



Ride confidently in open spaces

YOUR HORSE

For people with a passion for horses

April 2020
(Issue 463)
£4.30

BODY TALK

**Learn his language,
improve your bond**

Back in the saddle

Enjoy a positive
return to riding

Crack counter canter

in six
simple
steps

TREC

The sport
that really
is for all

REVEALED

The benefits of
going barefoot

GEAR

Spring fashion to
brighten your day

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Welcome

WHEN YOUR HORSE presents you with a challenge and you've exhausted all the skills you have, it's time to think outside the box and try something different. This is just what I did when I felt I'd hit a bit of wall with my training – that was until I started training with Jenku Dietrichsen at the start of 2019. Jenku's Modern Horsemanship methods made me completely rethink how I do things. With a better understanding of how horses learn, my training and my relationship with my horse have been transformed. I want to share more about this unique method and what it can do for you and your horse – see page 34.

When I learnt to ride (many, many years ago!) there were no all-weather arenas – we were just taught in a field with cones as markers. I still don't have an arena where I keep my horses and so I school in a field most of the time. If anything, I can find riding in an arena a little claustrophobic. But, for many riders, schooling in an arena has become the norm and it can be a big deal to leave its safe confines behind. If you'd like to take your riding out into the great outdoors, then our feature on page 42 is sure to give you the confidence to do it.

Have you ever taken the time to just



watch how a group of horses interact? It's fascinating to see the body language they use to communicate with each other. It's also a great opportunity to learn more about your own horse's personality and improve your bond – see page 64.

It can be pretty daunting getting back in the saddle after a break, but if you can't ignore the

urge any longer, on page 24 we have all the advice you'll need to make your return to riding a successful one.

If you never want to miss a copy of your favourite horsey mag (and who would?) we have a jaw-dropping subscription offer that you really can't afford to miss – receive 26 issues for the price of 13. See page 94 for full details.

We're on the final countdown until the clocks change – yay! Hopefully that will mean some better weather is on its way too. Taking care of horses through the winter is hard work. I for one can't wait for the longer days and the chance to spend a bit more time with my horses.

Allison

Acting editor, Allison Lowther

PS: It would be great to hear from you, so feel free to email me at allison.lowther@bauermedia.co.uk.

YOUR HORSE MAGAZINE

A word from the team...

Features editor Stephanie Anthony:

Put your horse's balance and canter rhythm to the test with counter-canter. Whether you're a novice or a dressage wiz, follow our expert's exercises to hone your skills. **Page 50**



Freelance features writer Julie Brown:

I love shopping – well, what horse owner doesn't! I so enjoyed working on the 'Spring buyer's guide', but it didn't help my addiction much – so many lovely things to buy. Take a look and get that shopping list started. **Page 120**



Veterinary physiotherapist

Sammy Finnemore:

Polework grids are a great way to help your horse maintain normal mobility and performance. Try my suppleness and strengthening grid and you'll find he will soon start to feel the benefits. **Page 48**



Equine podiatrist Emma Burston:

Are you thinking of letting your horse go barefoot? There are many benefits for both you and him. If you're not sure how to go about it, I'm here to help you make the transition as comfortable and easy as possible. **Page 70**



Meet our cover star

Chasing Rainbows (Lunar to her friends) is a six-year-old mare owned by Matthew Firth. She's competing at BE100 in 2020. Lunar has a beautiful temperament and loves 'the boys' next door – she keeps escaping to be with them!



PHOTO: MATTHEW ROBERTS



Getting back in the saddle (p24)



Your new spring wardrobe (p120)



Riding in open spaces (p42)

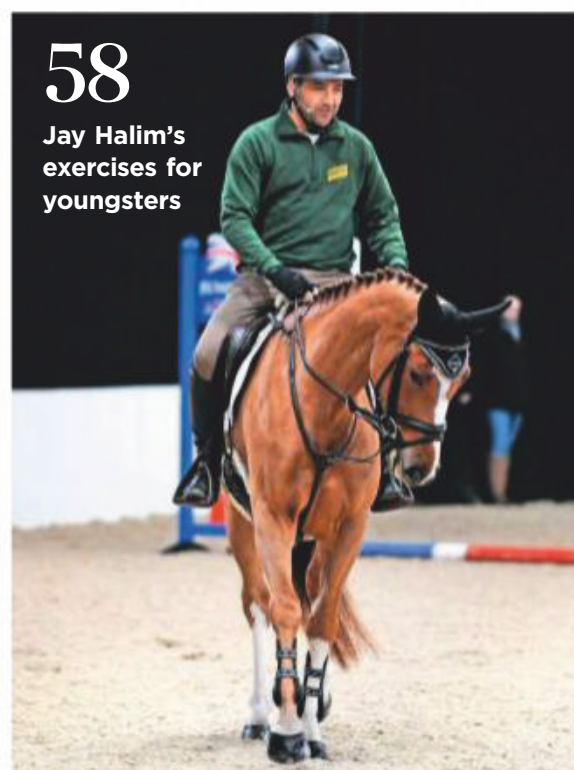
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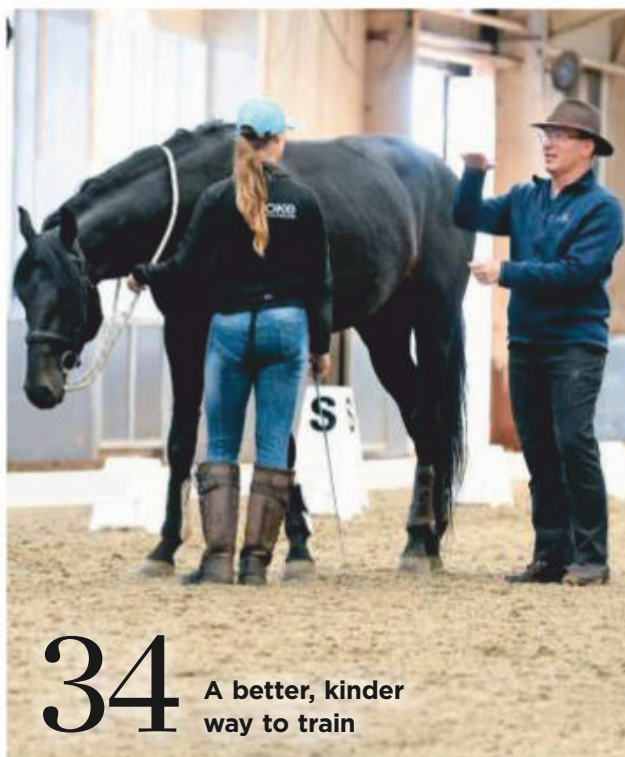


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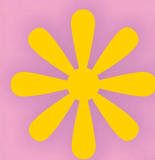


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Teach your horse counter-canter

On the cover





SUBSCRIBE & SAVE

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and get **two years** for the
price of one See page 94

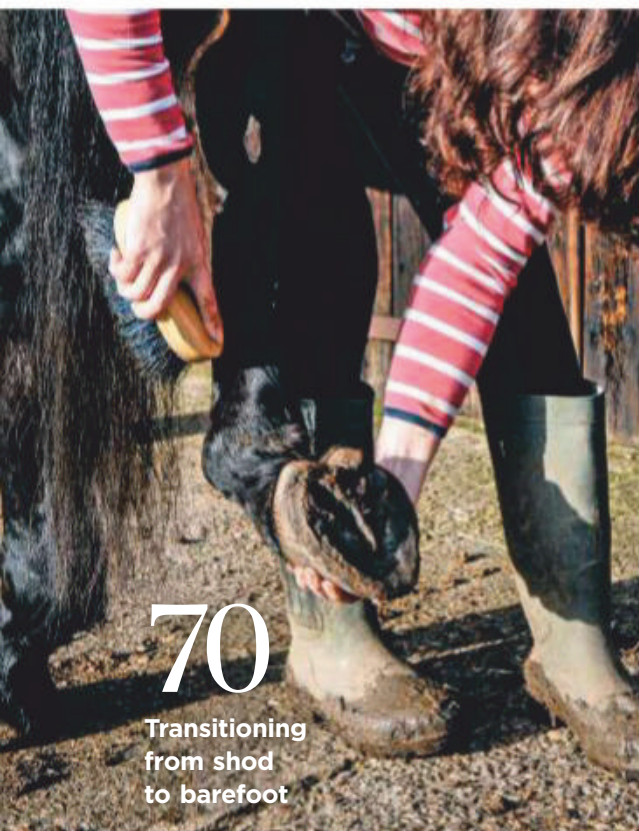


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Transitioning
from shod
to barefoot



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A full-page photograph of a rider on a horse, bareback, in a field. The rider is wearing a black helmet, a white sleeveless shirt, and tan breeches. The horse is a brown and white paint horse, wearing black boots on its lower legs. They are on a dirt path with a grassy field and trees in the background.

Riding bareback improves core stability, so if your horse spooks you'll sit more securely in the saddle

Your Horse challenges you to...

RIDE BAREBACK

Want to improve your skills as a rider, build your strength, and fine-tune your balance? Then give riding bareback a try.

Stephanie Anthony finds out more about the benefits

RIDING BAREBACK IS an excellent way to develop your strength as a rider. Many riders use their saddle and their reins as a crutch. However, with the saddle gone — which normally supports you and helps to hold you in the correct position — you have to rely on the strength in your legs and in your core to keep yourself upright and on your horse.

Removing the saddle can reveal flaws in your riding position that you may not have even realised were there. Removing your stirrups is also a good way to test this.

When you ride bareback, without several inches of leather, stuffing and saddle pad in the way, a channel of communication opens up between you and your horse. You will be able to feel

his every movement. This means that you can feel your horse's intentions more clearly and react more quickly. Experiment with using your weight as an aid and learning how your horse responds.

The next time you ride in a saddle, try to recall this awareness of how your horse's body moves to better understand the effects that your own movement and position have on his back.

Secure seat

By riding bareback and improving your core stability you should find that the next time your horse bolts or spooks you're sitting more securely in the saddle.

You'll likely discover that you tire more quickly when you ride bareback, especially when working in trot or canter. If you want to

improve your strength quickly, then make a point of riding bareback for five or 10 minutes at the end of each schooling session.

If you've not tried riding bareback with your horse before, make sure that you do it in a safe place, such as an enclosed arena. You could even try it on the lunge or with someone holding/leading your horse. Ensure that you wear a riding hat at all times.

There's no need to even move off anywhere, though, if you don't feel comfortable doing so — simply sitting on your horse bareback while he's standing still can help you to develop an understanding of the sensitivity of his back and the line of communication that exists there. Your horse is the best riding instructor you will ever have. 🐾

Giving it a go?
Tag us in your
photos on social
media and use
the hashtag
#YHChallengesYou

HORSE

Here's what you need to know about this month

talk

For all the latest news from the horse world, visit yourhorse.co.uk

FUNDRAISING SKYDIVE

Swapping ponies for parachutes

Ahead of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games British riders are swapping saddles for parachutes to raise vital funds for Team GBR eventing. Organised by the Horse Trials Support Group (HTSG), a number of brave equestrians, including Tina Cook, Spencer Sturme, Alice Fox-Pitt and Ibby Macpherson, will be skydiving on 22, 24 and 29 April at Skydive Netheravon in Wiltshire.

The HTSG supports talented eventers, providing them with the resources to reach the top of their sport. This year's main fundraising aim is for Team GBR and the campaign for success at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. HTSG members and the general public alike are invited to come along to support the riders taking on the challenge.

- For more about the HTSG, visit htsg.co.uk
- Donate at [gofundme.com/f/htsg-skydive](https://www.gofundme.com/f/htsg-skydive)



Commentator and former eventer Spencer Sturme takes a leap of faith for a good cause

PULLING POWER

Horsepower triumphs over machines

A riding centre has invested in a special kind of horsepower to help beat the winter mud. Leanne Launchbury, who owns Bourton Vale Equestrian Centre in Gloucestershire with her husband Justin, said the idea came after weeks of heavy rain when they were unable to use tractors in their fields.

The solution came in the form of 16hh, 11-year-old Belgian Draught mare Belle. "She's ideal for pulling a harrow and getting into small spaces," says Leanne. "By bringing back horsepower we can support a rare breed and a traditional method of agriculture — and not get stuck again!"



Belle doesn't let a bit of mud stop her

Charlie was a much-loved member of the team



STAR SHIRE DIES

Fond farewell

A much-loved Shire, described as the 'star attraction' at Acton Scott Historic Working Farm in Shropshire, has died. Charlie had been a valuable member of the team for more than 10 years.

Farm staff said they had been reducing his workload due to his stiff back legs, but he'd been in good health over the winter and was out in the field on the day before he died.

Lezley Picton of Shropshire Council said: "Charlie was so loved. He will always be there in our hearts."

HOOFING IT

Delivering for donkeys

A postal worker from Devon will swap the county's quiet rural lanes for the busy streets of the capital in April as she takes on the London Marathon to raise funds for The Donkey Sanctuary.

Sharon Wells, 54, is one of 12 runners who will embark on the challenge in support of the equine welfare charity. Sharon, who lives in nearby Feniton, is a regular visitor to the sanctuary and wants to give something back to the area she calls home.

■ To donate, visit justgiving.com/fundraising/shazrunsvlm2020



Sharon is running in aid of The Donkey Sanctuary



HORSES HELPING HUMANS

Shetlands boost mental health

Two super-cute Shetland ponies, Sven and Freddie, have been visiting primary schools in north-east England to help engage children in discussions about their mental health. The new initiative was launched by Lynsey Swales, a former police officer, BHSI and trained counsellor. As well as miniatures Sven, two, and Freddie, four, Lynsey owns four other rescue Shetlands.

"We use the ponies to help the children start talking. It helps them to open up," explains Lynsey. "Mental health is an issue I'm quite passionate about, as I've dealt with a lot of stressed people over the years. I feel that it's good to start removing the stigma around mental health as early as possible."

■ Find out more about Freddie and Sven at facebook.com/tellfreddietellsven

RESCUE UPDATE

Ever wondered what happens to the rescued horses and ponies you read about in the news? Wonder no more...

Patchwork was rescued in 2009, along with 10 other cobs who had been abandoned on a site in Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire. The group was spotted straying into the grounds of a local school and were in very poor condition.

On arrival at Redwings they were all treated for worms and lice. Patchwork's blood tests also showed that she had problems with her liver and intestines.

Happily, the mare made a full recovery and in 2012 she was rehomed to Yvette in Norfolk. In 2019 they were



AFTER

Last year Patchwork was crowned Reserve Rescue Champion

crowned Reserve Rescue Champions at the Royal Norfolk Show.

"Patchwork is my best friend and has such a loving, cheeky, sassy character," says Yvette. "I can kiss and cuddle her for hours and she will happily snooze loose in the field with her head in my lap."

"She has taken my other young horse under her wing and made her a confident, happy pony. Patchwork is my forever horse and she's made me a better person. Just being in her company makes me smile."

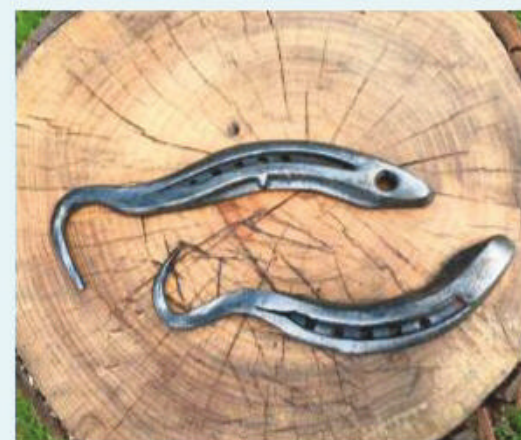


BEFORE

Patchwork was underweight and suffering from worms and lice

This month we love...

Three things from the equestrian world that caught our eye



PERFECT PICK

Hand-forged from recycled horseshoes, this hoofpick has been lovingly crafted to provide you with a fabulous robust tool that will last for years.

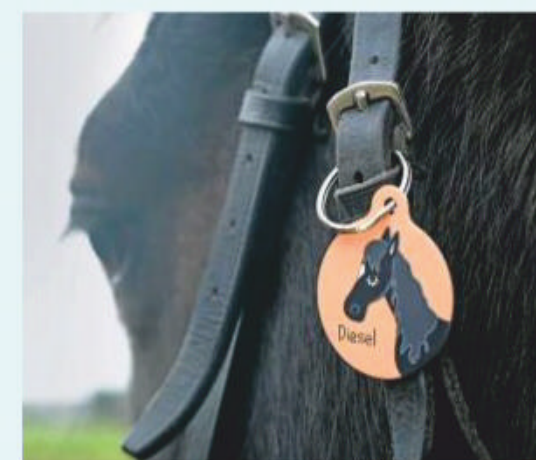
RRP £13.95 etsy.com



CASE CLOSED

Charming watercolour horses decorate this pencil case illustrated by Elena O'Neill. Perfect for storing stationery, makeup or anything else you might fancy.

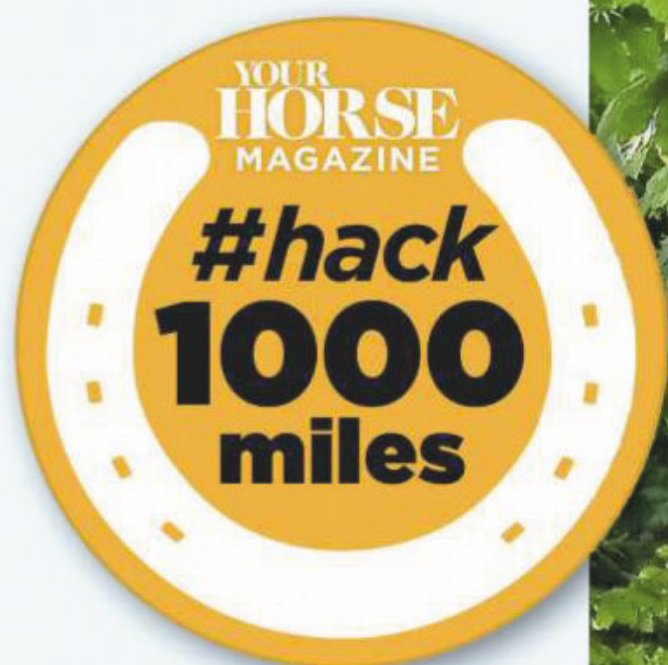
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WHAT'S IN A NAME?

This colourful ID tag is practical and pretty. It features a fun illustration of your horse as well as his name and your contact details on the reverse.

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Off the beaten TREC

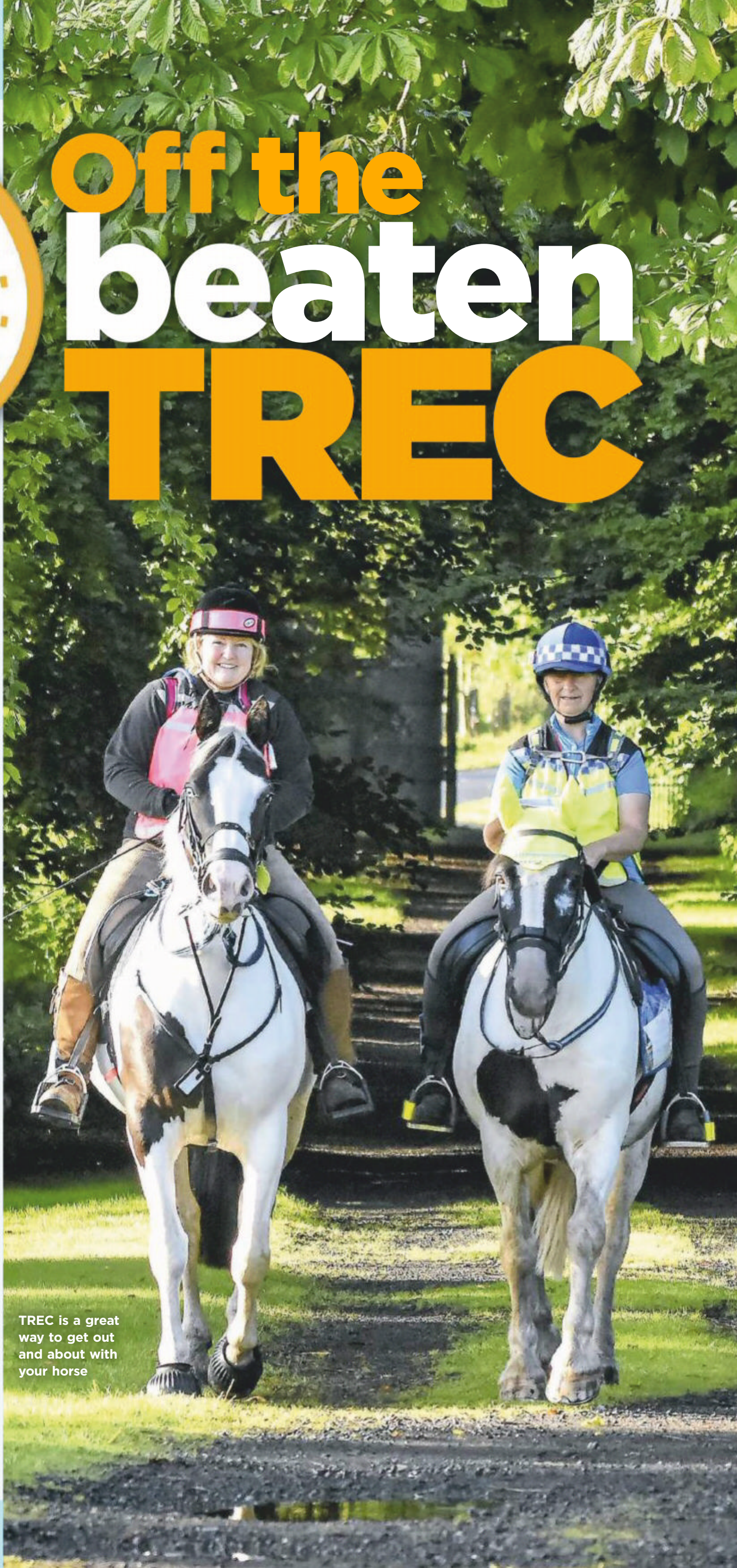
Ride 'off piste' through glorious, awe-inspiring landscapes while also **boosting your confidence and Hack miles** — just a handful of the many reasons why TREC could be the perfect sport for you

DO YOU LOVE riding in the countryside? Would you like to develop your hacking confidence? Trying to find a way to boost those #Hack1000Miles miles? Then TREC could well be for you.

TREC is a sport that any horse and rider can enjoy. It originated in France as a way of testing and improving the skills of trail ride leaders. Today it remains a test of skill, but it's also a fun way to get out and about and explore with your horse, boost your confidence and meet new, like-minded horsey folk.

"TREC suits all levels of riders," says Amanda Marfleet of TREC GB. "We have training days and camps throughout the UK and their popularity is constantly on the rise. Our demo at Your Horse Live in November 2019 generated more than 400 leads, with many new members joining us."

TREC is a great way to get out and about with your horse



As easy as one, two, three

There are three phases that make up TREC – orienteering, control of paces and the obstacle phase.

The orienteering phase can be ridden in pairs or solo at summer competitions. It involves copying a route onto a blank map, then navigating your way around the trail. There are optimum speeds for each section.

In the control of paces phase, riders are awarded marks for a slow canter and a fast walk in a corridor 100-150m long.

The obstacle phase consists of 16 obstacles based on hazards you might encounter out hacking, such as splashing through water, riding up and down an incline, opening a gate, and so on. All obstacles are optional.

“TREC is the only sport in which you can decline an obstacle and just lose the 10 potential points. You won’t be eliminated,” explains Amanda. “In fact, we have several good competitors who don’t jump for various reasons and that doesn’t stop them winning. A loss of 10 marks can easily be made up by a good sense of direction on the map phase.”

Over winter, the TREC season doesn’t stop. There are still arena days focusing on the



obstacle phase and control of paces sections, which make a great introduction to the sport. Events are usually run in an indoor or outdoor school, with the obstacle phase shortened to 10 obstacles. There are a number of classes to suit all horses and riders, and help is at hand for those trying TREC for the first time.

You can even do the obstacles in-hand, or have someone in the arena with you to boost your confidence.

The exciting orienteering phase involves using map-reading skills to navigate a set route



The obstacle phase mimics real-life hacking situations, such as splashing through water

Handy for hacking

Training for the obstacle phase can easily be done while out on a hack as all the obstacles are based on real-life situations you might encounter. If your horse is spooky or green, TREC is the perfect incentive for training – it gives you a goal to aim for and a genuine way to chart his progress. There are always other ‘TRECcies’ on hand to offer advice, too. In this way you’ll become ever more confident when out hacking, meaning that you’ll be able to face any obstacle you meet.

“Riders also get the chance to go ‘off piste’ in our competitions, away from bridleways and rights of way,” says Amanda. “We ride through amazing private estates, on farmland and through forestry that is usually closed to horses. In 2018 we rode at Sandringham.”

All for fun, or going for glory

The sport of TREC can be as competitive as you want it to be.

“We have riders on ordinary horses and ponies representing GB at competitions throughout Europe, and others who just appreciate the countryside and enjoy the camaraderie of TREC,” says Amanda. “Our events range from Grassroots level, where competitors ride 10-15km in the orienteering phase – which equates to a hack of about two hours – up to 45km at the top level.”

The goal of TREC is to develop a safe, well-trained horse who can deal with anything he encounters while out on a hack, whether alone or in a group. The rider, too, will learn skills that will make hacking easier, safer and more enjoyable. So, whether you’re up for a laugh, or are craving some shiny new rosettes, why not give TREC a go?

And don’t forget – the miles you clock up in the orienteering phase count towards your #Hack1000Miles challenge!



To find out more about this fun, inclusive sport, or to locate a club near you, visit trecgb.com.



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Have you ever tried TREC?

Have any of our #Hack1000Miles challengers given TREC a go? We found out through a quick poll...

I've been doing it for a number of years, and really enjoy it as it's such a friendly and sociable sport. You also form a great partnership with your horse. I'd definitely recommend giving it a go.

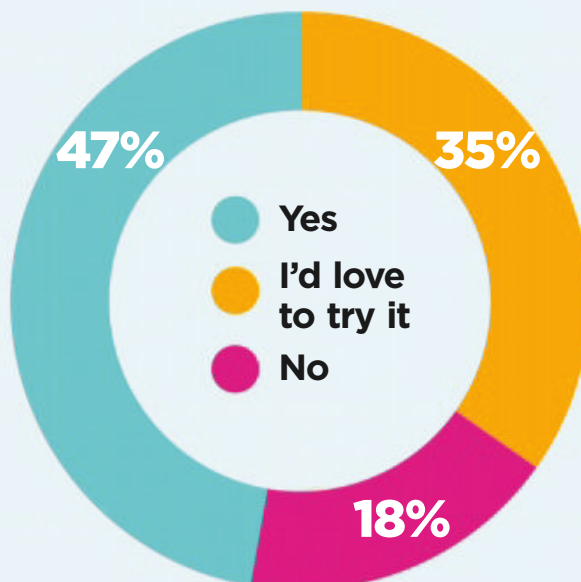
Sue Squirrell

We have regular competitions at the yard where I keep my horse. The lady who owns it competes for Team GB, so I have expert advice on tap. My husband also does TREC and really enjoys it.

Karyn Hynd

I've been interested for a while and met the lovely TREC GB people at Your Horse Live. They put me in touch with my local group. I plan to get involved this year with some friends.

Rhiannon Pritchard

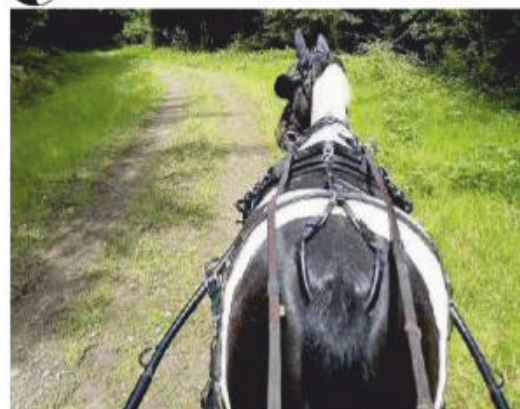


TREC is amazing. We run a TREC branch here in Northern Ireland called TREC North. It's fun, challenging and a fabulous way to build a deep and trusting connection with your horse. I absolutely love everything about it.

Ali Shiels



Hack finishers



'It's all down to Zig'

Despite two months off, Steph Price and her seven-year-old 12.3hh mare Zig Zag Ziggy (aka Zig) have reached over 1,000 miles in eight months. They completed the challenge driven, and averaged 130 miles a month!

"We're out six days a week training for competitions (Zig competes nationally at driving trials) so we were putting in mega miles," says Steph.

"We've really enjoyed the challenge and had such a lovely response from the Facebook group. Zig is a little star!"



'Loved every minute'

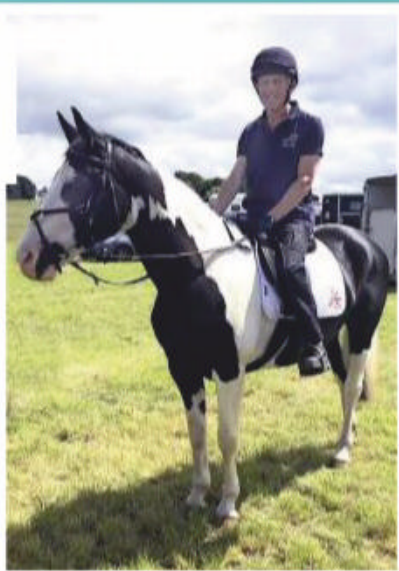
Gillian Anderson started the challenge last April with her 21-year-old mare Kia, and although they had some adventures — such as falling into a marsh — they reached the target.

"I'm delighted to have completed the #Hack1000miles challenge," smiles Gillian. "I've loved every minute and have met so many lovely, supportive people through the Facebook group.

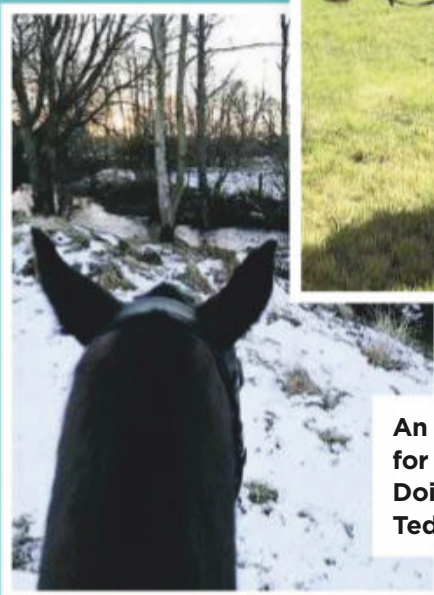
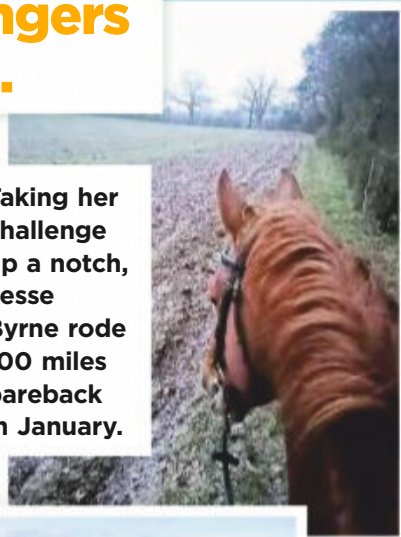
"I feel a real sense of achievement. What an amazing horse — I'm so lucky to own her. The group photo was taken mid-hack, just as I passed the 1,000 mile point. I couldn't help but let out a big cheer in the middle of the forest!"

Our #Hack1000Miles challengers have been busy this month...

David Kerry and Trixie are aiming to boost their hacking confidence.



Taking her challenge up a notch, Jesse Byrne rode 100 miles bareback in January.



An icy ride for Kate Doig and Teddy.



A flooded field makes for great paddling for Hannah Leslie.

#HACK1000MILES IS SPONSORED BY...



DUBLIN



Haven't joined us yet? Sign up now at hack1000miles.co.uk.



ALLEN & PAGE

QUALITY HORSE FEEDS

“His feed plays a vital role in his success”

Charlie always gets comments wherever he goes about his coat shine, condition and topline. His feed plays a vital role in his success! Charlie is 32 years old now and has been fed Veteran Vitality for many years, he loves it!

– Laura Oughton-Auker
& Hot Fuss (Charlie)



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CONFESSIONS OF A #HACK1000MILES CHALLENGER...

‘Winnie doesn’t jump or spin at trucks, cars, trains or new horses in a nearby field’

Anna Louise enjoys some in-hand hacking with youngster Winnie, back in action after a three-month winter break

PHOTOS: ANNA LOUISE

WINNIE’S THREE-MONTH baby break has flown by. Since the end of November she’s been loving life

with her two miniature accomplices, galloping through the trees, chilling in the fields and chomping through lots of hay.

On 1 February, we experience the first sign of sunnier days to come – a much needed breather from the flooding we’ve had on our smallholding. I spend hours grooming the little herd who resemble mud-slated hippos rather than horses.

When I start to see my 14.3hh (nudging 15hh now) youngster emerge from under the dirt and brambles, I tack her up gently and take her out for a stroll in-hand. She hasn’t been touched for three months and yet she doesn’t jump or spin at trucks, cars, trains or new horses in a nearby field.

We wade through muddy puddles, past builders with their deep laughter booming through the fencing, walk under echoey tunnels and around busy roundabouts. Winnie is interested and listening, but doesn’t seem fazed. My now five-year-old



Despite hours spent grooming, Winnie’s grey coat stays brown



Splashing through water on an in-hand hack



ANNA LOUISE is a radio presenter for BBC Radio Kent, Fun Kids Radio and a reporter for Radio 4’s *Farming Today*. When not behind a mic, she’s on her family’s smallholding with 100-plus animals, including her hacking partner Winnie. @annalouiseradio

“Winnie is interested and listening, but doesn’t seem fazed”

loves being back out exploring. If you ever have doubts about throwing out your youngsters for the winter, do it. Winnie loved the freedom and time with the herd, and she now feels happy to come back into action after being backed last year.

