles

Fifteen-metre circles are in many dressage tests, but they can be hard for riders to ride accurately. While many riders find it easy to accurately ride a 20-metre circle, because you touch the track on at least two sides of the school in a standard dressage arena, a 15-metre circle is ridden just off the track. When you're starting to develop your eye for accuracy, it's easiest to ride 15-metre circles at either end of the arena. Strategicallyplaced markers or poles can help to guide you if you're unsure of where you're aiming for. Wobbly youngsters can benefit from the extra guidance, too.

I set up this exercise with a pole 2.5 metres away from the track on each long side, and another 15-metre from the track and perpendicular to the short side. Ride the circle with a slight inside flexion, aiming to ride one straight stride as you meet the pole.

Common issues riders face when riding 15-metre circles include riding too far into the corners and spending too much time straight by the inside track. The poles give you a point to aim for, but only ride one straight stride beside the pole. It's a great exercise to add some accuracy into your dressage test.

This exercise can benefit you if you're a jumper, too. Fifteen-metre circles demand more suppleness, flexibility and flexion from your horse than a 20-metre circle, so incorporating them into your schooling sessions can really benefit your horse. Getting into the habit of riding accurately, whether you're riding a course of jumps or a dressage test, makes all the difference.











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Exercise 3 Get in the rhythm

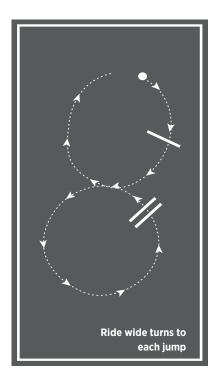
When you're jumping against the clock, accurate, balanced turns can help to shave seconds off your time. Watch any top-level showjumping class and you'll see that the quickest jump-offs are the ones that take the most direct lines, but keep the same rhythm around the course. Inside turns and cutting corners can look like a time-saving plan, but if you have to put the brakes on to make the turn, it wastes time.

Regardless of whether or not you're going for speed, maintaining the same canter rhythm around the course will help you to meet the jumps on a good stride and boost your confidence. And looking at the next fence early helps you to make balanced, sweeping turns that keep your rhythm.

To develop your eye for accurate jumping, set up two fences on a figure

of eight. I like to use a plank upright and an oxer (see right). Start with the fences small and ride wide turns, with five or more straight strides' approach to each fence. Get a feel for the exercise, your horse's canter rhythm and where you must turn in your arena to be straight to the fences. make sure you count the strides off the turn. This will improve your accuracy and help you to 'see' a stride.

Once you're happy with your rhythm on the figure of eight, you can start to decrease the number of strides on the approach to each fence. In a jump-off situation, it's ideal to have a minimum of three straight strides before each fence. This will ensure that your horse is balanced and straight to the jump. Gradually decrease the number of strides before the fence until you can meet each fence comfortably with three strides' approach.







A half seat, where you put slightly more weight into your heels, with your seat slightly, but not fully, out of the saddle, can help to keep your horse moving on

Perfect position

Your position can impact your horse's balance and rhythm, especially in canter. When warming up, practice the three seats – full, half and light. When you're coming to the fences in a collected canter, your full seat can help to keep your horse balanced on his hindquarters and maintain his impulsion. A half seat, where you put slightly more weight into your heels, with your seat slightly, but not fully, out of the saddle, can help to keep your horse moving on once you've established your rhythm. The light seat, with your seat fully out of the saddle, is great for moving on in the canter with a little bit more momentum.

You can practise your different seat types in the canter, but also in trot and walk. Balancing in your half seat and light seat at a slower pace is a challenge – grab some mane if you need to and don't forget to sink your weight deep into your heels! The extra effort will help you strengthen your lower leg and you'll be on your way to a picture perfect jumping position.



From top to bottom: full seat, half seat and light seat

Next month

Learn how to develop your horse's canter rhythm over fences and warm-up at a showjumping competition.

Research keeps SPILLERS HAPPY HOOF® ahead when it comes to feeding the laminitis prone

aminitis has been reported to affect up to one third of horses and ponies within some populations in the UK, which is why SPILLERS® is working hard to improve our understanding of the factors that may be involved in increasing the risk of an individual horse or pony developing the condition. Through its work with the Waltham International Laminitis and Obesity Research Consortia, SPILLERS® is conducting important research into many of the areas that are thought to be involved in the development of the condition and SPILLERS HAPPY HOOF® has been used successfully in many of these studies.

In the last 10 years, the Waltham Equine Studies Group, which provides the science behind the SPILLERS® brand, has conducted more than 20 research projects looking at all aspects of laminitis, including investigating the role that obesity can play in the development of the condition. This work not only aims to build knowledge, but also to give practical support to owners of susceptible animals.

This year SPILLERS® is supporting two research programmes in the UK. One is looking at the effects of diet on the microflora in the hindgut of senior and obese horses. The other is trying to understand why some horses and ponies are more at risk than others to pasture-associated laminitis.

There is a growing body of evidence suggesting that insulin dysregulation (a collective term used to describe high circulating blood insulin levels, increased insulin response to a starch/sugar load, and insulin resistance) appears to be a component in the risk for laminitis. It is hoped that future studies will shed further light on the role of insulin.



Clare Barfoot RNutr, Research and Development Manager at SPILLERS®, explains: "We are determined to find out more about the role of insulin dysregulation in the development of laminitis, as well as the other associated risks. Meanwhile, we're excited to report that SPILLERS HAPPY HOOF® has been used successfully in many of our studies. This low-calorie, high-fibre feed has been proven in more than one project to show a low glycaemic and insulin response, which will benefit horses and ponies at risk from, or prone to, obesity and laminitis. That's something very few, if any, feeds in the category have scientific proof of."

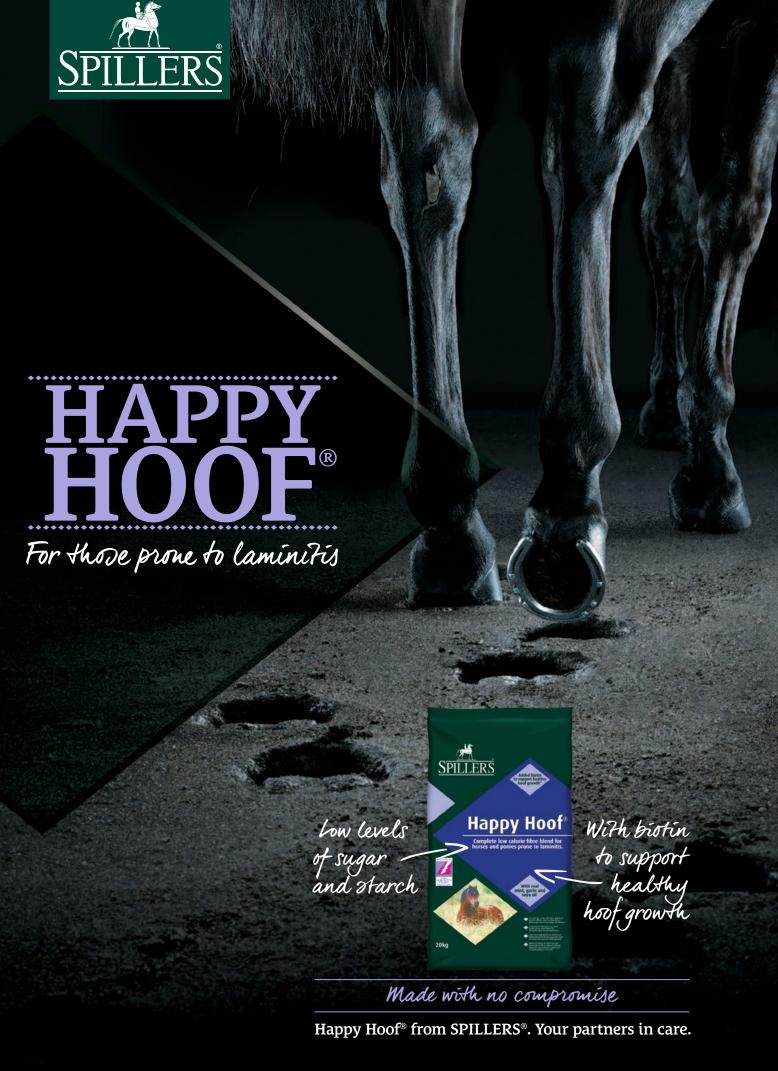
This is just one of the reasons SPILLERS HAPPY HOOF® remains at the forefront of feeding the laminitis prone. It is a specially-blended, low-calorie, short-chop forage that contains all the vitamins and minerals your horse needs to stay in good health. Approved by The Laminitis Trust, it can be used as a bucket feed or as a replacement for hay, and is specifically designed to extend eating time.





Top tips to help reduce the risk of laminitis

- Restrict your horse's grass intake, particularly at high-risk times in spring and autumn. This can be done by using a grazing muzzle, strip grazing, turning out on a bare paddock or restricting turnout time. If using the latter strategy, don't turn out in a field where there is a large quantity of grass available, because ponies in particular
- can hoover huge amounts of grass in a short period of time.
- Keep your horse lean (a body condition score of 4.5–5 out of 9), especially if he has had laminitis before. Allow seasonal fluctuations of body condition to occur, with natural weight loss in winter.
- Keep your horse in regular exercise. Even a low level of activity will be beneficial for his waistline.
- Analyse your forage. Hay and haylage can contain lots of hidden carbohydrates. Most feed companies will analyse it for you but, as a guide, the water soluble carbohydrate (WCS) should be less than 10%.
- Soak your hay. Soaking in tepid water overnight maximises the amount of WSC lost, although it is best to have it analysed because there is no guarantee the WSC will reduce to the recommended level.



PART THREE *In this feature...* > How to present yourself with an air of







Sarah's issues

After starting her family, Sarah began competing Will again last summer. She explained to Wendy that as Will hadn't competed for five years and she hadn't been out for 10 years, they have been taking their time at unaffiliated Novice

level until she gets her confidence back, although she hopes to have a go at Elementary soon.

Sarah feels that at competitions, she can't focus on doing well, she just wants to get the test done. At home and in her lessons, everything feels amazing, but when she starts warming up before a test, the doubts start creeping in. Although Will has achieved some good results, Sarah doesn't feel like she's quite good enough and questions whether she should even be at the competitions. She needs to start believing that she can do it.

Following her off-horse session with Wendy, Sarah tried to put her new skills into practice on Will.

As told to Lucy Turner. Photos: Bob Atkins. For more information on Make a Difference clinics, email inspiredressage@icloud.com

confidence > Stop your horse anticipating > Impress judges with a grand entrance

Riding – it's all in the mind!

A big part of riding a dressage test is creating a great impression in front of the judges. That's all well and good if you're brimming with confidence, but not so easy to achieve if you feel like a quivering wreck inside. This month, Tania and Wendy show you how to create the illusion of confidence, even if you don't feel it

urning up at a show can be intimidating. Having left home feeling hopeful following a couple of great lessons with your horse, the little confidence you've built up suddenly crumbles away when you see the other competitors floating around the warm-up arena looking like they could sail through the test with their eyes shut. Our model, Sarah Moore, has experienced just that, suddenly getting that sinking feeling and asking herself what on earth she is doing there when she arrives at a competition.

Sarah is perfectly capable and Will is an old hand – she has as much right to be there as anyone else in the class. The only thing that's holding her back is her confidence – something that Wendy and Tania are about to put right.

Dealing with distractions

Sarah doesn't feel like she's good enough and questions whether she should be at competitions Sarah explained to Tania that she sometimes finds Will more difficult at shows because he tends to be spooky in new arenas. Tania had the following advice: "Everyone has their favourite venues and venues they find more tricky, whatever level they ride at.

"For instance, one of my horses is much better at outdoor venues where he can see everything that's going on. But in an indoor arena, where he can hear noises but not see what's going on, he becomes upset. The trick is to find a way to produce the test, no matter where you are. Try recreating problem scenarios at home or hire out different venues and try different things to keep his attention. You could also try to desensitise him to situations he finds particularly worrying."

Our experts



Wendy Jago (left) is a British Dressage List 3 judge. She is also a neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) master practitioner and NLP coach.

Tania Grantham BHSAI Int SM (right) is a professional dressage rider who, as well as competing, specialises in helping all types of horse and rider enjoy dressage, making it fun, rewarding and attainable for everyone.

Together they run Make a Difference clinics, which include a session off-horse with Wendy followed by a session on-horse with Tania. Many riders keep their horse lives separate from their non-horse ones, but the clinic is designed to help riders explore what kind of approaches and strengths they could bring from their off-horse life to help improve their riding life.

Our rider



Sarah Moore is riding her 16.1hh, 17-yearold Irish gelding, Will

Magill. They compete at unaffiliated Novice level. Will is a schoolmaster with lots of experience in the dressage arena, but having had several years out of competitive riding while starting a family, Sarah is feeling a little rusty and her confidence is dwindling.



If you need to work on a movement in the right place in the arena, play a guessing game with your horse

Filled with anticipation

While Will is fantastic at his job, Sarah finds that he often tries to second-guess her: "Because he's done quite a lot in the past, I find that he tends to anticipate what I'm going to ask. However, he doesn't always get it right! Sometimes I find it quite hard to do something simple like a circle, because he starts doing some lateral work instead."

Tania laughed: "Schoolmasters are fantastic, but you have to really ride them. This is because they won't do it if you don't ask them correctly and they know more buttons than you do. And with schoolmasters who have done a lot of lateral work, they sometimes use it to escape what you're really asking them to do.

"I used to joke that I probably couldn't get through a mistake-free Novice test with my advanced horse," she continued. "Every time I went to go across the diagonal he tried to extend or pirouette or something. He wanted to do things all the time and it was very difficult to keep it simple.

Tania had some great tips to improve the problem: "To help prevent Will anticipating, avoid riding movements where they occur in tests while you're

training. The centre line is a very good example. Horses learn very quickly to anticipate a halt at X, so I usually practise my halts everywhere else, such as on the track or on diagonals.

"When you need to work on a movement in the right place, play a guessing game with Will," she advised. "For example, if you need to practise your halt on the centre line, repeatedly ride centre lines, but change the transition you make each time. First ride a trot-walk-trot transition, next time trot-halt-walk, then trot-canter-walk, then trot-halt-trot, walk-halt-canter and so on. If you do this, Will will learn to anticipate that something will be happening, but to wait for you to tell him exactly what to do."

Tania continued: "A lot of riders like to practise their tests to help them learn it, but although this helps you, your horse also learns the test. Try riding through the whole test at walk while you're warming up or cooling off to help you remember it. Then when you're schooling, practise the relevant transitions and shapes, but not always in the place they are in the test. If you're going to ride parts of the test exactly as they will happen, try to do it in small sections."

Take the lead

Tania asked Sarah where she and Wendy thought the problems laid with her confidence. "I completely believe in Will. It's more a lack of confidence that I can do it," Sarah explained. "I think it's just going to take time to believe in myself and feel confident again. Wendy thinks that I need to go into the dressage arena and just tell myself, 'Come on, you've got a job to do so just get on with it', so that I focus on myself rather than worrying about whatever else is going on around me."

"Is there another area of your life that you're confident in?," asked Tania. "How about your job as a physiotherapist? I'm assuming that people come to you because you're the expert and that you give them a definite answer to their problem?" Sarah nodded.

Tania continued: "So you're used to taking charge of a situation and being confident at work. And you're also used to people not always responding how you'd expect and having to change tack halfway through, but still making it work and being successful at the end. It's exactly the same in your test riding. You've got to instigate it and take charge.

"I've noticed while you're warming up that you're slightly apologetic in the way you ride," said Tania. "Does that make sense? You're slightly tentative. It's a positive because you've not come in here banging and crashing around on Will, but at the same time, he hasn't got a herd leader. He's a herd animal and he needs a leader. At the moment you're meandering along with him on the same level, but you need to take charge.

"Like Wendy said, tell yourself, 'Come on, we can do this, it's fun. I enjoy riding my horse, let's go and show off'. See it as more of a performance, and show them what you can do and how much hard work you've put in."







A handy tip

While Sarah was warming up, Tania spotted something that could be adjusted to give the appearance that Sarah is more confident about what she is doing. "You warm him up on a long rein with low hands to encourage him to stretch, but do you change your hand position when you're riding him up and together?" asked Tania.

Sarah replied: "I've been told in the past to keep my hands firm and consistent, then when he gives, to anchor my hands towards his ears to keep the consistency up. And at the same time breathe in through my core stomach muscles. So I've been working on that."

Tania had some more advice to add to that she'd already been given: "When you're stretching Will, keep your hands down and wide, inviting him to stay forwards and down, but when you're working Will properly, bring my hands a little bit higher, presenting him a bit more. If you have your hands higher as you ride down the centre line in a test, it says 'I'm here, I'm presenting my horse, he's up in front of me'.

"Carrying your hands higher also shows the judge that your horse is nice and light, and you don't have to hold his head down," Tania continued. "If your hands are low, it can look a bit like you're trying to keep your horse there. It's similar to if you've got a long rein and your hands come back, it can look like your horse is on his forehand. But if your reins are short and you carry your hands, it presents a more uphill picture.

"It will also help you, as it makes you look up and proud. It encourages you to circle your shoulders back, bring your elbows down, lift your hands up and look up ahead of yourself. When you come into the arena, your position will say, 'Hi, I'm here!', whereas at the moment it says, 'Don't mind me!'. You're not an also-ran, you're there. They are your six minutes, everyone's going to focus on you and you're going in there to show off."

Make a grand entrance



When you're riding a dressage test, the first centre line as you come in is all-important. It's when you make your first impression to the judges and how well that goes will set the scene for the rest of the test – and your marks. Tania encouraged Sarah to practise riding a couple of centre lines as though she was beginning a test.

"They need to be accurate and correct, but I also want you to present them as if you were making your first impression," instructed Tania. "When riding a centre line, ride half a 10-metre circle from the corner marker. Start your turn on the long side. If you were showjumping over a fence at X, you'd be looking round the turn beforehand. This is exactly the same thing. If you're coming down the centre line at A, you need to make sure you're looking at C before you're on the centre line.

"It also gets you looking up and around, which the judges will be pleased to see," Tania advised. "Every rider is obsessed with looking at their horse's neck because that's what's in front of them. Look up. To help with this, when you look down to C, don't look at the marker, find a spot above it to focus on so you have to look up.