We enjoy our first in-hand trots along some private roads. It’s funny how such a minor thing to most can feel like a huge achievement to us on our baby journey. Initially she’s confused and jumps when the reins flap against her neck. However, after a couple of asks, she trots by my side down the length of the road, with trucks queuing behind us and gates rattling ahead.

Dear diary

I have invested in a horse planner and I’m writing an account of all our progress – each hack, every training session – and it’s really helping me towards my goal of being back on board by the spring. Even though our hacks are currently in-hand, I crave riding – that magical time spent outdoors, with my horse, away from the stresses of

life. But what Winnie and I have been doing proves that you don’t have to ride your horse to have fun adventures together.

Near us there are some incredible paths leading to National Trust properties and ancient forests, as well as woodland bridlepaths. The only problem is that they lie hidden behind busy main roads that would be terrifying for most horses, let alone a recently-backed youngster.

The other day, I watched (through fingers, with my hands over my eyes) a group of teenagers canter across the main road. It reminded me of when I used to take my loan horses to the nearby woods. Drivers would rev their engines right behind us and I’d struggle to prevent my horse from bolting. At the time, it was just part of the hacking experience, but I look back on it and wince.

It’s heartbreaking that we have such beautiful locations on our doorstep and yet they’re almost off limits. Fast roads, irritable drivers and horses are such a dangerous combination. So much more needs to be done to educate both drivers and riders.

But I’m determined that our exploring won’t be curtailed. One day this summer I plan to get Winnie there – safely and calmly – but until then we’ll work steadily in-hand in traffic until we’re both confident enough to face the sharks of the road. 🐬



Horses around the world

KNABSTRUP

Stephanie Anthony discovers more about this striking breed that you're sure to develop a soft spot for

HAILING FROM DENMARK, the Knabstrup (or Knabstrupper) is known for its distinctive spotted coat. In addition to its striking colouration, the breed is also valued for its performance and temperament.

The Knabstrup emerged at the beginning of the 19th century from the crossing of a Spanish mare with a spotted coat and a Frederiksborg stallion (another Danish breed).

The pattern is caused by a genetic mechanism called the leopard complex. Some people may confuse the Knabstrup with the American Appaloosa horse because of the similarities in coat pattern, but the two breeds developed independently.

The characteristic spotted coat was almost the Knabstrup's downfall as horses were often inbred to achieve the desired spotted colouring. Since

1970, breeding efforts have been made to recover the breed, although it remains rare. It is currently bred in various locations across Europe, and more recently in the United States.

Because the breed has been diluted, the physical features of the Knabstrup vary. Typically it is quite big, with a straight or slightly convex profile and a short, strong neck. Coat patterns range from solid to a full leopard-spotted coat, with many variants in between. The mane and tail are normally thin and the hooves are often striped like humbug sweets.

The Knabstrup is an intelligent, friendly horse with good endurance. Its easygoing nature makes it suitable for both riding and driving. The breed is also popular as a stunt display horse because of its striking-looking coat and the fact that it is easy to train.



The Knabstrupper's
beautifully patterned
coat was almost
its downfall

KNABSTRUP KNOWLEDGE

- * Averages 15-16hh.
- * Striated (striped) hooves are common.
- * The spotted coat is now a strong preference rather than an essential feature of the breed.
- * Spots can be black, bay or chestnut.
- * There is also a smaller breed, the Knabstrupper pony, which is bred for children, as well as a miniature version. 

A full-page photograph of a woman, Lara Butler, smiling while riding a dark-colored horse. She is wearing a bright pink long-sleeved jacket, dark navy blue riding breeches, black gloves, and a black Uvex riding helmet. The horse is equipped with a white saddle pad and black leather boots. In the background, there is a stone building with a dark, mossy roof and a chimney, with trees visible behind it.

Lara Butler with Rubin Al Asad at the Bechtolsheimers' Eastington House Stables, where she's been based for nine years

‘You do wonder if having a baby will change you, but no. I’m still just as driven as I ever was. But I feel like I have a different focus’

YOUR HORSE MAGAZINE

meets

LARA BUTLER

The elite dressage rider, in the mix for Tokyo selection, has found that motherhood concentrates the mind when it comes to top level competition. **Julie Harding** meets her

TWO WORLDS COLLIDE in the vicinity of a Bugaboo Cameleon buggy. Lara Butler inhabits both worlds. In one she is a new member of dressage's elite club of

barrier-breaking 80%-plus score achievers, with designs on a ticket to the Tokyo Olympics and a long list of reserve team slots on her CV. This Lara has just put her leading light Rubin Al Asad (aka Rufus) through his paces in the outdoor school. And then there is Lara the new mother, all gooey smiles as she reaches into the depths of the buggy to pluck nine-month-old son Jack from its quilted and cocooned depths. Extracted and held aloft, and then clamped to his mother's side, Jack returns the smile, exposing two tiny white teeth in an ocean of gums.

"It's killing my back lifting Jack. I have to be careful that he doesn't make me crooked for the horses," says Lara.

Most winter days play out something like this for Lara (née Griffith), a former dressage national champion, and Jack. He spends the morning at nursery or with a childminder while she rides, and then he returns to the palatial Eastington House Stables where a

statue of Giorgione S, the Oldenburg stallion ridden at the Barcelona Olympics by Carl Hester, stares out over the huge sand school, frozen in a movement of passage. It was from here that Laura Tomlinson (née Bechtolsheimer), friend and mentor to Lara and now also a mother of three, trained from childhood and launched her team gold and individual bronze medal-winning tilt at the London 2012 Olympics.

"I bring Jack on the yard in the afternoon and fit in work like grooming around his naps," says the hard-working rider of her great juggle. "I'm lucky that he's such an easy baby. Billy [her self-employed builder husband] and I are quite laid back, so maybe Jack's got that from us. He eats well too, which obviously helps to keep him happy."

Just like numerous other roll-up-your-sleeves-and-get-stuck-in riders, Lara discovered that 'needy' equines provided the perfect training ground for motherhood.

"Horses require a lot of looking after, plus you need patience just like you do with a child, and you have basic instincts if anything is wrong," she says.

But if anyone in the rarefied world of top-level pure dressage harboured thoughts

PHOTOS: JULIE HARDING



Lara took a five-week break from riding after having Jack last April

that Lara couldn't have her baby and eat her slice of the prize cake too, she emphatically dispelled those by returning to the competitive fray seemingly more determined and even better than before, despite a tricky birth.

"Jack was fine, but I developed a haematoma and needed extra stitches," she reveals. "I also became anaemic and I was in hospital for four days. For five weeks I had no intention of getting back into a saddle, but then I started to have a change of heart and from thinking, 'there's no way I'm going to do this', I sat on Rufus and walked around the school. Then I gave him a canter and that felt fine, and then I thought 'I'm going to train him'. I didn't look back after that."

She's not over-exaggerating. Success piled on top of success. Geesteren and Hartpury (top 10 placings). Hickstead (grand prix – win; grand prix freestyle to music – win). Olympia (short grand prix – fourth; grand prix freestyle to music – fifth, and *that* score of 81.54).

"When I finished the freestyle to music at Olympia," recalls Lara, "it was the first time that I knew we had done a very good test. I was warming down in the warm-up area when Carl [Cuypers, her new trainer] said: 'You've scored 81.' I said: 'What?' I never expected to get that."

"Carl hugged me and I burst into tears. I hadn't competed Rufus since Hickstead in July and, after that amount of time out, we're usually a little rusty, plus it was a new grand prix. But, from the moment we got there, Rufus was settled and focused. Going into the arena he seemed to have a different mindset. Even though we have a good partnership, it was so together. It can be a bit hit and miss as to whether he listens to me, but he was on the button the whole show and on fire."

Although children were firmly on the agenda after Lara's 2017 wedding to Billy Butler ("he actually wanted a child more than I did"), on occasions while pregnant the 31-year-old pondered whether her competitive spark would be extinguished



Lara and Rufus broke the magic 80% barrier at Olympia in December

by disturbed sleep, relentless nappy changing, puréeing vegetables and altered priorities. She schooled horses until she was eight months pregnant, but the subsequent hiatus gave her an increased number of spare moments to contemplate such a scenario.

"You do wonder if having a baby will change you, but no. I'm still just as driven as I ever was. But I feel like I have a different focus now. I don't know if it's the break – horse people aren't used to taking time out from riding – or maybe it's because I now split my time between family and horses. When I'm riding, I know that my time training is limited so I really concentrate on it, probably even more than before," reveals Lara, who, of course, now couldn't contemplate life without pink-cheeked, blue-eyed, strawberry blonde-haired Jack.

"I can't even remember what life was like before he came along," she confesses. "We timed having him around my competing so that I could still do the summer season, which I just about managed. I don't usually do the winter season that much anyway and I was lucky to have Sarah Rogers [another rider at Eastington] who kept the horses ticking over. I'll certainly carry on after Tokyo. Horses are my career, so Billy has to enable me to do a certain amount to be successful because that's the way I earn a living."

Billy, his Essex-based parents Mark and Sara, and Lara's mum Caroline, performance manager to the British dressage team, have all been "amazing" in commandeering Jack when Lara needs a little baby-free time.

"Jack and Billy came to competitions with me in the early days when I was still breast feeding, but for the last few I've left them at home," says Lara. "That enables me to fully focus on the horses. At home, Billy does the night shifts, too, plus he does the washing and we take it in turns to cook. Whoever puts Jack to bed doesn't have to cook that night."

Come May, Lara will be hoping to see her name typed on the nominated list for the Olympics. And on Saturday 25 July – day one of the dressage action in Japan – she would probably like to imagine that she will be preparing to enter the arena on the 18-year-old Rufus, or maybe his younger 15-year-old stablemate, Kristjan, but she doesn't dare. Whichever horse it could potentially be, what isn't in doubt is that she would rather be dressed in breeches and be looking through a set of bay ears than sitting in the stands in a pair of shorts and a T-shirt.

Lara has a great support network, including husband Billy, who helps to care for Jack when she's away competing



There are surely only so many times you can play fifth fiddle (to the likes of Charlotte Dujardin, Carl Hester and others) before you berate life for being unfair. But Lara, who watched from the wings at the Rio Olympics, the 2017 European Championships and the 2018 World Equestrian Games, has a different take on it.

"I've said to myself, if I'm reserve again I'll see it as a massive achievement after having time out. To be honest, I've got used to it, although being reserve so many times sometimes feels like we're being overlooked slightly as a top combination. I have felt disappointed in the process of selection of some of the horses, and massive disappointment when at times I've thought, 'that isn't right', but it is what it is, and you have to pick yourself up and keep going. I believe some time will be my time. I will eventually make a team, whether that's on Rufus, Kristjan or Ampy [Amiek C; her own and Anne Hutton's talented but tricky 10-year-old gelding]. Or when I'm 60! That's the beauty of our sport – you can keep going."

None of Lara's glittering dreams would even be a spark of brain activity were it not for legendary horse trainer Dr Wilfried Bechtolsheimer and his wife, Ursula, who own Eastington House Stables, as well as the majority of the horses within (Kristjan is even home-bred). Nine years of association leads Lara to constantly term them 'The Bs'.

"They have taken me in and nurtured me like one of their own, and the fact that they let me do what I do is huge and something for which I'll be eternally grateful. It's a unique position to be here. The support they've given me is huge and never-ending. Dr B trains me and so does Laura, even though she's moved now. We're Team B at a show. I even feel like one of the family. They were so happy when I told them I was pregnant, and they continue to support me now with Jack. Mrs B is always buying him presents."

By the time Lara arrived for an interview for a work rider job at Eastington House Stables – when she was given a super-sharp Rufus to pilot for the first time – she had already trained with some of the best in the business, including Dan Greenwood and Emile Faurie. But none of this would even have happened had she not grown too tall for her eventing ponies aged 13, and her new horse Sir Dunnaway's back injury kept all four of his feet emphatically on terra firma.

"Emile set me up well," she continues, adding that it is Belgian grand prix rider Carl Cuypers (who will soon be based permanently as a trainer at Eastington) who has really helped to apply the polish.

"He's our eyes on the ground here and at Laura's yard," says Lara. "He's made slight changes and it's given us a massive boost. He's the reason Rufus went so well at Olympia. In fact, Rufus is going so well that we've proved we shouldn't be ruled out [of Olympic selection] just yet."



Lara credits new Eastington House trainer Carl Cuypers with adding polish to her performance with Rufus

'ONLY YOU WILL KNOW IF YOU'RE READY TO GET BACK IN THE SADDLE'

Lara advises on riding during pregnancy and after the birth:

"Some people say stop when you get pregnant, but only you can make that decision. I have respect for people who still ride while pregnant, but also those who stop as soon as they find out.

"I was careful who I rode, and I would advise other pregnant riders to be the same. I stopped riding Kristjan a few weeks before Rufus because he's

naughtier and he could feel that I wasn't as strong as before – he was becoming too powerful for my weakening core to hold.

"Mentally it's good to have a break from the saddle, but you have to follow what's right for you and how you're feeling. Listen only to yourself when the time comes to start again. Only you will know if you're ready to get back on board." 🐾

WORK HORSE *balance*



"The best thing about my job is the variety"

Samantha Murray

HGV and coach driver

How I make it work: living and working close to the yard — and having a super-supportive dad and husband



PHOTOS: SAMANTHA MURRAY

Samantha Murray is a full-time coach and HGV driver who owns a retired racehorse named Smurf and his Shetland companion, Blue. The Inverness-based rider also recently qualified as an equine sports massage therapist.

My job...

I started working for coach company D&E Coaches 18 months ago when I moved to Inverness from Cumbria. I passed my Cat D (bus) licence eight years ago when I was just 21 when a local company in Cumbria was recruiting trainee drivers.

I didn't always want to be a driver; it was something that I fell into after working on various yards through my teens. I've worked at riding schools, racing yards, showing yards and stud farms — and finding myself in a position where I needed to earn a higher wage to pay the bills. After passing my coach test, I decided that I wanted to drive lorries, too, and in March 2018 I passed my full Class 1 driving test, which means that I can drive articulated lorries.

Work pros and cons...

The best part of my job is the variety of the work. I get to travel throughout Scotland with D&E Coaches and I've taken tours all over the UK and Europe for other firms.

The downside is the long hours. I can start and finish at any time of the day or night. Our longest day is a 15-hour 'spread over' (so we'll get a break in between), or 21 hours if we are working as a double driver team.

My horse and a half...

I call my two my 'horse and a half'. Smurf is a 21-year-old 17hh ex-racehorse who I bought 10 years ago from a trainer. I've competed Smurf in eventing, dressage and latterly side-saddle. As he's quite 'seasoned' now,

we mainly hack — at least twice a week if I can. Blue is an 8hh Shetland pony who I've owned for 18 months. I bought him to be a companion for Smurf. And, yes, you read that right, Blue Smurf — just like the cartoon characters and the cocktail — and I didn't even name them myself!

I recently got married and both of my horses were there at the wedding. Smurf gave me away with my dad and Blue had his mane dyed and was our unicorn ring bearer.

Country dreams...

I've not had horses all my life — I bought my first horse, a Thoroughbred mare, when I was 17. I've always been the odd one in my family. Growing up, we weren't allowed pets and my

"On a few occasions my dad has found me asleep in Smurf's stable after I've returned from a 10-day tour in the early hours"

**WE
NEED
YOU!**

Do you have a demanding job and would be perfect for this page? Tell us more by emailing stephanie.anthony@bauermedia.co.uk.

Blue and Smurf make a lovely pair

All-rounder Smurf has competed in eventing, dressage and side-saddle. Now he mainly hacks out

Unicorn Blue was Samantha's ring bearer at her wedding

THE BACK-UP PLAN

If I hadn't been a coach driver...

I've always wanted to work with horses and I recently trained and qualified as an equine sports massage therapist through the College of Animal Physiotherapy so that I can practise alongside my current job. I'd love to combine driving with my love of horses one day and run my own horse transporter business.

parents, brother and sister are all townies, while I loved climbing trees and rescuing animals. I started riding lessons at seven and I've never looked back. My husband, Stephen, is the only member of my family who rides.

My reason to get up...

My job is very demanding and fitting in my horses can be a struggle, but they certainly keep me motivated. They are my reason to get up in the morning and I know that if I don't work I can't feed them. There's nothing I like better than to get back to Smurf and Blue for a cuddle after a long day at work.

A typical day...

I can work any hours at any time, but a typical day goes as follows:

■ **4am:** Alarm goes off, but I snooze it for half an hour!

■ **4.30am:** I get up, throw ingredients into the slow cooker for dinner, get dressed for work, put my overalls on top and go and see the horses. I feed them, give them hay, muck out, and change their water and rugs. I'll turn

them out too if that's a part of their schedule.

■ **6am:** I take off my overalls and set out for work.

■ **6.30am:** Once I'm at the bus depot, I check the sheet to see what bus and run I'm on, then collect the keys and get on my bus. After the school run the bus is often hired out for trips, so I'll do those before the school pick up.

■ **5pm:** On my return to the depot, I wash my bus and finish for the day.

■ **6pm:** I'll return to the stables via home if I need to change clothes to ride. I'll bring in the horses, then feed, muck out and so on.

■ **8pm:** Back home after a quick shower, I'll prepare chips or sides to go with supper from the slow cooker. After that Stephen and I will chill out for an hour or so.

■ **10pm:** I nip down to the stables in my PJs to skip out and check on Smurf and Blue before going home to bed.

Helping hands...

With the shifts I work, I've been known to get home past midnight and still have the horses to do. On a few occasions my dad has

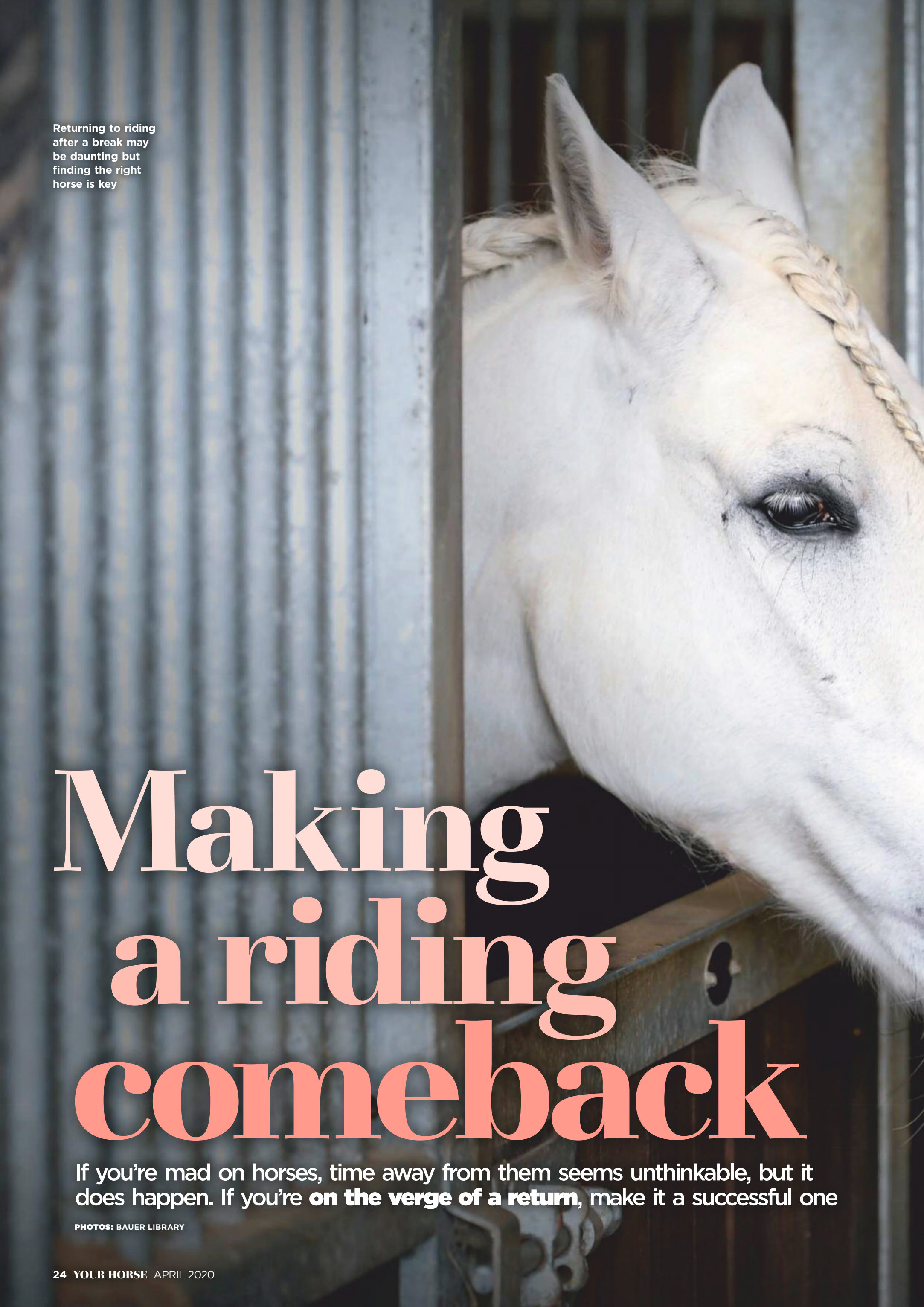
found me asleep in Smurf's stable after I've returned from a 10-day tour in the early hours.

The stables are only five minutes from home and 15 minutes from work. Thanks to my dad looking after the horses, I can go on the UK and Europe tours if I need to. Stephen also helps me with the horses and is learning to ride on Smurf. He hasn't had much choice, but he's embracing the equestrian life.

My downtime...

Socialising doesn't happen all that often, but Stephen likes doing up cars – we've recently renovated a VW Beetle to look like Herbie from *The Love Bug*! 🐾

NEXT MONTH The farm manager aiming for fun rides after a back injury.



Returning to riding
after a break may
be daunting but
finding the right
horse is key

Making a riding comeback

If you're mad on horses, time away from them seems unthinkable, but it does happen. If you're **on the verge of a return**, make it a successful one

PHOTOS: BAUER LIBRARY

THEY SAY ONCE a rider, always a rider, and it does seem that way. Many people take a break from horses for all kinds of reasons, sometimes for several years, but the pull back to the saddle is strong and most end up there once again. If this is you, you'll find things have changed since you hung up your boots – from riding techniques and kit, to horse management and care, not to mention your confidence and mindset, especially if you're a parent now.

When it's time to get back in the saddle it can feel quite daunting. Your imagination

goes into overdrive as you obsess about all the things that could go wrong. It doesn't stop us, of course, but knowing what to expect and finding the right horse for your first ride is important if you're going to make your return a joy from the off.

Riding skills revisited

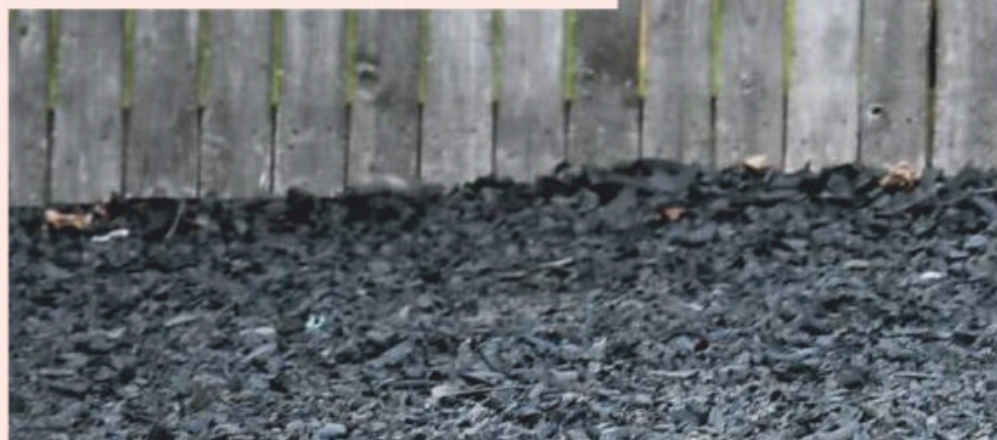
The skills for anything diminish if you're not using them, but relearning is usually quicker than learning them the first time around – good news. Give yourself a break and try not to stress about your lack of expertise when you first get back on board.





Enjoy just
spending time
with your horse

“Recognising that confidence is fickle and not everyone wants the sharpest horse in the box, more is being done to breed for sensibility and enjoyment”



Learning new
skills is what
riding horses
is all about

That said, over the years the technique of riding has progressed considerably as we've learnt more about horses. So whether you now have new skills to learn depends on when you stopped for your break. For some, riding may have been a bit of a 'push, pull' affair when they were last in the saddle and they'll need to understand about such things as steering without the reins, half-halts, constant contact, engagement and keeping the horse off his forehead. Not to mention going sideways.

Don't underestimate how capable you are. You might be a rusty rider, but you're a rider, brimming with the motivation to get back to peak riding fitness. You don't need to be brave, and it's OK to admit you have things to learn.

A hack can be a good reintroduction to time in the saddle. Find a sensible, safe horse and go out with someone experienced, also on a sensible horse. You can relax and relish the moment with none of the stress of a lesson situation.

Acknowledging the fear

What happened to that dewy eyed, gung-ho, fearless girl who started riding all those

years ago? The one who had a fit of giggles every time she fell off, which was often. Please be assured that if we've just described you, but you're now wobbling like jelly at the mere thought of mounting up, you're not alone. The *Your Horse* team meets riders like you who've lost their confidence after a break, week in, week out. It's incredibly common. The fear is often linked to increased responsibilities – mortgage to pay, children to bring up, money to be made, elderly parents to care for... It all adds up to you being hypersensitive to not injuring yourself.

But we have good news. Horses are safe and getting safer. Recognising finally that rider confidence is fickle and not everyone wants the sharpest horse in the box, more is being done to breed for sensibility and enjoyment. You just need to choose your mount carefully, whether you're buying, loaning, or riding at a centre.

The second bit of good news is that there's so much more equipment designed to keep you safe now. Air jackets, safety stirrups, gadgets to cling on to if things get hairy, hi-vis, sticky bum breeches – the list goes on.

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

The British Equestrian Federation is helping people get closer to horses by connecting them with riding facilities and clubs. Designed to support all riders, including those new to the sport, returning riders and riders with disabilities, it's a great place to start.

For more information, visit hoofride.co.uk.

Take your time re-establishing your confidence in the saddle if you feel nervous

All change in the horse world

The thing that has developed massively in recent years – and continues to do so – is how much more we understand about why horses behave in the way they do, and how they need to be cared for. It's no longer just about the rider; these days our lovely mounts have a say in the matter too.

For instance, we now know that living in a herd is essential for a horse's wellbeing, and that his learning is based on a reward system. We understand why he might be scared to hack alone, why bad behaviour is more likely to be related to pain or misunderstandings rather than to him being awkward, and how we should react to issues such as rearing in the correct (and safest) way.

We also have more knowledge about what horses should eat, about preventative health care, about how a horse sees, hears, and so on.

We would suggest that if you've had a lengthy break from the saddle, there's more new stuff to learn about horses' behaviour and care needs than about the skill of riding. It's important to do this to ensure that your horse is happy in body and mind.



Equipment and techniques may have changed since you last rode

CASE STUDIES



Sharon makes a point of taking away three positives from every lesson

‘The past year has been about building my confidence’

“I returned to riding at the start of 2019 after a break and have been having lessons at my local riding school each week since,” says Sharon Howe. “I started riding when I was 14, but early into lessons I was bucked off. I’ve carried this with me.

“Over the years, I’ve returned to having lessons for a period of time, but then life gets in the way and I stop — only to return as a nervous rider all over again. The past year has been all about building my confidence and it’s a continual process as I progress to the next stage. I have a very supportive instructor who makes me ride different horses and pushes me when needed.

“I’ve also been working on my mindset, as in the early stages I was only focusing on the things I wasn’t doing correctly in my lesson and was ignoring all the positive aspects. I now make an effort to come away from each lesson with three positives, always keeping in mind what needs to be improved too. When I started jumping a couple of months ago I was really nervous, so I switched my lesson from 11am to 9am so that I didn’t spend all morning worrying about it. That helped.

“I’ve always wanted my own horse and have just bought my first, Riley, although

he isn’t the ‘been there, done that’ horse that I always thought I would buy. It’s early days yet, but so far so good.

“I’ve found it useful to write about my return to riding (themulberrytree.co.uk/returning-to-riding) and I hope it might inspire others too. If I can do it, you can!”

‘Reluctantly I acknowledged that I had over-horsed myself’

“I rode for eight years, then took a break for four. A few loan horses later, I was 21 and my parents bought me my first horse, Bailey — beautiful, but totally unsuitable,” explains Eve Proctor. “I persevered, but a relationship break-up meant that I had to sell him.

“Fast forward a few years, and secure with my now-husband, I took a horse on loan as we had paddocks and stables at our rented cottage. Pregnancy followed and, as this horse was quirky, I wasn’t happy to ride and he went back.

“When I had my second child I realised how much I’d missed riding, so I bought Mac. He was a green, six-year-old Irish Draught, and I lacked the time he needed. Life revolved around early starts and feeling guilty at weekends as other activities suffered. There’s only so much grooming and sweeping an eight- and a four-year-old are happy to do. I realised I’d lost a lot of confidence and feared getting injured when I was responsible for my children. Reluctantly I acknowledged that I had over-horsed myself and sold Mac to a home where he regularly events.

“This left a hole, so eventually I bought a pony as my son had started taking lessons and had become hooked. Along came Snoopy. I loved taking care of him and breathing in that delicious horsey smell I’d missed so much.

“Once my son got a bit older I wanted something of my own so that we could

ride out together. Diamond, a chunky 14.2hh, 12-year-old cob who adores hacking entered our lives. A year on and my confidence has grown massively thanks to her. We’ve done pleasure rides and had a weekend away, something I would never have dreamed of doing before. My son is 14 now and capable of doing the horses on his own, which makes life so much easier.

“I couldn’t have done the horse thing with babies in tow and I have a huge amount of respect for those who do. It becomes easier as the children get older, and finding the right horse for your circumstances makes all the difference.” 🐾



Eve’s confidence has grown massively thanks to Diamond



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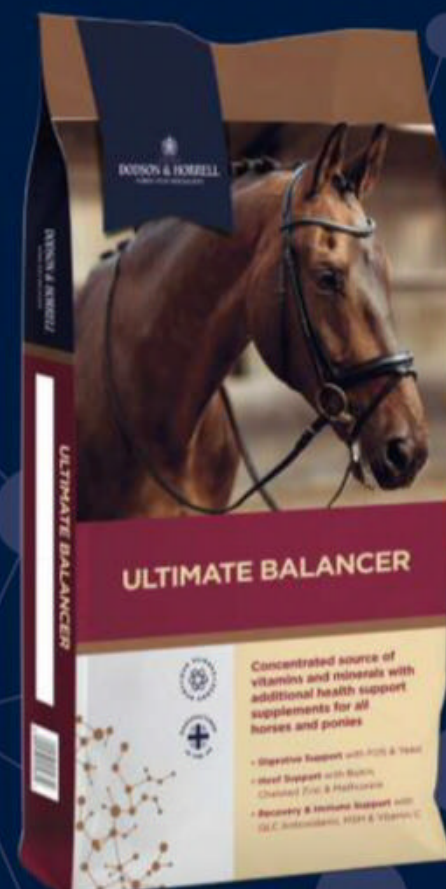
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Star prize

Our star letter from Hettie sees her win a bottle of Lincoln Itchy Switchy S.O.S. — a thorough skin cleanser to 'save our skin' (SOS) from the 'itch-scratch' self-mutilation cycle. Regular use provides comfort by purging the skin of the mane, tail and feathered legs of impurities. Visit lincolnhorsecare.com.



INCOLN

Star letter



Finn is a happy chappie now he's back home

"We almost lost my eventer Finn"

My ex-eventer Finn was recently in hospital after cutting open his legs while he was out in the field. At first it didn't seem too serious — just a graze that could be treated with a bit of cream.

We called our vet after spotting signs of infection, and everything seemed to be OK again. But one day we changed Finn's bandages to discover a nasty infection. Pus pockets had formed near his arteries and blood was pouring everywhere. He was admitted to The Barn Equine Surgery in Ringwood, Hampshire, and we were told that he had a high risk of sepsis. We almost lost him.

Finn is now making a full recovery and he's very happy to be back home. He was turned out and had a week of lungeing to reintroduce him to work. We've schooled twice now and he's been a superstar. We're concentrating on lateral movements to work on his suppleness. His legs are continuing to recover and we hope to be out hacking again before too long.

I love your 'Send a selfie' feature in every issue — it makes me laugh so much to see how alike our horses can be. Here's a photo of Finn pouting for the camera and all his admirers on the yard!

Hettie Collenette, New Forest



Birthday fun at Gaddesden Estate

PHOTO: BRIAN FINDLAY PHOTOGRAPHY

Fun ride 500

I help to run a Park & Ride series at Gaddesden Estate — this year we celebrate our 500th birthday. We're based in Hertfordshire, but have had participants from as far afield as Wales. As a part of this year's special events, we're holding a 'Gaddesden 500' Park & Ride in aid of the Riding for the Disabled Association. Here's hoping we'll raise lots for an amazing cause!

Susannah Halsey, Hertfordshire

You've been posting

▼ A pony apiece

Timothy and Tommy each have their own pony now so we can do lots more hacking!

Victoria Poole, Facebook



▲ Different generations

This is our old girl Darcy (she's 25), with me and my grandson.

Lisa Slassor, Facebook



◀ Lazy Lord

Sleepy pony Lord Flashheart having his early morning kip.

Lisa Bates, Facebook

▼ New starter

This is my lovely four-year-old, soon to be backed — can't wait to start riding!

Iona Cosh, Facebook



▲ Setting goals

I have rheumatoid arthritis, but I'm trying to ride more this year so that I can jump alongside my friends this summer.

Hannah Sherrington, Facebook



Let's talk about... Coughs and sneezes

It's not uncommon for horses to develop a cough over the winter. This can be caused by spending longer in the stable, hay and straw getting a bit dusty, or not being ridden as much. We asked our Facebook followers to share their tips and tricks for keeping horses cough-free...

More time
in the stable
can make some
horses cough

SIMPLY SOAK

I hate it when my hay starts getting a bit musty — the lovely fresh spring stuff is long gone and all you're left with are the dregs. Soaking it is a must for me. It gets rid of the dust and my horse is much more interested in eating it too.

Joanna Finch

FRESH AIR

It's simple really — try other beddings and soak or steam your hay. And if you still have problems, turn your horse out more so that he can actually get some fresh air!

Lin Harwood

HELPFUL HERB

Putting thyme in my mare's feed helps her stay cough-free. I soak her hay too.

Mark Pitt

OUT AND ABOUT

My girl Stella lives out 24/7, even in winter. I used to bring her in, but she developed a really bad cough so my vet suggested giving it a try. She has an extra rug if it's really cold and she's got a field shelter, but she seems happy, so I'm happy too.

Pauline Chivers

A SPRING CLEAN

A few times a year I give my horse's stable a really good clean from floor to ceiling. I sweep out any cobwebs and dust, wipe down the walls and take out all the bedding. It gets disinfected too. I think this helps to ward off coughs from being stabled.

Niki Anderson

STABLE NEIGHBOURS

Zoo gets a cough every year and there's nothing I can do about it as it's because his stable neighbour has straw.

I've asked the owner to consider changing it to see if it makes any difference, but they refuse to even try.

Viv Monk

NEW ROUTINE

My horse used to start coughing really badly whenever I rode him, particularly if it was cold. I had a routine of giving the stable a quick scoop out before we set off, and used to leave him in the stable. Now I tie him up outside, or pop him in the field while I muck out. He doesn't cough anymore.

Annabelle Lancaster

CHANGING THE BEDDING

Sky used to cough a lot so I decided to change her bedding. I tried various types before it made a difference. I also invested in a steamer for her hay. She coughs less now so I'll stick with it!

Caroline Warder

BACK TO NATURE

Isaac used to have his hay in a net until I read that grazing from the floor can help horses' airways. Since then he's had his hay from the ground. I throw his feed on top too so he can have a good rummage!

Fiona Caper

LOVELY LAVENDER

My horse Piper responds really well to aromatherapy. Lavender and eucalyptus are particularly good for coughs, I dot a few drops on the ledge under his haynet, or on his headcollar before turnout.

Lucy Mann

STEAM AHEAD

My veteran never had a problem with winter coughing when he was younger, but he's getting on now so he was bound to develop some new traits. I borrowed a friend's steamer and it's made a real difference. Now I'm on the lookout to get my own.

Kate Park

LITTLE EXTRAS

I use a supplement over the winter added to my boy's feed. It seems to help.

Dan Smith

SEND *a selfie*

Send
in your
pics!



Double cuddle

Giving Red and Spirit some well-deserved fuss — they're my world.

Donna Beddall, Cheshire



Furry friends

Kizzy O'Keefe helps with the bonding process.

Linda O'Keefe, Devon

Little princes

My minis Bruno and Leo.

**Rona Kennedy,
Royal Deeside**



Gums up

My mare Polly gives a grin.

**Seren Merrills,
South Wales**

Best friends forever

Shad's my lifeline.

**Denise Davy,
Devon**



Tongue in cheek

Our beautiful rare Skyrian Miss Loli shows her cheeky side.

Amanda Burgen, Edinburgh

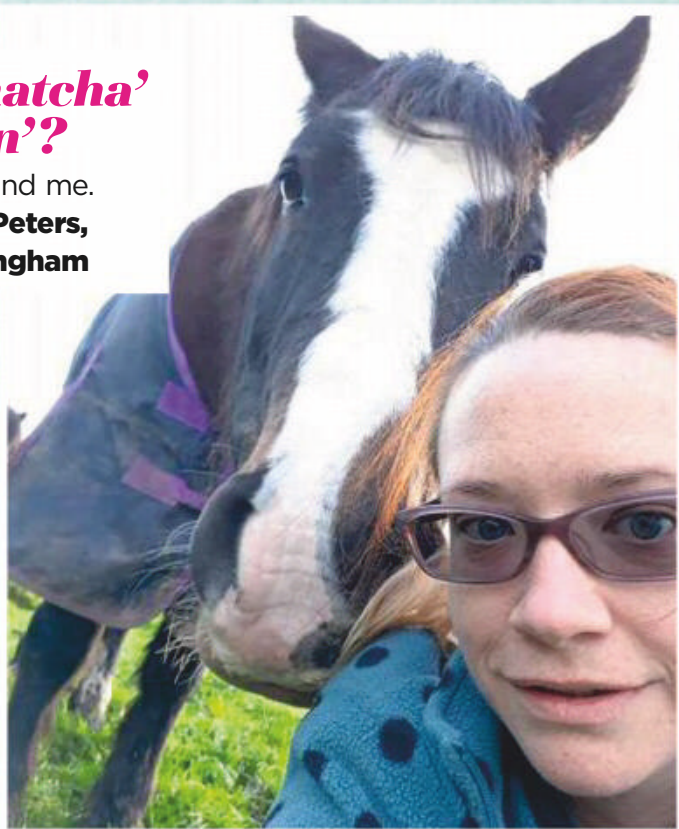


We love getting your pics, so each month we print a selection. This month our fave wins two packs of **Stud Muffins** — wholesome horse treats made with love! Visit studmuffins.co.uk.



Whatcha' doin'?

Teds and me.
Beth Peters, Birmingham



Blue bling

Me with my boy Blaze.
Louise Carter, West Midlands



Glorious mud

I adore my cheeky boy Buster, even when he splashes mud all over me.
Caroline Brown, Kent



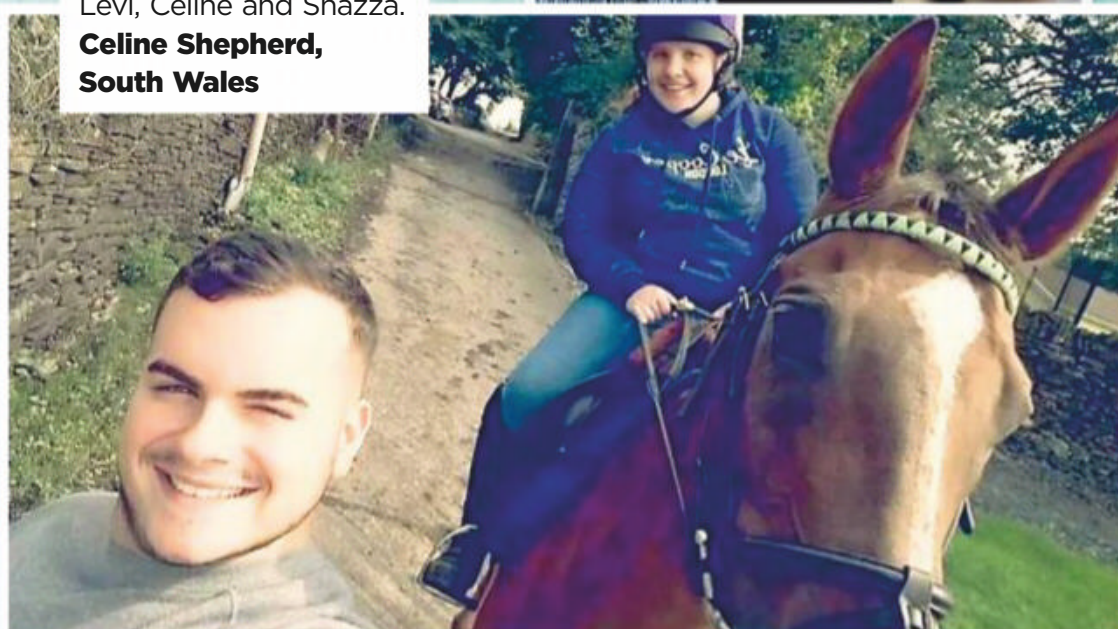
BFG

My BFG Theo and I. It's hard to take a selfie as he's so big!
Sarah Craig, Yorkshire



Going walkabout

Levi, Celine and Shazza.
Celine Shepherd, South Wales



Squeeze together

Karen, Bud, Big Alice and Little Alice.
Alice Rose Evans, South Wales



In perfect harmony

Are you stuck in a training rut? Then why not look for an alternative? **Allison Lowther** examines one method that will definitely get you thinking...

PHOTOS: MATTHEW ROBERTS



DO YOU EVER question the way you ride or train your horse? Do you wonder why we try to train all horses the same way? Do you think there might be a better way to do things?

If you've answered yes to any of these questions then you're not alone. Jenku Dietrichsen wasn't happy with the techniques he was using to train horses. Over three decades later, Jenku has developed a new method of training called Modern Horsemanship. Here we take a look at what it is, and why you need to give it a go.

Training from the outside in

"Are you training your horse from the outside in or from the inside out? This

question has intrigued me for many years," says Jenku. "I used to be a very physical trainer. I knew what I wanted, and I knew how to get it, but I only considered the outcome from my point of view. I was successful and enjoyed the rush but, more often than not, I had the bitter taste of adrenaline in my mouth and was disappointed with the way in which I handled myself around horses."

Training from the inside out

In 1999 everything changed. Jenku had broken his back in a freak riding accident the previous year. For the first time, he felt vulnerable and, as a result, became a more mindful trainer. He started thinking about why a horse would want to learn

anything – from the horse's point of view. "It became my quest to find a better way, a kinder way, to train horses. And, more importantly, to share it with others – For the Good of the Horse."

iCAN mindset

iCAN is an acronym for Improve, Change, Adapt, Nonstop.

"I want to grow a learn culture, not a blame culture," says Jenku.

Try > Fail > Learn > Improve > Repeat.

"This is the cycle I kept running over and over again, and this is how the method evolved. I was willing to try things. They weren't always successful, but I learnt from them, improved on them and this is how Modern Horsemanship came about." 



By using a language
your horse understands,
training him will
become so much easier

What is Modern Horsemanship?

Jenku uses a combination of classical dressage, natural horsemanship, positive reinforcement and the belief that 'there must be a better way'. He believes in training the trainer and taps into the horse's innate potential to learn complex behaviours. He uses one universal language based on what he calls 'The Three Agreements'.

The Three Agreements

- 1 A clear yes** – Reward as feedback. Desired behaviour is encouraged with a pleasant consequence.
- 2 A clear no** – Pressure as feedback. Undesired behaviour is discouraged with an unpleasant consequence.
- 3 A clear neutral** – when in doubt, go to neutral. Doubt is the precursor to fear. Fear of failure is counterproductive to

learning. The third agreement serves as a safety mechanism to help you and your horse to reset and try again if the stress levels get too high.

Shared neurobiology

It's important to consider that the horse has an overdeveloped brain stem and an underdeveloped higher brain. Humans, on the other hand, have an overdeveloped higher brain and an underdeveloped brain stem. Horses, therefore, have no capacity for language, reasoning and problem solving. These are human traits. However, both horses and humans have a similar nervous system that consists of three parts:

- 1** Central nervous system
- 2** Peripheral nervous system
- 3** Autonomic nervous system

With this understanding of the physiology of the human brain and the horse's brain, it is possible to combine the best of both for optimum performance.

Motivation

Both horses and humans are fundamentally motivated by pleasure or pain. To understand a little more about why this method is so effective, you need to know how your own and your horse's neurobiology functions. This revolves around the autonomic nervous system. It regulates all our subconscious bodily functions, our heart rate, liver and kidney functions – even our breathing when we're not consciously thinking about it.

It's composed of two parts – the sympathetic and the parasympathetic nervous systems. The fight or flight state



Jenku taps into the way horses learn and trains the trainer to understand this

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Jenku Dietrichsen started riding on his grandmother's farm at an early age. In 1990 he was selected for the mounted police section in South Africa. There he qualified as a farrier and was also part of the police display team – he did Roman riding, standing up on three horses. Part of the job description was to break and train the young horses.

Jenku left the police at the end of 1994 and continued to break and train horses. However, he always thought that there must be a better, kinder way to train and he's spent the last three decades researching, learning and developing what was to become the method he currently uses. It's from this process that Modern Horsemanship was born.

Jenku is based in Cape Town, South Africa, but travels to many parts of the world to share his training and coaching methods.



(sympathetic nervous system) acts like the accelerator in your car. And the rest and digest state (parasympathetic nervous system) acts like the brake to slow down your car. In other words, you cannot be running and resting simultaneously.

Fight or flight state

Trigger > Stress hormones > Blood to the outside

Normally there is an external trigger that stimulates one or more of your horse's five senses. This, in turn, triggers an electrical impulse in his brain that causes a neurochemical reaction in his body. Stress hormones are released in his bloodstream which increase his heart rate and the intake of oxygen to his lungs. His pupils dilate to help him to see better. His back muscles contract and his head and neck come up. And, most importantly, blood rushes to his muscles to enable him to flee from danger.

Rest and digest state

Trigger > Happy hormones > Blood to the inside

The rest and digest state is active when your horse feels safe and relaxed. This state slows the heartbeat, increases salivation, boosts circulation to the intestines and liver, and increases movement through the digestive tract.

When your horse is in the rest and digest state he's relaxed. He'll yawn, sigh and his breathing will slow.

What happens when you feed your horse is that the mouth signals to the brain that food is coming. The brain then signals to the body to return blood to the intestines. This changes the neurochemistry and releases 'happy hormones'. This is one of the reasons why the "Tsk" sound for desired behaviour (see 'Direct feedback',



Rewarding your horse with food for positive behaviour calms the nervous system and aids learning



'Jenku's training method is about direct feedback – everything is about precision and timing'

below), followed by a food reward, helps your horse to relax and focus. It's in this relaxed state that optimum learning takes place.

"In a high stress situation, survival is the priority, not learning," says Jenku. "People try to train their horse when he's in a flight state and, when they can't get him to relax, they put him in draw reins, side reins – something to physically force him into the 'correct outline' – but the neurochemistry is all wrong."

Direct feedback

The equipment Jenku uses is minimal. He uses a "Tsk" sound to mark the exact moment a desired behaviour is performed, followed by a reward. Depending on the exercise to be trained, he also uses a schooling whip, a longer rope line, or reins to apply pressure to mark undesired behaviour. His training method is based on direct feedback – everything is about precision and timing.

"I'm a very practical guy and everything is about marginal gains," explains Jenku. "The simpler the equipment, the easier it is to give direct and accurate feedback. The more complicated your equipment and system is, the harder it is to give direct and accurate feedback. This means that your timing will be off, which inhibits input-output feedback signals between you and your horse. This is when I discovered that using a sound as a cue to mark desired behaviour works really well."

The "Tsk" sound cue has five criteria:

- 1 Easy to use
- 2 Distinct
- 3 Very precise
- 4 Unemotional
- 5 Audible over a distance



Training beyond emotion

At the core of this method, horse and trainer learn to control the emotional part of their brain and find relaxation.

Jenku firmly believes that when you're training your horse, there's a certain order that you need to do things in.

"You don't build a house from the roof down, you start with the foundations," he says. "I believe that the part many people miss out on in our modern-day training methods is relaxation. You need to take time to calm you and your horse's nervous system and build two healthy, focused brains.

"We don't focus on this any more – we're after instant results. You get on your horse, you put him in a frame and ride him forwards. In this way your horse is constantly under pressure to perform. If your horse displays signs of stress – by opening his mouth or sticking out his tongue – we try to suppress this by tightening the noseband. In other words, we are artificially inducing stress into our horse's nervous system. Your horse



The in-hand work, such as leg-yield, teaches relaxation and improves suppleness

needs to lick, chew and swallow to access the rest and digest state, get the blood back to the intestines and release those 'happy hormones'. If you clamp his mouth shut, he cannot access this state, even if he wants to."

Jenku's training begins on the ground

before progressing to ridden work and focuses on encouraging your horse to relax – whether that's leading, backing up, lunging or asking him to lower his head and neck when he's standing still. The aim is for him to do all of these from a calm, relaxed state of mind.

This is done by a feel on the leadrope or headcollar, or a touch from the schooling whip. When your horse shows any sign of lowering his head and neck you mark the desired behaviour with the "Tsk" sound and give him a reward.

Horses learn by repetition

Reinforcement learning is a type of learning that tells your horse he's made the correct decision or the wrong decision. With enough repetitions your horse will eventually be able to predict the correct outcomes and therefore make the 'right decision'.

As you learn to focus on what your horse is doing right and rewarding him, rather than focusing on what he's doing wrong and punishing him, your horse will become more responsive and you will be able to lighten your aids. In time, for example, your horse will learn to lower his head when you simply point your finger at the floor.

CASE STUDIES



Wish and Allison have developed a stronger connection thanks to Jenku

'We're now working more as a team'

Your Horse acting editor Allison Lowther started training with Jenku to help overcome her horse's needle phobia.

"Jenku has been instrumental in helping Wish with her fear of needles. We still have a long way to go, but the change in her behaviour is huge. Jenku's passion and enthusiasm is infectious. His training will challenge what you've always done, but it's simple and it works.

"The in-hand work we do has also made a massive difference to Wish's

suppleness and it's translating to her ridden work too. All the lateral work we do in-hand has become much easier to do in the saddle.

"It's all about repetition and consistency and, above all, timing. I love the relaxation Jenku has brought to my training – I'm a lot calmer and more patient. This has then led to a much better relationship and connection between me and Wish. I'm excited to see where the Jenku journey will take us – piaffe is the dream!"

'It's a great way to drip feed their education'

International dressage rider Emma Woolley has been training with Jenku for three years.

"Modern Horsemanship is an excellent way to drip feed your horses' education," explains Emma. "It's mentally stimulating for them and the in-hand work really helps to grow your relationship with your horse – you develop a much better understanding of how horses learn.

"Teaching your horse the buttons from the ground means that he already has an understanding of what you're asking when you get into the saddle. All of my horses enjoy it and, at the end of the day, I'm producing horses who are happy and relaxed in their work, which means that they can produce their best performance in the dressage arena." 🐾



Emma's horses are more relaxed in their training

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Your horse's TRAINING

Expert advice for riders of all levels

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Develop your horse's counter-canter and improve his suppleness



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pages to boost confidence and improve your performance

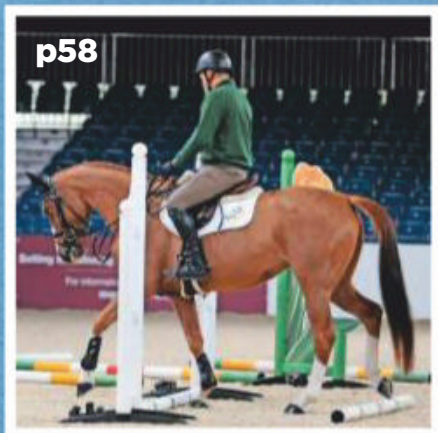
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JUMPING YOUNG HORSES

Showjumper Jay Halim's top tips for teaching your youngster to jump.

Escape the arena

The better weather is finally here and it's time to exit the arena. Make riding and training in open spaces a breeze with top advice from eventer **Tanya Bridgeman**

PHOTOS: BAUER LIBRARY

IT'S NOT UNUSUAL for riders to be fearful of leaving the arena – there's all sorts you might encounter in the big wide world and lots of scenarios for you (and your horse) to deal with. This fear can affect the way you ride. You may become tense, shorten your reins, grip with your knees, tip forward and, without meaning to, send a message to your horse that there's a reason for everyone to be afraid – and then he'll be on the lookout too.

It doesn't need to be like this – after all, hacking is the time you're supposed to be at your most relaxed, enjoying moments with your horse. There's plenty you can do to nip any fear firmly in the bud, though, and here trainer and eventer Tanya Bridgeman has plenty of tips to make your time out of the arena as fun and carefree as it should be.



MEET THE EXPERT

TANYA BRIDGEMAN is an event rider, dressage judge and senior coach whose experience in retraining racehorses and working with sensitive horses is well known. She particularly enjoys training riders who lack confidence and who want a strong partnership with their horse. Find out more at facebook.com/tbeventing.

Improve your skills and confidence by riding beyond the confines of an arena

MAKING A START

"When it comes to riding in open spaces, particularly after the winter when your horse may have only been exercised in the school, or not ridden at all, many riders can feel nervous," says Tanya. "There's only so much speed your horse can get up in a 20x40m arena, and if things do get a bit tricky, it's relatively easy to deal with."

"When riding out, though, much of what happens is out of your control and this is the scary bit. Horses can be fresh when venturing out for the first time after a winter break, so take small steps towards the big outdoors by moving the boundaries bit by bit."

First, try boxing your horse to a venue nearby for a training session in a different outdoor arena. It's a little party for him and, if he does get silly, you're in a safe place.

"If your horse hasn't been worked much over the winter, or turnout has been restricted, it's not wise to go straight out on a hack," warns Tanya. "Think of it as a progression of experiences – adding one new thing in, letting your horse cope with that, then giving him something else to think about."

"Work with the weather too, delaying your first escape from the school until it's safe."

YOUR HORSE'S TRAINING

School your horse in a small area to check that you can stop and turn safely before venturing further afield



THE NEXT STEPS

A good next step is to work in a small paddock at home. It's still an open space, but is less daunting than going on a hack.

"Lungeing your horse first can be a handy way to settle him before you get on," says Tanya. "Horses tend to be more forward going when out of the arena and working in the field will build your confidence in being able to handle this."

"Long-reining is useful too, but only if you're experienced with it and can avoid getting dragged or tangled in the lines."

Ask yourself if your horse has enough respect in you to stop and turn when you ask him to. If not, then avoid it.

"Long-reining can be useful for giving a young horse confidence away from the arena, but he will need to be introduced to it carefully," adds Tanya.

IT PAYS TO PLAN

There are lots of ways you can plan ahead for a successful ride in the open.

"If you're intending to hack and you or your horse is nervous, go out with two other riders and get them to sandwich you between their sensible mounts. Of course, ensure they're all friends first!" says Tanya.

"Think about the route too. If you need to go over a railway bridge, check the train times so you're not halfway across when an express roars below."

The same goes for dog walkers. If you think your horse may get silly around dogs, go out at a time of day when there are fewer around.

"Come to an agreement with your hacking pals that everyone will ride to the level of the least confident in the group. They shouldn't be forced to do things they're not capable of handling. Hacking out is supposed to be fun for everyone," adds Tanya.

Plan your route in advance so that you can avoid known distractions



Bending your horse will help you to get him past objects he's suspicious of

KEEPING THE LID ON

"Treat your initial hacks as if you're still in the school to keep your horse focused and listening," says Tanya. 'Ride transitions, shoulder-in, leg-yield, go from walk to halt to walk and so on, keeping the contact, but not holding tight.

"Stay relaxed and have a plan – every 50m you're going to do a leg-yield, then shoulder-in, for instance – anything to keep your horse thinking. But remember, the work doesn't have to be perfect".

Bending to the inside then the outside before going straight is a very useful exercise if you need to get past something your horse is worrying about.

"By keeping the contact throughout this work, you'll feel through the reins if your horse is becoming tense or is about to spook, and you can be ready for it. As you both get more confident about being out of the arena, you can do less and less of this work," adds Tanya.

DEALING WITH DISTRACTIONS

Horses can lose focus at times and it pays to be ready for this.

"I'd suggest putting your stirrups up a couple of holes so you're truly secure – and don't hack in a dressage saddle if you can avoid it," says Tanya. "A GP or jumping saddle is ideal."

Tanya also suggests using a breastplate to stop your saddle slipping and a neck strap to hook your fingers under if you need a bit of extra security.

"Horses also need some fun, though, so if yours starts gently bunny-hopping, see if you can be brave enough to let him continue for a few seconds before

asking him to move on. I like to think of it as my horses having a giggle, and I don't always want to suppress it."

Doing spook-proofing work at home during the winter is a key exercise.

"Place poles, barrels, fillers, blocks and so on in the school as you work, especially if you're going to be eventing," says Tanya. "If you can, always work with something in the school so it just becomes second nature to your horse. Work in the arena with other horses too."

Meeting horses when out hacking can cause a bit of excitement for your horse and stress for you.

"If they are turned out and are gallivanting around their field, running along the fence line and winding your horse up, try to stay calm yourself, reassuring your horse at the same time," says Tanya. "Let him stand and watch them – saying hi from a distance – and give him time to take stock."

As the horses settle, you should be able to move off. If you meet horses and riders coming towards you or hear them approaching from behind, use hand signals to ask them to slow or stop. Don't shout as this could upset your horse and they may not hear you anyway, especially if they're riding at speed.

"Wearing hi-vis helps as the riders will be able to spot you," adds Tanya.

FROM SAFETY COMES CONFIDENCE

Wearing hi-vis is vital when riding outdoors

"I'm a great believer in using as much safety equipment as you need to feel confident in the saddle," says Tanya. "If wearing a body protector or air jacket helps you relax and ride more effectively, then use one. There's absolutely no stigma in it and don't let anyone pressurise you into anything different."

Hi-vis is also vital. Both you and your horse should wear it, and invest in kit with LED lights if you can. The brighter you are, the more easily you will be seen by anyone you meet, on and off the road.

"I regularly get asked by riders if it's worth dismounting if they start to wobble, especially if their horse is excited," says Tanya. "Everyone feels differently about this, but I would rather stay on board. I know my horse isn't going to pull away from me and I'm more likely to stay in control."

"I feel the same about going for hacks in-hand, although if you've got a sensible horse and it helps you psychologically, then do it. However, check you're insured for this activity first. You may need to wear a bridle and hi-vis for your insurance to be valid. Definitely look into that."



Tackling a variety of terrain will help to improve your balance in the saddle



THE BENEFITS OF VENTURING OUT

Although we may feel more secure in the arena, time spent hacking can work magic on both you and your horse.

Hacking needs additional skills to the ones you use when schooling. You may have hills and different terrain to tackle. There'll be cars, obstacles, flags, children on trampolines, and so on. Dealing with all of this helps you to become a much more skilful rider, particularly in terms of balance and awareness. Once your confidence is sorted, you can relax more too, which is very good for the mindset.

Horses love hacking and it can help them in all sorts of ways. A horse who is stuffy and not particularly forward can be transformed by hacking, and it can do wonders for his paces – the mediums are always easier to achieve on a hack. You can school on a hack and he will barely know he's training, which prevents him getting sour. He'll get braver and your bond will strengthen as you learn to trust one another. His fitness will improve too.

Always be careful of the going and don't do fast work if it's hard or very wet. Remember that trotting on the roads should be done with extreme care too. 🐾

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THE CORRECT DISTANCE

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Walk — 1m

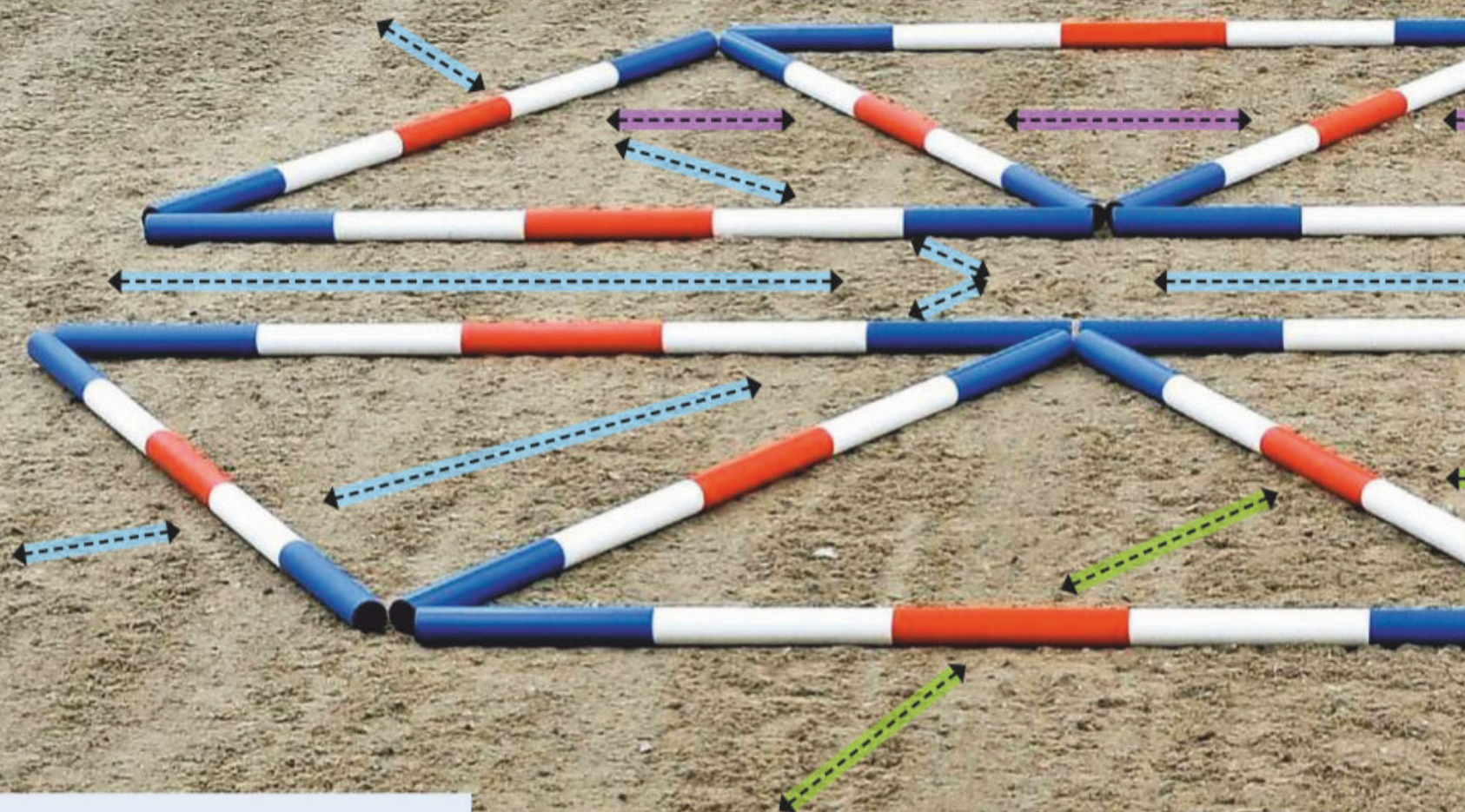
Working trot — 1.2m

Collected trot — 1.1m

Medium trot — 1.4m

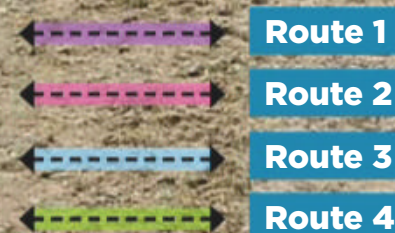
Extended trot — 1.6m

Canter — 3m steps



Building the grid

Build the grid as shown in the photograph — if you don't have enough poles to build the full grid, just build one part of it. If you can, leave the grid set up and use it throughout the week, just for a few minutes during your schooling.



Time to ride

It's important to encourage your horse to find his own way through the grid without interference from you. Don't try to alter his stride, let the poles do that for you. Allow your horse to take his head forward and down — this will help him to work over his back. He may struggle at first, tripping or doing irregular steps. If this continues, adjust the distances between the poles.

- 1** Begin by walking through the grid — shown as the purple and pink lines.
- 2** Still in walk, progress to the blue and green lines, which are more difficult. Encourage your horse to bend through the poles on these lines using your upper body, seat and legs, but not the reins.
- 3** Repeat these exercises in working trot. Regulate the pace using your seat and legs, allowing your horse to

take his head forwards. Use half-halts if he's rushing.

Change the challenge

- 1** Alter the distance between the poles to canter strides and ride through the grid in canter.
- 2** Change the distances again and you can ride through in collected trot.
- 3** Be inventive. There are lots of different routes you can take through this grid.

A NUMBER OF TECHNIQUES can be used to help horses restore and maintain normal function, mobility and performance. Vet physiotherapist Sammy Finnemore is particularly keen on polework as grids can be built to suit any type of horse. With her knowledge of biomechanics, Sammy designs the

grids to promote correct movement and allow your horse to work truly over his back. This produces a fit, supple, loose and flexible horse working in correct horizontal and vertical balance.

In this issue Sammy uses a grid designed to improve and develop your horse's lateral suppleness, core strength and proprioception.