"As you enter the arena, think about the best trot you've ever done and make a grand entrance," she continued. "Fantastic, look at Will now! And you're looking around, smiling and giggling, and thinking about what's next, as opposed to riding around looking like you're about to start crying!

"Really practise this grand entrance at home and if you have mirrors in the school, ride towards them with your new 'Look at me' attitude and see for yourself what a difference it makes."

Take a gamble

Tania noticed that Will has a fantastic medium trot and that he has the ability to get marks of 8 or more for it. "We have had a couple of 8s for our medium trot in the past," said Sarah. "That's fantastic," Tania replied, "so why aren't you going for 9s?" Sarah joked: "I didn't think they gave those out!"

Tania laughed: "Of course they do! Slightly force their hand. If you've got a test where there's a mirror image movement – for example, medium canter on a circle – if the first one is good and you know you've done it well, don't just settle for that, push for more on the second one. Say you got an 8 for the first one, if the second one goes wrong, you might get a 7, but if it goes better than the first one, they have to give you a 9. So really go for it."



Sarah's goals

- ➤ Practise riding in unusual arenas or tricky scenarios to tackle Will's spookiness.
- ➤ Keep Will guessing while she is schooling to make him listen to her and stop anticipating the next movement.
- ➤ Use the same skills she employs at work to help her take charge of her
- riding and become more of a leader for Will.
- > Carry her hands higher to present both herself and her horse better when she enters the dressage arena.
- ➤ Practise making a grand entrance that will wow the judges.
- ➤ When things go well, don't settle for that, push for even more!

★★★ Rate this issue

Go to tinyurl.com/RateMay15 for a chance to win a Mountain Horse Crew jacket (see p9).



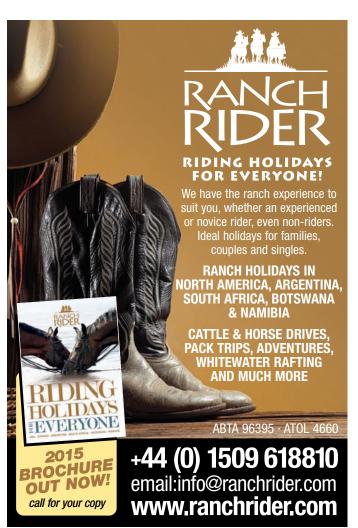
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GET IN THE ZONE

Whether you're thinking of entering your first competition or haven't been to a show in a while, preparation will help you and your horse have an enjoyable day.

Martin Diggle explains how

hether you're
naturally competitive
and participating in
riding competitions is
just a part of who you
are, the idea of 'having a go' is something
that has crept up on you, or you've been
persuaded to have a go by fellow riders or
your instructor, your first competition can
be nerve-racking.

Preparation is key to a successful day – however you choose to measure that success. The old adage 'Fail to prepare: prepare to fail' is absolutely true and will usually result in comments such as, 'Well, I tried but...' or 'No one told me you weren't allowed to...', and a reluctance to repeat the experience. But a little analysis, planning and acquiring some background knowledge can pave the way for a more successful introduction to the world of competition riding.



Have a clear aim

Be clear about your motivation. What do you want to achieve? It's important that you do really want to be at the competition and haven't simply been persuaded to go by other people, otherwise you're setting yourself up for a miserable experience. If you really don't feel ready, give yourself more time – there is no obligation to compete.

Although the ultimate goal of competing is to win, only one person can win a class so, in practical terms, you should approach competitions with the idea of success being performing reasonably well in partnership with your horse.

Be clear about your motivation. What do you want to achieve?



Make appropriate choices

It's important that you know you can do at home whatever is required in the competition you're entering. That means finding out what will be required and making sure you and your horse can do it to a satisfactory standard at home. If you're at all unsure of the level of a class you're considering entering, speak to the competition organiser or entries secretary, or an experienced friend or instructor. This is particularly important with showing, where entering an inappropriate class can make the entire trip a write-off.









Prepare

The next step is to put sufficient time into preparing yourself and your horse. Don't start out with the mindset of 'It's my first time – I don't really know what I'm doing, I'll just go along and see what happens'.

One of the key factors that contributes to success in any venture is planning. Having a clear idea of what you need to do doesn't guarantee success, but it does make it a good deal more likely than starting out with only the vague notion of what you're trying to achieve. Given the choice, surely you'd rather do reasonably well than have the day unravel?

- ★ Showing you will probably be expected to give an individual show, so work out a short routine that shows off relevant movements your horse does well and practise it at home.
- ★ Dressage make sure you understand each movement, learn the test and practise it several times at home (but not all at once!). You can usually have a caller someone who reads the test out to you but it's best to avoid this option and commit the test to memory, if at all possible.
- ★ Cross-country walk the course beforehand. It's important to know the terrain and walking the line you plan to ride is the only way to find out if there's a hazard such as uneven ground or tree roots on the best line to a fence, meaning you need to choose an alternative approach.
- ★ Showjumping as with cross-country, it's important to walk the course thoroughly. Choose the line you intend to ride and note tight turns, changes of rein, and anything at the ringside that might catch your horse's eye and distract him. If it's not possible to walk the course, take a few minutes to walk around the outside of the arena and note the relevant basics: do you have to approach the start on a particular rein? Where is each fence in relation to the next? Where are the changes of rein? Where is the finish?





Check the rules

Another aspect of preparation is knowing the rules you will be competing under. The rules an event is run under should be stated in the show schedule. Find out what they are, and check what clothing and equipment you and your horse can wear, as well as any other considerations that apply to you.













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Get to the show

Being late is a terrible way to start a competition and backward planning will help avoid this. If your class starts at 9am, work back factoring in time to warm up, tack up, unload and find the secretary. This will tell you what time you need to arrive at the show and then you can calculate travelling time on top. Don't forget to allow yourself plenty of time to get ready at home, too.

Whatever sort of competition you enter, even if you are hacking to it, it's immensely helpful to have some support. Choose

someone positive and knowledgeable who is confident handling your horse while you dash to the loo or walk the course, and who will help boost your morale when needed.





Warm up

Allowing enough time for the warm-up is something many riders fail to do. Knowing the optimum time your horse needs to warm up is a fine art and it can be affected by various factors, but if you don't have enough time you can't do it properly. If you have more time than necessary, you can always take a brief break.

Warming up in company can be quite nerve-racking. Try to find a reasonably

large area that is not too busy and do your initial warm-up there. If it's not possible to find a quiet spot and the warm-up area is crowded, make sure you adhere to the rules of the school and keep your wits about you. When jumping, always check that the way is clear before riding your approach and don't follow too closely behind another rider, in case they have a refusal or knockdown.



Help your horse

This is the crux of competition riding – in fact, it should really be at the heart of all riding. Even if you feel a little nervous or uncertain at your first competition, a determination not to let your horse down should provide a positive focus. How does this attitude manifest itself? Here are a few pointers...

- ★ Showing your job is to show off your horse to his advantage. Take the attitude of 'Look at my lovely horse and how well he moves'. The judge wants to see active movement combined with pleasant obedience, so do your best to ride in a way that produces this and do it all the time, not just when you think the judge is looking. If you have been standing in line for some time before doing your individual show, get your horse's attention as the previous exhibitor is finishing and don't be afraid to trot a circle, or similar, before beginning your show, so your horse isn't starting from 'cold'.
- ★ Dressage use the time before the bell goes to ensure your horse is on the aids. If things go wrong then try, without panicking, to get back on an even keel as soon as possible. If you can contain an error within a single movement, then it will mainly affect the marks for just that movement. However, if you get flustered and allow the error to continue, it will affect the marks for the rest of the test.
- ★ Cross-country the thing you need above all is commitment. It is much easier for a horse to jump if he is travelling actively forward and getting a sense of encouragement from his rider, so ride positively. To begin with, don't worry about the optimum time, but instead focus in riding your horse in an even, comfortable rhythm. This will make things easier for both of you.
- ★ Showjumping focus on an active, rhythmical, balanced canter. Pay attention to turns from one fence to the next, and ride them as smoothly and accurately as possible. Alse be aware that jumping away from the collecting ring can make your horse back off, so be ready to encourage him forward.





Hopefully, these points will help to make your early ventures into competition reasonably successful. 'Reasonably successful' may sound a little unambitious, but is has the virtue of being realistic. Most of us, most of the time, are happy to do as well as can be expected given our own and our horse's abilities, and most of us make the occasional mistake. This may affect our result on the day, but it also gives us an opportunity for learning.

Whatever form of competition you are attempting, if you can come home thinking, 'Yes, I didn't do too badly, glad I came – when's the next one?', then you are well on the right track.

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Why should I feed a balancer?

quine diets have evolved dramatically in the last 15 years. Horses used to be fed a basic fibre diet with oats if they needed extra energy, not forgetting a good bran mash on their day off. However, today we are much more knowledgeable about the equine digestive system.

Healthy horse

Horses are designed to eat mainly fibre, little and often, and this constant passage of fibre through the digestive system helps to ensure a healthy gut. In the wild, horses will graze for 18 hours a day on a varied fibrous diet that includes different types of grasses, herbs and flowers. Many pastures these days are managed by us and have little or no variation in forage types. This is why balancing your horse's diet with the correct level of vitamins, minerals, nutrients and probiotics will help to ensure the best possible health and condition, both mentally and physically.

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The inclusion of a Blue Chip balancer ensures a nutritionally balanced diet and health from the inside out. Blue Chip produce balancers suitable for all types of horses and ponies. The Blue Chip balancer range contains a complete hoof and respiratory package, eliminating the need for additional supplements to be fed and helps to simplify feeding with a pre- and probiotic, ultimately saving you money! Blue Chip is the first UK-based feed company to include nucleotides in its balancers. These are the building blocks for DNA and RNA and have many health benefits. Blue Chip's modern nutritional technology includes the highest quality ingredients in the most absorbable form, to maximise benefit to your horse.

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Blue Chip Original is for horses and ponies in light to medium work, as well as youngstock. Blue Chip Pro contains elevated levels of vitamins and minerals along with a prebiotic and blood building formula for the competition or veteran horse. Blue Chip Lami-light is



Testimonial

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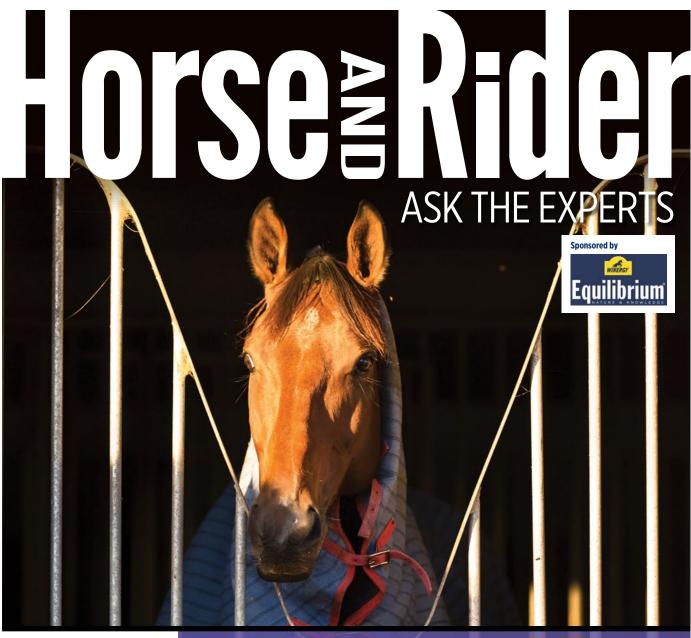




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Our experts are on hand to help you and your horse

email experts@djmurphy.co.uk or log on to horseandrideruk.com for more advice.

Get in touch by mail or online

Or send your horsey problems to Ask the experts, Horse&Rider,

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Adam Jackson BSc, BVM&S, MSc, PGCert, PGDip, MRCVS is an assistant vet at Liphook Equine Hospital.



teaches jumping. **Perry Wood** trains horses and people,

Minette Rice Edwards

trains up to Grand Prix

level dressage and also



Hazel Morley is Chief Executive for The Society of

Master Saddlers.

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Meriel Younger is Director at family-run business Electric Fencing Direct.







MANAGEMENT KNOW-HOW

OUR EXPERTS



Hazel Morley is Chief Executive for The Society of Master Saddlers.



Meriel Younger is Director at family-run business Electric Fencing Direct.

Self assessment

My horse is prone to losing weight, which means his saddle needs reflocking regularly. Are there any simple checks I can do between saddler's visits to know whether his saddle needs looking at urgently?

Keeping a close eye on your horse's condition is very important throughout the year and it is great that you already have regular visits from a registered, qualified saddle fitter. There are a number of ways to check for saddle-fitting issues in-between those visits that are simple and easy to undertake. It is very important

Hazel Morley answers:

to make sure the saddle doesn't pinch your horse if he puts on weight or sit too low on the withers due to weight loss.

When it comes to simple checks, these

When it comes to simple checks, these are best carried out visually and by feel. By simply by running your hand under the saddle just after your saddler has been, you can quickly learn what you should be

feeling and this will give you an idea if you need to call out your saddle fitter before the date you have booked in your diary. The pressure should be even throughout the underside of the saddle – if your hand is squeezed more in one place than another, then there is more pressure in that place. It is important to do this with and without a rider on board.

Putting your fingers between the pommel and the horse will give you a rough guide to whether the saddle has dropped and is pinching the withers. The amount of clearance between the horse and the pommel of the saddle changes depending on the shape of the horse – for example, a wide, flat-backed horse will

have much less clearance than a narrow horse who has high withers. As long as there is clearance throughout the length of the saddle at all times, then this is sufficient. A saddle that sits too high on the withers will be unstable and it will be obviously visible that there is too much height.

If you're unsure whether his saddle fits correctly, immediately consult your saddle fitter. As his weight fluctuates so much, it could mean that you need a visit every three months. When making an appointment, try to remember how your horse changes shape each year from season to season and when these changes are at their most extreme.



How to find a qualified saddle fitter

Your first point of call is a visit to the Society of Master Saddlers' website – mastersaddlers.co.uk. They have an online database that will help you to locate saddle fitters in your area.

Yard search

I've recently relocated and am searching for a new yard for my horse. I've found many options online, but how will I know if a livery yard is any good?

Horse&Rider answers: Searching for a new yard is no easy feat and there are many considerations when choosing the ideal yard for your horse. It's advisable to visit potential yards in person, to get a feel for the facilities, horses and management before committing. What's right for one owner won't suit another.

- How far are you willing to travel for the right facilities? Some areas have an abundance of yards, but if you live in an urban area, you might have to travel a little further for your ideal yard.
- Consider what you enjoy doing with your horse – are you a competitive rider or do you prefer long hacks? The facilities you'll need will be different depending on your preference.
- If you intend to keep your horse on DIY livery, you'll need to select a yard that's convenient to get to from your home or work.

- Some yards offer different livery plans, from full and assisted livery to DIY. Take a look at the cost of your preferred option and what's included. Some yards include bedding in DIY livery, while others require you to bring in your own.
- Ask about turnout. Will your horse be turned out in groups or individually? Are paddocks available all-yearround or only in the summer? Some horses prefer all-day turnout, while others are quite happy on a few hours - but know your horse and ensure that potential yards will accommodate his needs. • When visiting yards, you should get a general idea of the atmosphere. A happy yard with caring staff will make your time with your horse relaxing and enjoyable. It's a good idea to ask for references

your options.

The British Horse Society offers a list of approved livery yards on its website.

BHS approval means a yard or establishment is insured for public liability and complies with the latest health and safety legislation, and is regularly subject to unannounced annual inspections.

from current livery clients

when you've narrowed down



Strip grazing solutions

My pony is starting to put on weight and a friend has recommended that I strip graze him. I have a one-acre paddock, so how much fencing do you think I need to buy and what is the best way to set it up?

Meriel Younger answers:
A one-acre field has about a 200m perimeter, but not knowing your pony and how much weight he has to lose, I'm afraid I can't recommend what size the sectioned off area needs to be. There are many strip grazing starter kits on the market and I would recommend you start with one of these. Generally, they are about 100m long with either one or two lines of tape, an energiser, an earth stake, gate handles and posts.

These fences can be put up into any configuration. It could be possible to cut the field in half by running the fencing across the field, or instead restrict the grazing to just one corner of the field. Your pony will be hungry, so make sure you power up your energiser and get one that is going to power a longer distance than you need, therefore giving a stronger zap. It shouldn't take long to put up a fence like this and most suppliers will send instructions with your kit.

Also, take your pony's height into consideration, and think about what height posts you will need and where you are placing the fence lines. A small pony will think nothing of limbering under the fence to get to the grass, so you'll need to put a line at knee height. A 17hh horse would need posts of over one metre in height to reduce the urge to lean over the fence.

TOP TIP

Give your horse a chance to settle into his new surroundings once you've moved yards. Some horses take a few days, while others take a few weeks – every horse is different.



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Jo Davies BSc MSc MBPsS runs an independent sport psychology consultancy.



Katie Macalister BA (Hons), EBQ (Reg'd), BHS INT (SM) is proprietor of KJM Equine Behavioural Consultancy.



Perry Wood trains horses and people, combining classical riding with natural horsemanship.



A bundle of nerves

I get so nervous before a competition that I can't sleep. Why?

Jo Davies answers:
Pre-competition nerves are not unusual. In some instances, worrying can be helpful in prompting action and problem-solving. However, becoming pre-occupied with 'what ifs' and worst case scenarios at bedtime is unlikely to make for restful sleep, and a sleepless night could impede alertness and focus on competition day.

Broadly, nerves can be split into two types. First, head nerves describe the unhelpful thoughts or images we may experience about a competition – for example, 'What if I stop at the first fence?'.

Second, physical nerves describe our body's reaction to an impending situation that we feel threatened by – for example, the sensation of butterflies in the stomach, a quickened heart rate and feeling clammy.

Commonly, head nerves are experienced before physical nerves in the lead up to a competition, although the two are often linked. To illustrate, worrying about stopping at the first fence may make your heart race. Often, head nerves come about when the demands of a situation (for example, your goals and expectations for a competition) exceed confidence in meeting those demands.

When considering the competition demands, it is useful to consider honestly – with your trainer – whether your goals are realistic and personally controllable. For instance, compare the nerves that may arise from an uncontrollable goal of winning (which depends on many factors such as other competitors) with the confidence that can be placed in a personally controllable goal such as looking for the line to the next fence (which may lead to a clear round or win).