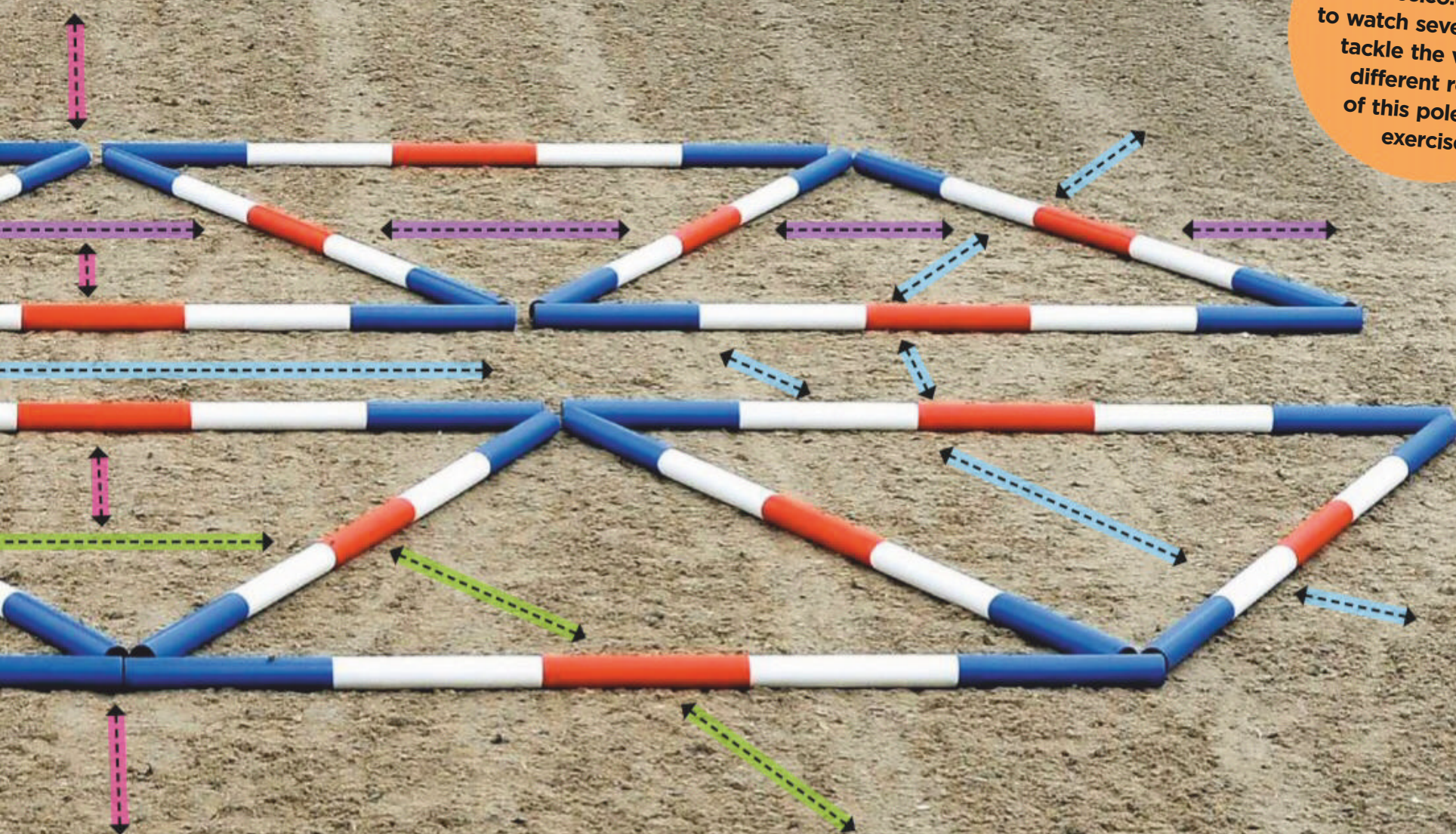


MEET THE EXPERT

SAMMY FINNEMORE is a veterinary physiotherapist based in the Midlands. Her particular interest is in taking a holistic view of a horse's wellness, focusing on his posture during training to build independent balance and self-carriage. Sammy uses polework to help achieve this. Find out more at hazelcroftvetphysio.co.uk.



Head to yourhorse.co.uk/pw463 to watch several riders tackle the various different routes of this polework exercise.



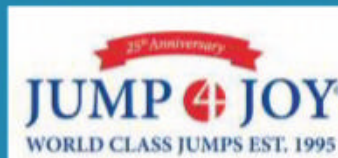
The results

Your horse should feel lighter in his stride, with better cadence and less pressure on his joints. His core will be activated, and he'll flex his joints. This grid will also help him lengthen over his topline while the curved lines will improve his ability to bend laterally with inside flexion and open the muscles on the outside of his body.

Troubleshooting

If your horse rushes or breaks into canter, try walking the curved lines to settle him. He may also feel stiff or fall out on one rein — riding the curved lines are a good way to feel if he favours one shoulder. Use your body to encourage him to follow you. This leaves your hands free to allow his head and neck to stretch forwards, down and out. In this position, your horse will be less inclined to lean through one shoulder — stay on one rein to give regularity in the exercise. 🐾

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WHAT YOU'LL LEARN:

- How to test your horse's balance and canter rhythm
- How to teach counter-canter
- To make tidy transitions with shallow loops

Counter-intuitive

Are you ready to try counter-canter? Dressage coach **Tracy Wright** helps you hone it

PHOTOS: BAUER LIBRARY,

FOR WANT OF a better description, counter-canter is cantering on the wrong leg lead. In dressage tests, counter-canter first appears at novice level, but there are advantages to practising the movement in your schooling sessions even if you're not preparing for a test. Working in counter-canter will help to straighten your canter. It will also improve your horse's suppleness and help with canter balance. In addition, it's a fantastic foundation on which to base teaching flying changes later in his training.

Dressage coach Tracy Wright believes that it's crucial to teach counter-canter correctly, however.

"Riders need to keep their horse feeling confident," says Tracy. "We're continually asking our horses for the correct leg lead, then suddenly we change the game plan. So, as a rider, you must be careful with your body position and leg aids. When you start going into counter-canter ensure that your body doesn't fight it and try to switch your legs the other way. Keep your aids sure and solid, or else your horse will get confused."



MEET THE TRAINER

TRACY WRIGHT is an Essex-based UKCC level 2 and 3 dressage coach. She is also the British Dressage (BD) Eastern Region coaches' rep. When not competing and training her own horses, she teaches riders and horses at varying levels.





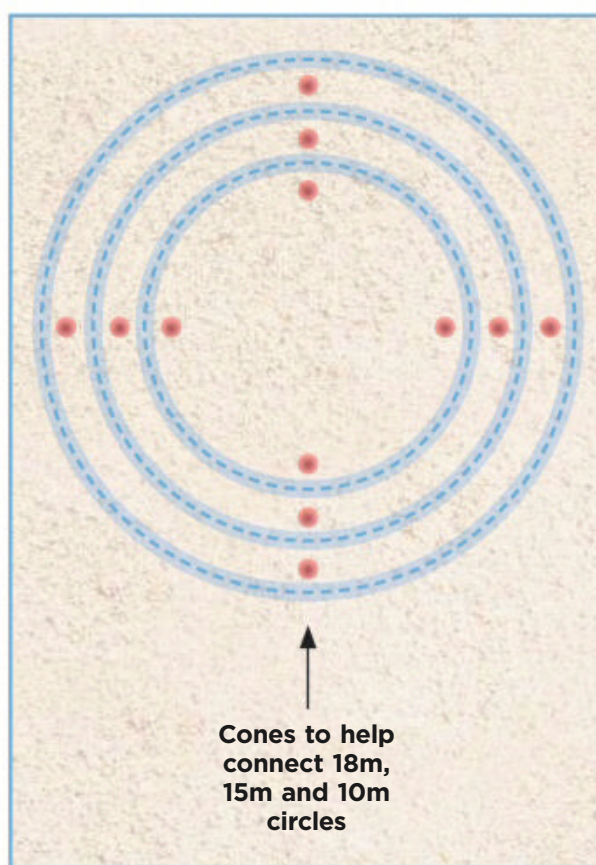
Exercise 1 CHECKING BALANCE

Before you start the exercises, to help develop the counter-canter you must have enough balance in the canter. A great way to check your canter's balance is to be able to spiral in and out of a 20m circle.

"Establish an 18m circle, then a 15m circle, then 10m," says Tracy. "It mustn't be a rush to get straight in to a 10m circle. Your horse has to develop strength and balance. So focus on getting the 18m circle going first while maintaining balance and rhythm."

How to ride it

- 1 First, check that your leg aids are correct — inside leg by the girth, outside leg slightly further back.
- 2 Your horse must be slightly flexed to the inside. Be careful, though — too much flexion can cause him to fall in or fall out.
- 3 Try to imagine a model train on a circular track. Even though it's on a circle it keeps straight on the tracks and doesn't derail.
- 4 It's important when spiralling in that you keep the circle shape — no eggs allowed! Using cones or poles can help



with this (see diagram, above).

- 5 Focus on the 'straightness' of your circle and the quality of your horse's canter.



Think of maintaining 'jump' in the canter

TOP TIP

Speed doesn't necessarily mean activity and nor does slow always mean collection. Think of maintaining 'jump' in the canter. "I often tell riders to feel that they're jumping through a skipping rope or going through a long line of bounce fences," says Tracy.

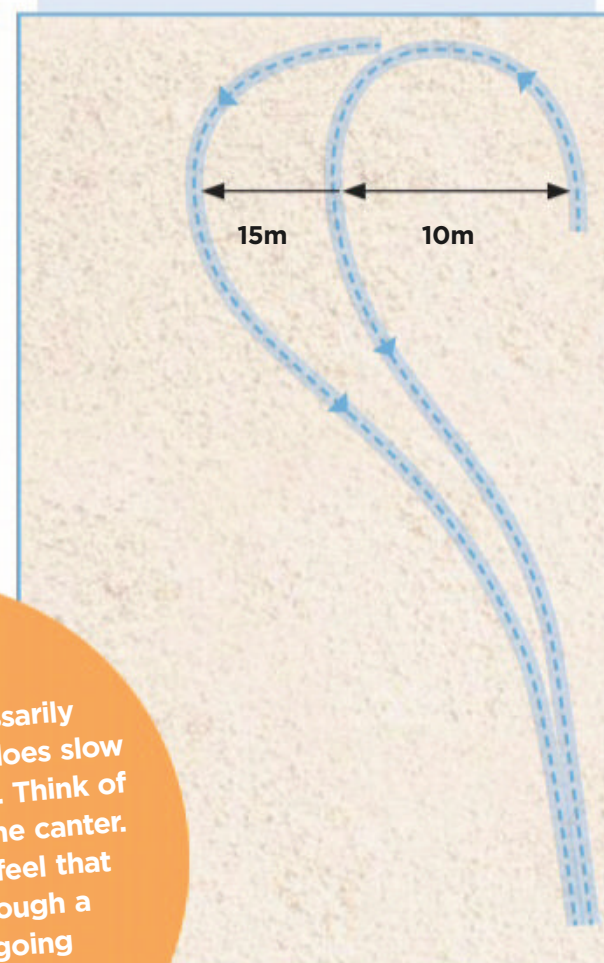
Exercise 2 TEARDROP

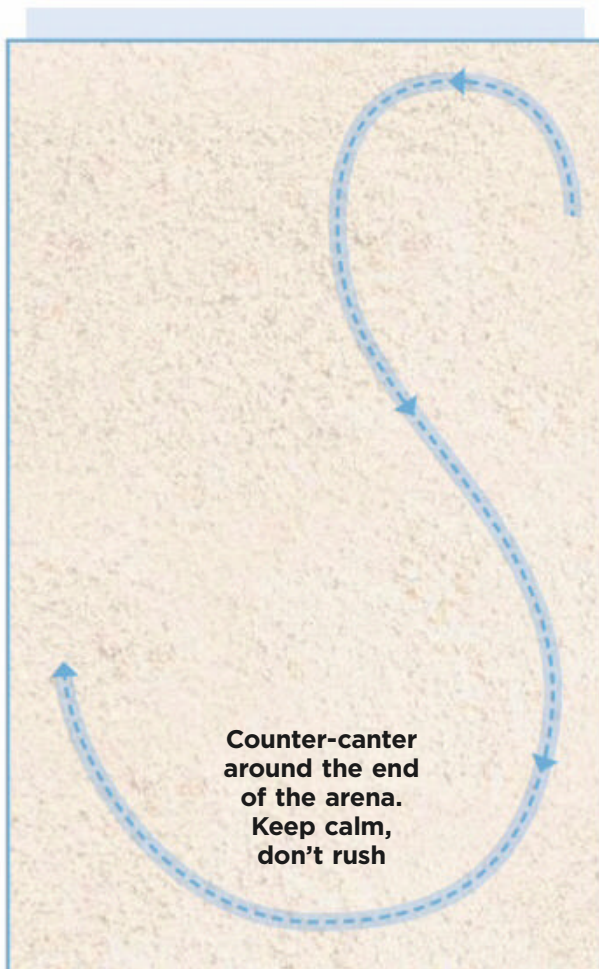
This is essentially a half 10m/15m circle back to the track (see diagram, below). The circle size depends on how balanced your canter is from exercise 1.

It can also depend on your school size. In a 20x60m arena you have a little more room on the long side so you can get away with a half 15m circle. In a 20x40m school you'll be better riding a half 10m circle as it allows you to get back to the track sooner.

How to ride it

- 1 The canter must remain 'straight' — again, care must be taken to have the right amount of flexion.
- 2 Once you've turned on the half circle you need to do a gentle turn back to the track.
- 3 The key is not to panic and rush the canter back to the track as this will throw your horse out of balance. Straightness and 'jump' are important.
- 4 It's also important to merge carefully back to the track — if you make a sharp turn your horse could become disunited or even break back into trot.
- 5 The first few times you ride this exercise, trot before you get to the first corner.
- 6 Remember to praise your horse when his work is good.





Exercise 3 GETTING AROUND THE SHORT END

Once exercise 2 is becoming more established, the next step is to counter-canter around the short end of the arena. Here you ride the half circle as you did in exercise 2, then continue around the corner in counter-canter, forming a half 20m circle (see diagram above).

How to ride it

- 1** When you're in counter-canter, remember that your horse needs to be flexed slightly over the canter lead, but not excessively.
- 2** Don't wedge your horse into the corners. This will throw him out of balance and could cause him to break into trot or become disunited.
- 3** As before, don't rush. There's always a panic to get round the end of the arena, but don't get desperate about it! The key is the quality and balance of the canter and the 'jump'.
- 4** The jump of your canter will help your horse to negotiate the end — so not a fast, flat canter.
- 5** If your horse gets it, go back to trot and give him lots of praise.
- 6** If you're not quite there yet then go back to exercise 1. You may need more work developing your 12m and 10m circles.



Work on keeping in counter-canter along both short and long sides

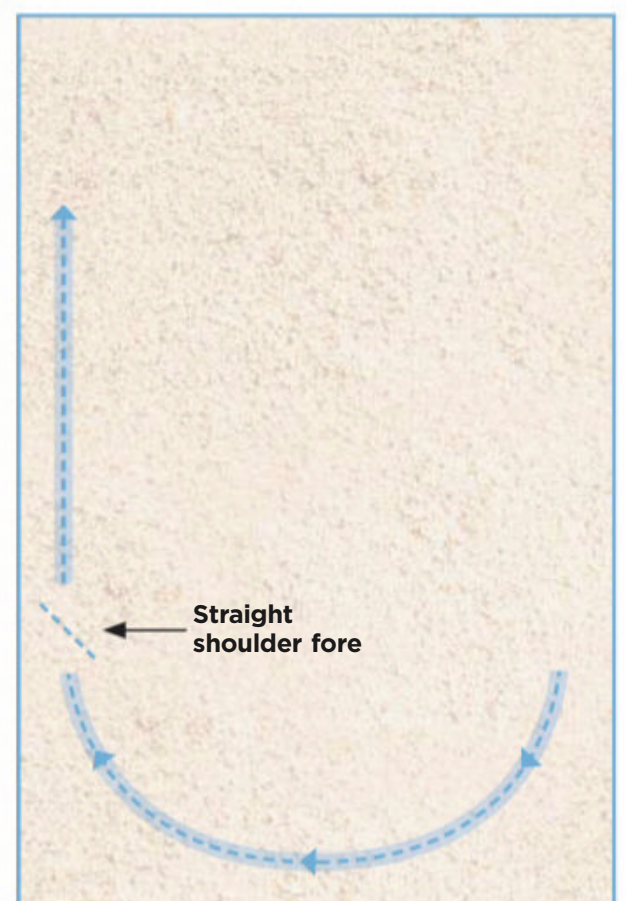
Exercise 4 BUILDING IT UP

So, you've counter-cantered around the short end of the arena — what's next?

"Well, there are several things you can build on now," says Tracy. "Continuing up the long side and checking your horse's straightness is a good test."

How to ride it

- 1** Remember that the front of a horse is narrower than the back end, so don't ride your horse straight along the fence line.
- 2** You need to be in a slight shoulder fore over the leading canter leg, but take care not to bend your horse's neck too much. Instead, think about where his shoulders are.
- 3** Arena mirrors are great for this, but if you don't have them, ask a helpful friend to video the long side for you. Watching things back helps to tell you whether what you feel is how it actually looks. If it's not right, you can adjust accordingly.



NEXT STEPS

If the counter-canter is good, see if you can ride through another end. Ensure that you keep the quality. If you lose the 'jump' and your canter is flat, do another exercise and recharge it.



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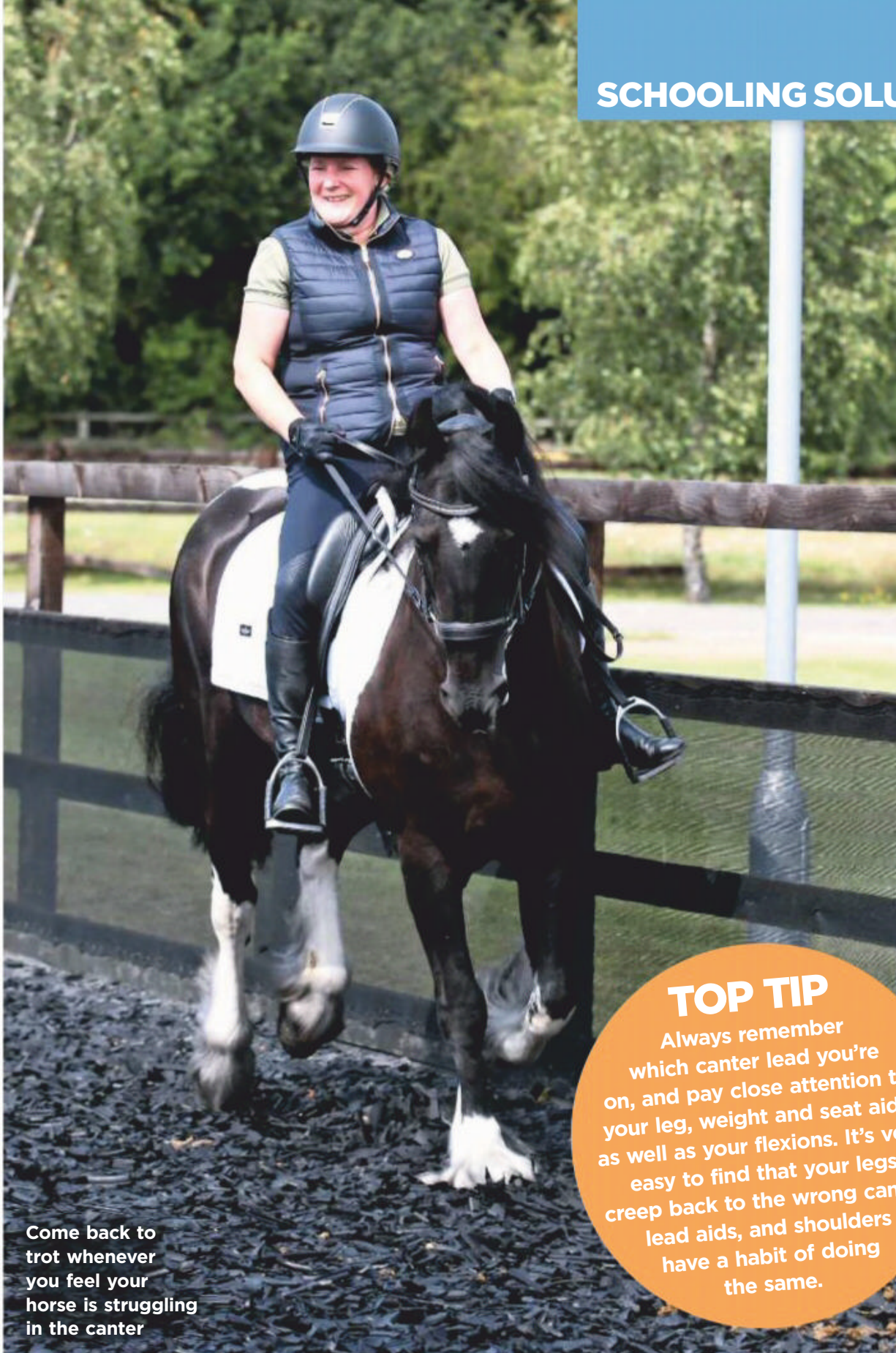
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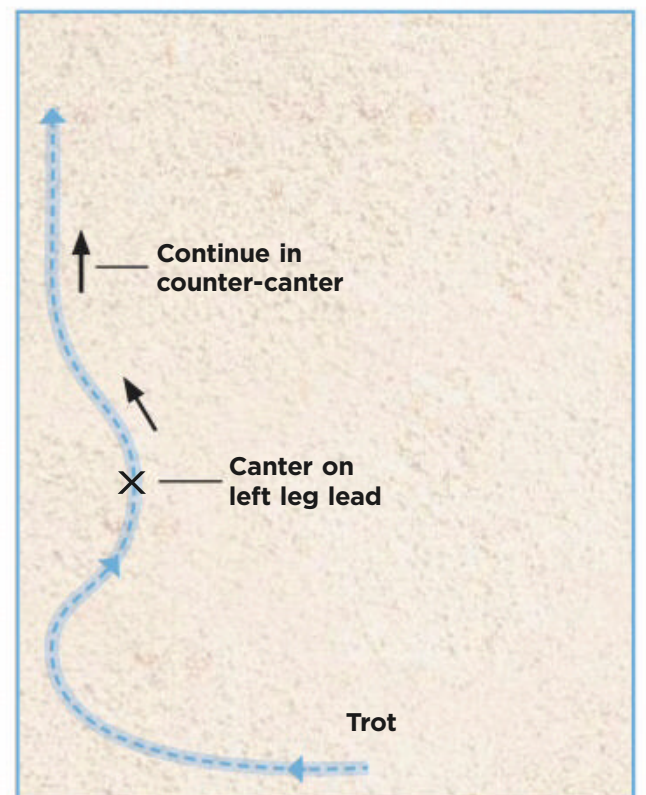
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Come back to trot whenever you feel your horse is struggling in the canter

TOP TIP

Always remember which canter lead you're on, and pay close attention to your leg, weight and seat aids, as well as your flexions. It's very easy to find that your legs creep back to the wrong canter lead aids, and shoulders have a habit of doing the same.



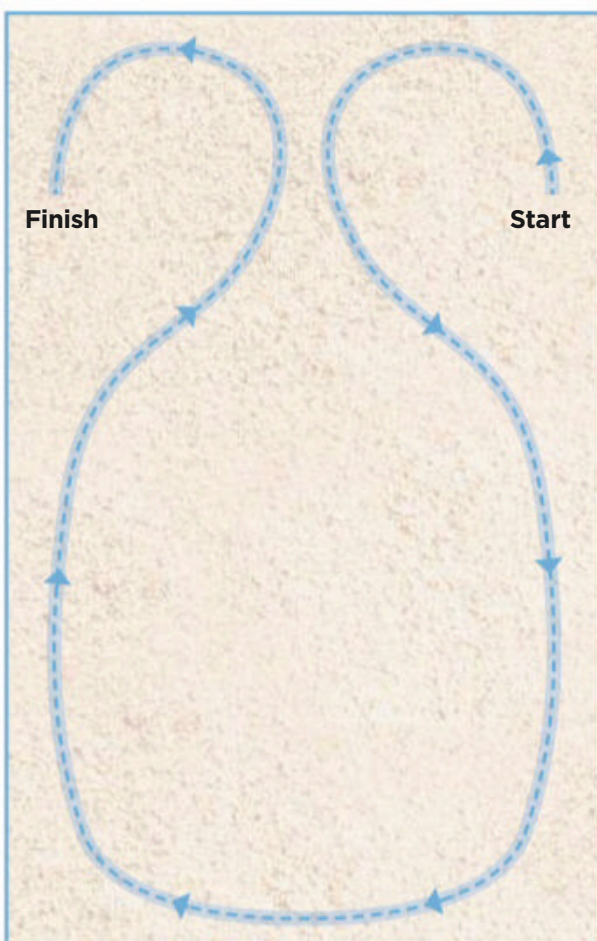
Exercise 6 SHALLOW LOOPS

Shallow loops are a great way to pick up counter-canter (and a good exercise on their own). They are handy if your horse has lost balance down the long side and gone into trot — riding a loop will enable you to pick up the counter-canter again swiftly and continue.

How to ride it

- 1 The shallow loop needs to be at least 5m and, if possible, executed in the first half of the long side to start with.
- 2 The loop is ridden in trot. As you hit the peak of the loop, pick up the counter-canter lead and ride smoothly back to the track (see diagram, above).
- 3 As your horse progresses, make the loop smaller until you can pick up counter-canter on the long side straight from trot or even walk.
- 4 If your walk-canter transitions are good, try this exercise with walk-canter. It's great preparation for simple changes.

Exercise 5 BACK TO THE CORRECT LEG



Remember that you can always come back to trot if you feel the canter is struggling — or as praise and reward when your horse has managed a particular exercise well.

“There's also a smart way you can finish and come back smoothly onto the correct leg lead again,” says Tracy. “To do this we're going to reverse the second exercise.”

How to ride it

- 1 After riding counter-canter around the short end of the school and then back along the long side, this time leave the track from the middle marker and head directly towards A or C.
- 2 If you are on a left counter-canter lead, you'll turn left into the corner so that you're back on normal left canter lead.
- 3 If you've gone into counter-canter originally from a 15m circle rather than a 10m one, make it a 15m to return back.
- 4 This exercise is great if your horse has become a little long in the counter-canter. Going back to the correct rein using the fenced corner will help to 'sit' him back.

Lessons learned



Tracy says...

✱ It's much more important to maintain 'jump' in the canter than speed.

✱ Don't be afraid to take a step back if your horse is struggling with an exercise.

✱ Keep a close eye on your aids — it's easy to creep back to the wrong lead aids when riding counter-canter. 🐾

Keeping on the straight and narrow

30 MINS

EXPERT
workout

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN:

- Why horses find narrow gaps and fences a challenge
- How to train your horse to jump skinnies with confidence

Does your horse have a tendency to run out at narrow fences? Five-star eventer **Imogen Murray** explains how to tackle skinnies successfully

SKINNY AND NARROW fences are designed to test horses and riders and slow them down. It's important that you train your horse to understand what it is that you're asking, rather than just

expecting him to automatically know what to do when he comes across a skinny on a course. Introducing him to narrow fences in an arena allows you to start at a basic level and build up before tackling a more difficult solid fence.



EXERCISE 1

This exercise introduces your horse to narrow gaps. Horses in the wild are prey animals, so they would generally avoid narrow spaces in case they got trapped. We need to understand that it's not natural behaviour for them to go through a tight gap when they can see there's a wider space available either side.

- 1 Set out two sets of wings five or six strides apart, with a gap of roughly 90-95cm between the wings. Now place two 'tramline' poles midway between, the same distance apart. The poles will help to keep your horse straight through the 'skinnies'.
- 2 Walk through the wings and tramlines on each rein. In walk you have most control, so you can stop your horse from running out. You want him to see only the option of going through the gap, not going around the side of the wings. Repeat the exercise until he walks through the wings calmly.
- 3 Once you've mastered walking through, try it in trot. Build up to it by approaching in trot, downward transitioning to walk before the wings, then going back into trot after. Each time you ride it, do fewer walk steps until you're trotting right the way through.
- 4 Next do the same in canter. As before, approach in canter, trot as you go through the gap, and then back to canter before staying in canter for the whole exercise. This teaches your horse not to rush and ensures that he understands the exercise.
- 5 Now add a short pole on the ground between each set of wings. Start in walk or trot, depending on how confident your horse is, then progress up the paces.
- 6 If you and your horse feel confident, raise one or both poles to a small fence.



MEET THE EXPERT

IMOGEN MURRAY

is a five-star event rider who has represented Great Britain on Nations Cup teams. Based in Leicestershire, she runs MS Team Eventing. As well as her successful competitive career, Imogen is also a highly regarded producer of young horses, from four-year-olds to five-star contenders.



EXERCISE 2

This is a really helpful exercise that teaches your horse to be confident with narrow fences. As he gains confidence, you can start to skip the first couple of steps so that he jumps the fence from the beginning. At this point you're ready to go out and try a proper cross-country version.

- 1 Set up your two skinny poles and wings again, but this time on a dog-leg curve. As before, start with the poles on the floor.
- 2 Walk, trot and canter over the poles as you did in exercise 1. This time it will be harder as you'll have to ensure that your

horse travels straight on a curved line (the back end follows the front) and doesn't fall in or out on the turn.

- 3 Once you can follow your line over the poles, make one or both of them into a small skinny jump. Again, it's important not to move onto the next step until your horse is confidently tackling this exercise without too much influence from you.
- 4 Gradually increase the height of the skinny jump until it's suitable for your horse's level. At this point he'll be confidently jumping a fence that's much narrower than the skinnies you're likely to encounter at competitions. 🐾

Build up from the basics before tackling a more difficult, solid skinny fence

TOP TIP

Always practise exercises equally on both reins and remember that you don't need to achieve everything in one session — you can do these exercises many times and progress to a higher level each time.



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Young guns

Patience and consistency are what's needed when you're training a young horse to jump. **Jay Halim** shares the go-to exercise he uses to produce relaxed and happy horses

PHOTOS: MATTHEW ROBERTS

FOR YOUR HORSE to jump successfully there are a number of different factors that you need to have in place. To improve his way of going on the flat and over fences the six Scales of Training – relaxation, rhythm, contact, impulsion, straightness and collection – will help to guide you. These are simply the principles used in riding to ensure that your horse works correctly; they provide the basic foundations of all training.

Showjumper Jay Halim, in one of his demos at Your Horse Live 2019, took us through the basics of training a young horse and showed us his favourite exercises that focus on relaxation, rhythm and contact. They are suitable for all horses of any age, and by following Jay's advice you will improve your own horse's way of going – and have fun too. ▶

Get the basics right and your horse will find jumping easy





MEET THE EXPERT

JAY HALIM is an international showjumper based in Burford, Oxfordshire. Jay rides and trains horses of all ages and competes regularly. He was named the National Grand Prix Champion in 2016.

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A simple warm up

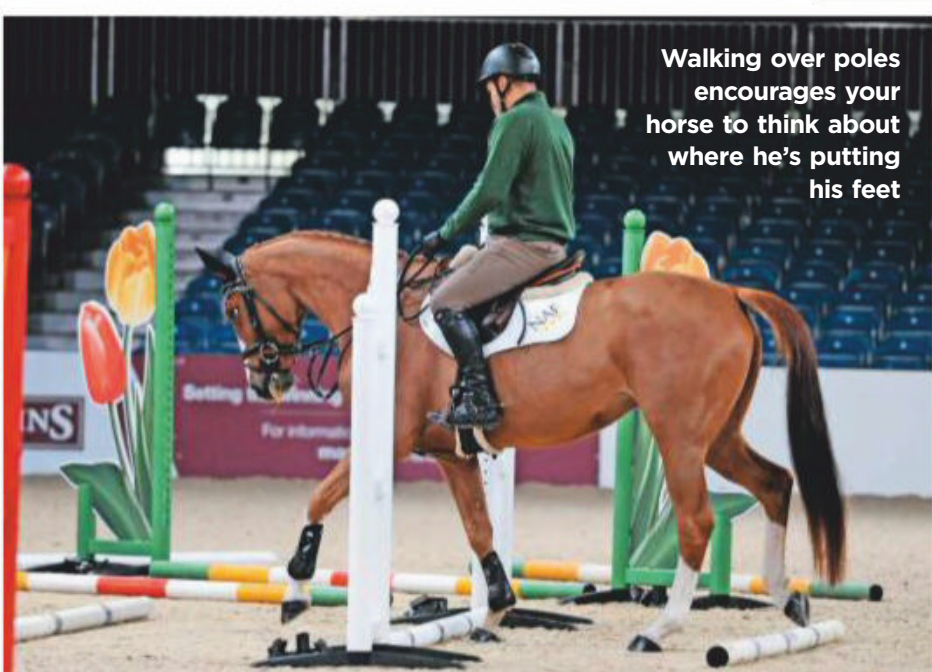
As the first scale of training is relaxation, at the start of your warm up you should take some time to let your horse relax. If it's safe to do so, walk around on a long rein so that he can stretch his head and neck forwards and down. Use this time to check your position, too – sitting evenly in the saddle with equal weight in each stirrup and sitting up straight.

Your flatwork should encourage your horse to work over his back to help his technique over a fence. Jay likes to use ground poles, put out at no set distance so your horse has to think about where he's placing his feet.

"It's absolutely fine for your horse to slow down and drop his neck over the poles," says Jay. "Spend a bit of time just walking over the poles in both directions to encourage your horse to look and think about where he's putting his feet. If you think about the way he jumps, he needs to be able to drop his neck."

Moving up to trot, ride your horse from

As you trot round the arena, your horse should be in a good rhythm and working equally into both reins



Walking over poles encourages your horse to think about where he's putting his feet

your leg into an even contact. Some horses, especially youngsters, tend to fall in around the turns. As you trot round you want to encourage your horse to stay away from your inside leg – ask for a step or two of leg-yield so he's stepping away from your inside leg.