A further consideration of competition demands is how rational your expectations are. Consider the demand 'I must jump clear' in comparison to the strong preference of 'I would really like to jump clear'. The 'must' is more likely to cause head nerves, because suddenly you have set very extreme and irrational demands of yourself, which even the most confident of riders may find intimidating.

Once appropriate goals and expectations are set, it is helpful to plan how to be confident about meeting those demands. For instance, what preparation and training could you do before the competition? What plans will you put in place on the day? What are your timings? Who will you have around you? Head nerves are usually focused on the future and what might happen. Through planning ahead, you may find that you've beaten your head nerves at their own game and solved your worries before they've popped into your mind!

What about head nerves around uncontrollable worries that even the best-laid plans can't account for – for example, 'If it's raining, we might slip around a turn and I might fall off'? The centuries-old practice of mindfulness meditation may help you to accept uncontrollable worries and learn to let them go. The mindfulness approach focuses on the present. For example, in bed you might be mindful of the way you are lying, how your body feels or the rhythm of your breathing. It's a simple concept, but it does take practice.

Put a smile on his face

How do I know if my horse is happy?

Katie Macalister answers:
In order to have a happy horse, it is essential that you are aware of your horse's physical and mental needs. First, you can ensure that your horse is physically healthy by keeping up with healthcare regimes such as worming, hoof care and vaccinations, and also by arranging vet visits if you are concerned about your horse's health in any way. Ensuring that he is comfortable when working by having his tack checked frequently by a qualified saddle fitter will also make him more content when being ridden.

As a rider, it is also vital that you ride and train your horse correctly, and you can enlist the help of an instructor to assist you with this. You also need to think about the environment that your horse is living in and whether it is suitable for his needs. Horses like company of their own kind and plenty of space to move around in, as well as somewhere to shelter from bad weather.

Your horse will also be healthier and happier if his diet is suitable for his needs. Horses are trickle feeders and can get very frustrated if they are not able to forage as they would naturally. To ensure that your horse is receiving the correct feed, I would always advise that you seek the help of a nutritionist.

The best way to ensure that you are aware of how your horse is feeling is to spend as much time with him as possible and to observe his behaviour, so that you know when he may be acting out of character. When observing your horse you can also take note of his body language and it is important to be aware of when he shows signs of pain or tension so that these can be addressed. Signs can include a clamped tail, a straight lip line, sweating, shaking, moving the ears back and down and narrowing the nostrils.

If your horse is unwell, he may also show signs of ill health such as refusing to eat or drink, lying down more than usual or not wanting to move. If you observe any of these signs then it is important to seek the advice of a vet.



DID YOU KNOW?

It is important to remember that what makes us happy does not automatically make our horses happy, and that our motivations may be somewhat different to those of our horses.



Trailer troubles

When we bought our pony a year ago, he didn't travel very well in our trailer - he threw himself against the partition and climbed up the side of the trailer. We then started travelling him on the left-hand side instead, which seemed to work and for the last year, he has travelled very happily. But out of the blue, he started doing it again. We've gone back to basics, but as soon as we close the ramp up, he throws himself at the partition. Someone advised we take the partition out. What do you think and please can you help?

Perry Wood answers:
Issues that happen
when your horse is actually in
transit in a trailer can be tricky
to figure out. Clearly he isn't
happy and has probably had
a bad experience in a trailer
in the past. Removing the
partition may work, allowing
him a little more space and

giving him the chance to find his own angle in which to travel – some horses prefer to travel diagonally given the chance.

Is he tense in the trailer even when it is stationary and not closed up? I suggest you make sure he is happy in the trailer at a standstill, give him a little feed once he's in the trailer and take it one step at a time so he is happy at every stage of the retraining process.

Only when he is really happy with going in and standing in with the doors open, shut the door. And only when he is happy with the door being shut, reopen the door and let him out again. Then only when you're 100% happy with that, drive 10 yards, stop and let him out. It is also a good idea to bring him out of the trailer before he gets tense or tries to leave by himself, so that he feels comfortable and thinks he is in control at all times.



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Ollie Pynn BVSc, CertEP, MRCVS is a partner at veterinary practice Rossdales Veterinary Surgeons.



Adam Jackson BSc, BVM&S, MSc, PGCert, PGDip, MRCVS is an assistant vet at Liphook Equine Hospital.



Mystery lesions

My horse gets small, circular scabs on his face during the spring and summer months that leave bald patches when they come off. What could these be?

Ollie Pynn answers:
The exact cause of these skin lesions is difficult to identify without examining your horse, so it would be ideal to have your veterinary surgeon look at your horse when the lesions are present. However, the most likely causes include allergy or infection. It would be very helpful to identify any changes in management or feeding around the time that the lesions appear and also whether

any other horses in the same herd are also being affected.

Mild allergic reactions can occur from flies, other insects, different types of plants or pollens, as well as different feeds. Reactions can also occur to fly sprays or other topical skin treatments and shampoos. Skin infections can occur more commonly in the summer when your horse gets sweaty, especially in areas that are covered by tack or headcollars.

Mild allergic reactions can occur from flies, other insects, different types of plants or pollens, as well as different feeds

Did you know?

Allergens

are a type of antigen that are usually harmless but the body perceives them as a threat, producing an abnormally vigorous immune response – an allergic reaction. Sensitivity varies from one individual to another and there's a range of substances that can be allergens, like dust or certain feeds.

Antibodies

are Y-shaped components that the immune system produces in response to a specific antigen. They lock onto the antigen and act as a target for white blood cells to destroy the antigen. Following this reaction, the body produces memory cells for a speedy reaction next time the antigen is present.

Pruritis

or itching, is commonly caused by parasites, infections or allergies. Some skin conditions don't cause pruritis, but it can develop as a result of secondary bacterial or yeast infections. Itchy horses rub up against walls or fences, or aggressively bite skin for relief.

Chorioptic

mange or leg mites tend to occur in heavy breeds of horses, mostly affecting the legs around the foot and fetlock. The mites feed on skin debris and bodily fluids, unlike other types of mites that pierce the skin with their mouths. Both cause itchiness, rubbing and scratching, damaging the skin.

Flaky knees

My cob has recently developed mallenders on his knees – is there a permanent way of treating him and keeping it at bay?

Adam Jackson answers:

Mallenders and sallenders are the historical names for conditions veterinary surgeons now refer to as idiopathic palmar carpal dermatosis and dorsal hock dermatosis respectively. It's a common, but poorly understood skin disorder that is characterised by skin scaling and hyperkeratosis (thickening of the outer layer of the skin), restricted to the back of the carpus (knee) and the front of the hocks.

It can affect horses of all ages and is particularly prevalent in feathered breeds such as Shires, Welsh Cobs and Clydesdales. The clinical signs are scaling and flaking of the skin without pain or pruritus (itchiness). The affected areas may be small or large and the edges are poorly defined. Early or mild cases are often easier to feel than see and your horse may chew or rub the area, resulting in damaged and distorted hair. Sometimes these areas may become ulcerated and crusting can develop with secondary bacterial infection.

It has been suggested that the condition is a secondary disorder to recurrent episodes of itchiness caused by mite infestation. However, it is thought



that it is the scaling and skin thickening caused by the disorder that eventually attracts the mites which leads to itchiness and irritation.

Diagnosis is made by using the clinical signs in conjunction with the history of the disorder. Biopsies sometimes help, but are often disappointing in the information that they provide to your vet.

Treatment is neither possible nor warranted, even when owners are concerned about the condition. Attempts to treat may lead to further scaling and are more aggressive to the skin, but clipping of the overlying hair can help.

The most important thing is to treat and control any mite infestation. Often three doramectin injections at 10–14 day intervals can be helpful in eliminating the

mites. I sometimes use flower of sulphur mixed with liquid paraffin or pig/emu oil. The oils or liquid paraffin are merely a transport medium, and the sulphur is thought to suffocate the mites and act as a natural insecticide.

Shampoos such as selenium sulphide or coal tar can be used to reduce the scaling and flaking, as well as reduce the thickness of the skin in the affected area. It is important to use warm water to apply shampoo and rinse thoroughly with warm water. Dab the legs dry – rubbing them can irritate the area further. Occasionally, self-trauma can lead to secondary bacterial infections, which can be treated with antibiotics.

Your vet can advise you on the best treatment options for your horse.

Booting bother

I've read a lot about boots causing horses' tendons to heat up, perhaps resulting in tendon injuries. But I worry about riding my horse with no leg protection in case he strikes into himself. Is it really true that boots cause the leg to heat up? If so, what are my options to protect my horse when we go cross-country?



Ollie Pynn answers:

Tendon boots help protect your horse's legs from injuries associated with hoof strikes or trauma associated with knocks against jumps. Recent research published by Westermann and colleagues from the University of Vienna has shown that the skin temperature underneath boots increases significantly during exercise compared to when boots aren't worn. However, it is not known whether the increase in skin temperature is associated with an increased risk of injury to the underlying tendons.

In my opinion, the risk of injuries associated with striking or collision with jumps far outweighs any detrimental effects on the tendons, so I recommend that you continue to use boots on your horse's legs when you go cross-country.



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HORSEY SHOPPING

OUR EXPERTS



Lisa Brooke is a qualified veterinary physiotherapist and McTimoney therapist.



Claire Rowlands is Technical Support Manager at Natural Animal Feeds.



Alison Jones is a 4* Parelli Professional based in Devon.

Flexible friend

My horse has regular physio as he has an old back injury. I want to help keep him flexible between treatments, what are my options?

Lisa Brooke answers:
There are many ways to help
maintain your horse's flexibility between
treatments, but as I've not a seen your
horse, it's important that you check these
suggestions with your own physio to make
sure they are suitable and safe for him.

The most common exercise used to maintain spinal flexibility and to help

core strength is baited stretches – more commonly known as carrot stretches. Stand your horse square and tempt him to flex his neck around to his elbow (both sides), down to his knees and to his chest using feed to encourage him. Traditionally we used carrots to tempt the horse, but fingers are easily mistaken for these! I like to use a small lick that can be held in position while your horse licks it for the 15–20 seconds he needs to hold the position.

There is a great product that uses therabands attached to a saddle cloth in various positions to aid abdominal muscular contraction and hindlimb engagement when ridden or lunged. Some horses can resent this set-up initially

but, with time, most respond well to it. It must be fitted and used carefully, so if in doubt, seek the help of a professional to help you get up and running. I would always recommend your horse is tested in-hand with such a set up before being ridden in it.

When used correctly, polework can be beneficial in improving your horse's core strength and flexibility. Poles don't have to be in a straight line, you can use alternate raised poles, star-shaped poles and mazes to work your horse over in-hand.

There are also various massage pads on the market. If used regularly as an add-on to your horse's physiotherapy sessions, these can be helpful to maintain suppleness pre- and post-exercise.



Did you know?

- The longissimus dorsi and iliocostalis muscles lie parallel to the spine down its entire length. These flex the back laterally and longitudinally, while the multifidus muscles stabilise the individual vertebral joints. In cases of back pain, they don't work as effectively as they should. In chronic back pain, the multifidus muscles tend not to recover to full function.
- Recent research has shown that dynamic mobilisation flexing, extending and bending the back from side to side helps to rehabilitate the *multifidus* muscle where chronic back pain has lead to atrophy and asymmetry.
- If your horse is an enthusiastic carrot eater, you can form a shield between the carrot and your fingers by cutting a carrot-sized hole in a plastic lid or paper plate. Alternatively, wearing gloves offers some protection.



Keep calm and carry on

My horse gets very stressed in certain situations – for example, when I take him to new places or if there are a lot of other horses around at sponsored rides. I've read about calmers, but don't know if they would be suitable. What are they and how do they work?

Claire Rowlands answers:

Very often, once a horse has become stressed, the only option is to remove him from the situation, but what can you do to support him? A calmer is designed to support not only a relaxed mind, but also to help reduce tension in muscles.

Magnesium-based calmers are recommended – often owners of horses supplemented with magnesium have reported an improved outline and longer stride length, as the muscles naturally relax and stretch. Care should be taken as to the source of magnesium, though, as not all are safe or suitable for long-term use. For example, Epsom salts (magnesium sulphate) is an effective laxative, so regular use will have an undesirable effect on your horse's gut.

As research dictates, magnesium given alone is simply not the answer and is unlikely to have the required effect. It should be combined with a fast-acting natural herbal base that will help to support confidence and concentration, and produce a happier horse.

While herbal use can be relied upon to provide a traditional approach to a calm horse, care is also advised here. Herbs with a sedative action, such as valerian, are considered doping and are banned under FEI rules. Plus, you are not looking to sedate your horse, but help him to cope with what is required of him. The right blend of herbs can support concentration and confidence, resulting in a horse who is more forward-going and assured.

It is also important to differentiate between a horse who needs daily support and a horse who finds himself tense in one-off situations. Horses who react abnormally to stressful situations, such as a visit from the farrier, dentist, clipping or simply travelling and competing, can be supported by an instant calmer. A swift-acting, easy to administer liquid or paste calmer will help to take the edge off the situation and make your horse more comfortable.

To ensure your horse's supplement is suitable to compete on, look for the BETA UFAS NOPS logo on the label.

A prod in the right direction

What is the difference between a carrot stick and a whip?

Alison Jones answers:
Carrot sticks have had bad press, but they deserve a fair hearing. A carrot stick is four feet long, made of fibreglass and is quite rigid, and as it is usually the same length as a horse's leg and neck, it is a good tool for 'pushing' or 'driving' a horse around. A whip on the whole is much more flexible and 'whippy'. Both have their place in the tack room and both are very useful.

A carrot stick is used in Parelli, which teaches a horse how to understand certain pressures that he will be expected to come across in domestication, such as tying up, leading, loading, riding forwards and vet visits. The horse is taught how to yield to pressure, so the purpose of pressure becomes much easier.

When helping the horse to understand pressure, a carrot stick can be a much better tool than a whip. For example, horses can be naturally defensive of their legs, and



rightly so, as a lame horse is less likely to survive in the wild. So when taming a leg, a carrot stick can be a better tool because it is more solid and rigid, which gives the horse a better feel, and it also keeps the handler at a safe distance.

They can be fiddly to handle at first, but they are a useful training tool when you've got used to them.

The horse is taught how to yield to pressure, so the purpose of pressure becomes much easier



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IN THE SADDLE

OUR EXPERTS



Ernest Dillon FBHS is a UKCC level three certified showjumping coach and BE Master Coach.



Tania Grantham BHSAI Int SM is a dressage rider and trainer on the British Dressage database.



Minette Rice Edwards trains up to Grand Prix level dressage and also teaches jumping.



Toss up

My horse throws his head in the air just in front of the fence. Why is he doing it and how can I stop it? I've had his tack and back checked, and it's all fine.

Ernest Dillon answers:
If your horse throws his head up on the approach to a jump, it can be for numerous reasons. In addition to checking his back and tack, it would be a good idea to check his teeth to ensure he has no pain from sharp edges. If you have a martingale, he could be fighting against the pressure, so also check that it's not too tight. In some circumstances, it is beneficial to use a correctly fitting standing martingale as a temporary measure when you are working on correcting this sort of problem.

While riding, pay attention to the way you keep the contact on the rein. If you

set your hand still with a stiff elbow, your horse will set against you and throw his head up – instead, try to maintain the contact with a soft and relaxed arm. Don't try to pull your horse, because this will make matters worse.

Once these problems have been ruled out, try coming into small fences in trot to create a confident approach and settle your horse's mind. Use a trot pole if necessary to ensure you meet the fence correctly. Then work on the canter separately until you can lengthen and shorten your horse's stride easily. Finally, combine the better, more relaxed canter with the happier jump.

Weak link

I have a five-year-old Irish Sport Horse who is very weak behind. What type of exercises can I do to increase her strength?

Tania Grantham answers:
With a young or weak horse,
doing a variety of work, little and
often, is the key. With youngsters, I
like to work in the arena two or three
times a week, and one of these may
be lunging or polework. I also hack
two or three times a week and then
give the horse one or two days off. If
possible, vary your hacking. Roadwork
and hill work are very good for horses
– walking up and down steep hills can
help strengthen their hindquarters.

There are lots of different exercises you can do – it's important to do them frequently in short bursts with plenty of breaks. One of my favourite exercises – riding a square – incorporates the introduction of lateral work and transitions, both of which are great for strengthening.

To do this, start on the inside track in walk, go forwards to halt, then ride a quarter turn on the forehand and proceed forward in walk across the school. Before you reach the other side, halt and use a quarter turn instead of a corner. Repeat this so you end up riding a full square.

Once your horse has the idea of waiting for the halt, you can ask her to hesitate rather than stop fully before you start the turn. After the turn, you want her to walk forward without stopping. This teaches your horse to half-halt. You can then progress further by riding a trot transition out of the turn, followed by a walk transition before the next turn.



Jog on

My horse jogs a lot on hacks. Why does he do this and how can I stop him?

Minette Rice Edwards answers:
Frequent jogging on hacks can
be very tiring for both horse and rider.
It is usually caused either by an excess
of tension and anxiety, or because the
horse is stiff and not comfortable moving
forward freely. Firstly, ask your vet to
check his soundness. For a good walk it
is essential that your horse can push with
his hindlegs and swing through his back,
neck, shoulder and forelegs. Any pain in
these areas would certainly impede this
and shorten his step, leading him to resort
to jogging when asked for a longer stride.

If he's pain free, then he may need some retraining to help his suppleness both laterally and longitudinally. Allow him to stretch in a free walk on a long rein, which will supple his topline. Then pick up the reins carefully, work in a medium walk and then let him stretch again. When

he is working well with this exercise, you can progress to collected and extended walk. When he's calm and balanced in walk, move on to trot.

It is also important to consider your position. Sit equally and lightly on both seat bones with your coccyx being the third balancing point. Your hips need to be loose to allow you to sit deep and soft in the saddle, with your pelvis free to follow your horse's movement. Try not to grip with your legs, as this will cause excess tension. Keep your head up, and have fluid shoulders and arms, and sensitive hands.

When you go for a hack, be careful not to tighten your body, but to maintain this lightness, harmony and balance. It can help to gently run the reins through your fingers so you're not tempted to tighten your arms and pull back.

If you're hacking in company, ride with another horse who walks at the same pace so that you don't get left behind, tempting a jog to catch up. Have long, steady, rhythmical trots to settle your horse so he is happier and more willing to walk when you ask.

Did you know?

- A strong, balanced canter rhythm is key to a good showjumping round.
- When jumping, the optimum take-off distance for a horse is the height of the jump projected in front of it. Horses can comfortably take off half a stride shorter or longer than that, provided their rider is in balance.
- The rounded shape a horse makes with his body over a jump is called a bascule. This is achieved when the horse lowers his head and rounds his back. The faster the horse is travelling, the flatter the bascule is likely to be.
- When landing from a fence, the foreleg that comes in contact with the ground first absorbs 20% more force than the other foreleg.
- Children under 14 years of age are required by law to wear a current, up-to-standard riding hat that is securely fastened while riding a horse on the road. The only exception is children of the Sikh religion, while they are wearing a turban.
- The Highway Code advises that if you're riding or leading a horse on the road at night, you should wear or carry a light that shows white to the front and red to the rear, as well as wearing reflective clothing. However, if you are driving a horse on the road at night, it is a legal requirement that a light that is white to the front and red to the rear is fitted to the carriage.
- To adjust a standing martingale correctly, attach it to the girth and noseband, and hold the slack onto your horse's neck. It should touch the throatlash easily.

Frequent jogging is caused by excess tension or anxiety, or stiffness which is making the horse uncomfortable



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N BRIEF

OUR EXPERT



David Sheerin BHSI is a BE Accredited Trainer and Chief Instructor at Wellington Ridina

Hard to swallow

No matter what I do, my horse always manages to keep some wormer paste in his mouth and spit it out when I let go of his head. Any tips?

David Sheerin answers: One of the biggest reasons for a horse spitting out his wormer is that he still has some food in his mouth, then spits it all out when you syringe the wormer in. So take away all food before worming. Once you've syringed the paste in, gently hold his head upwards. Initially he'll have a very still, quiet mouth, so you think it's all gone. Then, as soon as you let go of his head, he'll drop it all out.



So, when you hold his head up, gently massage his throat to encourage him to

chew and then swallow. and hand when approaching the puddle,



Baby blue eyes

My youngster has one blue eye. I've heard that blue-eyed horses can be more susceptible to disease. Is this true?

Horse&Rider answers: Recent studies suggest that blue-eyed horses aren't at a greater risk of disease to their eyeballs than brown-eyed horses. But the pink skin surrounding many horses' blue eyes may put them at greater risk of squamous cell carcinoma - a type of skin cancer. To decrease the risk, turn your horse out with a fly mask and sun cream to help block harmful UV rays, and ask your vet to examine your horse's eye area regularly.

Testing the water

My otherwise sensible Connemara hates walking through puddles when we go hacking. Can you recommend any advice to help him overcome his fear?

David Sheerin answers: This is a tricky one, but the best days to go out are when it's really wet and it's impossible to avoid! Ensure your horse is straight and firmly between leg and try to find larger ones to practise walking through. Small puddles are easy to avoid and can be easily jumped, whereas it's easier to keep your horse straight at larger ones. If possible, hack out with a horse who's confident going through puddles and have him take the lead through the puddle to boost his confidence.





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67% of horse owners believe they are protecting their horses from the rise of resistance, however, 81% are not conducting the adequate level of FWECs (faecal worm egg counts) that experts say are the only way to prevent the build-up of resistance to wormers.

Routine testing, not routine worming, is the advice given by experts involved in a survey conducted by Countrywide, the leading equestrian supplier of products and advice, in collaboration with Westgate Laboratories, Norbrook and BW Equine Vets, where nearly 1,000 horse owners were surveyed on their current worming practice and knowledge.

Resistance – does that affect me?

Rebekah Dudek, European Veterinary Advisor at Norbrook Pharmaceuticals, explains: "FWECs are a key way to help prevent the build-up of resistance to wormers. It is not possible to cure resistance, and with 99% of people worming their horses, and 81% of those not conducting an adequate level of FWECs, a worryingly large proportion of owners could inadvertently be promoting the build-up of resistance.

"If we continue to worm simply as we always have, there is a chance we will eventually be left with no efficacious wormers in our arsenal, meaning we would have to rely on management strategies as the only option to control worm burdens."

Resistance prevention is essential. Here's how you can help:

- ➤ Avoid unnecessary worming
- ➤ Don't under-dose
- ➤ Avoid excessive worming
- ➤ Alternate the class of product, not just the brand name
- ➤ Seek advice from an SQP or vet
- ➤ Understand the seasonal/climatic effects on worm populations

Best practice

Mark Hawkins, SQP at Countrywide, explains: "All horses are susceptible to parasites. This makes worming an essential consideration. But while it is often easier to blanket worm a yard of horses, it is more important to develop a worming plan for each individual horse. This ensures that all the necessary parasites are targeted with every anthelmintic dose."

Chris Shepherd, Director at BW Equine Vets, advises: "Only treat your horse if his worm burden is above 200epg, and speak to your in-store advisor to ensure correct dosage and product type."

Without testing, there is no way of knowing if a wormer is effective. The implications of not worming if it's needed, or ineffective worming, can be

- weight loss
- · life-threatening colitis

severe and can include...

- colic
- irreversible lung damage
- under performance
- death

Mark Hawkins continues:

"The cost of these incidents will far outweigh the relatively low cost of an effective worming plan, incorporating tests and wormers - if they are required".

Routine testing, not routine worming

When asked about their current approach to worming practice, 59% of respondents said they interval dose at set times of the year with only 31% conducting regular FWECs. A new, easy-to-use saliva test available from Countrywide, or an ELISA blood

test conducted by a vet can be used.

that shows the presence of tapeworm in the gut is

Best practice worming plan - for effective worm control in a mature adult horse

SPRING

Tapeworm test and FWEC for redworm and ascarids

SUMMER

FWEC for redworm and ascarids

AUTUMN

Tapeworm test and FWEC for redworm and ascarids

WINTER

Worm for encysted redworm (a further FWEC test can be conducted in winter to monitor worm burden)



How can Countrywide help?

It is recommended that you seek expert advice to support your worming plan. This is free in all Countrywide stores.

Visit countrywidefarmers.co.uk/wormingsurvey

and for the full breakdown of results. Countrywide's in-depth, how to worming guide and information on its testing services, or to sign up for a free reminder service.





Photos: Bob Atkins. With thanks to Liphook Equine Hospital for their help with this feature



Colic is a word that strikes fear into most horse owners. Although relatively common and often mild, the potential for serious consequences is all too well-known. Vet Freya Jollands from Liphook Equine Hospital discusses

ome horses seem prone to colic, while many others never show any signs of it. But how much do horse owners really need to panic? And what really is going on when a horse has colic?

Colic is the name given to the signs shown by a horse with abdominal pain. Most commonly this is due to disturbances in the gastrointestinal tract, although colic may also be seen when your horse feels pain in any organ or tissue within his abdomen.

Types of colic

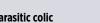
There are many different causes and types of colic...

Spasmodic colic This is one of the most common types. There are many potential causes, including recent changes in diet or level of activity, however, it is often difficult to determine the exact

underlying cause. Fortunately, most of these cases respond to medical management.

Gassy (tympanic) colic There are many different causes, including increased intake of fresh grass from a new field, crib-biting or windsucking and increased time spent in the stable, which can lead to a build-up of gas in the intestine. Most cases respond to medical treatment.

Impaction colic Impaction of the large intestine with feed may occur due to a variety of factors, including box rest, reduced exercise, reduced water intake and poor dentition. Impactions of other material, such as sand, dirt or bedding, may also occur. Horses living in sandy soil regions may be susceptible to a build-up of sand in the intestine.



Tapeworms have been implicated in some cases of spasmodic colic. Encysted small redworm larvae (Cyathostomins sp) may cause weight loss, diarrhoea and colic, and Parascaris (Ascarids) may cause impactions, particularly in foals or weanlings.

Colic due to large intestinal displacements These occur when a section of the large intestine moves from its normal location. Displacements are more common in larger breeds and in mares following foaling. Some respond to medical treatment, however, many require surgery.

Colic due to intestinal volvulus (also known as twisted gut) This is the most severe form of colic and requires surgery as soon as possible to maximise chances of survival.

Other types of colic These include colic signs due to grass sickness, gastric ulceration and diarrhoea.

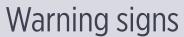
False colic This is when the colic signs are caused by non-gastrointestinal diseases, such as kidney stones, liver disease, atypical myopathy and laminitis.



What's the risk?

Many studies have shown an increased risk of colic due to certain factors, including...

- a recent change in feeding, such as an increase or change in type of concentrate, new batch of hay or haylage, or a change of field, especially with increased amounts of grass.
- reduced water intake in winter, it is important to ensure ice is removed from buckets and troughs.
- changes in stable management for example, box rest due to injury or weather conditions. This can be associated with an increased risk of impactions because the horse is not moving around as much.
- change in level of activity.
- poor dentition. Those with poor teeth for example, older horses – may be unable to chew their food so well, increasing the risk of problems.
- poor worming history, although even horses with an apparently good worming history can be at risk of colic, particularly due to tapeworms and encysted small redworms.
- certain vices, such as crib-biting and windsucking.
 These have been associated with an increased risk of colic, including certain types of displacement.
- factors such as breed, age, change in weather conditions and recent transport.



Symptoms of colic can vary from the subtle to the extreme, sometimes obvious and other times a little more obscure. And to make things more complicated, every horse will react individually to the pain he feels. Signs that your horse is uncomfortable include...

- · unexplained restlessness/agitation.
- · appearing dull and depressed.
- · pawing at the ground.
- looking round at his flanks.
- · standing in unusual positions.
- · curling his upper lip or yawning.
- · kicking with his hindlegs at his belly/flank.
- groaning or grunting
- patchy sweating.
- · making repeated attempts to lie down or roll.
- · violent thrashing.

The key to a healthy digestive system

You can help reduce the risk of colic by...

- keeping a good feeding regime. Don't make sudden changes to feed – introduce changes gradually (over 2–3 weeks) by mixing old and new batches of feed and hay.
- ensuring there is adequate clean, fresh water at all times.
- making sure your horse is adequately wormed speak to your vet for advice.
- providing adequate exercise ideally at least one hour of turnout or exercise daily. If your horse is on box rest, monitor the amount of droppings.
- arranging dental examinations at least once a year with your vet or qualified equine dental technician.



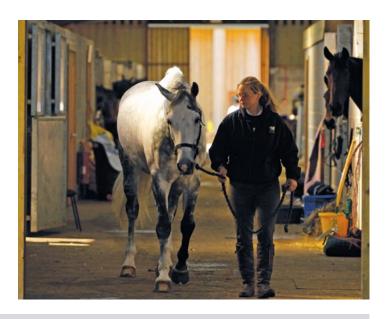
Remember

Horses can act very unexpectedly with colic, showing a sudden onset of attempts to lie down, roll or thrash about. They can be very distracted and easily inadvertently injure any handlers. Always stay at a safe distance and wear appropriate safety clothing, including a hard hat and gloves.

Dealing with colic

Your vet will probably advise you to do the following, but while you wait to speak to him, or wait for his arrival, take the following precautions...

- · Remove food.
- Ensure your horse is somewhere where it is safe for you and him should he try to lie down or roll. An arena can work well for this, allowing you to get out of the way while remaining in a safely confined space.
- Stay calm yourself and try to keep your horse relaxed.
- Walk him gently, if recommended by your vet.
- Don't panic if he wants to lie down. Once considered to be the cause of a twisted gut, we now know that this is not the case. The desire to roll is in response to serious internal changes, not the cause of them.





Assessing the situation

Initially, your vet will assess the severity of the colic to determine whether urgent action is required. In a small number of cases, only surgery will be able to correct the internal changes and the sooner your horse reaches a hospital, the better the chance of a successful outcome. When your vet first arrives, they are likely to ask a few questions while observing your horse for a few minutes to gauge the severity of the symptoms. The questions are likely to include...

- Background on your horse's age, recent routine, feeding and general health.
- What time the signs of colic began and how the signs have progressed.
- Whether your horse has had colic before.
- When he last passed droppings.
- What the consistency of the droppings was.
- Whether there has been a recent change of pasture.
- · Whether he grazes on sandy soil.
- Whether there has been a change of routine, including any recent periods of rest or confinement.
- Details of your worming routine, including when he was last wormed.

Your vet will also undertake a thorough examination of your horse, including...

 checking heart rate and circulation, which are linked to the degree of pain and can be a good indicator of how serious the colic is likely to be. Severe colic can lead to a condition known as cardiovascular shock, which causes the mucous membranes, (usually a healthy salmon pink colour) to turn progressively darker, to dark red and then bluey-purple.

- abdominal auscultation, which is a fancy way of saying listening to the gut sounds. Typically, low-level sounds can be heard from horses' large intestines when using a stethoscope. Either increased or decreased gut sounds from normal may indicate a problem.
- a rectal examination, which can prove to be one of the most informative parts of the examination. Your vet is not simply feeling the inside of the last part of the rectum, but is also palpating all the other structures within reach. Changes in the position or amount of distention of the gut may be detected abnormal filling of the gut with air or food can indicate the possible cause of colic signs. However, some changes are not possible to feel, or may be out of reach.
- passing a nasogastric tube into
 the stomach of the horse via the
 nostrils, which may be undertaken
 to release any excess fluid that
 has accumulated in the stomach.
 This can occur in serious cases due
 to a blockage somewhere in the
 small intestine, causing a backing
 up of fluid into the stomach. In
 other cases, your vet may choose
 to deliver fluids or a lubricant via
 the nasogastric tube, if changes
 indicate this could be useful.
- a peritoneal tap, which is used to gather a small sample of fluid from the abdomen. This can help to ascertain the type and degree of changes occurring internally.

Response to medication

Your vet may give your horse some medication fairly early in the examination period. This can provide pain relief and also allow easier examination to determine the nature of the colic. In addition to this, the way your horse responds to simple painkillers is a useful indication of how serious the problem may be. Approximately 90% of all colic cases do not require surgery and can be managed either at home or in the hospital (depending on the severity) with a combination of treatments including...

- · pain relief and anti-inflammatories.
- anti-spasmodics to help relieve intestinal spasms.
- oral fluids or faecal softeners, which are especially useful for impactions.
- intravenous fluids, which are given if the horse is dehydrated to improve gut motility and to help relieve difficult impactions.
- gentle exercise which, under veterinary guidance, may help treat some intestinal displacements.
- withholding feed, as advised by your vet, can be helpful in the treatment of certain types of colic, but water should never be withheld, unless instructed by your vet.
- regular monitoring. How often depends on the severity of the signs, however, things can

change quickly so the more often the better. Your vet will be able to advise you how often you should check on your horse.



If you suspect your horse has colic, always call your vet. This doesn't mean your horse definitely needs urgent veterinary attention, but your vet will be able to discuss the situation with you and advise on the best way to proceed. This may be to monitor your horse for a period of time, or it might mean an emergency visit from your vet.



Hospital trip

he is in transit.

Sometimes, the severity of the colic symptoms means that referral to a hospital environment is the most suitable option. If surgery is a possibility, the sooner your horse is moved to a hospital, the less risk there is of complications associated with difficult travel. Also, there's less chance of deterioration of cardiovascular status while

On other occasions, even if signs are not indicating that surgery will need to be performed, there can be benefits of being transferred to a hospital environment. These include the availability of further diagnostic tools such as ultrasound scanning equipment and stocks for safe examination, means of administering intravenous fluids, round-the-clock monitoring and more qualified personnel to assist with procedures.

On arrival at the hospital, the team will go through a process similar to the one outlined below...

- The hospital vet will likely repeat the examination performed by your vet to see if there have been any changes.
- Ultrasound imaging may be undertaken, in order to gain information on internal changes. The degree of distention of gut loops, sign of displacements and gut wall thickness can all be visualised.
- Blood tests may be performed to help guide the vets as to the degree and severity of metabolic changes.

Surgery becomes a real option if the diagnosis is that a section of gut has lost its blood supply – for example, due to a twist – that will, over time, cause this area of tissue to die. Horses' guts contain

millions of bacteria that are safe when contained within the gut, but potentially very damaging or fatal if absorbed into the circulation or abdomen of the horse.

Sometimes, changes to the gut may be apparent that indicate the

need for surgery for survival.
On other occasions, it is not possible to fully determine exactly what internal changes are occurring, but the signs indicate surgery is required.
The team will speak to you

about the best way to proceed and whether they advise your horse has surgery. Before surgery, your horse will be stabilised as much as possible, although time is often of the essence. During surgery, an abnormality is identified and corrected, which may involve removal of a section of intestine or relocation of displaced gut back into its correct position. Sometimes gut content will need to be emptied or flushed, or other masses or lumps removed.

Depending on what type of process is occurring, your vet may well be able to give you a good idea of the chances of success or failure of colic surgery. A recent study was carried out in Denmark that looked at a large group of horses (1,500) who had shown colic over the previous 10-year period. Of the surgical cases, 27% were euthanased or died during surgery. Of the horses who recovered from surgery, 25% died or were euthanased before they could be discharged, while 75% survived to discharge. These figures reflect a large range of types of colic - remember your vet will be there to guide you on the risks according to your horse's individual case.



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CLEARING THE AIR

Your horse's respiratory system is essential for life. But with respiratory problems being one of the main conditions to plague horses, how can you keep your equine friend's chest in the peak of health? Vet Imogen Comyn from Rossdales Veterinary Surgeons tells you everything you need to know

respiratory condition is any illness, disease or dysfunction that relates to breathing and they are very common in horses. They have many potential causes and the severity varies considerably – several can be highly contagious, while others are limited to an individual animal. Certain diseases can affect the whole body system, while others are classified as upper or lower respiratory tract disease.

Respiratory anatomy

The equine respiratory tract is a highly-specialised organ whose sole function is to move large volumes of air in and out of the lungs, maximise the transfer of oxygen from the air into the red blood cells and expel carbon

dioxide. To fully understand it, we need to consider the anatomy of the

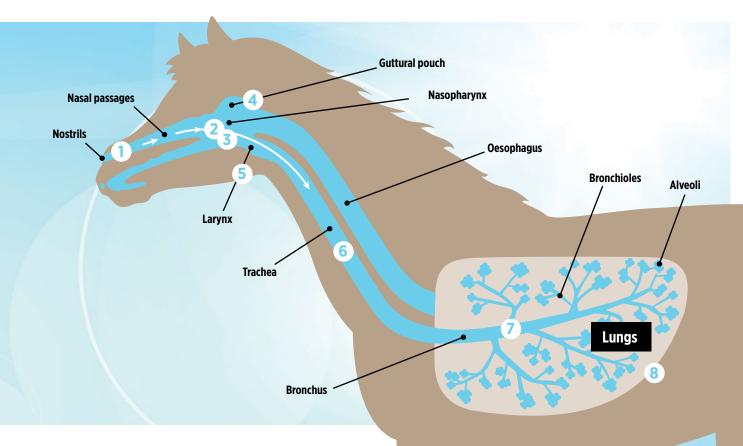
respiratory tract...