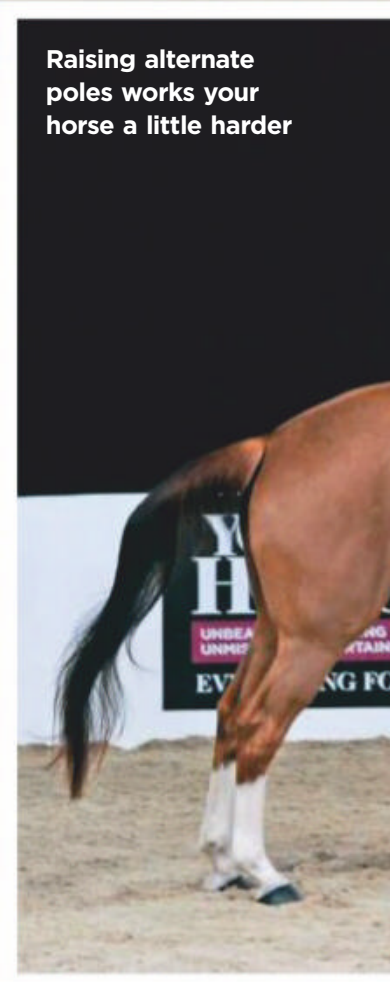
"With young horses I find that you have to hold their hand a bit," says Jay. "Your contact can offer your horse a little security and connection, but he shouldn't rely or sit on that contact. Test this by giving and retaking your reins – your horse should stay in the same rhythm and shouldn't fall flat on his face."

As you increase the pace to canter, you still need to ensure that your horse doesn't fall in on the corners.

"When the canter feels balanced, I may ride it a little more forward, but only when the time is right – there's no point in lengthening and shortening the stride when your horse can't maintain a regular canter rhythm. Check that you're not trying to pull your horse into a frame; you're just offering him security in the contact," says Jay.



Raising alternate poles works your horse a little harder



Riding canter poles on a curve is a great gymnastic workout for you and your horse



A full body workout

Riding over canter poles on a circle is one of Jay's favourite exercises – it's an all-round gymnastic workout for you and your horse. Whatever level your partnership is at, you'll both benefit from using this exercise.

"Horses naturally have a weaker side,"

explains Jay. "When you're working on a straight line, no matter what you do with your horse, he'll always push off the same leg. I want my horses to be as symmetrical as possible and by doing gymnastic exercises, like this one on a curve, you're making your horse work both sides."

This exercise has two parts to it and it works the horse quite hard, so build up gradually. Don't move on to the second part until your horse is happy and confident going over the poles on the ground.

When you practise this exercise, focus on riding an accurate circle and maintaining the canter rhythm. Watch that you don't over-ride – stay relaxed in your upper body and arms so that you can follow your horse's movement. Keep your eyes looking forward and following the line of your circle.

Don't pull

Set out four poles, three yards apart middle to middle, on the curve of a 20m circle. Pick up canter on the circle and ride over the poles. Remember to look up where you're going and concentrate on riding an accurate circle.

It's important that you don't pull your horse around the circle with your inside rein. Channel your horse's body by using your legs – this will help you to stay in the centre of each pole. Let your horse figure out what you're asking him to do, but don't expect him to get it right first time. Ride over the

FEEL THE BENEFITS

Riding poles on a curve will:

- Improve rhythm
- Increase suppleness
- Teach your horse to use his back
- Engage his core
- Develop you and your horse's balance
- Strengthen your horse

poles four or five times before changing the rein and riding through them again.

It's important that your horse stays in an even canter rhythm and that you ride to the middle of each pole. Jay suggests riding through the poles in a light seat so that your horse can stay soft through his back.

Up the challenge

To move this exercise on, you can raise alternate poles. Always have a take-off and landing pole to give your horse a bit of time to think and use himself. Keep the raised poles small and easy to encourage your horse to use his muscles evenly.

It's important not to alter the way you ride this exercise now that the poles are raised; just keep the rhythm and don't do too much with your position. Stay tall and in balance, focusing on riding a well-shaped circle.

Remember not to overdo it. When your horse has managed this exercise well, call it a day and let him stretch and cool off. 🐾



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Your horse's **CARE**

Helping you to keep a happy, healthy horse

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What is your horse's body language telling you?



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EQUINE HERPES VIRUS

Vet advice on spotting the signs and treating this killer disease.

BODY TALK

PART TWO

Horses might not speak, but we can learn to understand what they are telling us through their behaviour and body language. In the second of a two-part series, behaviourist **Justine Harrison** discusses your horse's non-verbal communication

PHOTOS: BAUER LIBRARY, UNLESS STATED

MOTHER NATURE WAS clever when it came to developing the horse. As a prey species that evolved to live in social groups, using sounds to interact with one another could have put the entire herd at risk of being noticed by predators. As a result, horses have developed a range of sophisticated body language signals and behaviours to communicate with each other silently and safely. Of course, horses do sometimes use vocal signals, but their primary method of communicating is through body language.

Tense body posture indicating horse is alert or alarmed



Hindquarters lowered ready to move quickly



Leg ready to kick behind or move away at speed



MEET THE EXPERT

JUSTINE HARRISON is a certified equine behaviour consultant. She applies the science of behaviour and learning to help owners understand and solve horse behaviour problems.

Justine also has many years' experience of riding, competing and handling horses. To find out more, visit equinebehaviourist.co.uk.

Ears turned
backwards
to listen
behind

Head and neck
held upright
indicating high
level of arousal

THE WHOLE PICTURE

Learning to understand equine body language means that we need to put together several pieces of a jigsaw:

■ Horses use their whole bodies to communicate

Messages may be conveyed via several movements or positions, so body language signals can only be interpreted correctly when the body is seen as a whole. For example, facial expressions may be supported by the position or movements in the rest of the body. The position of the head and neck, hindquarters and tail are of particular importance, as is overall body posture. If your horse has his ears back, for example, he may either be listening behind him or threatening to bite. The position of his head and neck – high and alert when listening, or low and extended towards you when aggressive – can help us to understand what he's saying.

■ Body language and behaviour is context specific

How a horse behaves can mean different things in different situations, so it's vital to take the context or situation in which the behaviour occurs into account.

■ Body language and behaviour can differ between individual horses

Not all horses respond the same way to events in the environment. Some are extremely stoic and may be much more frightened or stressed than their body language suggests. This can be particularly true of coldblooded horses like cobs and Shires who may freeze if they are frightened rather than spook or run about.

Conversely, hotblooded breeds like Arabs and Thoroughbreds may be very reactive and expressive in their behaviour and body language if they are anxious.



THE HEAD AND NECK

The position of the head and neck can tell you a lot about how a horse is feeling. Often horses will raise their heads when aroused, fearful, or threatened. They will arch their necks in response to a threat, and head threats can quickly escalate to lunging and charging.

Stallions bow their heads when they meet one another and 'snake' their necks when herding members of their bands.

Lowered — A lowered head can be a sign that your horse is relaxed, resting, in pain or even depressed. Taking his overall body posture into account can help you to differentiate between these emotional states.

Elevated — If your horse raises his head, he may be focusing on something in the distance and be deciding whether to flee, ignore, or investigate it. If he raises his head while being ridden this could be an early sign of pain. Further indicators could be if he hollows his back, puts his ears back, shakes his head, or swishes his tail.

If any of these behaviours occur then have your tack checked by a master saddler and ask a vet to examine your horse for any potential physical problems.



Head tossing — This indicates that a horse may be frustrated, irritated, or in pain. He may grind his teeth, toss or fling his head, open his mouth, or elevate his head to avoid a rider's hands or the bit when ridden. There is usually an overall stiffness to the body.

Again, if your horse displays any of these behaviours ask a master saddler to check your tack and have a vet look over your horse for any potential problems. PHOTO: TIERFOTOAGENTUR/ALAMY



Head turned away — If a horse turns his head away when you approach this may be an indicator that he's worried about you or what you're about to do. Horses will often turn their head away when their owners arrive with their tack or travel bandages as they are anticipating that a stressful event is about to occur.



THE TAIL

What a horse does with his tail is often overlooked, but it can be a great indicator of his emotional state.

PHOTO: AGENCJA FOTOGRAFICZNA CARO/ALAMY



Raised — A tail raised straight up is a sign of excitement. It's often seen when playing or when something has caught his attention.

Swishing slowly — The slow swish of a tail is usually to get rid of flies, but it can also be seen if a horse is becoming colicky. In this case you may also see the horse stamping his feet, as well as kicking at his stomach, dropping his head, looking at his hindquarters, or attempting to get down.

Tail swishing when ridden can be a sign of anxiety or discomfort.

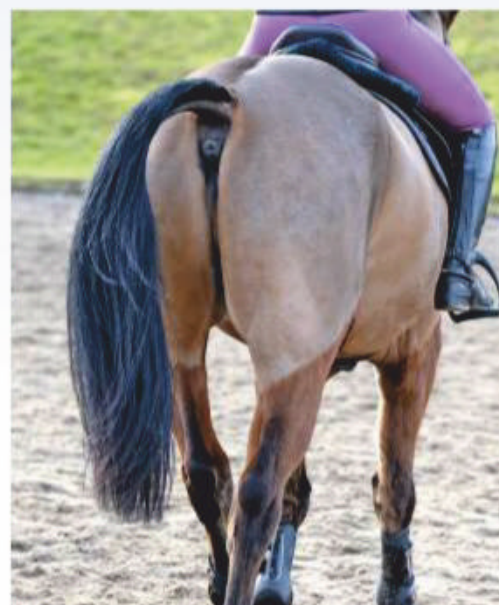
Swishing rapidly — When a horse's tail swishes quickly from side to side or up and down, he's irritated, in pain, or aggressive. This may be a warning sign that he's about to kick, buck, or bite.



Clamped down — A fearful or stressed horse will clamp down his tail tightly and may also lower his hindquarters. If your horse clamps down his tail when you're riding him, he may be fearful or in pain, so assess the situation — he might feel that you have punished him or asked too much. You may have frightened him and you'll need to build his confidence back up.

As before, ensure that his tack fits well and call your vet if the behaviour continues.

PHOTO: KZWW/SHUTTERSTOCK



Held to one side — A tail held like this can often be a sign of back pain. Ask your vet to check your horse over for any physical problems.



WARNING

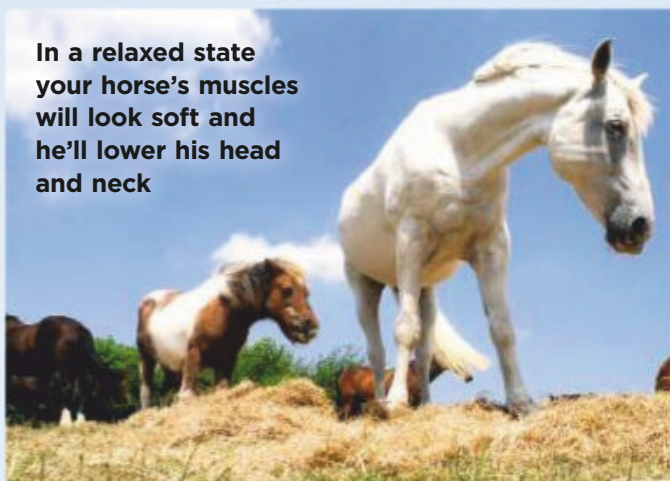
When a horse is anxious or sees something new, his posture becomes upright and his head and tail are raised. For example, if a horse notices a dog in the hedge, he may alert his fieldmates to the potential threat by looking straight at it, pointing his head or body in its direction and adopting a very upright stance. His head and tail will be held high, ears tightly pricked and muscles tensed. His movement may be stiff and jerky to signify to his friends that he is anxious about the intruder.

These postural signals may be seen by other horses from miles away and are clear indicators that something threatening requires their urgent attention. On closer inspection we might see that the horse's eyes are open wide, clearly showing the sclera (whites of the eye), with a tense neck and facial muscles too. We may also see flared nostrils sniffing towards the source of interest and the horse may blow or snort. If he's particularly frightened, his muscles may quiver or tremble.



If your horse sees something unusual or threatening his posture will become very upright

In a relaxed state your horse's muscles will look soft and he'll lower his head and neck



RELAXED

When he's relaxed, your horse will usually slightly lower his head and neck, while his body posture and muscles will look soft overall. His lips and muzzle will be relaxed too and his ears will be in a 'neutral' position — slightly lowered and rotated to the side. Often one hindleg will be resting on the toe when he's standing still. If he's moving, there will be a loose swing to his stride. The shape of his eye will be round.



WATCH YOUR HORSE

The best way to learn about your horse's body language is to watch him as often as you can. Notice how he reacts when he's in his field with other horses, when he's taken to a new environment, or when other people are around him. Watch his facial expressions and his body language, notice his

overall posture and how he reacts in different situations.

Learning to recognise early changes in your horse's body language and behaviour can help you to see when he's anxious, fearful, frustrated, or aggressive. This puts you in a better position to avoid potentially dangerous situations, or prevent behavioural

problems from escalating.

Changing what you're doing or removing yourself and your horse from a situation could help to keep you safe. Noticing the warning signs that your horse is irritated or fearful and acting accordingly could stop him from resorting to more dangerous behaviours like bucking or biting.

Watch how your horse behaves with his fieldmates

SEXUAL DIFFERENCES

Mares and stallions have different postural displays in certain situations (especially when it comes to sexual behaviours) but, generally speaking, their body language is very similar.

When stallions are gelded it often reduces some of their expressivity — stallions can be far more expressive in their body language than geldings. Many advanced dressage riders prefer to ride a stallion as their power and exuberant movement can be an advantage in competition. Gelding a horse also means that he will display far fewer sexual and herding behaviours. 🐾

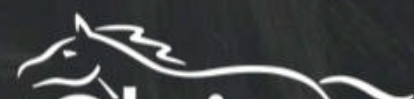


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Taking off those Jimmy Choos

Keeping horses barefoot offers myriad benefits. Equine podiatrist **Emma Burston** explains how to make the transition from shod to shoeless

PHOTOS: BAUER LIBRARY, UNLESS STATED

All horses can go barefoot, but you'll need to invest time in the process while he makes the transition



MEET THE EXPERT

EMMA BURSTON

is an equine podiatrist who runs Shoeless Solutions, based in Midhurst, West Sussex. As well as improving and maintaining hooves, she has a particular interest in the barefoot rehabilitation of laminitis and navicular cases.



THERE ARE MANY benefits to keeping your horse barefoot the main one being that your horse's hoof is able to function as nature intended. A barefoot hoof is able to absorb concussion, correctly utilise the frog and soft tissues of the hoof, and spread weight-bearing load over the wall, edge of the sole, heel and frog.

A horse's hoof is also a great reflection of his overall health, and often issues such as inflammatory responses and chronic metabolic disease can be picked up in the feet before any other signs are present.

So how does a farrier's trim differ from a barefoot trim by an equine podiatrist?

The main difference is that an equine podiatrist will approach the appointment from a whole horse point of view – assessing the way the horse is moving at every visit, as well as ensuring that his management and diet are correct. An equine podiatrist's trim is more conservative than a standard farrier's trim. I rarely trim the frog or sole unless it's really needing to come away. It's better to have a thick, rock-crunching sole after a trim than one that's polished and beautiful but sensitive. A horse should never be more sensitive after a trim than he was before it. If he is, too much foot has been taken away.

Every horse is an individual, so it's vital that the trimmer takes the time to ensure that what they are doing is exactly what that particular horse needs. It's certainly not about applying a 'one size fits all' approach.



A healthy horse will grow healthy hooves, so make sure that yours has a balanced diet



Maintenance of barefoot feet involves a daily clean out

Fitting the bill

So how do you know if your horse is suitable for barefoot living?

In a nutshell, all horses are suitable for barefoot trimming, from Shetlands to Shires and field ornaments to sports horses. All horses are capable of being barefoot because, after all, they were born that way. Sometimes, though, their lifestyle is the deciding factor not all owners are able to keep a barefoot horse and shoes are sometimes necessary to help that horse perform the tasks he's asked to do, such as hacking or maybe long-distance rides.

When deciding whether your horse should go barefoot, you need to consider whether you have the time and interest to invest in the first few weeks (or months) of transitioning to barefoot. The process varies and some horses have their shoes taken off and carry on as before with very little input from trimmer or owner. Some, however – usually those that are compromised either metabolically or in some other way – require a bit more support.

Some horses may need hoof boots to provide extra protection during exercise initially, so factor in the cost of these too. The podiatrist can measure your horse and suggest suitable boots if they are needed.

‘I use boots on horses who may still be a little tender’

Lauren Hetherington is a qualified barefoot trimmer who runs Graveney Equine in Kent, a track system livery yard that complements barefoot horses. Here she explains how hoof boots can help those going barefoot.

“Essentially, hoof boots can be the bridge between shod and barefoot,” says Lauren. “There are so many shapes, sizes and uses — some can be used for turnout or poulticing, while others are great for fast work or muddy surfaces — that there is almost always something to suit everyone.

“I like to use boots on horses who may still be a little tender — either just

on more challenging surfaces, or all the time if that’s what they need at first. Ideally you want to be able to transition your horse out of boots as then you’re finally barefoot, but people will often still use boots if they know there will be lots of stones where they’re going, and therefore the potential for bruising.

“Boots can also be used with pads to either provide extra cushioning or extra stimulation to the sole and frog to build them up along with the digital cushion.

“What I really like about boots is that they don’t restrict the hoof’s natural distortion when in use and they can be taken off when not required.”



Hoof boots can help your horse if he's feeling a bit tender



PHOTO: LAUREN HETHERINGTON

Management

Caring for a barefoot horse shouldn’t be much different to caring for a shod horse. A healthy horse creates a healthy hoof, so your equine podiatrist will ensure that your horse’s care doesn’t end at the coronary band.

One of the things podiatrists look at prior to a transition to barefoot is that the horse is eating a suitable diet for optimal gut health and therefore hoof health. This should be high in fibre and low in sugar and starch, with access to good quality forage.

If your horse is sensitive to grass sugars it may be suggested that his access to spring grass is restricted, but this isn’t something that necessarily applies across the board — the majority of barefoot horses can be turned out and managed as normal.

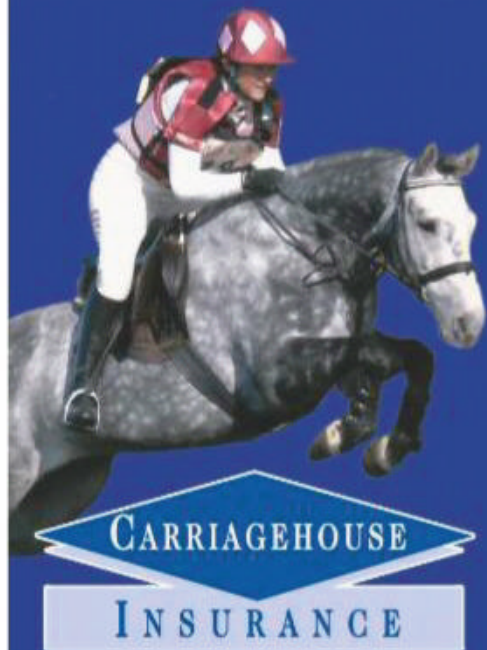
Most barefoot horses are trimmed every 6-8 weeks, but this varies from horse to horse — those who do a lot of work on more abrasive surfaces, such as sand or tarmac, may not need trimming quite so regularly.

Most barefoot horses can continue to work as usual, whether that be schooling, hacking, roadwork, jumping or whatever you and your equine companion enjoy.

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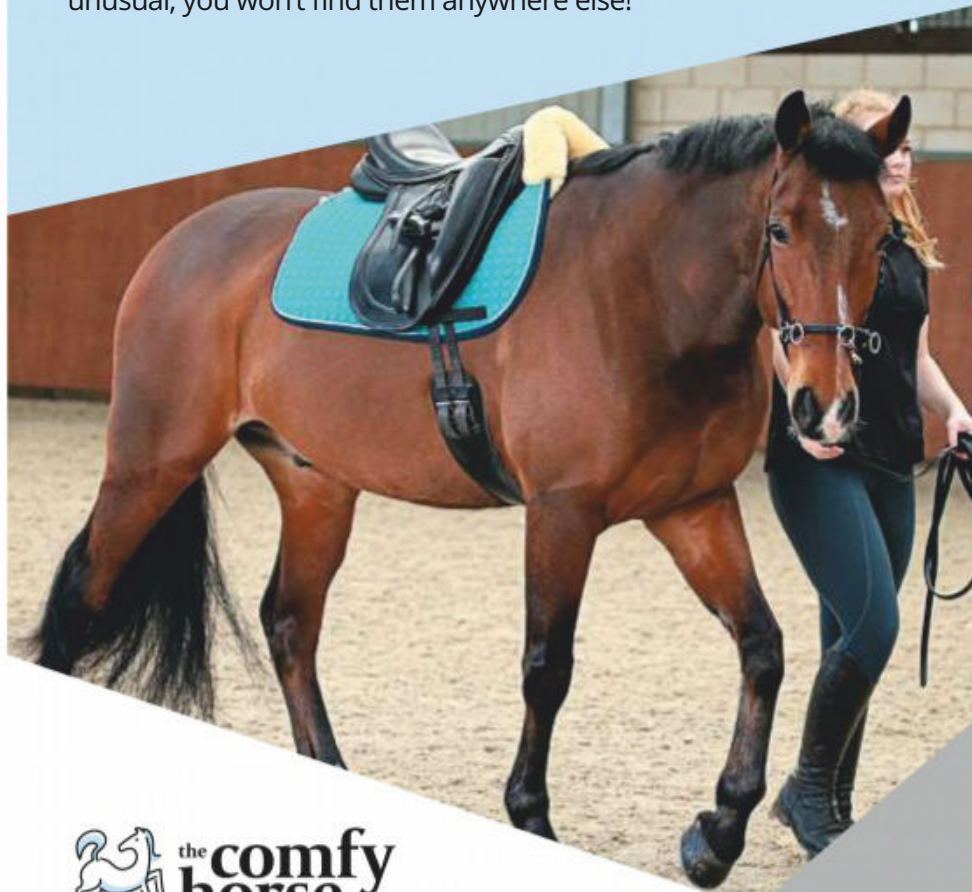


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The transition

To prepare your horse for the transition from shod to barefoot, undertake some research and find someone you really trust to see you and your horse through the process.

Your equine podiatrist will provide you with an individual plan for your horse at your first appointment which will make the transition as easy and smooth as it can be. It's important that you follow their advice to give your horse the best chance of making a successful transition. Your podiatrist will take into account what you want to do with your horse, how much time you spend riding on abrasive surfaces, and how to manage his hooves on a daily basis – including cleaning out each day and regular checks – to ensure that his hooves stay in good condition.

When your horse first goes barefoot your equine podiatrist will advise you on a suitable exercise plan for those initial few weeks, introducing different surfaces gradually. This is in order to condition your horse's feet to new surfaces gently and to avoid any foot soreness or bruising, which doesn't have to happen when transitioning to barefoot.

CASE STUDY

'I love the hollow clopping sound of Tommy's bare feet as he walks down the road'

Carla Manning owns nine-year-old Carhue Boy (aka Tommy) who she competes at elementary level dressage. Carla made the decision to remove Tommy's shoes in October 2016, and finds that it has benefited both her and her horse.

"The main reason I transitioned Tommy to barefoot was that he was diagnosed with hock arthritis. I believed that the only way to keep him sound long term would be to remove his shoes," she says.

"The first step was to make changes to his diet. At the time he was on nuts, but after digging into the nutritional content, I discovered his were high in sugar and starch, so I switched to a barefoot-friendly feed that was lower in both.

"I then arranged for my farrier to remove the shoes and I got in touch with

Emma Burston and arranged for her to come and assess and trim Tommy's feet.

"We did a few weeks of in-hand walking on different surfaces before I rode him, and then it was a couple more months before his feet were conditioned enough for the demands I need to place on him.

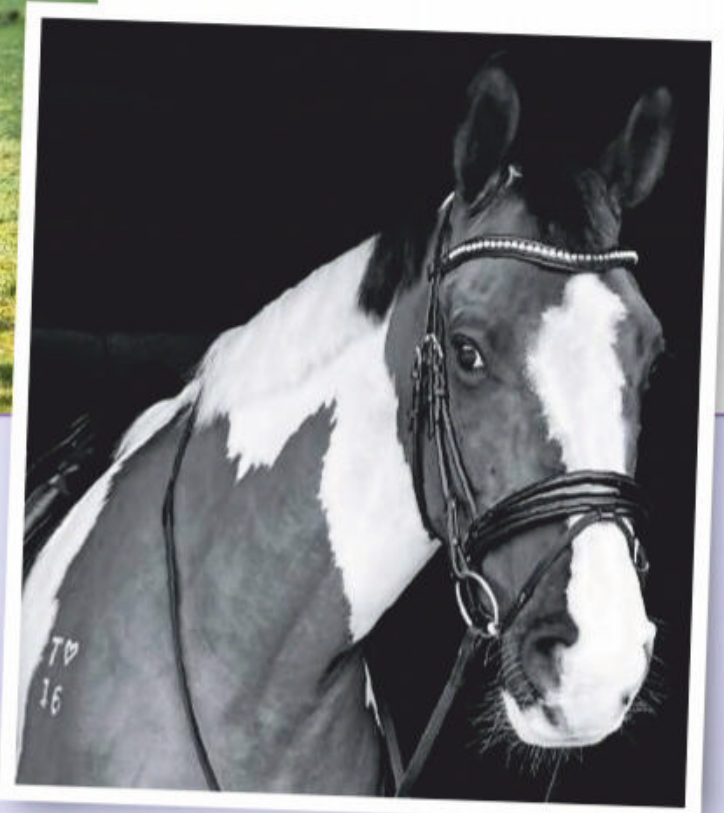
"I'm hoping that the benefits of barefoot for Tommy are long-term soundness, but having him barefoot also means that I'm able to notice even the slightest changes, particularly when his hocks are causing him trouble, and Emma can shorten his heels to make him more comfortable again. Having Tommy barefoot saves me time and maintenance jobs – I like to leave his feet alone as much as possible, bar a scrape out once a day. The other benefit is that when it

snows, we get to enjoy some lovely rides as barefoot feet don't ball up with snow.

"Emma trims Tommy every 5-6 weeks. It's not as cheap as a farrier trim, but the extra cost is worth it when you know that an experienced barefoot trimmer will keep your horse not only maintenance sound, but training sound as well.

Emma's advice on hooves, as well as on diet and management, is invaluable.

"In terms of management, you have to condition the feet – so you can't spend all your time in a soft arena and then expect your horse to do two hours' road work. But now I've made the transition, I'm so pleased with the results. I love the hollow clopping sound of Tommy's bare feet as he walks down the road." 🐾



How does your pasture grow?

Our horses' fields have taken a battering this winter. **Sam Vickers** advises on what action owners can take to help their paddocks recover



MEET THE EXPERT

SAM VICKERS is director of SMV Contract Services Ltd. Having grown up surrounded by horses, Sam studied at Askham Bryan College and then worked on a farm. His business provides paddock, grassland and ground maintenance across Lincolnshire and the surrounding counties. Visit smvcontractservices.co.uk.

TURNING YOUR HORSE out into a grassy paddock not only provides him with fresh air and exercise to boost his mental and physical wellbeing but, more importantly, it offers him a huge amount of nutritional goodness – or at least it should. Ensuring that the grass he's eating and the ground he's galloping on is of good quality not only helps to maintain good health, but it also means that his paddocks will remain in good condition for future use.

But how do you know whether your grass is of good quality – and how do you keep it that way?

There are lots of elements that contribute to quality grazing for horses. First, it's essential to know what's in the soil. The soil provides all the energy, protein and key nutrients to encourage healthy grass growth.

A soil sample is easy to obtain with a DIY home testing kit from ProGreen Weed Control Solutions. It sends out a sample kit with instructions for you to complete at

home and you simply return this to the laboratory for testing. Once the test is completed, you'll be sent an analysis sheet that shows which nutrients are lacking. A grassland management company can then select a bespoke fertiliser for you, enabling the correct amount of nutrients to be applied to promote healthy growth.

It's important to add the correct nutrients and minerals into the soil, but not overdose. We want a balanced pH level to establish good grass growth. Fertiliser is often spread in the spring (after paddock repair work and before weed spraying), but it can also be applied in early autumn. The land should be left ungrazed for at least seven days – and until it's had a comprehensive soaking of rain.

Some people ask for certain weeds to be kept in, but this usually requires a weedkiller that will leave that particular plant alone. Alternatively, you can 'spot spray' and just spray each individual weed that you want removed. However, this can be time consuming in large paddocks.

PHOTO: BAUER LIBRARY

Harrowing and rolling

Harrowing is an essential part of paddock maintenance and is carried out in spring and early autumn. The harrow has a number of key roles, including aerating the soil to promote growth, levelling out poached areas, and removing dead grass and moss. It's also used to spread out manure, but I recommend leaving the paddock to rest afterwards in case any live worm eggs are spread around. A springtime harrow usually has the best effect as it's more aggressive and generally heavier than a traditional chain harrow, although both methods are beneficial.

To consolidate the pasture, use a flat roller. Rolling needs to be completed at just the right time – the land needs to be malleable enough to level it out, but not too wet that it compresses and compacts the soil, preventing water from draining away. Rolling is often undertaken after harrowing, but generally only in the spring.

For poached gateways, I rotovate the soil into a fine powder and then seed the ground before I roll it. However, you then have to keep animals off the area for a few weeks, which isn't always possible if that's the only way into the field. The other option is to dig out the gateway and lay stone or tarmac chippings. You could also try fencing it off in really wet weather (using a moveable electric fence) to stop it getting poached.

Drainage

Having good drainage in a paddock is often underestimated. Horses are particularly good at compacting the ground, which makes it difficult for water to drain away. First, therefore, ensure that any ditches and dykes around your land are clear and maintained. Dykes are there to remove excess water and if they're blocked you'll only encourage water to stay on the land.

Next on the list is to get the land mole ploughed. A grassland mole plough has a leading disc that carefully cuts a channel in the grass. This is followed by a large leg with a bullet-shaped end that is pulled beneath the ground. This then breaks up the compacted surface and creates underground channels for water to flow through. It's important to only use a mole plough that is suited for pasture, however. A large agricultural plough will rip up too much grass and have a negative effect.

Mole ploughing should be carried out when the land is firm enough to travel on without the tractor spinning, but soft enough beneath the surface for the plough leg to be pulled through at depth.



PHOTO: SMV CONTRACTORS

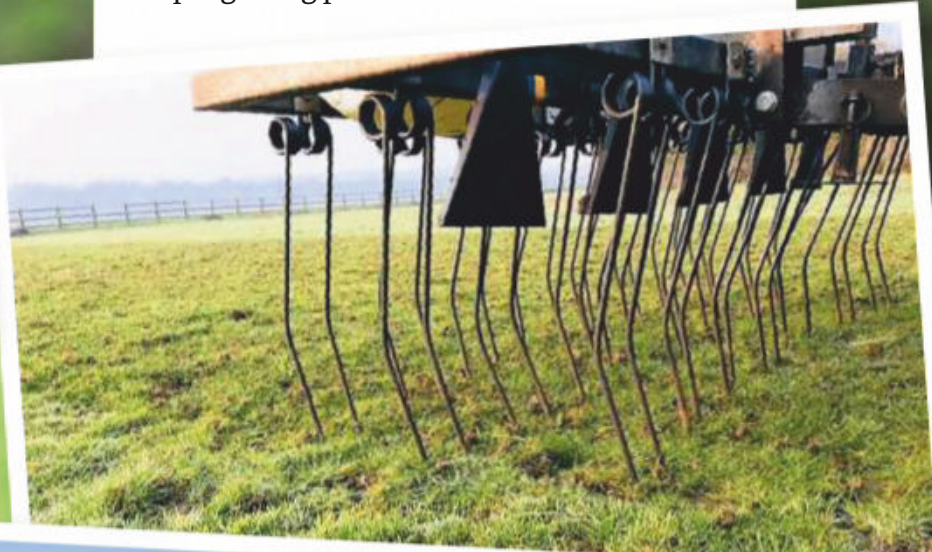


PHOTO: SMV CONTRACTORS



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Spraying for weeds

Some people factor weed spraying into their yearly maintenance. A number of chemicals are available to combat a variety of weeds, among them Headland Polo, ThistleX and PasTor. It's best to consult your local paddock maintenance company or chemical supplier for the chemical most suited to your weeds as every paddock is different.

The most common weed I get asked about is ragwort. Ragwort needs to be sprayed in its rosette stage in the springtime because the larger the plant grows, the less chance the chemical has of taking effect. As soon as ragwort has flowered, there's little to no point in spraying it at all.

Whenever you spray for weeds, don't cut or top the area beforehand. To kill weeds you need the chemical to land on the plant's leaves and then be absorbed, like rain. The area should then be left completely alone for a minimum of seven days. Remember, though, that ragwort is still both poisonous and palatable when it's dying off, so the pasture shouldn't be grazed until the plants have completely disappeared.

Always read the label as every chemical is different. Ideally, weed spraying should be left to a professional maintenance company.

Overseeding

After a heavy winter, a lot of badly poached areas struggle to regain growth. Once you have harrowed to level out the poaching and created a decent seed bed, you can then go ahead and apply seed. There's a wide variety of seed to choose from, either online or from your local country store. Be sure, though, to get a variety that suits your horse – a low rye mix is recommended if your animal suffers from laminitis, for example.

You then need to roll the seed into the soil to allow it to germinate and establish. For best results, you should leave the area ungrazed for as long as possible. The roots need time to grow into the soil, and if it's grazed too early horses will simply pull the new seedlings from the ground.

Overseeding can be done in the spring or early autumn when temperatures are above 10°C. I use a one-pass harrow, roll and seeding machine to reduce customer costs and keep compaction to a minimum.



PHOTO: SMV CONTRACTORS

Divide your paddock into smaller areas

NATURAL OPTIONS

When it comes to improving pasture and controlling weeds, there are also a number of natural management options.

1 AVOID OVER-GRAZING Don't allow your paddocks to become over-grazed. Bare patches make space for weeds to grow, so ensure grass is given a chance to recover regularly, then there's less opportunity for weed invasion.