Air enters through the nostrils, which have numerous nerves and muscles that flare them to increase air flow and reduce resistance.

The air then travels through the nasal passages and into the nasopharynx.

The horse's soft palate is very long and extends from the hard palate to the epiglottis. This makes horses obligate nasal breathers and means that any obstruction in the upper airway reduces airflow.

The guttural pouches, although not directly involved in the respiratory tract, are important because they open into the nasopharynx, and contain several cranial nerves and arteries.



The larynx is the entrance to the trachea. It co-ordinates swallowing and protects the trachea from inhaling food. It is made up of several cartilages, including the epiglottis and arytenoids.

Air passes into the trachea, which is roughly 8cm in diameter, and down into the lungs.

Once in the lungs, it branches into two bronchi, then branches into bronchioles and ultimately into alveoli. The exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide occurs in the alveoli.

A membrane called the pleura lines the thoracic (chest) cavity and covers the surface of the lungs.

Built-in defence

Air contains contaminants such as dust, pollens and infectious agents, so the respiratory system has unique protective mechanisms. In the upper airway, the air is filtered, humidified and warmed. The epithelium (lining) of the upper airway, trachea and bronchi has a mucous layer covering it and contaminants stick to this layer.

The epithelium of the bronchi and trachea also has cilia (hair-like fibres). The cilia increase the surface area and also perform clearance – contaminants are collected in the mucus and the cilia wave in a co-ordinated fashion to move the mucus and associated debris out of the lungs, up the trachea to the

larynx, from where it can be swallowed or coughed out. If this system is compromised – for example, by cold air, smoke, ammonia fumes from urine, bad ventilation or inflammatory conditions – there is increased risk of respiratory disease.

Another protective mechanism in the respiratory system is unique white blood cells that can engulf and kill invading organisms, such as bacteria and viruses. This immunity can be hindered by the same risk factors as the muco-ciliary system mentioned above and can also be overwhelmed by large concentrations of environmental contaminants.

Our expert



Imogen Comyn BVMS
MRCVS is a resident in
internal medicine at
Rossdales Equine Hospital
and is involved with all
areas of internal medicine,
ranging from heart
conditions to neonatal care.



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For further information on membership, please contact Angela Beckett on angela.beckett@fourseasons.com or 01252 853005

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What to look out for

There are a number of clinical signs that may indicate your horse has a respiratory condition, including...

- a cough, which may be intermittent, severe, dry or productive, and may be exacerbated during exercise, when eating or when being mucked out.
- > nasal discharge, ranging from thin, clear fluid to pus-like secretions.
- > reduced performance.
- slow recovery after exercise.
- increased respiratory rate and effort at rest. Excessive nostril flare and abdominal effort when breathing, and a change in mucous membrane colour is sometimes seen.
- swelling in the throatlatch region.
- > noise when breathing.
- > asymmetry of the head.
- increased rectal temperature.

Mild respiratory disease can produce very subtle signs that may not be noted unless they are exacerbated. Conversely, in severe disease the horse may be in obvious distress, sweated up, and showing an increased heart and respiratory rate.





The vet visit

If you have any concerns, it is important to contact your vet and ask them to examine your horse. Before your vet arrives, avoid exercising your horse, isolate him from others and minimise the dust in his environment. There are a number of questions your vet may ask, including what your horse's stable management regime is like, whether he is vaccinated, has contact with other horses, has experienced a stressful event or whether anything exacerbates the symptoms.

Your vet will then observe your horse from a distance prior to completing a full physical examination, including listening to the trachea and both sides of the lungs with a stethoscope. Depending on the severity of the condition, your vet may perform a rebreathing examination, which involves holding a plastic bag over your horse's nose for a short time. This is the same as asking him to take a deep breath, and it may highlight a subtle disease and any coughs or prolonged recovery times.

Diagnostic tests that are commonly used when evaluating a horse for respiratory disease include...

- **Routine blood analysis** to ascertain the overall health of your horse.
- Endoscopy, where a flexible, fibre-optic endoscope is passed up the nostril to evaluate the upper airway and trachea.

- **Dynamic endoscopy** to observe the larynx, if necessary.
- Radiography and ultrasonography are useful tools for looking at the thoracic cavity and head region.
- Fluid samples can be obtained from the trachea and the bronchioalveolar region. These samples are often submitted for cytological examination (study of the cells) and can be cultured. The cytology will identify the types of cells present and is especially useful at identifying allergic type responses.
- Arterial blood samples allow the oxygen content of the blood to be measured. In adult horses this is often collected from an artery in the head, whereas in foals, an artery in the leg is normally used.
- Examining mucous membranes for signs of cyanosis (where the gums turn a bluish-purple colour) this is not usually seen until a significant drop in blood oxygen is noted.
- Pulmonary function testing can be used to establish the impairment in respiratory function.

This is not an extensive list and not every case will warrant all of these tests. Referral is necessary for some of these diagnostic examinations, as the equipment needed is not portable and specialist knowledge is required. Should your horse be diagnosed with a condition, it may be necessary to repeat some of these tests to monitor him.

Common respiratory conditions

The primary causes of respiratory conditions can be grouped into infectious (normally bacterial, viral or parasitic, although fungal can occur), anatomical problems and immune-mediated or allergic responses.

➤ EQUINE INFLUENZA

Very common in horses, this virus affects the upper and lower respiratory tract. It is highly contagious to other horses, especially when there is crowding or poor ventilation. Another risk factor is frequent travel and mixing with other horses – for example, at shows. The virus is inhaled, but can also be spread by contaminated items, such as brushes and buckets, although the influenza virus does not last very long in the environment.

The flu virus is very effective at damaging the mucociliary transport system and invades the epithelium (lining) of the airways, causing inflammation and potentially leading to ulceration. All these factors increase the risk of a secondary bacterial infection.

The incubation period is up to three days, and clinical signs include increased temperature, dry cough, serous nasal and eye discharge, and a dull demeanour. If you're concerned that your horse has flu, it's important that you contact your vet, isolate any suspect horses and monitor others who may have come in contact with the virus.

Diagnosis may be suspected on clinical signs alone and rapid spread through an at-risk population. A nasopharyngeal swab can be taken and the virus isolated from this. Treatment is mainly supportive, including anti-inflammatories, minimising dust in the environment and rest. It is important to rest your horse for at least two weeks following resolution of his clinical signs. This allows the tissue damage caused by the virus to heal. Antibiotics are not necessary unless there is a secondary bacterial infection.

Prevention includes good hygiene, vaccination and minimising contact between horses. Vaccinated animals may still develop the disease, but their symptoms are usually milder. There are several vaccine options that can be discussed with your vet, but if you compete, then the relevant regulatory body will have strict guidelines for flu vaccination that you must follow.

➤ EQUINE HERPES VIRUS

This is a family of viruses that can affect multiple body systems. The main strains associated with respiratory disease are EHV1 and EHV4, and the symptoms include serous nasal discharge, fever, enlarged lymph nodes and coughing. The treatment is usually supportive, and aimed at minimising the fever and reducing the risk of secondary infection.

The disease is commonly seen in young horses, especially those in training, but foals are particularly at risk and can be infected in the womb, being born with severe, often fatal, pneumonia.

The virus does not live for long in the environment and the spread of disease is through inhalation of infectious material that is usually secreted in nasal discharge or through sputum (mucus from the respiratory tract). Any infectious animals should be isolated from the rest of the yard. A nasopharyngeal swab can be taken and tested for the virus. An alternative is paired blood samples taken 10–14 days apart to establish if antibodies are being produced to the virus.

As with most viral diseases, prevention is more important than treatment. Vaccination reduces the risk of infection and reduces the shedding of the virus into the environment that, in turn, protects the herd. Vaccination does not prevent disease but it can reduce the severity, which will lead to less time off work and reduced veterinary costs.



Vaccination does not prevent disease but it can reduce the severity



➤ RECURRENT AIRWAY OBSTRUCTION (RAO)

Formerly known as COPD, this disease has been reclassified because it is not the same as the human disease of that name. It is a disease of the bronchioles in the lungs with a characteristic inflammation of the lower airway. The episodes are triggered by exposure to allergens, such as dust, feed material, fungal spores or other environmental allergens.

There is a broad spectrum of severity and symptoms, including a chronic, intermittent, dry cough, serous nasal discharge and exercise intolerance. The symptoms may be very subtle, such as prolonged recovery after fast work, but those associated with severe disease include increased respiratory rate and effort at rest, and abdominal effort when breathing out – leading to a characteristic heave line.

The disease is a very common cause of coughing and nasal discharge. The allergic response in the lungs results in production of fluid and thickening of the walls of the small airways, leading to obstruction. This leads to an increased effort when breathing and a cough to clear the mucus. The lung pathology is reversible in the early stages, but the damage may become permanent and the disease can be progressive.

Diagnosis of RAO is based upon the horse's history, X-rays, bronchoalveolar lavage and tracheal lavage. The fluid samples collected during lavage are evaluated for cell type. Pulmonary function testing can be used to identify mild disease and ascertain respiratory compromise.

There is no cure for RAO, but most horses can be successfully managed and lead fairly normal lives. There are many ways to minimise allergen exposure, such as using dust-free bedding, avoiding deep litter, soaking or steaming hay, removing your horse from the stable when mucking out and grooming, and providing good ventilation and plenty of turnout. There is a subset of horses who have pasture-associated RAO, which is thought to be associated with pollens, so these horses will need slightly different management.

Medication for RAO is often reserved for flare-ups. The two main classes are bronchodilators – often administered via an inhaler – and corticosteroids, which minimise the bronchiole spasm and reduce the inflammatory response.

There is no cure for RAO, but most horses can be successfully managed and lead fairly normal lives

➤ PNEUMONIA

Inflammation of the lungs is termed pneumonia and the cause can vary. Bacterial pneumonia is often a consequence of a viral infection, due to the damage of the normal protective mechanisms and the disruption to the immune system, but it can also occur following a choke episode or inflammation post parasite migration.

Clinical signs include fever, dull demeanour, reluctance to move, nasal discharge, and increased respiratory rate and effort. Chronic cases can start slowly and be hard to detect at first. Abnormal lung sounds can often be heard with a stethoscope, and pneumonia is diagnosed by taking chest X-rays and performing ultrasound scans to see if pleural fluid has accumulated. Depending on the severity, treatment includes broadspectrum antimicrobials, supportive care and potentially chest drains.

➤ STRANGLES

This is a highly-contagious infection caused by the bacteria *Streptococcus equi*. Strangles is transmitted via the nasal discharge of active, recovering and asymptomatic infected horses. The bacteria can survive in the environment, on feed managers, water buckets and people's hands.

The clinical signs are similar to other respiratory infections, including fever, nasal discharge, dull demeanour and swollen lymph nodes in the throat region, which may make swallowing difficult and, if severe, can compromise the airway. Sometimes an

Continued overleaf

> STRANGLES (CONTINUED)

infected horse will carry his head in an extended, low position. Strangles isn't usually serious, but occasionally nasty secondary complications can develop and the horse must be monitored closely.

To diagnose strangles, a nasopharyngeal swab is taken and submitted for polymerase chain reaction (PCR) and culture. The PCR is much faster but it will detect DNA from dead bacteria, so if a result is positive, a culture to grow the bacteria is necessary to confirm. Paired blood samples can be submitted to assess the number of antibodies, but this only indicates exposure to the bacteria and not necessarily infection.

Most of the treatment is supportive – antiinflammatories, soft feed and isolation – and if the lymph nodes are abscessed, it may be necessary to lance and flush them. Antibiotics are generally not recommended, as although they kill bacteria in the blood, the abscesses become encapsulated and the antibiotics will not penetrate them, and it can delay the resolution of the infection. Having said this, some cases do require antibiotics. This will be evaluated by your vet.

Nasopharyngeal swabs should be submitted weekly for at least three weeks after recovery – it is recommended that a horse has three negative results before he leaves isolation. Horses can be asymptomatic carriers of strangles, where the bacteria hides in the guttural pouches and can be shed intermittently. When assessing a horse for strangles and to ascertain complete resolution of the disease, a vet will often flush the guttural pouches and take a sample of the fluid to test for the presence of the bacteria.

There is a vaccine available for strangles that reduces the severity of the disease and the spread of infection, although is not a requirement for competition at this time.

Good isolation practice

With many of the main respiratory conditions being infectious, isolation of affected horses is imperative, with no horse movement on or off the property. To catch a potential problem early, monitor the rectal temperature of all horses on the yard fairly regularly and if a horse develops a fever, move him to isolation.



Your vet will be able to advise you on how to prevent infection and minimise spread should an infection occur.

Horses in isolation should be kept 10–20m away from others on the yard. It is important to maintain strict hygiene and limit the number of people working with the infected horses – they

should wear gloves and shoe covers, and use separate buckets and mucking out equipment. Horses in isolation should be dealt with after the rest of the yard.

Fields used by infected horses should be rested for at least a month and troughs disinfected after the infected horses have been removed from the grazing. All stabling and equipment should also be thoroughly disinfected after use. It is good management to isolate new horses on the yard for two to three weeks, to reduce the possibility of an outbreak.



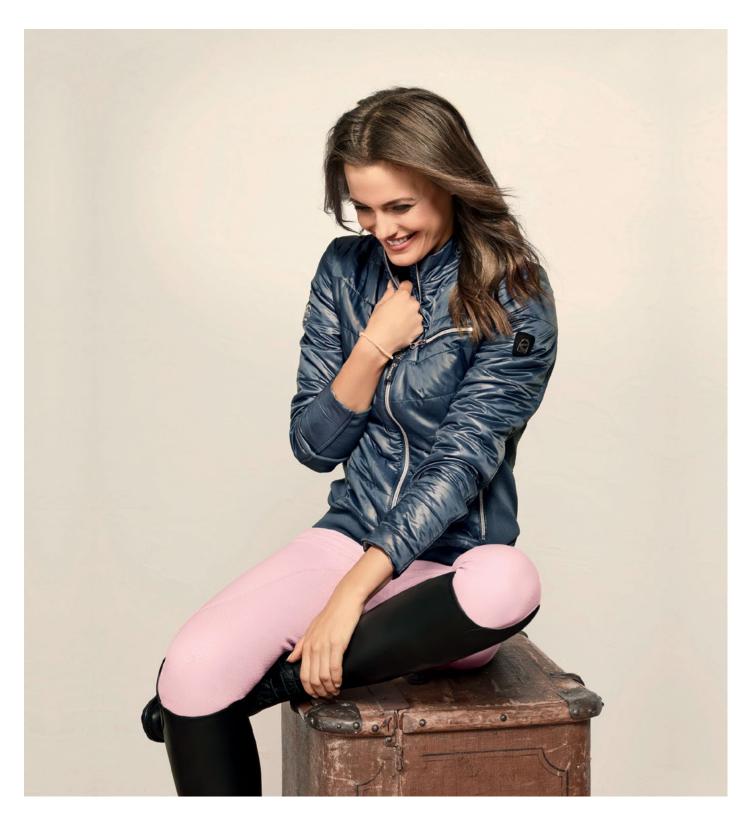
An everyday risk

Respiratory disease is a very common condition that can affect any horse ranging from Shetland ponies to Thoroughbred racehorses and, although we have touched on the main ones in this feature, there is a multitude of respiratory diseases that affect horses.

Many horses experience risk factors on a daily basis with no adverse effects, but overcrowding, poor ventilation, long journeys, poor nutrition and intense athletic activity can predispose a horse to infection. If you suspect your horse has a respiratory condition, immediately isolate him and contact your vet promptly.

With many of the main respiratory conditions being infectious, isolation of affected horses is imperative





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Tales of the unexpected

Readers tell us their true-life stories

More than meets the eye

When one H&R reader's horse developed a sore eye, the fact that it could be harbouring another living being wasn't a scenario she'd been expecting – especially one that, up until recently, hadn't been seen for the best part of a century!



ith horses being far too inquisitive for their own good and having their beautiful eyes situated rather unfortunately so that they protrude from the side of their head, eye injuries are not uncommon. When Horse&Rider reader, Laura Clayton, discovered that her 16.1hh Irish Sport Horse, Barney's eye was sore, she suspected nothing more than a minor bump. But there was far more to it than she could ever have imagined. Laura continues the story...

In August 2013, I noticed that Barney's eye looked a little irritated and puffy. The eyeball itself looked okay, so I decided to just bathe his eye and monitor it for a day or two to see if it improved. However, the next day a white spot had appeared towards the inside corner of his eye, so I immediately phoned my vets, Damory Veterinary Clinic.

After a thorough examination and a few tests, the vet diagnosed Barney with a corneal ulcer (an injury to the outermost layer of the eye) and a stromal abscess (an abscess in the cornea, which can follow corneal ulceration). My vet was not entirely sure what had caused it, but as Barney

had no history of a similar complaint, we put it down to it being 'one of those things'.

The treatment was a course of antibiotic drops and ocular serum, which was made by spinning down Barney's blood and removing the serum, which was then administered to his eye as drops. Within five days, his eye had healed and Barney was back to normal.

Growing concern

I thought that was the last of it, but in February 2014 disaster struck. When I got Barney in from the field, his eye was puffy and inflamed again. I immediately called the vet and Barney was diagnosed with another corneal ulcer that, with treatment, resolved in five days. Again, there appeared to be no obvious cause.

Two months later, Barney developed yet another ulcer. Vet Mel Wingate came out to see him and was concerned that he was developing such a regular pattern of ulcers for no obvious reason. So she put Barney back onto the antibiotics and ocular serum, and looked for a specialist who might be able to help us.

Mel spoke to Tim Knott, a vet at Rowe Equine Eye Clinic. Tim suggested that the next time Barney developed an ulcer he should be referred to Tim's practice in Gloucester. We didn't have to

Do you have a 'Tale of the unexpected' about your horse? Maybe an unusual ailment or a miraculous recovery?

Send the details to Lucy Turner, *Horse&Rider*, D J Murphy (Publishers) Ltd, Marlborough House, Headley Road, Grayshott, Surrey GU26 6LG or email lucy@djmurphy.co.uk



Until very recently, the parasite hadn't been seen in this country since 1927!

Dye showing a corneal ulcer in Barney's eye

wait long, because not even two weeks later the ulcer returned. The next day, we made the three-and-a-half hour journey to Tim's practice.

A worrying wait

When we got to Rowe Equine, Tim examined Barney and decided to admit him for further tests. I was told that I should prepare myself, as there was a very real possibility that he could have cancer in his eye. It was heartbreaking leaving Barney, but the staff were fantastic and reassured me that he was in the best hands and that they would look after him.

Tim began working on Barney later that afternoon. He flushed out his tear ducts and when he looked at the contents under a microscope, he discovered that Barney had parasites living in his eye. Tim then flushed his eye with ivermectin to remove any parasites that had been left behind.

Barney had also developed a small nodule on his cornea and Tim advised me that it would be in his best interests to remove it, in case it was anything sinister. I was apprehensive about the thought of Barney having surgery – Tim said it would be very delicate, 'like removing a piece of shell from an egg without breaking it'.

I knew it was the best thing for Barney, so I agreed to go ahead, then sat and waited on tenterhooks for the phone to ring with news.

Surprise findings

The surgery went well and I was so relieved when Tim called late that night to tell me that Barney was resting comfortably. Tim had just finished in the lab where he identified the lump as scar tissue – Barney was in the clear, he didn't have cancer!

Barney needed to have a lavage system fitted so that drops could be administered easily without interfering with his eye too much, but it meant that he had to stay at Rowe Equine to begin his recovery. The lavage system consisted of a tube that was fitted into his eyelid, and attached to various points on his head and neck. While this looked gruesome, Barney was quite comfortable with it.

After a few days, Tim rang to discuss what he had found in more detail and what Barney's prognosis was. I was absolutely gob-smacked to be told that the parasite that had been found in Barney had, until very recently, not been seen in this country since 1927!

He explained that it was likely that Barney's field companions were infected, too, and that Barney's reaction was so severe because he was allergic to the parasites. The horses at home were then treated for the parasite to ensure they couldn't pass them back to Barney when he returned home.



Tales of the unexpected

Readers tell us their true-life stories

Life-long management

Before I took Barney home, Tim explained that his eye was likely to remain hypersensitive for the rest of his life and that he would be likely to suffer from regular bouts of eosinophilic keratitis (inflammation of the cornea). This inflammation can be caused by a variety of factors, but Barney's most regular flare-ups are caused by flies.

He is always turned out in his fly mask over the summer to help protect his eyes. Barney lives at my grandparents' house and they regularly go out to his field throughout the day to replace the fly mask that he has rolled into the mud with a clean one! He had a flare-up recently that I think was caused by a cold, strong wind, so he now wears his fly mask on particularly cold or windy days over the winter, too.

He's likely to be prone to flare-ups for the rest of his life

The keratitis is easy to treat and is brought under control with a few doses of steroid eye drops. I have a good look at his eye every day to check for signs that he might be about to have a flare-up so that I can start treatment before he becomes uncomfortable. Barney has a very faint scar on his cornea from the surgery and the first sign of a problem is that the scar will turn whiter in colour. As soon as I see this, I phone Mel and we discuss the possible causes, whether we think it's necessary for Mel to come out and examine him, and if not, what treatment I should start on.

Usually, we put Barney on steroids and within two days he is completely back to normal. While steroids are great for treating the keratitis, if they are used in the presence of an ulcer they make it significantly worse, so it's important to be careful. There have been occasions where I have needed Mel to come and test for an ulcer before I've felt confident to proceed with the steroid treatment.

The other key to managing the parasite is to worm Barney and my other horses with an appropriate wormer every spring at the start of the fly season. While this goes against the recommendations for worming, it is the only way I will make sure that he stays free from the parasites.





Veterinary viewpoint

Mel Wingate, from Damory vets in Dorset, was the vet who suspected something unusual was going on with Barney's eye... My colleagues and I had seen
Barney on three or four occasions
during a six-month period for a
recurring corneal ulcer in the same eye. Corneal
ulcers are probably one of the most common
ocular problems that we see and involve
damage or disruption to the transparent cornea
that makes up the outer surface of the eye.
Usually it is caused by some form of trauma,

such as a thorn scratching the eye, and results in a painful, swollen, weeping, partially closed eye requiring prompt veterinary attention.

"Each time we examined Barney's eye, we confirmed the presence of a corneal ulcer at the same point on the eye. Samples were taken and sent off for analysis to make sure we were treating him with appropriate eye medication and each time the ulcer would heal.

"Given that corneal ulcers are usually traumatic in origin, I suspected we were dealing with something more unusual. Barney couldn't be that unlucky to keep damaging the same eye! That's when I contacted Tim Knott, a specialist ophthalmologist based at Rowe Equine Eye Clinic, who was incredibly helpful.

"Tim suggested that Barney's eye problem could be caused by a parasitic nematode (worm) called *Thelazia lacrymalis* – more commonly referred to as the eye worm. This is something I have never encountered before and, to my knowledge, nor had any of my colleagues. But I don't think it's quite as rare as it sounds. I suspect that the parasite is present in a lot of horses if you look for it, but that only certain individuals react to its presence in the way Barney did.

"From my research into this subject it would seem that *Thelazia lacrymalis* lives in the tear ducts and glands of the third eyelid, and it is the common face fly that acts as the vector (or transporter) of the worm, as the fly feeds on the eye's secretions. The female worm discharges larvae into the ocular secretions and the larvae are ingested by the fly as it feeds on them. The larvae then develop within the fly and they are deposited in another horse's eye when the infected fly feeds on the secretions.

"We referred Barney to Rowe Equine Eye Clinic for Tim to examine and treat him, and the presence of *Thelazia* was confirmed when Tim flushed Barney's tear ducts and found dead larvae. The parasite had caused a nasty recurring keratitis (inflammation of the cornea) and corneal ulceration. Barney underwent surgery on his eye to remove the abnormal area of cornea and, thanks to the brilliant expertise of the vets, he soon came back home and his eye healed really well.

"Thankfully, Barney is doing really well now and has retained his eye without any visual impairment. He has been left with a tiny area of scarring on his cornea, which may fade with time, and is back to his normal cheeky self, full of character and a very popular patient with his vets!"

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This month on Orseaking eruks





A pair of tickets to the CLA Game Fair!

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only to see the experts, but to have a go and try something new. The shopping opportunities are endless and all set in the beautiful grounds of Harewood House.

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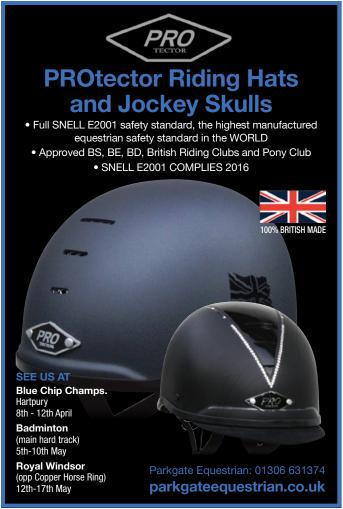
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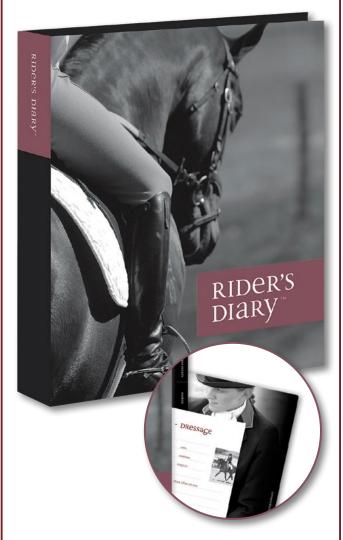
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In this series, I'm showcasing horses owned and ridden by my pupils. The horses came to the clinic unwashed. It was the middle of the season, so they were quite tidy, but in need of some work to be show-ready. This month, I'm looking at trimming, which is really important and takes a lot of practice. Get it right, and you can improve your horse's head, topline and limbs - it's a crucial part of professional showing turnout.

howing star Lynn Russell is a genius at making horses look their very best. A hairy cob becomes a smooth operator with clever clipping - his head comes into handsome definition and his limbs look clean as a whistle. As well as enhancing a horse's assets, Lynn minimises faults with a buzz of the blades. It takes practice, so begin now and you'll be ready for the show season. Lynn continues...

Step-by-step Trimming a horse's head

Clipping a horse's head is really important for showing, especially a cob's. They can grow very thick hair, even beards and moustaches, so you need to sharpen it up regularly. Here's what I did with Corky...

Because I don't know Corky well and haven't clipped him before, I'm starting slowly. I'm using quiet, cordless clippers (below) that are ideal for a nervous or unfamilar horse. The clippers also have adjustable blades so I can clip as tight to his head as I want. I begin on a low setting and just place them against his neck to start off with – that way I can see how he reacts before I get stuck into clipping.



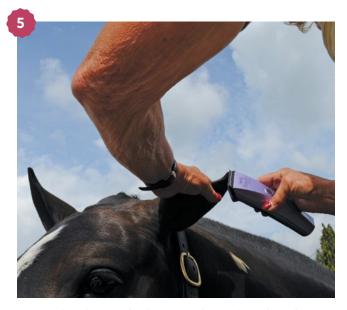
Don't wear lipgloss if you're clipping – you'll end up with a moustache!

Lynn's top tip

I start with the blades set to clip close, so I can take off all the whiskers. With a cob, it's also important to take off the moustache, if he's got one.



Next I trim his ears, keeping the blades on a wide setting. Ears are very difficult to clip. I keep moving the clippers so I'm always clipping with the growth of the hair. I remove the hair from the inside and outside of the ears.



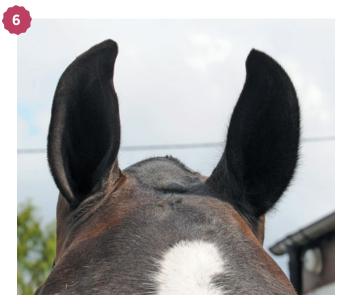
Once I've done that, I put the clippers on a close setting and trim the top of his ear.



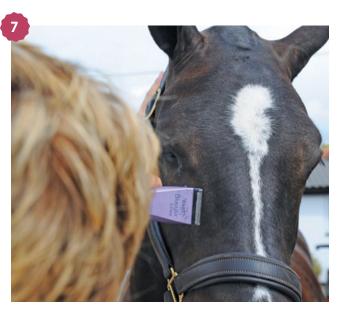
Once I've clipped Corky's whiskers, I widen the clipper setting as I don't want to shave his jawline as tight as his whiskers. I also don't want to take the coat too short on a dark horse because it will affect his coat colour. Then I run the clippers under his jaw, following the direction of the coat.



The small clippers are great for trimming the forelock, because I can blend it in with the hair on his face. I want my cobs to have a really nice, sharp head and for this I get much more control with small clippers than I do with big clippers.



One ear clipped, one unclipped - what a difference!



To finish, I take off the guard hairs around his eyes, which can be a bit of a feat. Although Corky doesn't seem too worried!

Step-by-step Trimming a horse's legs

Whenever you're trimming a show horse, it must look natural. You don't want any clipping lines to show, or to have lumps missing. It takes a lot longer using smaller clippers, but in the show season you can't afford to make any mistakes.



I stick with small, quiet clippers for Corky's legs. I begin by tidying up the coronet band, graduating the hair around it so it blends into the hoof. It's not as easy as it looks. You need a steady hand, and to change the settings on the blades so they're wider as you get closer to his pastern.



Next, I clip down either side of the fetlock joint. You can already see that it's a much better shape.



I'm struggling to get Corky's fetlocks trimmed properly because he has quite large ergots. Ask your farrier to take them off so you can remove all the hair in this area, otherwise they get in the way.



Now I move on to his hindlegs, trimming them in the same way as I did the front legs. Here I'm using larger clippers to trim long hairs at the back of Corky's cannon bone.



Now I'm going to use bigger clippers and take them in long strokes down the sides of the cannon bone. In this area, I always clip in the direction the hair is growing.



Because Corky is slightly upright in front, trimming his forelegs is very important. I'm going to trim the back of the pastern very closely to give him a lot more joint definition. When trimming around the joint, I'm careful not to trim so tight that I leave clipper marks.



That's a trimmed leg! You can see the difference between the clipped pastern and coronet (above left) and the unclipped one. Because I've clipped the joint, Corky doesn't look as upright as he does in the other one. When he is shod, he could do with having his heel reduced a little to promote a little more growth through his toe and improve the angle of his pastern.

Lynn's top tip Trim your horse's legs before you hog his mane, otherwise as you bend dow all the little hairs left over from hogging fall down your back – yery

Tricl

Tricks of the trade

Here I'm trimming
working hunter Calato's
hindlegs with the clipper
blades on a close setting.
Because he's grey with
black skin, if I clip too
close you will see a lot of
black coming through,
so I'm working slowly to
make sure I can control
my trim.



This hunter, Ruby, is quite light of bone, so all I'm going to do is tidy up the fetlock area for better joint definition. Doing this improves the amount of bone the horse looks to have, which is important in the show ring.



I'm using small clippers to take cob Frankie's whiskers off. It's tricky because he is quite ticklish. You'll be surprised at how much hair comes off. It gives him a quality look (left) rather than a common little snout.

I do most of my summer trimming on my show horses with the small clippers. They're great for tricky work and ticklish places, and also for horses who are nervous of clippers or are first-timers. I had a cob I couldn't clip at all when I first got him, so I did his first three clips with the small clippers and now he's okay.

Web extra



Watch Lynn clip ears, muzzles and whiskers in our video guide bit.ly/lynn-trimming

Next month

Finish off your horse's perfect showing turnout with a beautifully trimmed and pulled tail.

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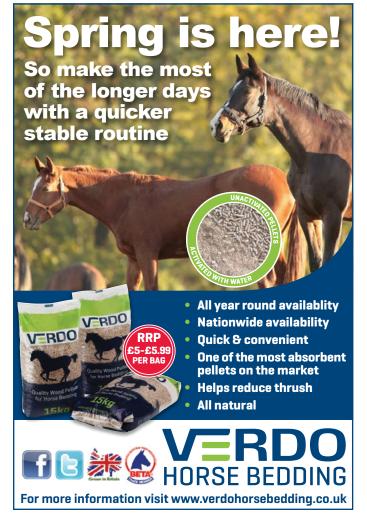
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* When compared to traditional diets with comparative energy levels

Keep your horse in good shape this summer by paying attention to his diet and exercise. Two experts offer their advice

s the warmer weather approaches and the grass starts to grow, many of us struggle to keep our horses at a healthy weight. Some horses only have to look at the spring grass to pile on the pounds, but how concerned should you really be and what changes can you make to ensure he stays fit, not fat?

"The only way for a horse to get fat is if the energy he consumes exceeds the energy he expends," says independent equine nutritionist Alexandra Wesker. "Equally, the only way for him to lose fat is if the energy he consumes is less than the energy he expends. The amount of energy consumed is increased by your horse eating more or eating feed with a higher energy content, whereas expended energy rises when he exercises more or if the exercise is more intensive."

Like humans, some horses are more prone to weight gain than others. If that sounds familiar, it's important to be vigilant about the amount of feed and exercise he is getting.

"Typically, native breeds are more prone to being overweight, because they've evolved to withstand harsh winters, poor grazing and exposure to the elements," says the Mare And Foal Sanctuary's Sian Morris.

"Today's domesticated horses often have a higher calorie intake because they have access to high-quality grazing, hay or haylage and hard feed. In addition, they are often only in light work, which means they don't burn many calories or maintain muscle tone."



Our experts



Alexandra Wesker MSc RNutr MSB RSciTech is an independent equine nutritionist.



Sian Morris works at the Mare and Foal Sanctuary, assisting with rehoming of horses, handling welfare concerns and liasing with loan homes.

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See page 114 for Spillers' feeding tip of the month



Dangers of being fat

Many vets and equine charities will tell you that equine obesity is a major problem in the UK. With our damp, sunny climate, grass growth can be sudden and its sugar levels may be high. This can pose a real threat to your horse's health, and experts warn owners to be aware of the dangers in order to keep their horses healthy.

An overweight horse is at an increased risk of...

- laminitis.
- · equine metabolic syndrome.
- insulin resistance.
- stress on his heart and lungs.
- bone and joint problems, if he is young.
- excess strain on the limbs and joints.
- becoming easily fatigued.
- arthritis.
- difficulties giving birth.

Calorie counting

Monitoring your horse's calorie intake is a good indicator of how much energy he is receiving. The challenge is to provide enough food to maintain a healthy digestive system, without offering more calories than is essential.

Alexandra advises: "If you want to feed less energy but don't want to compromise on the amount of food, the

energy content of the food needs to be reduced. When it comes to concentrates, choose one with less energy. If you're at all unsure of which feed to choose, consult an equine nutritionist to find the best option for your horse.

"Energy intake can be reduced by feeding a different form of roughage. For example, hay has a lower energy content than grass or haylage. If your horse lives out, you can decrease the size of his paddock and supplement his diet with hay – if he is eating the hay, he'll be consuming fewer calories than if he's

eating grass. This offers your horse the benefits of turnout, while providing roughage with a lower energy content.

"Another way to reduce the amount of sugar in hay is to soak it for several hours. However, soaking reduces hay's mineral content. Providing a mineral lick at all times is a way of ensuring your horse is receiving sodium, magnesium, phosphorus and copper, which are the important minerals and trace elements

he needs in his diet. Providing a mineral lick

is a good idea, even if his hay isn't soaked."

At the Mare and Foal Sanctuary, the staff use a variety of methods to control the residents' food intake.

Sian explains: "You can reduce your horse's grazing by using a grazing muzzle, strip grazing the paddock or by bringing him into a stable, barn or yard to manage his diet more closely.

"Also, consider whether your horse really needs to be fed concentrates.

Take into consideration his breed, type,

temperament, workload and current body condition score. A good way to reduce your horse's roughage intake while he is stabled is to double-net your hay (one inside





The right workload

Paying attention to your horse's diet is only half the battle to keeping his waistline trim. The amount and type of exercise you include in his weekly routine is also a key factor. "Exercise is the best way to reduce a horse's weight and the amount of energy expended should be more than the energy consumed," Alexandra explains. "Enter that jumping class you have been thinking about doing or go for a longer hack, including some hill work."