2 WEED CONTROL Where plant numbers are small you can pull up weeds by the roots. Another natural way to control weeds is to mow — most weeds can't withstand it. Mowing an area of pasture (after it's been grazed) to a height of 3-4in cuts tall plants down and encourages grasses to produce more leaves, making the strand thicker and better able to outcompete weeds. There's also an organic product available that kills ragwort.

3 GIVE IT A REST Resting pasture gives grass a chance to recover and grow. Create a rotation system by subdividing areas with electric fencing. Once the grass is grazed down to 3-4in, move the horses on to the next section. Only allow horses back on an area when the grass has regrown to about 6-8in.

4 GO ORGANIC A number of organic fertilisers are available. The best way to work out what your paddocks need is to call in an expert. They will assess your grass health and come up with a tailored menu for your paddock using organic materials.

5 CO-GRAZE Putting sheep on your paddocks has a number of benefits — one of the key ones being that they will eat weeds as well as keeping the grass at the same length. Unlike horses, sheep don't 'patch graze' and leave big gaps in the grass. They also help to break the worm cycle. Speak to your local farmer as he might be happy to graze a few of his sheep on your land.

CASE STUDY

'My horse's azoturia was caused by her new pasture'

WHEN HAYLEY MARSH'S 12-year-old Thoroughbred polocrosse mare Kuala tied up for the first time, Hayley discovered that it was due to a selenium deficiency in the pasture.

"I'd recently moved Kuala to new pasture and all the horses there were acting a bit strangely," says Hayley. "They were hyperactive and stressy, and one started bucking when being ridden, which was totally unlike her."

"When Kuala tied up, I called my vet who blood tested her and confirmed azoturia. She also suggested having the soil tested, and this showed a selenium deficiency and incorrect magnesium levels."

Hayley's previous paddocks had been made up of rough grass and were surrounded by a variety of hedges and trees, which Hayley believes offered her horses the vitamins and minerals they needed to

stay healthy. Although the paddocks at her new yard looked beautiful and green, they weren't offering the same level and variety of nutrients.

"I instantly put Kuala on a selenium and vitamin E supplement, and she hasn't tied up since," says Hayley. "I've also been giving all my horses a magnesium supplement and their behaviour has returned to normal. I'm now looking at getting the soil fertilised with the right nutrients."

"It's made me aware of how important grass quality is. We all concentrate on hard feed, but don't consider the grass's nutritional content and how that can affect our horses."

"Pastures may look lovely and green, but they might not be great nutritionally, and my advice is for horse owners to get their soil analysed to ensure that their horses are getting everything they need." 🐾



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LOCK DOWN

The patella plays a vital role in the horse's hindleg action — its locking mechanism even allows him to sleep standing up. Vet **Sarah Hunter** explains how it operates and what can go wrong

PHOTOS: BAUER LIBRARY, UNLESS STATED

THE PATELLA, OTHERWISE known as the kneecap, is a round, flat bone in the tendon part of the quadriceps muscle of the thigh. Three ligaments are attached to it and it sits in a depression on the femur (the trochlear groove) and slides up and down within this groove as the hindleg moves. This action enables the knee joint or stifle to operate like a hinge, allowing the leg to flex and extend but not to move sideways. Thanks to their attachments to the tibia, the three ligaments (the lateral, middle and medial ligaments) help to keep the patella in place. They are also involved in the patella's locking mechanism.



MEET THE EXPERT

SARAH HUNTER BVetMed MRCVS works for Yorkshire-based Station House Vets. After graduating from the Royal Veterinary College, London, she worked for animal charities in Africa before starting at a mixed practice in Scarborough. After four years treating everything from penguins to cows, she decided to concentrate on companion animals and horses.

The patella supports the horse's weight while he's resting, and allows the hindlimb to move smoothly during exercise

How the patella works

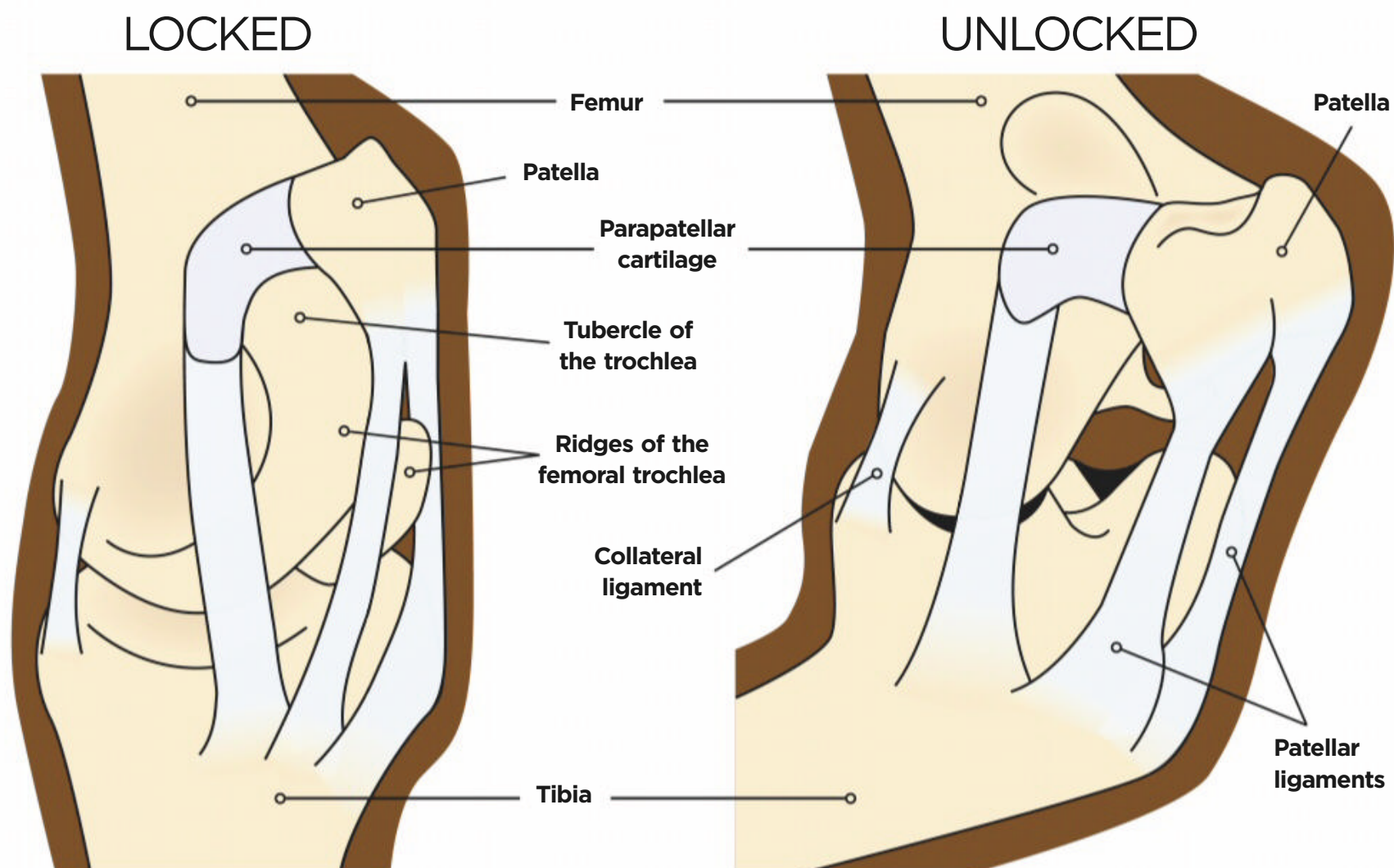
The three ligaments around the patella enable it to lock in place. Usually the patella glides freely within the trochlear groove, but when it's locked the medial patella ligament becomes hooked over the end of the femur so that the stifle can't be flexed. This feature causes the stifle to become immobile and allows the horse to rest in a standing position without using lots of energy in the process. He can then rest one leg at a time and can remain standing for long periods. To release the

lock, he shifts his weight on to the other hindlimb, which causes the thigh muscle to pull the patella back into place on the original resting limb. When the leg is locked, it can easily be 'unlocked' if the horse needs to run from danger.

The patella locking mechanism makes up part of the reciprocal apparatus, which involves the muscles and tendons on either side of the tibia. This ensures that when the stifle is flexed, the hock is also flexed, and when the stifle is in extension,

the hock is also in extension. This process allows the stifle and hock joints to move in unison. The horse can support his weight while standing and resting, and his hindlimb moves efficiently and smoothly during exercise.

The reciprocal apparatus uses tendons and ligaments rather than muscles, meaning that the lower limbs don't get tired as easily. The horse's limb continues to move with the same rhythm and strength for sustained periods of time.





The patella plays a vital role in your horse's hindleg action

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What can go wrong?

■ Upward fixation of the patella — 'locking stifle'

Although the patella locking mechanism is a helpful adaptation in the horse, sometimes it can go wrong, and this results in the patella being stuck in the locked position. This occurs when the hindlimb is extended back further than normal and the limb becomes stuck in extension. It's more likely to occur in horses with particularly straight hindlimbs and especially in young horses and ponies with poor muscle condition. In these cases, the weak thigh muscle fails to pull and release the patella.

If there has been trauma to the stifle region, in particular to the patella or its ligaments, it might become more difficult for the patella to be moved around and it may therefore remain in the locked position. Often a locking stifle becomes more obvious when the horse is stabled, and he will be seen holding and extending the limb back while he flexes his fetlock.

If this problem is identified, the horse can be given an exercise programme to follow, with the aim of building up his thigh muscles. Exercises may include daily lungeing, or walking up hills, and as much turnout as possible. A conditioning and exercise programme is usually most effective in young horses. In other instances surgery may be required. The prognosis for this condition is good, however, as most cases respond well to management.

■ Luxation of the patella

Usually the trochlear groove is deep enough for the patella to stay within it, but if it's too shallow the patella will slide sideways out of the groove. This condition tends to be seen in miniature breeds or in foals and is thought to be an inherited condition. An affected horse can be seen standing in a crouched position, unable to extend his stifle. He may also have a stiff gait. Surgery is required to treat the problem to ensure that the patella

stays within the groove. Because the condition is hereditary, breeding from affected animals is not recommended.

■ Fractured patella

A fractured patella can be caused by a kick to the stifle area, the leg hitting a jump, or getting stuck while trying to climb over a gate. Generally the horse will show signs of lameness, with heat, pain and swelling around the area. There may also be a skin wound indicating where the injury occurred.

X-rays of the area will be taken to see the extent of the injury. In some cases, box rest and pain relief will prompt healing, but some horses will require surgery to remove fragments of bone, or to repair large fractures.

■ Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis can occur following one of the conditions mentioned above, but it can also be seen after trauma or injury to the joint.

If your horse isn't moving correctly, your vet will perform diagnostic tests

CASE STUDY

'Samim looked like a ballerina'

SAMIM, A FOUR-YEAR-OLD gelding, showed signs of a locking stifle when he was two years old. His owner noticed the problem particularly when he had been stabled and described him as "looking like a ballerina".

Because Samim was young and still growing, polework exercises, lungeing and hill work were recommended to strengthen his thigh muscles. After a few months, his owner noticed a difference and the signs became a lot less frequent.

Samim still shows signs of a locking

stifle, usually in winter when he's stabled overnight. However, during the summer, when he is exercised frequently and turned out more, he's a lot better.

Samim never appears to be in pain or shows signs of distress when his stifle becomes locked. His owner tries to back him up a stride before bringing him out of his stable if she thinks that there might be a problem.

The gelding has recently taken a liking to dressage and the lateral work seems to be helping his locking stifle. 🐾

The horse is likely to be lame and there may be swelling. X-rays will be taken to assess the area, checking for fractures or bone fragments. Steroid injections into the joint around the patella can be given and, as part of the recovery, the horse will need to follow a controlled exercise programme. If he doesn't have severe osteoarthritis, it can often be managed with anti-inflammatory medication or joint injections, but if the disease is advanced it is probably unlikely that he will return to full work.

Other causes

There are many other injuries that can affect the stifle joint, but the key point is to identify that the horse isn't moving correctly and ask your vet to examine the affected leg. They will perform diagnostic tests, such as X-rays, to assess the patella and the stifle joint.

Once the problem has been diagnosed, a plan can be put in place to manage or treat the condition.



Samim's condition is improving thanks to polework, lungeing and hill and lateral work



VET

notes

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN:

- What is Equine herpes virus
- How it affects horses and ponies
- How to treat it

The killer virus

Four horses died in the recent outbreak of equine herpes virus. Vet **Geri Long** explains what it is and how to identify the symptoms, as well as discussing treatment and prevention

PHOTOS: BAUER LIBRARY

ALMOST EVERY HORSE throughout the entire world will have been infected with the DNA virus, equine herpes virus (EHV). Almost every one of those that has been infected, however, will suffer minimal side effects.

But, like all herpes viruses, equine herpes viruses have the ability to establish a dormant infection localised in neurons and lymphoid tissue that may be reactivated at a later stage. This reactivation may be linked to stress, coexisting infections, or being transported over long distances. Reactivation of the virus can lead to the shedding of the infectious virus without clinical signs. This makes it particularly difficult to know where it started.

Infection can be transmitted between horses in any of the following ways:

- Respiratory route.
- Contact with aborted foetuses, foetal membranes and fluids.
- Indirect transmission via objects, such as tack, equipment and feed bowls, all of which can lead to the spread of the virus.

The virus may remain infective in the environment for less than two weeks, but it can survive for up to six weeks on suitable objects. The incubation period for EHV is between two and 10 days.

There are many different types of EHV, but EHV-1 and EHV-4 are the most significant.

EHV-1 can manifest itself in four ways in horses – a neurological form, respiratory disease, abortion and neonatal death. EHV-4 mostly causes non-fatal upper respiratory tract disease in youngstock and is occasionally associated with abortion. On rare occasions it is associated with neurological disease.

Almost all horses carry a dormant version of EHV



MEET THE EXPERT

GERALDINE 'GERI' LONG

BVSc MRCVS is a member of the ambulatory team at Wrexham Equine Care, part of the North Wales-based Fyrnwy Equine Group (fyrnwy.co.uk). She has a particular interest in colic and foal medicine. Geri also breeds and produces Shire and Clydesdale horses from her Cheshire base.

Nasal discharge is a symptom of respiratory infection

Signs and symptoms

With a respiratory infection there is often serous discharge from the nose and eyes, but not a lot of coughing. Additionally, lymph nodes under the jaw may be constantly enlarged. Generally, respiratory signs are minimal when it comes to the neurological form, but the horse will have a fever of 38.5°C or more.

Neurological disease appears suddenly and usually progresses rapidly, reaching its peak within 24-48 hours from the onset of the initial neurological signs. Horses infected with EHV-1 strains often develop a fever, with a second temperature peak on the sixth and seventh days.

Secondary bacterial infections are common and are accompanied by nasal discharge and pulmonary disease. Other signs include:

- A lack of coordination
- Hindlimb weakness
- Loss of tail tone
- Lethargy
- Urine dribbling
- Head tilt
- Leaning against a fence or wall to maintain balance
- Inability to get up

Pregnant mares who abort after EHV-1 infection rarely display signs other than the abortion at the time. Abortions occur between two and 12 weeks after infection – usually in the last trimester, between the seventh and 11th month of gestation. Sometimes, but not always, abortion storms occur a few weeks after an outbreak of respiratory disease. Mares exposed late in gestation may not abort, but give birth to live foals with pneumonia. These foals are susceptible to secondary bacterial infections and usually die within hours.

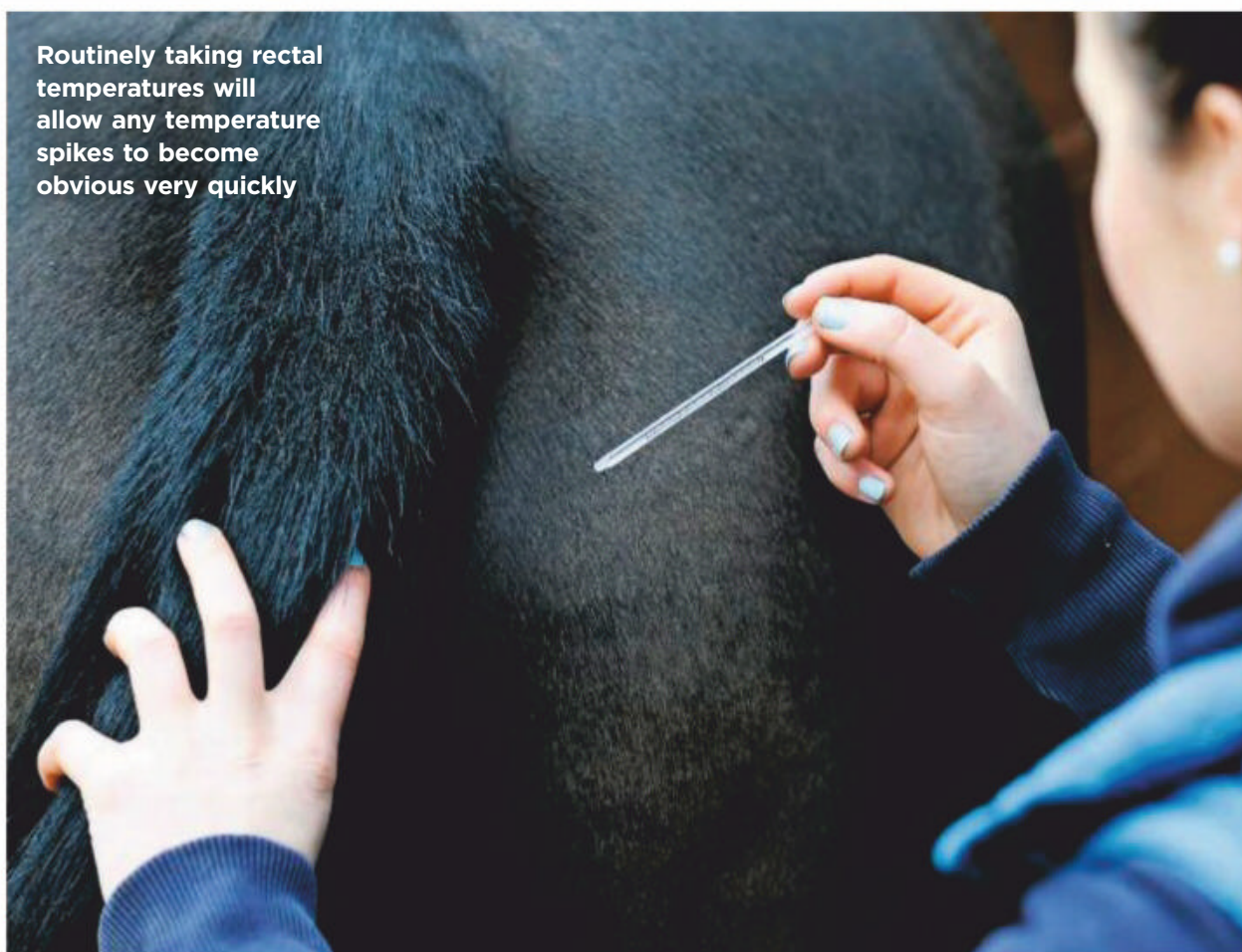
Diagnosis

Diagnosis of EHV is based on clinical signs and isolation of the virus. The vet might take a nasal swab or collect blood. Blood samples should be collected two to three weeks apart to check for levels of antibodies specific to EHV-1. It's important to note, however, that infected horses don't always shed via the nose, so a nasal swab can still show a negative result despite the horse having herpes disease. Horses may also shed the virus before clinical signs are apparent.

Definitive diagnosis of the neuropathic form is by isolation of the virus from the cerebrospinal fluid – the fluid around the brain and spinal cord – or from neural tissue, although this is rarely successful. Isolation of virus particles from samples from the respiratory tract or blood will support the diagnosis.

In cases of suspected EHV abortions, diagnosis is based on virus isolation and identification from aborted fetuses and lesions in a foetus found via post-mortem.

Routinely taking rectal temperatures will allow any temperature spikes to become obvious very quickly



Treatment

There is no specific treatment for EHV, although supportive care, antivirals, non-steroidal and sometimes antibiotic therapy for secondary infections can be helpful. These aim to:

- 1 Decrease the clinical signs of viral infection.
- 2 Maintain hydration and ensure that the horse is eating adequately.
- 3 Minimise the spread of the virus and the effects of secondary bacterial infection.

4 In neurological cases, the main emphasis of treatment is supportive care.

Horses should be rested while ill and return to work gradually. If they start training too quickly, reactivation of the virus may occur.

Routinely taking the rectal temperatures of all horses twice a day and recording these – along with any other abnormal signs, such as coughing, nasal discharge, swellings or a reduced appetite – means any temperature spikes (over 38.5°C) will become obvious. A horse with a temperature can then be isolated immediately before a vet is called.

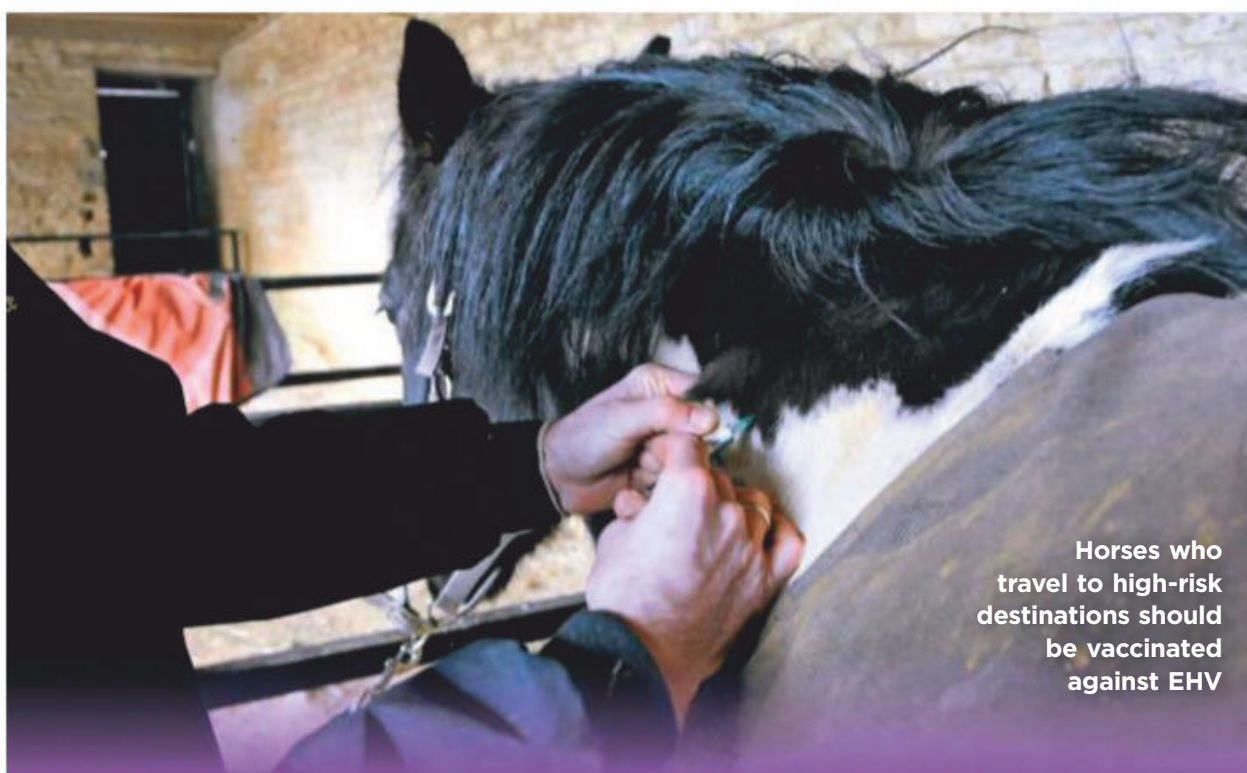


Affected horses must be isolated from others

Isolation

When an outbreak of respiratory or neurological disease strikes, affected horses should be kept away from other horses. The ideal isolation distance is 10-20m or more, which reduces the possibility of airborne spread of infections like EHV-1. It's important to have separate, dedicated staff and use separate equipment for quarantined and non-affected resident horses to avoid transmission. If this isn't possible, then quarantined horses should always be dealt with after resident horses to avoid the indirect spread from the quarantined animals to the others.

The ideal scenario is for separate handlers wearing hygienic protective clothing to provide all the care for the isolated horses. Feed buckets, soiled bedding and equipment can all carry infection, so precautions must be taken to avoid healthy horses coming into contact with these materials. The movement of horses on or off the yard should be halted to prevent further spread of the disease.



Horses who travel to high-risk destinations should be vaccinated against EHV

VACCINATION

Vaccination for respiratory disease (EHV-4 and EHV-1) should begin when foals are four to six months old. A second dose is given four to six weeks later, and a third dose at 10-12 months.

Vaccination programmes against the herpes viruses should include all

horses who travel to high-risk destinations, such as to competition venues, and all other horses on the premises. A vaccine against abortion should be administered during months three, five, seven and nine of pregnancy. All pregnant mares should be routinely vaccinated. 🐾

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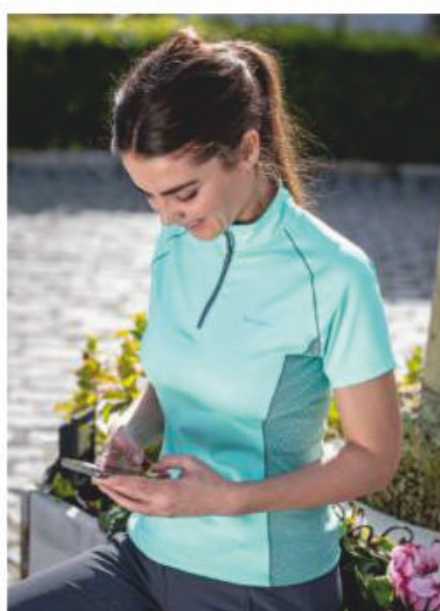
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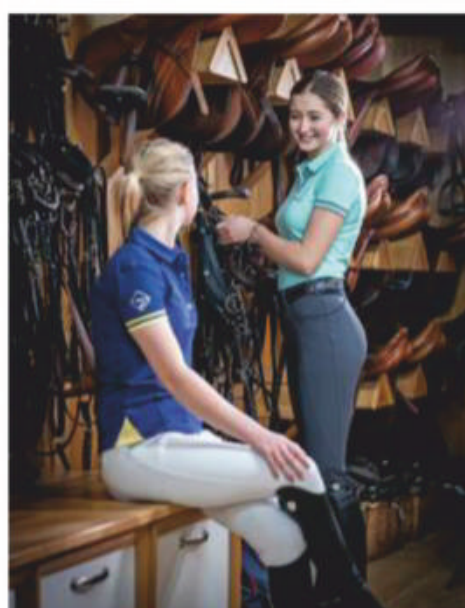
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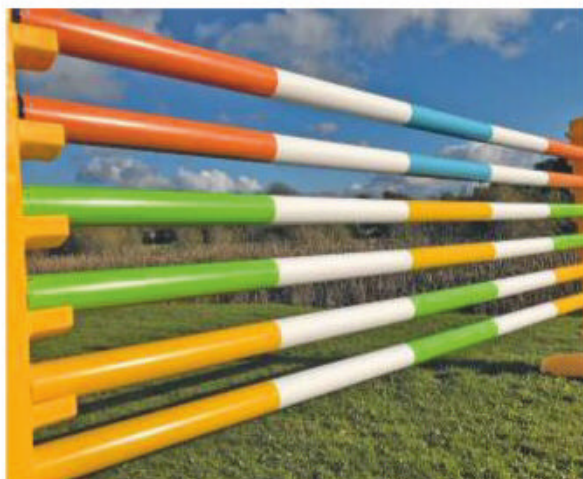
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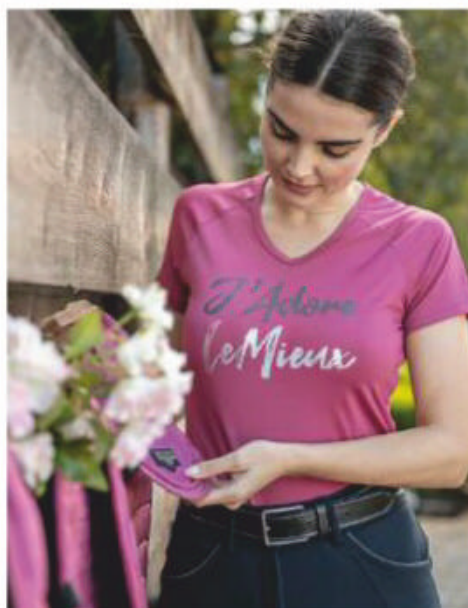
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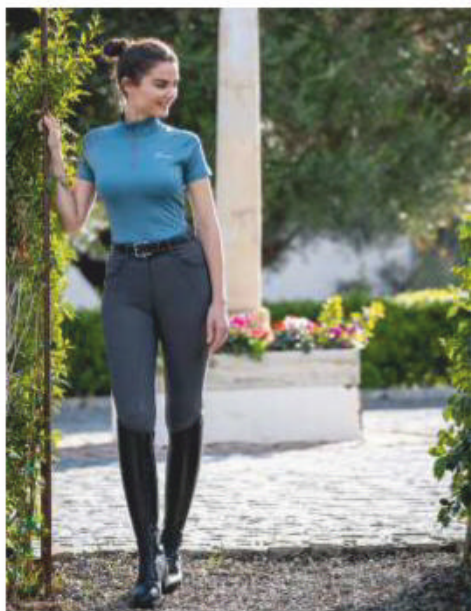


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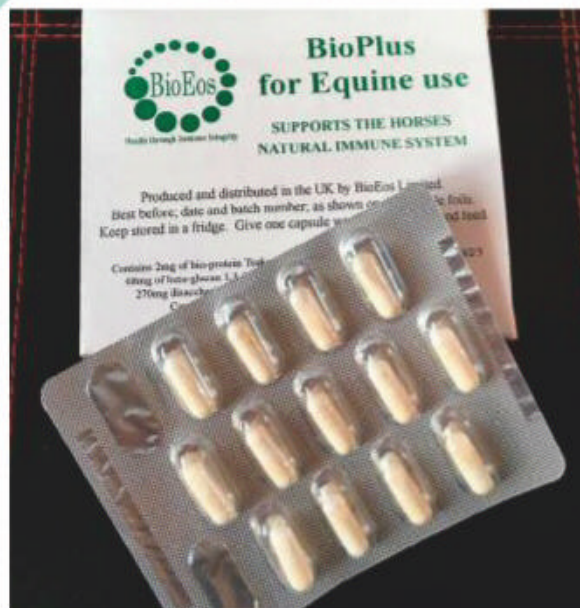
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Showing
in-hand,
page 103



*Simple
solutions
for horse
owners*

Meet this month's panel of experts



Passports **p98**

Simon Cooper is operations director of the General Stud Book for Weatherbys, the passport-issuing organisation for racing and non-racing Thoroughbreds in the UK and Ireland.



Spring nutrition **p100**

Stephanie George MSc RNut is a registered nutritionist at Saracen Horse Feeds. She works as part of a team offering advice and feeding solutions to horse owners.



Showing **p102**

Peter Emmerson is a panel judge for the British Show Pony Society, the National Pony Society and the Coloured Horse and Pony Society. He has been showing horses for over 40 years.



Rural crime **p104**

Sgt Stuart Grainger has been a police officer for 24 years. He works within North Yorkshire's specialist rural taskforce, tackling and preventing rural, agricultural, equine-related and wildlife-related crime.

GOT A PROBLEM?

*Need an answer?
We'll know
someone who
can help*

Welcome to our Ask The Experts section. In the next nine pages, we solve your horsey dilemmas by taking them to those in the industry who know best. This month's panel (left) answers your questions on equine-related crime, horse passports, spring nutrition and showing.

COMPILED BY RACHEL WILLIAMS



Ask The Experts

PASSPORTS: Simon Cooper says...

New owners' legal passport responsibilities

Q When horses are sold on, what legal requirements become the new owner's responsibility in terms of the horse's passport?