Summer is the prime time to enjoy your horse, with the longer days and better weather making horse-owning a pleasure. But by asking an overweight horse to work harder, you are putting him at risk of developing other problems. Before embarking on an increased exercise regime, it's important to remember that, just like any horse, a

fat horse will need time to develop his fitness.

"It's important to increase your horse's workload slowly, especially if he's overweight, in order to prevent unnecessary strain on his limbs, heart and lungs," says Sian. "An overweight horse has to make an increased respiratory effort during exercise, will lack stamina and muscle, and will generally be less fit for the job than a horse who is a healthy weight.

"At the Mare and Foal Sanctuary, we have individually tailored exercise plans, starting with groundwork and progressing to ridden work in walk, gradually increasing the workload and intensity," says Sian. "If your horse is sound, but not trained to ride, you could take up horse agility, go for walks in-hand, or lunge or long-rein him to keep it varied."

Exercise is the best way to reduce a horse's weight – the energy expended should be more than the energy consumed

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Top tips

- Roughage generally provides less energy the tougher it gets. Fresh pasture gives the most energy, followed by haylage, hay and then straw. Mixing straw with your current roughage is a way of decreasing your horse's energy intake.
- You can also mix a little straw with concentrates.
 Introduce straw into the diet slowly, because
 horses need to adapt to chewing more thoroughly
 to prevent choke and impaction colic. Avoid
 feeding straw to horses with dental problems.
- If you feed concentrates, place a large stone in the bucket to slow down your horse's feeding rate. The stone must be large and smooth to prevent your horse hurting himself or swallowing it.
- Avoid feeding too many treats and never make them a part of your horse's general diet. If you get your horse's diet right, he will not be hungry and there will be no need for extras.
- Avoid leaving your horse without feed. This
 causes boredom and stress, and enhances the
 development of gastric ulcers.
- For a lower calorie diet, choose feedstuffs carefully. Read the packaging and opt for low calorie or unmolassed feeds.

Avoid feeding too

many treats

- Graze overweight horses on poor-quality pasture. Avoid dairy pasture or fertilised paddocks.
- Place feed in a treat ball and provide fibre in the form of chaff – this will slow the eating process and increase chewing time.
- Track grazing is a great way to limit your horse's grass intake and encourage him to move around more to access the grass.
- Fit a grazing muzzle. Your horse may need showing how to eat through it, too. However, they are very effective at limiting grass intake.
- Slowly but steadily increase the amount and intensity of work to help your horse burn more calories.

• If your horse is on a restricted or a forage-only diet, he will need a feed balancer or a broadspectrum vitamin and mineral supplement to ensure he is receiving a balanced diet.

Body condition scoring

Body fat of horses is scored using a chart. The chart used in the UK is the Carroll and Huntington chart, ranging from 0–5 (the Henneke System ranges from 1–9 and is commonly used in the USA). Horses are classed as fat if they score a 4 on the Carroll and Huntington scale and very fat if they score a 5. Body fat is stored in multiple areas of the body, mainly the neck, should each area is scored according to the chart, then



See page 114 for Spillers' feeding tip of the month

Wellbeing news



{ NEWS SPECIAL }

Promote horse health

The National Equine Health Survey gives a valuable insight into the health of the UK's horses, ponies and donkeys, so that the most common diseases can be identified, prioritised and addressed. It's run by the Blue Cross, and sponsored by Spillers and Zoetis. All owners are encouraged to take part and the survey is open from 18–24 May.

Last year, data was collected from 12,301 horses, ponies, donkeys and mules in the UK. It's important data – the results help to establish benchmarks for equine health and disease in the UK, and define priorities for future research, training and education. Equine and veterinary colleges and universities also use the data as primary source material.

Last year, the survey highlighted the rise of atypical myopathy in the UK, leading vets to record and monitor incidences, and undertake further research. The survey identified an apparent increase in laminitis, when compared with previous years. The 2014 survey also highlighted that 20% of owners are unaware of the risk of encysted small redworm, and showed that the reported number of overweight horses and ponies had more than doubled since the previous year.

Speak up for your horse – take the survey at bluecross.org.uk/NEHS or email NEHS@bluecross.org.uk to register for the survey. It only takes five minutes and can make a difference to the UK's equine population.

{ RESEARCH }



Stable safe

Researchers in Poland investigated the working conditions of people caring for horses. Air samples were collected from inside the stables and outdoors, and then compared – the stable air was found to be 'considerably contaminated' with bacteria and fungi. The results showed that the average concentration of bacteria in the stable air exceeded what was considered a safe value for humans, putting grooms at considerable risk of adverse health effects.

{ NEW TREATMENT }

Sand colic solution

Sand is often ingested by horses who graze on sandy soil and it can cause colic. To reduce the risk of sand colic, these horses can be fed a supplement to help them pass the sand out of the large colon before it causes them any problems. Psyllium and magnesium sulphate are thought to be useful ingredients for expelling sand from the digestive system, so a group of international researchers conducted a study to

compare their effect.

The study looked at horses who had naturally acquired sand in their large colons. The

treatments were administered via a nasogastric tube for four days, then the researchers took X-rays of the horses' abdomens to measure the amount of remaining sand.

Nine of the 12 horses treated with a combination of psyllium and magnesium sulphate successfully evacuated the sand from their colons. But only three of the 12 horses treated with psyllium alone and two of the 10 horses treated with magnesium sulphate alone successfully evacuated the sand. So using

psyllium and magnesium sulphate together was much more effective.



Worried about laminitis? Help keep your horse safe with Spillers Happy Hoof. It's a low-calorie, high-fibre feed that's approved by The Laminitis Trust. It can be used as a complete feed or as a replacement for hay and is specifically designed to extend eating time.









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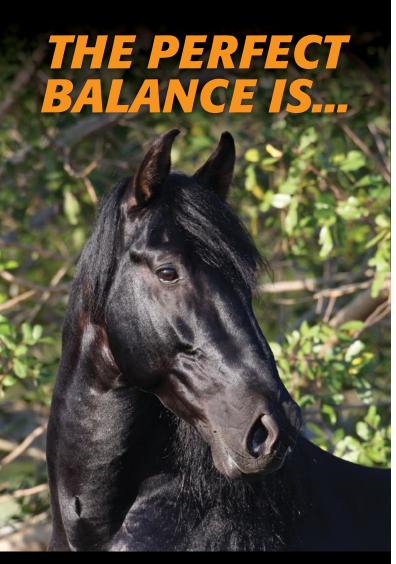
Evidence shows that up to 90% of laminitis cases may be caused by an underlying hormonal disease, either Cushing's Disease (PPID) or Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS)1,2. By working with your vet, these hormonal diseases can be uncovered by simple blood tests. Knowing the culprit ensures your horse or pony receives appropriate management to reduce risk of further episodes of painful laminitis. So spring into action and speak to your vet about testing today.

To find out more and see typical cases under investigation visit





References: 1. Donaldson MT et al. (2004) JAVMA 224(7):1123-1127. 2. Karikoski NJ et al. Domestic Animal Endocrinology 41(2011) 111-117. An educational service from Boehringer Ingelheim Limited, Vetmedica, makers of Prascend. Further information available from Boehringer Ingelheim Limited, Vetmedica, Bracknell, Berkshire, RG12 8YS, UK. Date of preparation: Feb 2015. AHD 8436. Use Medicines Responsibly (www.noah.co.uk/responsible)



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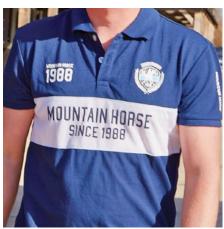












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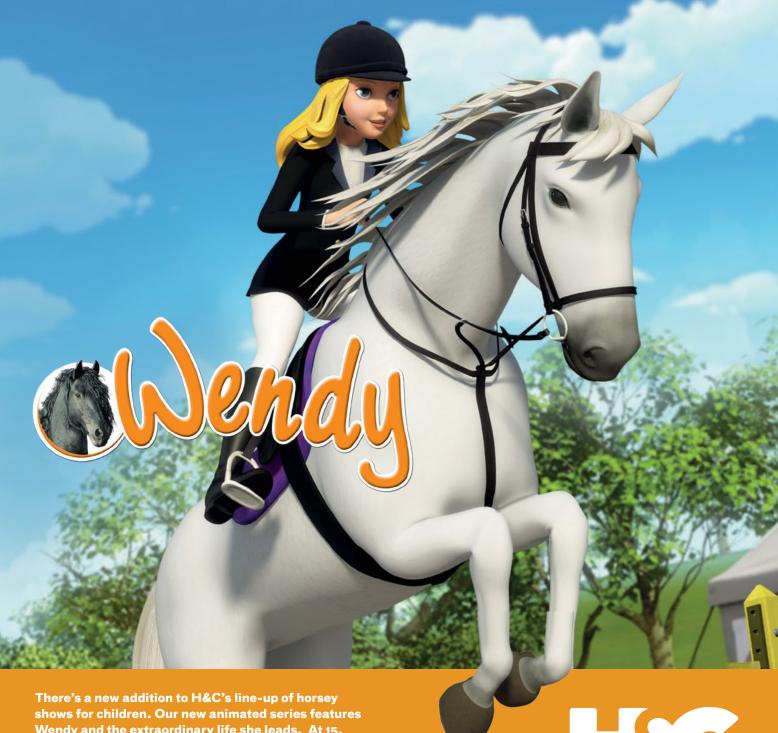
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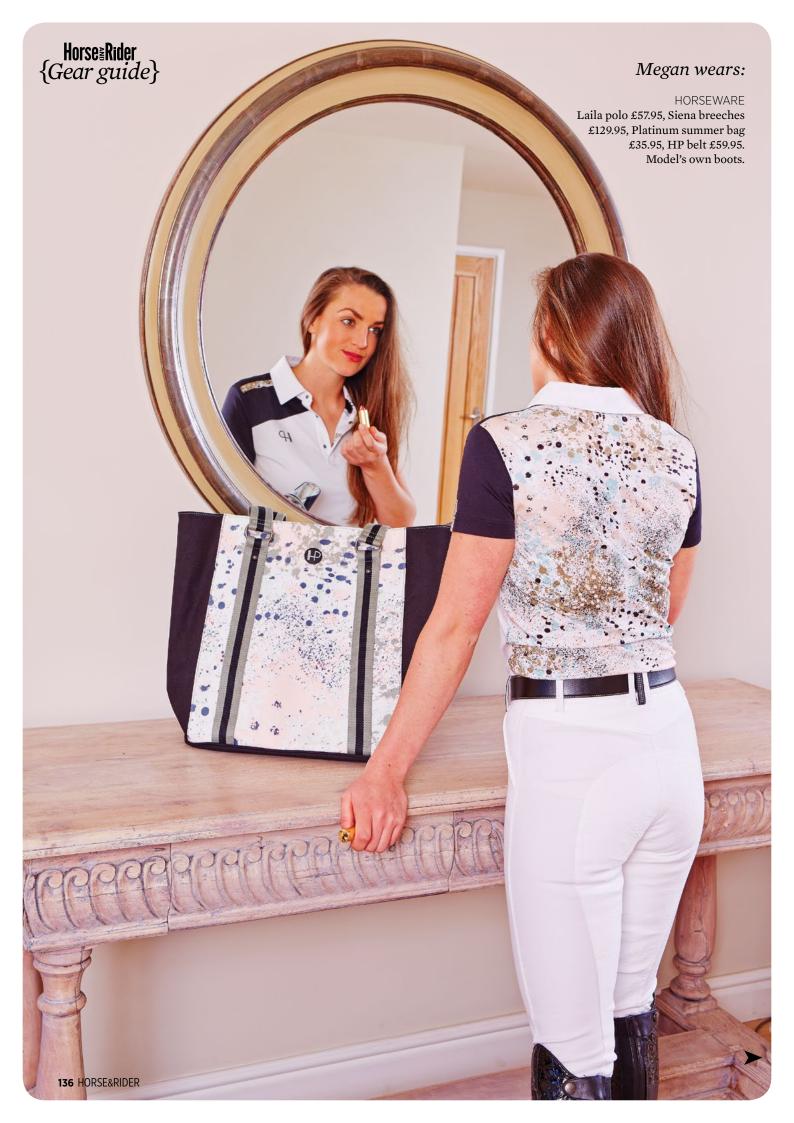
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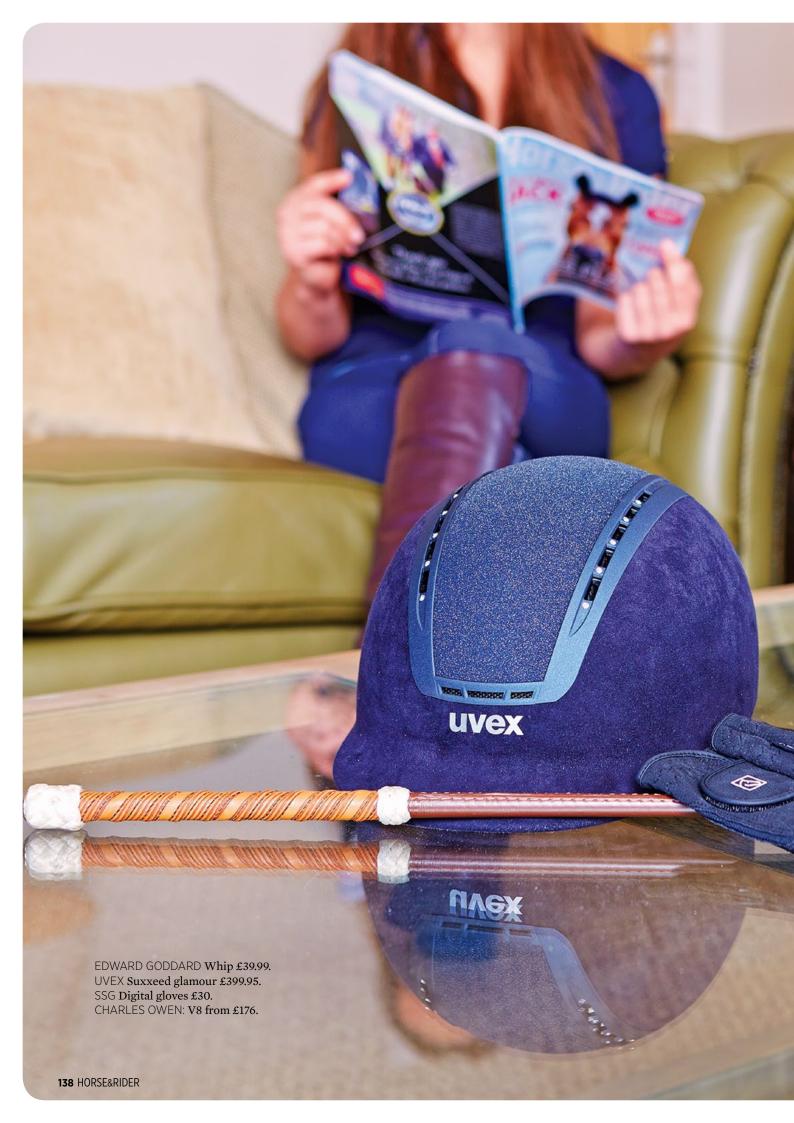
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he choice of turnout rugs on the market can feel overwhelming.

And when you've made a choice and invested in a rug, it's only natural to want to maintain it in as good condition as possible.

Denier is a unit of measure for the density of the fibres. A higher denier rating means that a rug's fabric is bulkier and harder wearing. When deciding on a rug, which grade of denier to choose depends on your horse. Is he playful in the field, young or boisterous? If so, your rug of choice should ideally be 1000D or higher.

Think about durability – do you mind replacing your rug every year, or would you rather replace it every 10 years? The higher the denier count, the higher the price and the longer it should last.

The outer fabric or, in some cases, the barrier layer underneath, is coated on the inner side with a **waterproof layer**. For some higher quality rugs, you shouldn't have to reproof the rug within the first three years. After that, it depends on how much you use your rug, but once a year should be more than enough.

Breathability is important, especially if you need to turn your horse out before he is totally dry and if you can't pop to the yard to change rugs on warm days.

Just because a rug has a higher denier, it doesn't necessarily mean it is less breathable. Breathability depends on the type of fabric and waterproof coating used. And just because it's more waterproof, it doesn't necessarily mean it's less breathable, either.

Breathability is measured by how much moisture vapour can be released through the waterproof coating within a 24-hour period and this will vary according to the materials used. Check the manufacturer's waterproofness/breathability standards for the rug to see exactly how waterproof and breathable it is.

To **wash a rug** yourself, you should first gently brush off any excess dirt and mud

from the outside. Once it's dry, gently hose the rug and wash it using a product specifically formulated to clean horse rugs. This will help avoid any damage to the fabric or waterproof coatings. Strong or biological detergents can affect the waterproof coating.

Don't wash your rug with a power washer, because the pressure from the washer could damage its waterproof layer. If you're using warm water, the temperature should also not exceed 30°C.

Once your rug is clean, it's a good time to check for any damage, and repair small tears or nicks using a rug repair kit to seal and waterfproof them. When your rug is completely dry, fold it neatly and store it in a breathable bag, in a cool, dry area, away from any moisture, damp or excessive heat.







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BEHIND THE SCENES

At the Four Seasons Hotel Hampshire

The equestrian centre at the Four Seasons Hotel Hampshire provided the perfect backdrop, says Céleste Wilkins

et in the glorious Hampshire countryside, near Dogmersfield, the equestrian centre at the Four Seasons Hotel Hampshire was a spectacular setting for this season's gear guide shoot. The staff graciously welcomed us into the perfectly appointed clubhouse and provided us with the most delicious pastries before we were let loose onto the grounds to snap away. The 14-stable yard is newly-built and there's a manège in the centre, with another just a few steps away from the stables. The horses were so sweet - we met two gorgeous school horses who were quite happy to pose for the camera and

cuddle with our models.