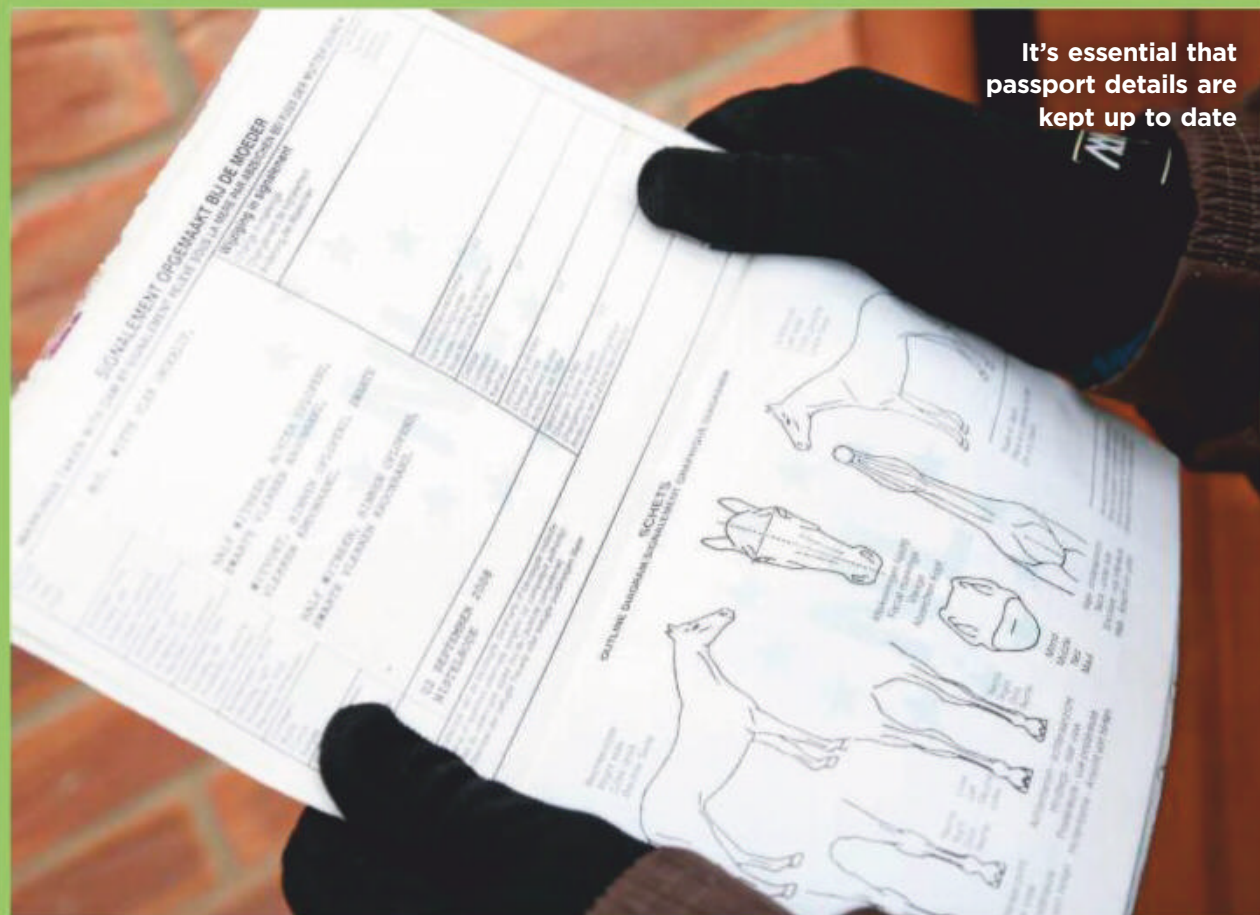
Rachel Smith, Somerset

Simon says... The new owner is legally required to record their ownership of the horse with the organisation that issued the passport — the Passport Issuing Organisation (PIO) — within 30 days of transfer of ownership. This legislation was

enacted in October 2018, having been regulation only since 2009. The owner is also legally required to submit the passport to the PIO if any passport details subsequently change — for example, if the horse is gelded, its colour has changed, or a new microchip has been implanted.

Of particular note, the owner must inform the PIO if the food chain status of the horse is changed in the passport, and the passport must be returned to the PIO within 30 days of the death of the horse.

New owners are legally required to record their ownership of a horse within 30 days



It's essential that passport details are kept up to date

A horse with no name

Q My horse has never been named on her passport. She is now approaching 17. Can I add an official name to her passport with Weatherbys? What is the process and how much would it cost?

Louise Williams, Leicestershire

Simon says... A naming form would need to be completed and the

form and passport returned to Weatherbys, together with the fee of £55.20 (assuming this is not for Thoroughbred racing and/or breeding purposes). The name would then be registered (if the name is available after the checks have been completed) and the passport would be stamped to show the horse has been named for non-racing and non-breeding purposes.



Better late than never

Q Does it cost anything to register a change of ownership? I didn't realise I had to put my details on my new horse's passport within 30 days. What will happen if I do this now, late? *Dean Wilson, Derbyshire*

Simon says... The cost for change of ownership will depend on which PIO issued the horse's passport. Weatherbys, for example, charges £23 for change of ownership online and £26 to do the same via a paper form.

If you haven't done this yet and more than 30 days has elapsed, we would advise you simply to complete the change of ownership as soon as possible. Trading Standards is currently concerned with ensuring that repeat offenders are aware of the equine passport legislation.

False ID?

Q How can you tell if a horse's passport is fake? *Christian Thomas, Conwy*

Simon says... If you have any doubts regarding your horse's passport, contact the relevant PIO and it will be able to help you. If the PIO is concerned, it may request that you send it the passport to be checked. Common signs to look for include:

- Amendments to the horse's markings that are not accompanied by an official stamp.
- New microchip stickers that are not accompanied by an official stamp.
- Passport binding that isn't complete.
- Pages that look like a colour photocopy on different paper to the rest of the passport.
- Any signs that pages have been glued.



Ask The Experts

SPRING NUTRITION: Stephanie George says...

Transfer window

Q Our yard's summer turnout arrangements begin soon. How can I support my horse's transition from four hours' turnout a day to being out 24/7 on spring grass?

Veronica Watson, Lincolnshire

Stephanie says... Any dietary change that your horse experiences should be made slowly, and this doesn't only apply to hard feed. Changing from hay to haylage, or from hay to grass is still a dietary change and will affect the function of the hindgut if not done correctly. The hindgut is full of microbes, bacteria and other organisms that are very sensitive to change – they can take weeks or even months to adapt.

Winter grazing

Horses who have had restricted access to grazing over the winter months will have been more reliant on conserved forage sources, such as hay and haylage, and their hindgut microorganism population will have adapted to utilising a larger quantity of this food type for energy. Winter grazing is often sparse and of much poorer quality than spring grazing, so not only will the abundance of new grazing be a big change for your horse, but the nutritional value will too. Digestive upsets, such as diarrhoea and colic, can easily occur if the transition to new or different pasture isn't dealt with correctly.

Acclimatisation

When introducing your horse to more (or better) grazing, restrict turnout for a few weeks to allow him to acclimatise. Start by allowing him access for an hour a day, and increase this by half an hour or so each day. During this time, it's important to include periods away from grazing and also to provide the same hay he's been eating over the winter. Depending on the quantity of the grazing in the field, you may need to reduce the amount of hay you provide to reduce the risk of excess weight gain.

After a few weeks your horse's digestive system should have adapted to the change in forage and he can then be turned out 24/7.

Nutrition for

Q I'm planning to get my horse much fitter in the hope of competing at least every fortnight over the coming summer. What consideration should I give to his diet as we prepare to do more?

Emma Waterman, East Sussex

Stephanie says... Requirements for individual horses will vary according to factors such as bodyweight, body condition score, environmental factors, the discipline you compete in, and rider ability, but fibre – hay, haylage and pasture – should always form the basis of any horse's diet. A lack of fibre will increase the incidence of gastric ulcers, wood chewing, loose droppings and weight loss. Additionally, fibre in the hindgut traps water and electrolytes and

MONITOR CHANGES

During this adjustment period it's important to keep an eye out for any subtle or not so subtle changes in digestive function. Bear in mind that horses with previous digestive issues may require a longer period to adapt. They may also benefit from a gut balancer or hindgut buffer being introduced during this time to help support hindgut function.

competition

helps to combat dehydration. Performance horses should receive a minimum of 1.5% of their bodyweight in forage per day, although ideally intake should be in the region of 1.5-2% of bodyweight and more if you're feeding haylage.

Specialist feeds

An increasing number of performance diets are now available that have been designed to meet the nutritional requirements of horses performing in specific disciplines. Performance feeds are formulated to provide your horse with optimum nutrition when fed at the recommended quantity, though, so make sure that you weigh your feed to ensure the correct intake. If you need to feed below the manufacturer's recommended levels (to help manage body

condition, for example), use a feed balancer to ensure nutrient intake is consistent.

Travelling troubles

Travelling and competing can mean that horses go for prolonged periods without anything to eat. This leads to a build-up of gastric acid in the stomach and increases

the chance of gastric ulcers, which will reduce performance. Allow your horse to regularly graze or pick at a haynet to stimulate saliva production. Alfalfa is a natural antacid, so frequent bites of alfalfa chaff will help to neutralise excess stomach acid, especially if fed 30 minutes before riding.

SWEATING IT OUT

Electrolytes are a critical component of a performance horse's nutritional programme. During exercise, sodium, potassium and chloride are lost in large quantities through sweat. Loss of these electrolytes causes fatigue, muscle

weakness and decreases the thirst response to dehydration, so it's vitally important that performance horses have optimal levels of fluids and electrolytes in their bodies before they compete.

A lack of water will rapidly dehydrate your horse and severely affect his health and performance, so before

you even think about taking your horse away from home, check that he's not likely to become fussy about the water he drinks. Practise at home by encouraging him to drink flavoured water — containing apple juice, for example. Alternatively, take water from home with you when you travel — making sure you have enough containers on board.



What's your poison?

Q What poisonous plants do I need to keep in check in my horse's field? I'm aware of ragwort, but not a great deal else. Help! *Marnie Booth, Suffolk*

Stephanie says... You're right — pasture should be regularly checked for the presence of undesirable weeds, such as ragwort and hemlock, but attention should also be paid to the surrounding tree line or hedgerow to ensure that the following are not within reach of grazing horses:

- Sycamores
- Yew trees
- Acorns
- Deadly nightshade
- Bracken

If you're concerned about any plants in or near your paddock, fence off the areas where they grow with electric tape to discourage curious horses from nibbling something they shouldn't.

Look out for poisonous plants such as ragwort. Ideally, dig them out at the rosette stage (below) before they flower and seed





Ask The Experts

SHOWING: *Peter Emmerson says...*

Smile and enjoy

Q My goal this summer is to enter my 15.3hh bay Thoroughbred in a riding horse class. What tips do you have to maximise our chances of success?

Sam Jones, Halifax

Peter says... Practice makes perfect in all showing classes. Ask an experienced person or professional for advice and feedback on your specific performance all the best sports people in the world have a coach, so don't think you can, or should, do it all by yourself.

Make it look easy

In the ridden section, your horse must go with ease and calmness, with a smooth, controlled gallop as part of your show. Ensure that you've bathed and trimmed to the last detail, and that you and your horse are wearing appropriate clothing and tack including, for riding horse classes, a coloured browband. If the class you are entering has a requirement for the judge to ride your horse, consider asking someone else to ride him at home so that he's happy to carry a new rider.

Remember that on the 'go round' the judge is looking for a horse they will enjoy riding themselves, so make sure you and your horse have a smile on your faces don't make it look difficult!

Get your coat

Q What can I do to ensure that my gelding has the most beautiful summer coat growth for showing this season?

Tilly Carmichael, Faversham

Peter says... For the best summer coat, clip no later than the middle to end of February. Bath your horse the day before you clip so that his coat is very clean — otherwise it will affect the quality of the clip and potentially damage the hair follicles. If your horse is a 'hack' type, clip out his legs, but lightly trimming excess hair from legs and heels is fine for hunter types. Groom every day (yes, every

day!) and use a coat conditioner to soften the hair and increase the shine. Regular grooming keeps grease at bay and encourages good circulation of blood to the skin and coat.

Rug up

Rug up with well-fitting rugs that don't rub your horse's shoulders. This helps to maintain a good coat that doesn't become overly hairy. It also helps horses and ponies to keep condition on, as they don't need to burn calories to keep warm. Avoid turning out for long periods in bad or cold weather, and avoid stable rugs with necks as they can rub out your horse's mane. A good rug or two to keep the body warm is sufficient.

SHINE FROM WITHIN

Feed the best hay/haylage along with a quality bagged feed. External washing and brushing only goes so far when it comes to skin and coat health.

Groom every day to keep your horse's coat in top condition

Smile and have fun
in the ring and
you're more likely
to bag that
red rosette



All in hand

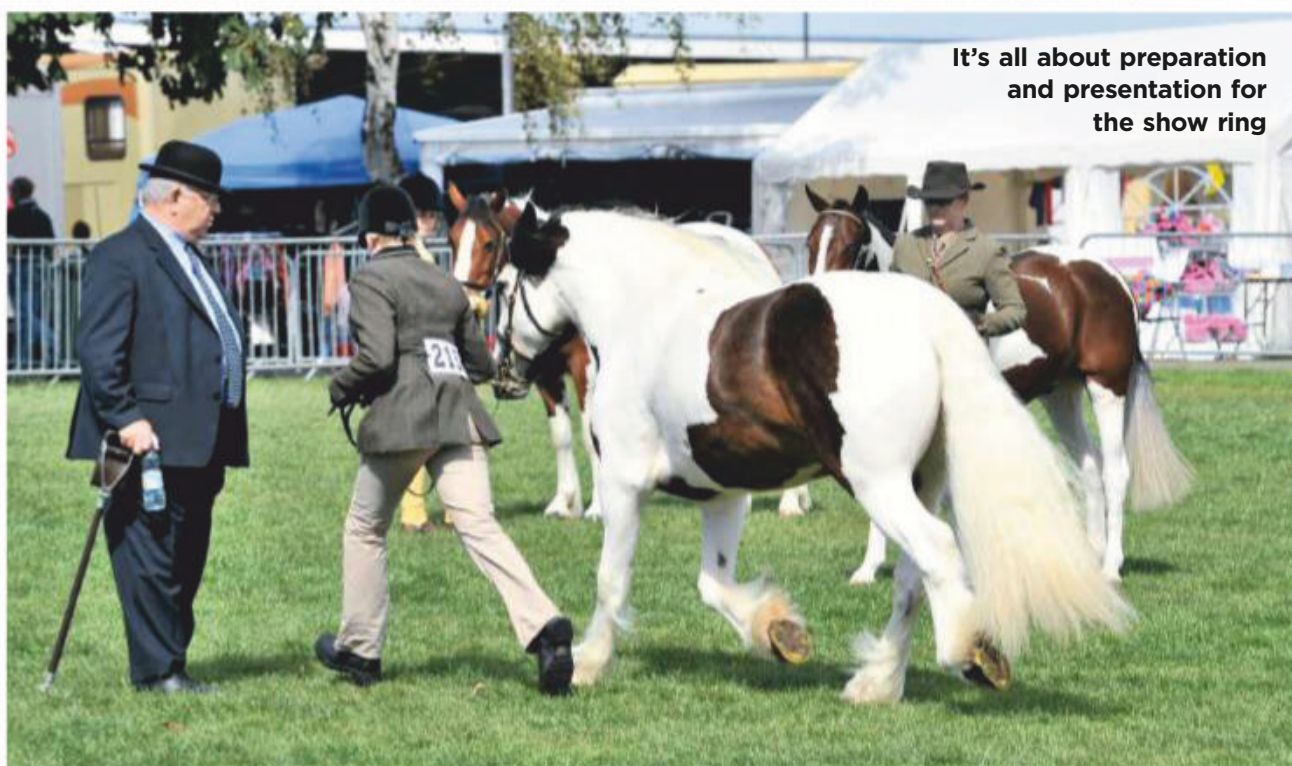
Q I'd like to try my first in-hand class with my traditional gypsy cob this spring. What suggestions do you have for this type of horse and class? *Skye Sanderson, Dorset*

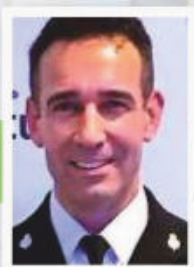
Peter says... Work on your in-hand show until you achieve perfection. Practise standing on a hard surface, standing square and moving to a better position as requested by the judge, then walking away briskly and trotting back to the judge on a perfectly straight line and in a controlled manner. Ask a knowledgeable person or a professional to watch you and give advice on how your performance looks.

Remember that turnout is all important to help you achieve the presence every successful show horse or pony needs. Bath your horse the day before the show – a traditional gypsy cob should go into the ring with big, white, fluffy legs.

My philosophy is, you can't change your horse or pony; it's the way they are prepared and presented that makes the difference in the ring.

It's all about preparation
and presentation for
the show ring





Ask The Experts

RURAL CRIME: *Stuart Grainger says...*

Cameras and security lights are useful deterrents for thieves



Don't make it easy

Q My friend's yard was robbed recently and tack and other items were stolen. What can I do at my own yard to help prevent theft of our valuables, or even of our horses? *Sarah Parker, Co Durham*

Stuart says... It's a huge source of anxiety for horse owners when spates of yard burglaries seem to be taking place. However, take some comfort from the fact that actual horse theft is far less common than you might think. In recent years, panicked owners have seen comments on social media about such things as mysterious plaits appearing in horses' manes as a 'marker' for a later theft. But not one of these crimes has ever come to fruition or been reported in North Yorkshire, nor, according to police research, nationally either.

That said, general horse theft does occur occasionally, and theft of tack is common, but there are a number of sensible measures you can take to make a thief's life harder.

TELL THE POLICE!

Report all suspicious persons or vehicles to the police on 101. The police will often recognise descriptions or number plates and, if someone has nothing to hide, they won't mind a routine visit from an officer.

Layers of an onion

Treat your yard's security like layers of an onion, starting with fences and boundaries. You need to make it as hard as possible for strange vehicles to gain access as it's much harder to steal animals or heavy valuables if transport isn't close by, ready to be loaded.

It goes without saying that all fencing, doors and gates should be 100% secure, and gravel drives can be a very useful auditory deterrent! Gates should actually be locked. Buy anti-lift locks or weld gate pins so that gates can't be lifted off their hinges even when padlocked.

Barns and stables

A determined thief will come in through any weak point of a building, including roofs, skylights and windows, so fitting metal bars to areas like this can help. Your tack room ideally needs to be 'armour-plated'. Brick or concrete walls and heavy duty mortice locks are advisable – indeed, anything less than this may invalidate your insurance.

If your yard facilities don't include this, check whether there's at least an alarm and/or CCTV system, and that areas are well lit with security lights. If you have CCTV, it's advisable to film the entrances to the property to catch strange vehicles' number plates. CCTV cameras are much cheaper these days and many operate using wifi, so if wiring in a camera system is putting you off, there's now a way around this.

Your valuables

When it comes to your animals and your possessions, make them less appealing to thieves by marking them. Freezemarked horses are visibly more difficult for thieves

Treat your yard's security like layers of an onion, starting with fences and boundaries



POLICE MARKING SERVICE

Some police forces offer Dot Peen marking free of charge to livery yards, or at Pony Club/riding club events. Call your local force on 101 to see if this is available in your area.

to sell on as it's obvious that they can be identified, but freezemarking and microchipping also allows vets, abattoirs and dealers to discover whether an animal has been rightfully sold on.

Dot Peen marking tack, trailers and clippers can make them less attractive to take too, and certainly more identifiable. A Dot Peen machine can be used on a variety of materials, including leather and metal,



PUT 'EM UP HIGH

Make sure that cameras are placed well out of reach — even to someone holding a yard brush! Thieves will grab anything to hand to push the camera away from their activities. They might also spray them with paint to obscure the picture.

and it hammers a symbol, word, or number of your choice onto your belongings.

Painting distinguishing marks onto trailers makes it much easier for police to spot them if the theft is reported early on. Painting the postcode on the roof is a useful tactic, but never have the address of where the trailer or horse is kept on the vehicle as this will tell thieves where something that has caught their eye can be found.

Keep records

Keep an inventory of all your tack and include photographs as well as descriptions. Take plenty of photos of your horse from all angles too — and in both summer and winter when his coat looks different. Photographs will help police identify stolen animals and possessions more easily, and they can help users of social media keep a lookout too.

Local websites and forums, WhatsApp

groups and Facebook pages can help equestrian and rural communities to stay safe, so consider using them to keep abreast of what's going on in your area. It's amazing how useful they can be to the police when investigating a crime too.

FAKE IT 'TIL YOU MAKE IT

If CCTV cameras or other security measures are out of your price range right now, try fitting some dummy cameras instead, or displaying signs about the presence of concealed cameras on the yard.



Ask The Experts

RURAL CRIME: *Stuart Grainger says...*



Looking for the **BETA**
EGUS approval mark?
See below

Proud sponsors of Ask The Experts, spillers-feeds.com

Possession of stolen goods

Q How can I be sure I'm not buying a stolen saddle?
Danielle Patrick, Stirling

Stuart says... This is a sticky situation for the buyer, as there's very little you can do beyond checking the tack for any markings that can't be explained by the seller. Checking saddles for chips or SmartWater marks that fluoresce under UV light is something police can do if an item is suspected stolen. However, that's not much use to a buyer who has already paid for the item – it will still be taken from you and you'll be left out of pocket.

Buyer beware

Sadly, it's the age-old thing of 'buyer beware'. Stick to reputable tack dealers, and if you do buy from someone online, arrange to meet them at their shop or yard where you can see the set-up and gauge the situation. If it seems too good to be true, or you feel at all uncomfortable, don't go ahead with the purchase.



Before buying secondhand tack, check it for any markings the seller can't explain

After the horse has bolted

Q What do the police do about horses who have got loose?

Maria Hawkins, Winchester

Stuart says... If a horse gets loose on private land, this isn't really a police matter. However, if a horse is heading for a road, railway line or other public area, then it has the potential to be a serious incident and you should immediately call 999. The police will do their best to help catch the horse or get it into the nearest secure area, but, more importantly, they can slow or redirect traffic, even shutting the road if necessary while the horse is caught, or a vet attends the scene. A loose horse on a railway line will require the attention of the British Transport Police too.

If the worst has happened and a horse has been hit by an oncoming vehicle, it's an offence for that driver to leave the scene.

It's also an offence in some situations to allow an animal to get loose, but it's unlikely that you'd be prosecuted for an accident like this.

Ask Clare

SPILLERS™ registered nutritionist Clare Barfoot answers your feeding questions



The owner: Niamh Fitzroy The horse: Flash, a six-year-old Irish Sport Horse
The problem: Flash has had gastric ulcers and Niamh is worried about his diet

Niamh and Flash are planning their first season of eventing. The gelding has recently been diagnosed with gastric ulcers and Niamh wonders if she should change his diet.

Flash has just successfully completed a course of treatment. He is ridden six days a week and has two hours of turnout a day. Flash has three large haynets a day, with the final one given last thing at night. He also has 1.5 scoops of competition mix twice a day, mixed with sugar beet.

Clare says: Niamh is right to consider changing Flash's diet. It's great that he is given large, regular haynets, including extra hay last thing at night – regular chewing produces saliva, which helps to neutralise stomach acid but the competition mix is high in starch, so not ideal for a horse prone to ulcers. Niamh should switch to a low-starch, high-fibre feed, ideally one that includes soft-chopped alfalfa with oil for additional calories.

New SPILLERS™ Ulca Fibre is

an ultra-low starch, high oil fibre feed proven* to support horses prone to gastric ulcers following veterinary treatment. The short-chopped alfalfa extends eating time and provides a natural buffer to stomach acid, while the high oil content gives slow-release energy for condition and performance. A full range of vitamins and minerals includes vitamin E for immune support and muscle health, while high quality protein supports muscle development.



For free, friendly advice on feeding your horse or pony, ring the SPILLERS™ Care-Line on 01908 226626 or visit spillers-feeds.com.

Healthy Gut, Healthy Horse



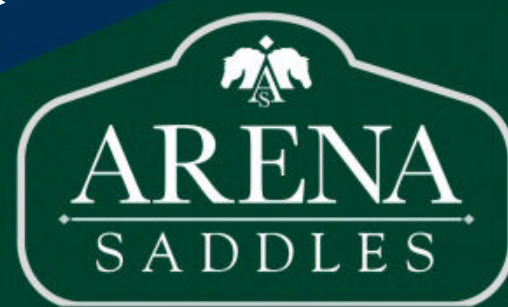
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For a chance to get your hands on these goodies*, enter at yourhorse.co.uk/463

10 DENGIE HEALTHY HOOVES MOLASSES FREE BALE DUOS



Ten lucky readers will each win two bales of Healthy Hooves Molasses Free from Dengie. Healthy Hooves Molasses Free is a nutritionally balanced, low-calorie, high-fibre feed with no added sugar. It's packed with B vitamins, including biotin, which are essential for hoof health, and is independently approved by The Laminitis Trust.

Worth
£27
each

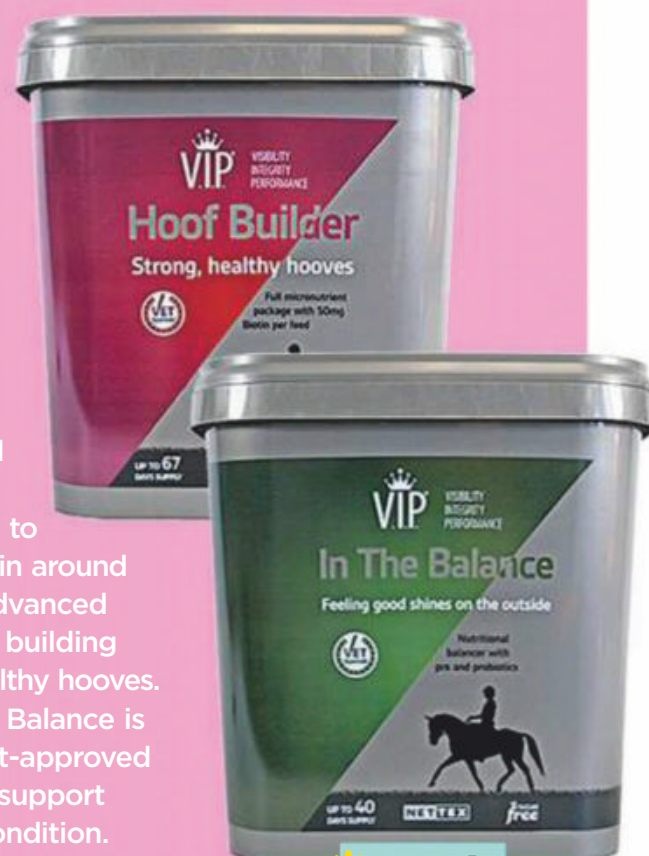
Find out more at dengie.com

3 NETTEX BUNDLES

Three readers will each win a tub of **Nettex V.I.P. Hoof Builder** and **Nettex V.I.P. In the Balance**.

Nettex V.I.P. Hoof Builder is a no added sugar, vet-approved supplement designed to deliver visible results in around three months. This advanced formula provides the building blocks for strong, healthy hooves.

Nettex V.I.P. In The Balance is a no added sugar, vet-approved formula designed to support health, vitality and condition. When your horse feels good on the inside, he shines on the outside.



Worth
£92
each

Find out more at nettexequine.com

1 BACK ON TRACK THERAPY RUG

The **Back on Track Equine Frost Rug** is a tough turnout rug with a 1680-denier outer. It's lined with Welltex ceramic-infused

material and has a 330g insulating filling. The rug offers protection from the elements, while also providing beneficial FAR Infrared therapy for the whole of your horse's body. The rug has shoulder pleats for comfort, cross surcingles, a double adjustable front closure and a tail flap.



Worth
£230

Find out more at backontrack.com/uk

13 TUBS OF TURMERAID

TurnerAid, from The Golden Paste Company, is a natural turmeric supplement that supports healthy joints, aids digestion and promotes a healthy skin and coat. TurnerAid is carefully formulated with key ingredients for maximum absorption and bio-availability. The complete turmeric pellet contains a minimum 5.1% curcumin, yucca, black pepper, linseed and apple cider vinegar. Yucca aids digestion and has a positive effect on the microflora that occur naturally in the gut.



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Find out more at goldenpastecompany.co.uk

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Your horse's GEAR & yours

The latest products and expert reviews you can trust



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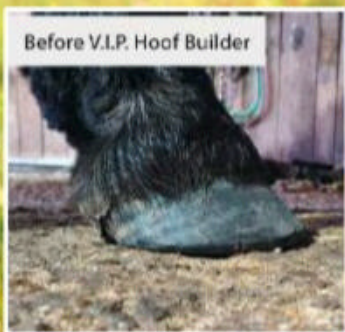
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Next generation
supplements which give
you **visible results.**

This smart, practical headcollar is designed to release in an emergency



FIRST LOOK **Safety first**

A practical headcollar that puts the safety of your horse to the fore.
Allison Lowther takes a closer look at the Stellar Head Collar

A HEADCOLLAR IS A practical piece of equipment that we use every day, whether that's for leading, travelling, or wearing in the field. There are already a number of safety headcollars available — primarily for use during turnout — which are designed to release if your horse gets caught on something like a fence post.

The team at Equilibrium Products wanted to take a closer look at headcollars and see if they could create one that's safe for all of the different situations in which horse owners need to use a headcollar. The end result is the Stellar Head Collar.

Preventing injury

The Stellar has a specially designed headpiece with adjustable press stud fasteners and keepers on both sides of the headcollar. When needed, the headpiece releases, preventing injury to the soft tissue and nerves on your horse's face, poll and neck. You have the option of adjusting the



The Safety Release System can be altered to suit individual horses

position of the keepers to alter the amount of force it takes for the headcollar to release.

This patent-pending Safety Release System has been scientifically tested to give consistent results and provides you with a headcollar that allows you to handle your horse safely while also ensuring that he stays safe.

Thorough testing has been carried out in laboratory conditions, as well as in practical, everyday situations. In laboratory conditions, in position a, the headcollar consistently released when a force of between 50-60kg was exerted on it. For position b, it was between 80-90kg.

The Stellar Head Collar is made from a smart leather-look PVC, making it both durable and easy to keep clean. It also has neoprene padding on the headpiece and nosepiece for added comfort. 

The Stellar Head Collar comes in black or brown, and in sizes XS – XL RRP £59.95
BUY AT equilibriumproducts.com

SIMPLY STUNNING

Handmade in England using Preciosa crystals, the **Megabling Curve Browband** from Elevator Equestrian is sure to turn heads. Crafted in the finest quality English Sedgwick leather, the browband is set with colour-changing blue, iridescent and clear crystals.

RRP £80

BUY AT elevatorequestrian.co.uk



SO COOL

The **WeatherBeeta Wick-Dri II Cooler Combo Neck** is a lightweight, breathable and highly wickable cooler rug. It has a mesh-covered Cooledry fleece upper to offer additional protection to the major muscle groups and a mesh lower for air flow. The combo neck style rug has a hideaway neck pocket with touch-tape closure so that you can fold away the neck portion and use it as a standard neck.

RRP £74.99

FOR STOCKISTS

weatherbeeta.co.uk

WHAT'S NEW?

A look at the latest gear from the equine world

DAILY NEEDS

SmartLick is the smart choice for cost-effective feeding. It provides vitamins, minerals and a prebiotic in an easy-to-use, vanilla-flavoured block produced in accordance with the BETA NOPS code. This lick contains a blend of essential vitamins and minerals to help maintain ideal condition for every horse and pony, plus a yeast-based prebiotic to support beneficial intestinal bacteria.

RRP £19.99 for 12.5kg

FOR STOCKISTS

thesmartlick.com



SOMETHING SPECIAL

The **Equipe EK-GO Special Saddle** is built on Equipe's revolutionary carbon tree to offer you the best possible contact with your horse. The saddle has a shapely tree, which particularly suits higher-withered, shorter-backed horses with a big shoulder.

RRP £4,050

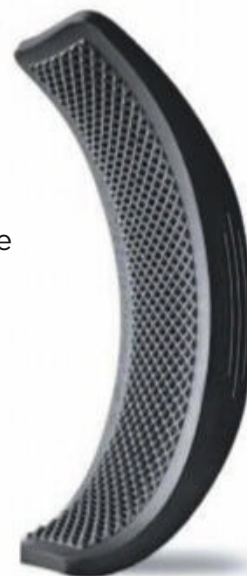
FOR STOCKISTS

zebraproducts.co.uk

GENTLE GROOMING

The **StripHair Gentle Groomer** is a multi-purpose addition to your grooming kit. Safe to use on all parts of the body, it can be used to remove loose hair, lather shampoo and remove dust and dirt to produce a great shine. It gives your horse a lovely massage, too.

RRP £35.99 BUY AT kmeliteproducts.co.uk



FEED FOR THE ULCER PRONE

Spillers has introduced a gastric ulcer-friendly feed, **Ulca Fibre** — an ultra-low starch, high oil fibre feed that carries the BETA Equine Gastric Ulceration Syndrome (EGUS) certification mark. Ulca Fibre contains short-chopped alfalfa to extend chewing time, encourage saliva production and increase your horse's ability to buffer stomach acid. The high oil content gives slow-release energy, and a full range of vitamins and minerals includes vitamin E for immune support.

RRP £17.69

FOR STOCKISTS

spillers-feeds.com



TASTY GRAINS

Likit Granola is a long-lasting lick, jam-packed with tasty grains such as maize, wheat, barley and oats. Use it in your Likit Holder or Boredom Breaker to help relieve boredom and stress, or simply as a fun treat for your horse to enjoy. The new packaging is easy to open and is fully recyclable too.

RRP £5.49 (Likit only; excluding holder) FOR STOCKISTS likit.co.uk



LUXURY TRAVEL

If you're looking to take the plunge and invest in some new wheels to get out and about with your horse in 2020, take a look at the new Duomax herringbone horse trailer from Cheval Liberté UK.

The Duomax is a diagonal loading double horse trailer that's fully equipped with lots of features to keep you and your horse happy and comfortable. The trailer features a two-part aluminium partition on a sliding rail for maximum adjustment. There are several sliding windows for great ventilation on both sides of the trailer, and the side-opening flaps mean that your horse can take in the view in between classes.

The rear combination ramp can be

used as a conventional ramp, or as a door so that your horse can step up and into the trailer. There's also a large, built-in saddle room, which will leave more room in your towing vehicle — the perfect excuse to take your dog along for the ride and pack a good picnic too!

To ensure great towing and handling, the Duomax features Pullman 2 Suspension, which also reduces the ride height, keeping your horse more comfortable and happy. In fact, your horse's comfort and safety is at the heart of the design of this trailer. You'll both arrive at your destination ready to go.

RRP £7,600 + VAT

FOR STOCKISTS chevaltrailers.co.uk



Cross-country boots are designed to offer protection to your horse's legs when he's jumping fixed fences

THE BIG TEST

Cross-country boots

Keep your horse's legs well protected this eventing season with a **set of cross-country boots**. Our testers review a selection and reveal their favourite

RIDING CROSS-COUNTRY is a fast moving sport over varied terrain, jumping a variety of fences, which means your horse will have an increased risk of injury from hitting a solid obstacle or striking into himself.

A well-made set of cross-country boots will protect your horse against knocks, but they should also be comfortable, lightweight and not hinder his movement when he's galloping and jumping.