We were incredibly lucky with the weather – the preceding week had been rainy, but we were treated to a day of blazing sunshine and blue skies. But there were a few times where we weren't so lucky. The previous day's deluge had made the ground rather muddy and soft – something I wasn't thinking about when I directed our photographer, Liz Gregg, onto a grass verge to turn around in her car! She ended up well and truly stuck in the mud and, although I tried, I couldn't push the

car out. Luckily, a farmer came along in his hefty four-wheel drive and towed

Liz out. This wasn't the end of her misfortunes – she found out what touching an electric fence feels like – the hard way! The little setbacks didn't dent her cheery mood and she took some amazing shots of our fabulous models,

Shaun Pay, Kate Jackson, Megan Macfarlane Waller and Jessica Vanassche. Our *Horse&Rider* team comprised of Abi Cannon, Georgia Guerin and Victoria Howe, and our brilliant Art Editor, Sarah Garland.

If you're inspired to plan a retreat to the countryside with the lovely horses of the Four Seasons Hotel Hampshire, visit fourseasons.com/hampshire

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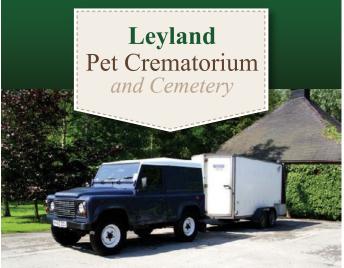
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Check out some of our favourite horsey products this month

Made from full-grain, soft leather, the **Dublin Summit Zip Jodhpur Boots** include the RCS Ultra footbed for additional comfort and support.

Sizes: Ladies' 4–8 RRP £99.99 dublinclothing.co.uk



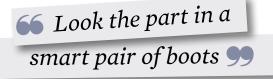
The Albion K2 jump saddle

incorporates a contoured knee pad to help you achieve a closer leg contact, and supportive knee rolls to promote a super-secure, correct leg position.

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RRP from £1,499 01922 646210

albionsaddlemakers.co.uk





Colours: Navy or black Sizes: 52–61cm RRP £83.99 for matt finish, £99.99 for suedette finish 01303 872277 wefi.co.uk





Entertain your horse in his stable with a hanging or wall-mounted lickable, chewable toy. Bizzy Bites combine textured wings for chewing and a molasses-based, edible lick into a boredom-busting toy.

Colours: Aqua or pink RRP £35 01494 837303 bizzybites.co.uk

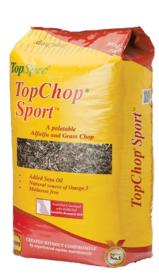




Carr & Day & Martin Equimist 360 Canter Mane & Tail can spray a full 360°, so can even be applied while the bottle is held upside down.

Available in 600ml RRP £11.70 0845 5004040 carrdaymartin.co.uk





TopSpec TopChop Sport is a dust-extracted blend of alfalfa and British grasses, lightly coated with soya oil, making it more palatable for a fussy feeder.

RRP £12.25 topspec.com 01845 565030



KM Elite Products Orchard treats are a great reward for your equine friend, and a good source of omega-3, 6 and 9 fatty acids.

Available in 1.5kg RRP £3.99 01403 759659 kmeliteproducts.co.uk



Designed for changeable summer weather, the Horseware Amigo three-inone Vamoose is a turnout and a fly sheet, and protects your horse from UV rays, too.

Colour: Silver/Excalibur Sizes: 5ft 6in–7ft 3in RRP £110 horseware.com

Tried & tested

SockMine horse riding socks with Coolmax

Colours: Pink/orange, navy/yellow

or black/maroon

Shoe sizes: 2-3.5,4-5.5,6-7.5,8-9.5 or

10-11.5 RRP £8

sockmine.co.uk

PROS: "These socks are very good value. I have been wearing them for months and they still look new – they wear and wash really well. They are really comfy and keep my feet warm without being too bulky."

CONS: "None."

BUY IF... you need versatile socks to keep your toes warm when the weather is cold and cool

when it's hot.

Tried & tested

Omega Alpha Chill Ultra calmer

RRP £15 per 60ml syringe omegaalphaequine.eu

PROS: "This offered my horse the right amount of calm without her feeling dozy. She is a nervous traveller and it helped her arrive at shows more relaxed, calm and ready to compete. Plus, after the initial dose she only needed 30ml, meaning I got two doses from each syringe."

CONS: "None."

BUY IF... you want to take the edge off your horse and make new experiences more relaxed and enjoyable.





Barrier Animal Healthcare Citrus Wash is a 100% natural and non-irritant summer body wash, containing avocado oil, aloe vera, citronella oil and chamomile – and there is no need to rinse.

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HyPerformance Pro ladies breeches

Colours: White, beige or navy

Sizes: 24-32ins RRP £70

hy-equestrian.com

PROS: "These breeches were hard-wearing and water repellent. The fabric is robust, with a bit of stretch, and hugged my leg shape without being restrictive. They washed well and kept their colour."

CONS: "The fastener was a little stiff to use."

BUY IF... you want competition or smart breeches for lessons.



Tried & tested

T.E.N. Challenged Lungs supplement

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CONS: "None."

BUY IF... you want a specialist lung supplement that's palatable and easy to feed.



Perfect prizes!

Stand out

to win! Two lucky readers will each win a pair of Rebel Rider Equidoodle breeches, worth £69.95, and a blouson jacket, worth £39.95. The breeches feature a three-quarter seat, high waist and Lycra lower leg. The jacket is waterproof,

has an inner fleece laver, and has external and interal zipped pockets. There is also iPod cord management in the neck. Available in ladies' sizes 8-14.



For more information, visit rebelrider.co.uk

Food for all

Four lucky readers will each win seven bales of **High Fibre HorseHage**, worth £7.75 each. It's a natural, bagged forage that is high-fibre, low-protein and low-energy.

HorseHage is also dust-free, to help maintain a healthy respiratory system, and is suitable for a wide range of horses from leisure to competition.



For more information, call 01803 527257 or visit horsehage.co.uk

Welcome mat

to win!

One lucky reader will win a set of 12ft x 12ft Equimat stable mats, worth £446.40. These highquality, durable, lightweight, interlocking stable mats are made from a unique mixture of EVA for lightness and synthetic rubber for durability. Easy to fit and lift for cleaning, they feature an easy-sweep, non-porous, antislip surface, and full drainage grooves and channels on the underside.



For more information, visit davieskett.co.uk

Need for speed

Twenty-five

lucky readers will each win a 20kg bag of **British** Horse Feed Speedi-Beet, worth £10.95. It's a micronized beet pulp feed that provides a good source of digestible fibre and is approved by The Laminitis Trust. It can be soaked and ready to use in just 10 minutes, and can be fed either cold or warm.



For more information, call 01765 680300 or visit britishhorsefeeds.com

To enter, complete the form on page 168 or visit horseandridercompetitions.co.uk

£1,586-worth of prizes to be won!

9 Boot up

Two lucky readers will each win a pair of Dublin Apex zip jodhpur boots, worth £114.99. Made from soft, full-grain leather with durable, slip-resistant, rubber outsoles, these boots are available in black or brown. They feature the platinum rider comfort system, which includes a sweat and odour control lining, shock-

absorbing heel cushion pod, contoured heel and arch support. Available in ladies' sizes 4–8.



For more information, visit dublinclothing.co.uk

71 Hot to trot

Twenty-one lucky readers will each win a pair of **Soxtrot socks** of their choice, worth £9.50. They're lightweight yet durable, cool in summer and warm in winter. A good fit under boots, they come in more than 150 designs – from bright and wacky patterns to plain and solid colours.



For more information, visit soxtrotuk.com

Entries must be received by 31 May 2015

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07790 691522 (Hampshire)



● 16.2hh, warmblood mare, 4 yrs. Expressive and powerful mare, ready to compete this year. Still green, needs a confident rider. £7,500. 07928 567472 (Devon)



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07515 948862 (Wales)



● 16.2hh, TB gelding, 12 yrs. Ex point-to-point, sweet-natured horse, has done all PC/RC activities. Polite to handle. £1,500.

07487 753131 (Cornwall)



● 16.2hh, warmblood gelding, 5 yrs. Super boy, always does his best to please. Very keen for him to go to a 5* competition home. £3,700.

07817 050203 (Buckinghamshire)



● 15.2hh, Standardbred mare, 7 yrs. Requires an experienced rider to unlock her potential. Willing attitude, hacks alone, lightly schooled. £800. 07718 074536 (Fife)



● 15.2hh, ISH mare, 10 yrs. Three lovely, balanced paces. Well-schooled on the flat and good technique over a fence. £5,500. 07943 07766 (Cornwall)



● 16hh, warmblood mare, 4 yrs. A dream to manage. Floaty paces, trainable and willing to learn. Would excel as Junior/FEI horse. £12,000. 07512 044597 (Devon)



● 17.2hh, warmblood X, gelding, 8 yrs. Has evented to Novice, currently building his BD record. Has scope to showjump with right rider. £6,000. 07512 044597 (Devon)



1st or 2nd pony

● 12hh, Welsh Section A gelding, 17 yrs. Loves showjumping and cross-country, and is very safe to hack. Micky has given my daughter so much confidence and is worth his weight in gold. He is barefoot and up-to-date with injections and teeth. £1.300.

07801 746593 (Worcestershire)



● Less than 8hh, Shetland stallion, 9 yrs. Well put together, ridden on and off the lead rein. Never silly or nasty in any way. £350.

07473 367592 (Tyne and Wear)



● 13.2hh, Arab mare, 6 yrs. Homebred mare, loving personality, good to do in all ways. Green in the school, likes jumping. £1,250. 07760 558752 (West Yorkshire)



Cracking little cob

● 13.2hh, cob gelding, 6 yrs. Neville is a very sweet little chap, easy to do in all ways, lives in or out. Passported and microchipped. He would make a fantastic driving pony. £1,000. 07919 915054 (Surrey)



● 14.1hh, cob gelding, 19 yrs. My first pony, taught me to ride and gave me all my confidence. Has mild arthritis. £850.

07720 624724 (North Yorkshire)



● 16.2hh, warmblood mare, 10 yrs. Currently competing at 1.20m with potential for much more. Forwardgoing and easy to load. £4,000. 07708 780531 (Lincolnshire)



• 13.1hh, New Forest mare, 8 yrs. Would make fantastic PC pony, lots of potential. Bold, scopey jump. Calm and friendly. £1,000.

07720 877360 (Berkshire)



● 16hh, warmblood mare, 12 yrs. Would suit a competitive teenager moving up to horses. Has jumped up to 1.20m. £5,000.

07703 319657 (South Yorkshire)



Fantastic hunter/allrounder

● 16.1hh, ID X, gelding, 10 yrs. 100% safe, good to hack out alone or in company, excellent in traffic and good to load. No napping or bucking and lives in or out. He is a real star who would love a fun, competitive home. £3,750.

07540 653585 (Shropshire)



● 15hh, Haflinger gelding, 10 yrs. Excellent temperament, good to catch, box, shoe and in traffic. Lovely paces. Tack included. £3,000. 07903 990552 (East Sussex)



● 15.3hh, TB gelding, 7 yrs. Would make great mother/daughter share, sane and sensible, three nice paces and pops a small jump. £1,000. 07887 440293 (North Yorkshire)



● 14.3hh, Arab mare, 5 yrs. Compact, powerful and well put together horse. Sensible, doesn't nap, responsive. £2,000. 07891 957477 (Devon)



● 16.3hh, warmblood mare, 8 yrs. Superb SJ bloodlines, mainly competed dressage up to Novice level. Snaffle-mouthed. £5,750. 07578 036063 (Essex)



● 13.1hh, Welsh Section C stallion, 3 yrs. Amazing pony, shown locally and at county level. Good to catch, box, with farrier etc. £800. 07852 102368 (Kent)



● 15.1hh, cob gelding, 5 yrs. Has done fun rides and cubbing. Hacks alone and in company. Easy, laidback, good in all ways. £2,500.

07828 417057 (Gloucestershire)

Dressage mare

● 16.2hh, TB mare, 8 yrs. A lot of horse for the money, works in a nice soft outline, comfortable ride, would excel in dressage or showing home. She is not a fan of jumping, but enjoys polework and groundwork. Good to shoe, box, catch, lead and clip. £1,250. 07725 741506 (Kent)



JARGON BUSTER BD: British Dressage; BN: British Novice; BS: British Showjumping; CS: cob size; CT: combined training; Disc: Discovery; DR: dressage; ER: endurance ride; Exp: experienced; F/M: freezemark; FR: first ridden; FS: full size; HDT: horse driving trials; HT: hunter trials; ID: Irish Draught; Inc: including; ISH: Irish Sport Horse; LDR: long-distance rides; LR: lead rein; M/chip: microchip; MG: mounted games; M/W: middleweight; ODE: one-day event; P/port: passport; PBA: part-bred Arab; PC: Pony Club; POA: price on application PS: pony size; pt-2-pt: point-to-point; R&D: ride-and-drive; RC: Riding Club; Reg: registered; ROR: Retraining of racehorses; Sec: section; SJ: showjumping; TB: Thoroughbred; Vacc: vaccinated; WB: Warmblood; WHP: working hunter pony; XC: cross-country.

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Are you thinking about buying an equestrian property? Horse&Rider finds out what you need to consider when it comes to getting a mortgage



f you keep your horse at livery, then you may have considered the benefits of buying a property with its own land and keeping him at home. After all, who doesn't dream of looking out of their bedroom window to see their horse grazing in the sun?

And what better way to offset the cost of keeping your horse and maintaining the land than having liveries of your own? You might even hope to include this income as extra earnings to secure a larger mortgage... But the reality of this concept isn't quite so simple.

Mortgages are classified as either commercial or residential - most properties with smaller scale equestrian facilities would be classified as residential,

whereas large livery yards and show centres would be classed as commercial. Residential mortgage lenders only take into consideration your pre-existing income, and won't include earnings that could be generated from the property - most high street-type lenders would not wish to lend at all if there is expected commercial use.

Meanwhile, commercial lenders usually look for purchasers with a history of running similar businesses, meaning that, unless you have relevant experience, securing a loan of this type will be difficult. You may be able to secure a mortgage that is financed in part residentially and part commercially, but this will depend on your commercial experience and business plan.

Another important consideration when expanding from just a couple of your own horses at home to having paying liveries is specialist insurance. Although it's not compulsory, livery yard liability insurance is advised and will normally include employer, public and product liability. Additionally, if you are providing full or part livery, you should also consider custodial liability - this would cover you for accidental injury or death to horses in your care or custody.

As well as mortgage and insurance costs, you will also need to factor in the cost of field and stable maintenance, increased utility, and probably business rates as well, so much thought should be given as to whether this is a viable option.



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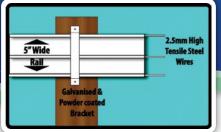
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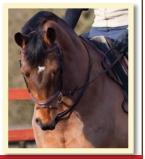
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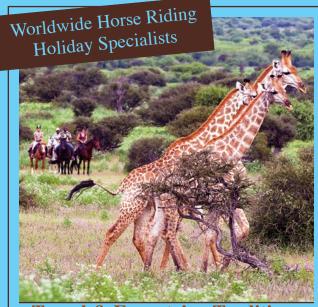
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lease complete the answers and tie-breakers for the competitions and 'Perfect prizes!' on the form below. Send your entry to: May Comps, Horse&Rider, D J Murphy (Publishers) Ltd, Marlborough House, Headley Road, Grayshott, Surrey GU26 6LG - entries sent to any other address won't be valid.

Entries must be received by 31 May 2015, unless otherwise stated. For full terms and conditions, visit horseandrideruk.com/terms_conds.htm To enter online, please visit horseandridercompetitions.co.uk

Page 8 Win tickets to Bolesworth International and Scouting for Girls concert (Entries must be received by 27 May 2015)

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Question When are Scouting for Girls playing at Bolesworth

Page 14 Win a Hit-Air vest

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Question In which direction does the Hit-Air vest inflate?..... Tie-breaker Tell us why an air vest would be a great addition to your equestrian equipment (max 50 words).

Page 97 Win a summer rug wardrobe from WeatherBeeta

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Question What fleece finish prevents bobbling on the WeatherBeeta polar fleece cooler rug?..... **Tie-breaker** Tell us why your horse deserves a new summer rug wardrobe from WeatherBeeta (max 50 words).

Page 156 Perfect prizes! (Tick which you'd like to win)

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Breeches size (8–14)
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with horses

Heather Bennett

Former international showjumper turned para dressage rider Heather gives an insight into her action-packed week

Monday Double dentist day for

my mare Tika and me! With a busy schedule, it's important to keep Tika in top condition. I also make my weekly visit to Manor Grange Stud for a session on their mechanical horse. The analysis helps me work on my balance and position, as well as the effect I have on my horses. Dash home,

then off for dinner with my friends and sponsors Andrew and Louise Bainbridge.



I welcome BBC Look North to the yard. They are planning a series on para athletes and their road to Rio 2016. My trainer Stephen Thompson and I are both interviewed, which is a bit nerve-racking! I then ride while the crew film me. I can't wait to see the results!



ensure that our changes remain straight. It's harder than it sounds. I also worked on the free walk, which is a personal challenge for me. I ride with loop reins because I have limited feeling in my hands, so to give the rein and allow Tika to stretch, I have to lean forward

> makes me dizzy. We're working on how to stop me getting disorientated -

and extend my arms, but this

who ever said dressage was easy?

Thursday

Stephen has introduced one-

handed flying changes to our training to

VVednesdav

The sun is shining and training went well. Stephen has been helping me with my trot. Before my accident, I was a Grand Prix showjumper, but didn't have to worry too much about my sitting trot. Now it's all about ensuring I can relax and ride without any tension. I relax in the evening watching my favourite soaps!

Friday

I pack the lorry for the five-hour drive to the Unicorn Equestrian Trust, Gloucestershire, for Squad training. As part of the World Class Training programme, these weekends allow me access to the team vet, doctor, nutritionist, physio and trainers - a thorough MOT for us both!

Heather Bennett, para dressage rider

In 2003, international showjumper Heather Bennett suffered an accident that changed her riding career. Against all odds, and not wanting a life without horses, Heather took up the reins again and is a mainstay on the para dressage circuit.



Saturday

Tika is checked over by the team vet and physio. We have been selected to ride for Team GB at Deauville, so it will be important that after the long journey through France, she arrives feeing fresh and ready to compete.

I see the doctor, physiotherapists, and Russell Guire, the biomechanics specialist, then have a session with the sports psychologist. When we travel as a team, they need to know all about my medical conditions, and the best way to help and support me as a para rider.

A lesson with Eric Mackenzie and then my rider review to discuss my new season goals. With the Para European Championships in September, it's important for us to keep training, but to also gain more international experience in order to make the selection criteria. Then it's time to go home.



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