Our independent testers have been using boots over the winter for cross-country schooling and arena eventing competitions. Each set of boots has been used on several different horses and has been assessed for fit, performance – do they do the job and live up to the manufacturer's claims? – and whether our testers think they're value for money and would recommend them. Read on to find out how each set of boots fared.

How we score ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Each set of boots is marked out of five for fit, performance and value for money. This gives an overall rating out of 15.

ARMA AIR MOTION XC BOOTS

RRP £42.99 (front), £40.99 (hind)

Rating
12
15

COLOUR Black **SIZE** Cob, full, extra full
FOR STOCKISTS shiresequestrian.com

FIT A lightweight set of boots that fit well. The tendon shields appear to be a bit big for the size of the boots, though, which makes them look a little gappy.

VALUE FOR MONEY
Good value, but check that the fit of these boots suits your horse.

PERFORMANCE The design and use of tendon shields offers a good level of protection, but because of the way these boots fit the leg they have a tendency to slip round – although not down.

OUR RATINGS

Fit	★★★★
Effectiveness	★★★★
Value for money	★★★★



TRI-ZONE IMPACT SPORTS BOOTS

RRP FROM £64.95

COLOURS Black, white, azure blue, flame red **SIZES** XS – L
BUY AT equilibriumproducts.com

FIT Well-fitting and easy to use, these boots wrap neatly and snugly around the legs.

VALUE FOR MONEY Not the cheapest boots, but they do a great job so good value for money.

PERFORMANCE These boots are lightweight and stay securely in place. The materials used don't absorb water, which is a great plus point, and my horse's legs don't appear to get as sweaty wearing them. The strike pads are positioned just where they're needed.

OUR RATINGS

Fit	★★★★★
Effectiveness	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★



Rating
13.5
15

WEATHERBEETA EVENTING BOOTS

RRP £46.99 (front), £51.99 (hind)

Rating
13.5
15

COLOURS Black, white **SIZES** Cob, full
FOR STOCKISTS weatherbeeta.co.uk

FIT A smart set of boots that fit nicely, especially the back ones. I have to fiddle with the fastenings to get each strap lined up neatly, though. I like the fact that the bottom strap is elasticated.

good to wash, too, and came up like new.

VALUE FOR MONEY
Good value for a smart-looking, practical boot.

PERFORMANCE These boots offer good coverage and the hind boots are slightly longer on the inside, which gives excellent protection. They didn't move at all after work. They're

OUR RATINGS

Fit	★★★★★
Effectiveness	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★



LEMIEUX SHOC AIR CROSS-COUNTRY BOOTS

RRP £64.95 (front), £69.95 (hind)

COLOUR Black **SIZES** Medium, large
FOR STOCKISTS lemieuxproducts.com

FIT The fit of these boots is good and they're shaped well for the leg. I did need to adjust the fastenings several times to get them tight enough, though.

PERFORMANCE These boots offer a good level of protection to the vulnerable parts of the lower leg, but if I don't fasten them tightly enough they can slip down and twist a little, particularly when they get wet.

VALUE FOR MONEY
Fair value compared to other boots in this test.

OUR RATINGS

Fit
★★★★★
Effectiveness
★★★★★
Value for money
★★★★★



Rating
11.5
15

VEREDUS E-VENTO BOOTS

RRP £124 (front), £134 (hind)

COLOUR Black **SIZES** M – L
FOR STOCKISTS zebra-products.co.uk

FIT A nicely designed boot that fits well to the leg and is shaped in all the right places to follow the leg's contours. They're a little more rigid than others in the test, though.

PERFORMANCE These boots offer a good level of protection and have well-placed foam pads to absorb impact. They do soak up a bit of water, though, which makes them heavier once wet.

VALUE FOR MONEY
These boots are quite expensive, but they look really smart and do the job well, so a fair price.

OUR RATINGS

Fit
★★★★★
Effectiveness
★★★★★
Value for money
★★★



Rating
12
15

ELICO CROSS-COUNTRY BOOT

RRP £29.95 (front), £34.95 (hind)

COLOURS Black, white, fluorescent **SIZES** XS – XL
FOR STOCKISTS elico.co.uk

FIT A no-frills set of boots with a modern look. They're quick and easy to fit and the strike pad covers all the areas of the leg you want to protect. The material is flexible, so it doesn't restrict your horse's movement.

EFFECTIVENESS These boots are wearing well. There are a few scuff marks on the strike pad, but this proves they're doing their job. They wash well, but do make my

horse's legs sweat a little.

VALUE FOR MONEY
A quality set of boots that perform well and won't break the bank.

OUR RATINGS

Fit
★★★★★
Effectiveness
★★★★★
Value for money
★★★★★



YOUR
HORSE
MAGAZINE
Winner

Rating
14.5
15

Correctly fitted, a pair of overreach boots will help to protect your horse's heels from injury

ON TREND

Overreach boots

Protect your horse's **vulnerable heel area** with a pair of overreach boots. Here are six of the best to choose from

BACK ON TRACK PERFORMANCE BELL BOOTS RRP £49

COLOURS Black, brown, white **SIZES** XXS – XL
BUY AT backontrack.com/uk

Perfectly shaped to fit around your horse's pastern to stop spinning or slipping, these boots have a high impact resistant outer, plus Welltex lining to support circulation to the coronet area to help aid mobility.



CALDENE CROC OVERREACH BOOTS RRP £30

COLOUR Black **SIZES** Full
BUY AT harryhall.com

If you fancy something a little different, take a look at these mock croc patent overreach boots. They are shaped to protect your horse's heels, and finished with sheepskin for comfort and style. Great for achieving a matchy-matchy look with the co-ordinating brushing boots.



VEREDUS SAFETY BELL BOOT RRP £59

COLOURS Black, brown **SIZES** S – XL
FOR STOCKISTS zebraproducts.co.uk

The ultimate protection for your horse's hoof and heel area, this design gives 360° all-round coverage while ensuring freedom of movement, flexibility and comfort. This shock-absorbing safety bell boot is designed to protect the entire heel area, and the Bi-TECH synthetic outer shell is waterproof, as well as tear, rip and puncture-resistant.



ARMA CARBON OVERREACH BOOTS RRP £29.99

COLOUR Black **SIZES** Cob, full
FOR STOCKISTS shiresequestrian.com

Designed for maximum comfort and protection, these boots feature a triple impact support system to prevent injury from over-reaching on the delicate heel bulb and pastern area. Additional features include anti-spin nodules, tough Armortex heel strike pads and a neoprene lining for a cushioned, comfortable fit.



LEMIEUX CARBONITE OVERREACH BOOTS RRP £22.96

COLOUR Black **SIZES** S – XL
FOR STOCKISTS lemieuxproducts.com

These boots offer good protection during fast work without the risk of tripping. They have a strong ballistic outer shell with an etched carbon finish that mirrors the angle of the pastern and contours the heels. A soft lining and collar reduce friction, and an elasticated fillet closure allows the boot to be tensioned around the foot to prevent movement.



WEATHERBEETA PURE WOOL TRIM BELL BOOTS RRP £41.99

COLOURS Black, white **SIZES** Cob, full, Warmblood
FOR STOCKISTS weatherbeeta.co.uk

Ideal for training and travelling, these bell boots offer maximum protection. Made from a soft and durable material, with a Pro Mesh BASF TPU outer and breathable neoprene lining, they also feature wool around the top of each boot for extra comfort and style.



BUYER'S GUIDE

Ready, steady, spring

Be ready for action this spring with our **fabulous selection** of warmer weather kit

IT'S FINALLY HERE. Spring, that is, and every rider's thoughts are turning towards the promise of warmer weather, which signals the start of months of riding joy. It's also a great opportunity to spruce up your wardrobe – any excuse!

We've had some pretty balmy springs recently, but fortunately there's never been such a vast choice of technical kit to keep us cool on the warmest of days. Look for fabrics that are quick drying, breathable and lightweight, and allow plenty of

freedom of movement. Mesh panels are also useful for encouraging airflow. For jackets, showerproof and windproof properties are key as even the mildest spring has wet or blustery days that will see you reaching for a top layer.

Some garments contain UV protection too – important at any time of year – although you should still wear high-factor sun protection on any exposed flesh, of course.

Manufacturers are doing a great job of incorporating fashion trends into riding wear, so you can look fab in and out of the

saddle, whether you're planning months of hacking, or have set your sights on a rosette or two. Whatever your needs, you're sure to find the kit to match.

PHOTO: VICTORIA SHIBUT/ALAMY*



Gilets for cooler days

◀ **Holland Cooper** Equi Sport Gilet **RRP £149**

COLOUR Tri-coloured

SIZES 6 – 16

FEATURES Lightweight, breathable, insulated

BUY AT hollandandcooper.com

Covalliero Venzona ▶ Body Warmer **RRP £59**

COLOURS Navy, stone, lemon, wildberry

SIZES XS – XXL

FEATURES machine washable, insulation technology

FOR STOCKISTS zebraproducts.co.uk



Kep Cromo Textile
Riding Hat **RRP £529**

COLOUR Black **SIZES** 56 – 60cm

FEATURES Lightweight, air control system

Kingsland Lowa
Training Shirt **RRP £65**

COLOUR Pink **SIZES** XS – L

FEATURES Quick dry, breathable

Kingsland Full
Grip Tights **RRP £89**

COLOUR Navy blue **SIZES** 6 – 14

FEATURES Shape retention fabric, breathable, quick dry, mesh panels

Harry Hall
Broadland Tall
Riding Boots

RRP £158

COLOUR Black

SIZES 3 – 8

FEATURES Leather, full length stretch side panel, hidden elastic gusset

**ALL AVAILABLE TO
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Layer with a **lightweight jacket**

Equetech Hack-A-Mac **RRP £47.95**

COLOUR Blue **SIZES** XS – XXL

FEATURES Lightweight, water repellent, portable, mesh fabric, stretch details

FOR STOCKISTS equetech.com



▲ **LeMieux** Team LeMieux Soft Shell Jacket

RRP £64.95

COLOURS Navy, burgundy, grey

SIZES XS – XXL

FEATURES Water resistant, wind resistant

FOR STOCKISTS lemieuxproducts.com

Cavallo ▶ Piri Fleece

RRP £89

COLOURS Lighter pine, dark blue, pinky pink

SIZES 34 – 36in

FEATURES Quick drying, breathable

FOR STOCKISTS zebra-products.co.uk



Mark Todd Perforated Softshell Jacket **RRP £52.99**

COLOUR Black **SIZES** XS – XL

FEATURES Ventilated, breathable

FOR STOCKISTS

marktoddcollection.co.uk



Mountain Horse Sense Tech Jacket ▶

RRP £149

COLOURS Navy, pink

SIZES XS – XXL

FEATURES Waterproof, breathable, back riding skirt

FOR STOCKISTS

mountainhorse.co.uk



◀ **Shires** Aubrion Bayswater Light Jacket

RRP £69.99

COLOURS Navy, coral **SIZES** XXS – XXL

FEATURES Showerproof, lightweight insulation

FOR STOCKISTS shiresequestrian.com

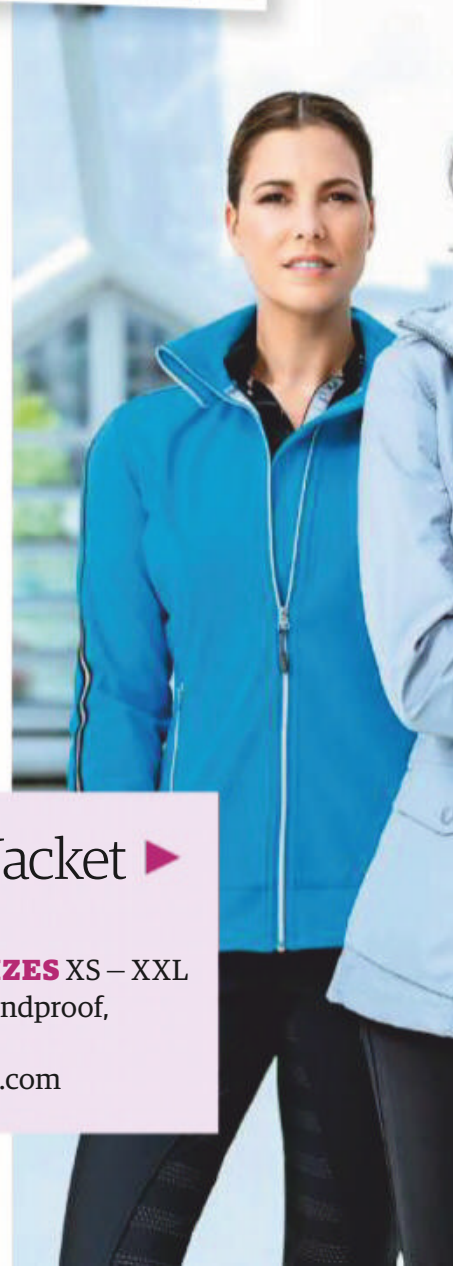
Anky 3-Layer Jacket ▶

RRP £119.95

COLOURS Black, lagoon **SIZES** XS – XXL

FEATURES Waterproof, windproof, breathable, stretch fabric

FOR STOCKISTS anky-atc.com





▲ **Covalliero** Light Corinda Jacket **RRP £75**

COLOURS Stone, navy **SIZES** XS – XL

FEATURES Water resistant, machine washable, lightweight

FOR STOCKISTS zebra-products.co.uk

Competition gear to shine in

Equetech Men's Waffle Shirt **RRP £46.95**

COLOUR White/grey **SIZES** S – XL

FEATURES Breathable, wicking

FOR STOCKISTS equetech.com



▲ **Just Togs** Belgravia Competition Jacket **RRP £149**

COLOURS Navy, white, black, grey, wine

SIZES XS – XL

FEATURES Breathable, stretch fabric

FOR STOCKISTS justtogs.co.uk



Equiboodle Show Joggers **RRP £37.99**

COLOURS Black/rose gold, navy/silver

SIZES XS – L

FEATURES Flexible and custom fit

BUY AT equiboodle.co.uk



Noble Allison Pull on Show Shirt **RRP £64.95**

COLOURS White/horseshoe print

SIZES XS – XXL

FEATURES Durable, flexible, lightweight

BUY AT nobleequestrian.co.uk



Long-sleeved tops

Mountain Horse

Rose Tech Top **RRP £65**

COLOURS Navy, pink

SIZES XS – XXL

FEATURES Stretch material, lightweight, quick drying

FOR STOCKISTS mountainhorse.co.uk



Shires Aubrion

Newbury **RRP £31.50-£35.50**

COLOURS Navy, coral, blue, camo

SIZES XXS – XXL

FEATURES Mesh panels, sun protection

FOR STOCKISTS shiresequestrian.com



Noble Hailey Crew

RRP £24.95

COLOUR Antigua geo **SIZES** XS – XXL

FEATURES Stretch fabric, wicking, reflective logo

BUY AT nobleequestrian.co.uk

Honest Riders Square Halt Dartmoor Top

RRP £30

COLOUR Light grey **SIZES** XS – XXL

FEATURES Organic cotton

BUY AT honestriders.co.uk

Dublin Alexis Long Sleeve Team Polo

RRP £34.99

COLOUR Navy **SIZES** XS – XXL

FEATURES Quick dry, airflow mesh, stretch fabric

FOR STOCKISTS dublinclothing.co.uk



Breeches and tights on trend



Equitech Shaper Breeches

RRP £89.95

COLOURS: Beige, grey, white, navy, blackberry **SIZES** 24 – 36in **FEATURES** Figure-shaping design **FOR STOCKISTS** equitech.com

▼ Mountain Horse Flora Tech Tights RRP £79

COLOURS Black, grey melange, dark navy **SIZES** 34 – 36in **FEATURES** Quick drying, stretch fabric **FOR STOCKISTS** mountainhorse.co.uk



Dublin Performance Cool-it Dot Print Gel Riding Tights RRP £54.99

COLOURS Grey, navy seal **SIZES** 8 – 18 **FEATURES** Stretch fabric, breathable, sculpting **FOR STOCKISTS** dublinclothing.co.uk



Just Togs ► Glitz Breeches

RRP £39.99

COLOURS Navy, white, black, grey, wine **SIZES** 8 – 16 **FEATURES** Technical fabric **FOR STOCKISTS** justtogs.co.uk

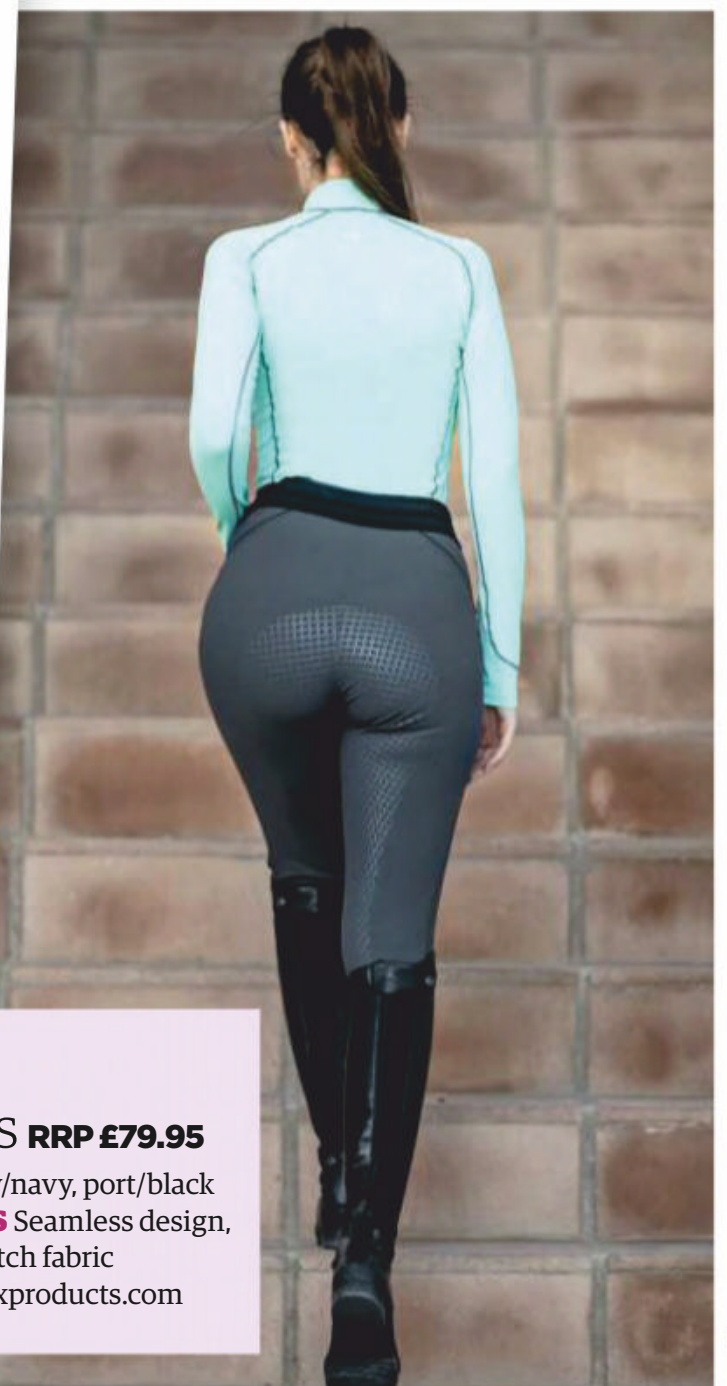
◀ Shires Aubrion Holland Breeches RRP £59.99

COLOURS Mink, orange, blue **SIZES** 24 – 34in **FEATURES** Stretch fabric **FOR STOCKISTS** shiresequestrian.com



LeMieux Freya Breeches RRP £79.95

COLOURS Navy/grey, grey/navy, port/black **SIZES** 6 – 16 **FEATURES** Seamless design, silicone seat, four-way stretch fabric **FOR STOCKISTS** lemieuxproducts.com



Short-sleeved tops

▼ Equetech Amelia Sleeveless Polo RRP £28.95

COLOURS Blue, grey **SIZES** XS – XXL

FEATURES 1/4-zip neck, scooped back hem

FOR STOCKISTS equetech.com



Equiboodle Supastar T-shirt

RRP £24.99

COLOURS White/gold, grey/zebra, navy/shimmer **SIZES** XS – XXL

FEATURES Organic cotton

BUY AT equiboodle.co.uk



LeMieux Air-Tec UV Shirt RRP £39.95

COLOURS Navy/citron, mint/grey, ice blue/grey **SIZES** XS – XL

FEATURES Lightweight, sweat wicking, mesh fabric, stretch material, UV finish

FOR STOCKISTS lemieuxproducts.com



LeMieux J'adore T-shirt

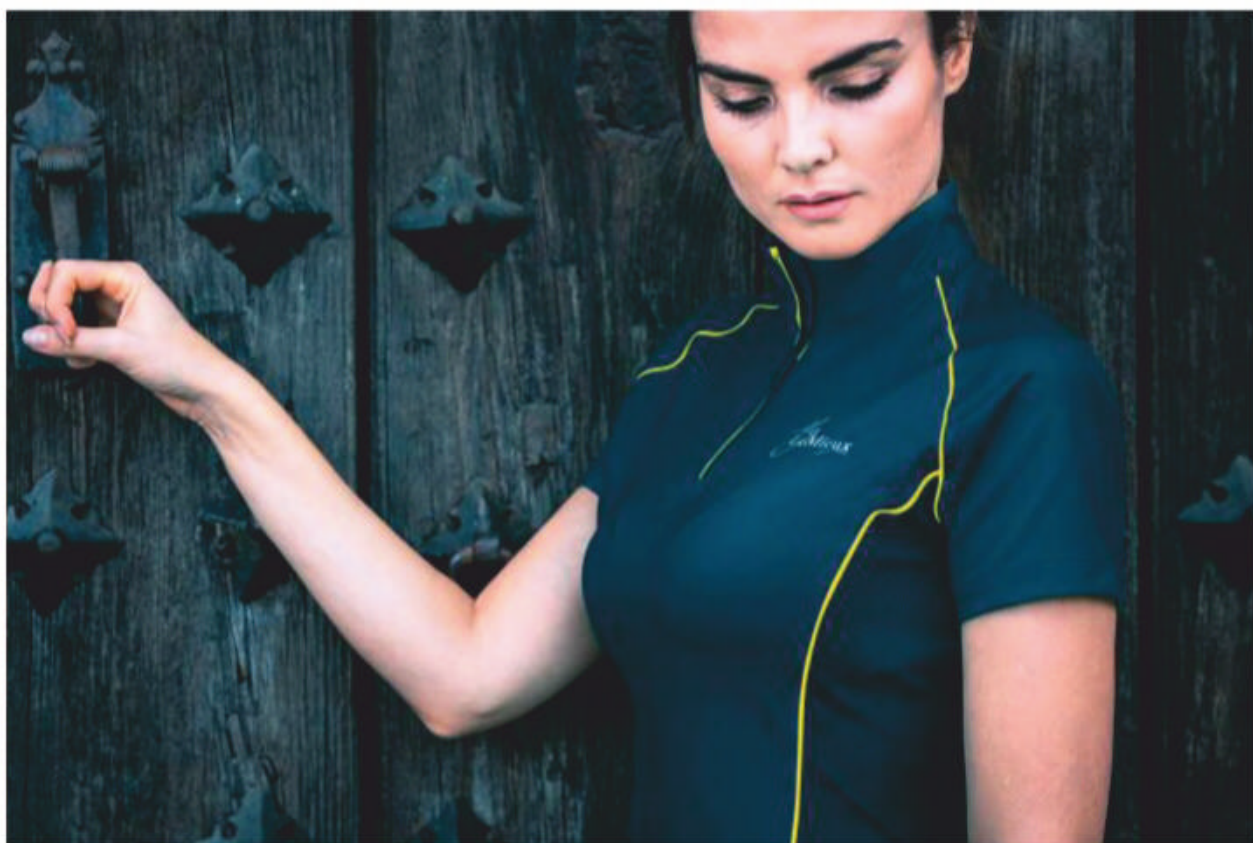
RRP £22.50

COLOURS French rose, navy, grey

SIZES XS – XL

FEATURES Stretch material, eco-friendly

FOR STOCKISTS lemieuxproducts.com





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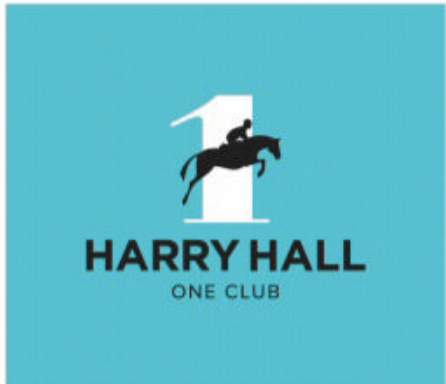
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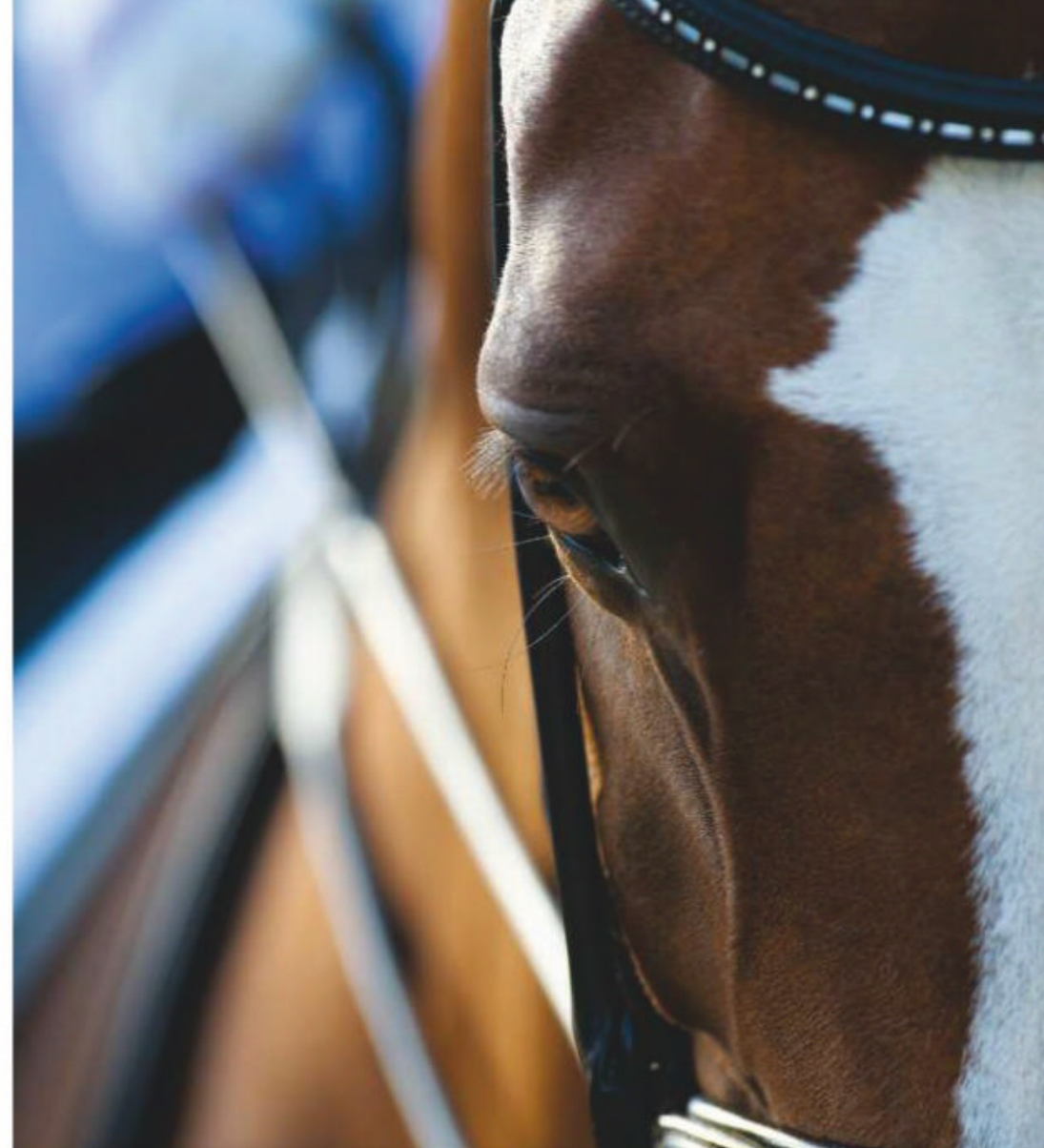
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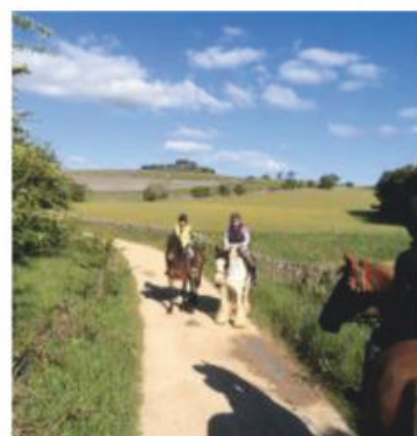
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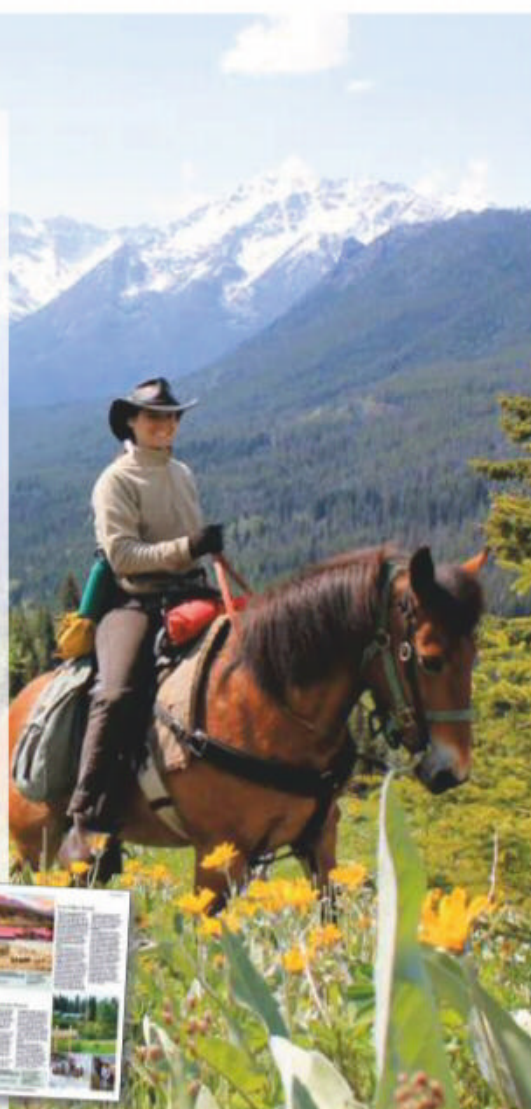
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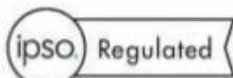
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TAKE FIVE WITH

Alice Goring

The eventer and **owner of social media superstar Teddy the Shetland** talks Instagram, meeting Valegro and riding with her inspirational grandpa



"We go eventing as a family, so it's always a lot of fun"

PHOTO: RICHARD GRIGSBY

How did you get into horses?

My grandpa Richard got me my first pony when I was nine. He was a stocky Camargue and he did things very much on his own terms. Grandpa has always raced and team chased. He and his twin brother completed the Pardubice in the Czech Republic, one of the oldest and most difficult steeplechases in the world.

How often do you ride?

I ride my eventers every day, as well as going to events with Teddy. I work full time, so I mostly ride in the dark under floodlights in the winter.

Do any members of your family ride?

My sister Molly events and we love training together. She's also the 'voice' of Teddy and keeps us all entertained!

My grandpa is 81 now and he's still riding – as well, if not better, than he did when he was younger. I went drag hunting with him a few weeks ago and I couldn't keep up. He flies over massive hedges and is an inspiration to us all. We've just started an Instagram page for him called @mygrandpaandotheranimals as he's hilarious (often without meaning to be, which makes it even funnier).

Tell us about your horses...

My top eventer is The Little Frenchman. He's only 14.3hh, but you'd never know it and he went clear around his first advanced level event in 2018. He has the heart of a lion.

My youngster Theodore has a huge jump and completed his first season last year, going double clear at BE100.

Then there's Teddy, of course, who I'm not sure comes under the category of horse as he thinks he's a dog! We bought him as a companion for the eventers, but his life gets more exciting by the day. His work as a therapy pony is incredibly important to us and we visit Shooting Star

"Teddy and Valegro spent an hour grazing nose to nose on the Queen's lawn at Windsor"

Shetland pony Teddy does lots of charity work, attends celebrity parties and stars in adverts, fashion shoots and premieres. He has 138k followers on Instagram (@teddytheshetland)

Teddy and Alice at Your Horse Live 2019



PHOTO: MATTHEW ROBERTS

Chase Children's Hospice once a month. We're also massive supporters of the charity Hannah's Willberry Wonder Pony. Hannah's pony Doris is Teddy's long-term girlfriend.

And about some of your favourite times with Teddy...

He was on TV with Valegro early in 2019 which was pretty special and they spent an hour grazing nose to nose on the Queen's lawn at Windsor.

Grand National day last year was also memorable for us for different reasons – one of the little girls at the hospice we visit got her wish of riding Teddy around the hospice, waving to the crowds as if she was in the National.

What's your day job?

I've recently completed a PhD and now work as a research scientist, studying bone disease.

Do you have any pets?

We have two dogs and Teddy lives in the garden, so I guess he counts as a pet.

What's been your most memorable riding moment?

Going clear in my first advanced and doing the Hickstead Eventers Challenge – although my horse lost both front shoes going down the bank, which wasn't ideal! 🐾

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