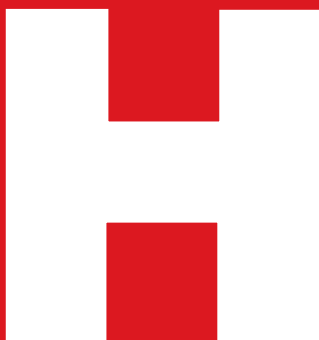


Winter 2023



Plus much
more inside...



Book Review
**HORSE BRAIN
HUMAN BRAIN**

.....
**Training
Balance and
Coordination**
.....

**"Horses are
the Mirror
of our Soul"
Really?**

**WHAT HAPPY
HACKERS CAN
LEARN FROM
EVENTERS**

2023
IH SHORT
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COMPETITION
*The
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Welcome to Winter

“Hello IH Members

In this wonderful Winter issue, we ponder what ‘Intelligent Horsemanship’ truly means; it’s certainly more than a series of techniques – our thoughts are; it’s a philosophy that emphasises understanding, empathy, and communication with our equine friends. Let us know what you think!

In this issue we have training and welfare articles by the best specialists in their field: Equine Veterinary Physiotherapist, Abi Pass, goes deep into the importance of proprioception and how to train balance and coordination; Sue Palmer ‘The Horse Physio’ shows us how to help your horse stay comfortable and achieve greater relaxation and freedom of movement with her guide to stretching your horse; and Gillian Higgins of Horses Inside Out gives us the key information regarding the growth and development of young horses. Their combined expertise is invaluable to anyone seeking to enhance their horse’s performance and overall health.

We meet Stud Manager and IH Member Sophie Woolf who shares her unique horsemanship journey with us, including an intimate glimpse into her daily life, balancing the challenges and joys that come with managing a stud.

Kelly writes about what Happy Hackers can learn from Eventers and also reviews the popular book *Horse Brain, Human Brain*. This is not the usual review which repeats the back of the book cover but is an in-depth and maybe slightly controversial evaluation. As usual we have included a most useful and interesting extract from the book which we know IH Members will appreciate.

PLUS! We’re finally announcing the WINNER of our 2023 Short Story Writer of the Year Competition. Turn to page 13 to read the story and check out our well-deserving winner and runner up. Congratulations to everyone who entered!

The IH Magazine Team

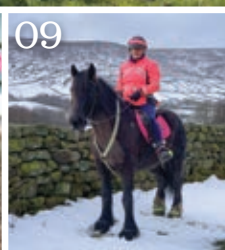
Note to members: If you make any changes regarding your name, address, email address or telephone numbers, please let the IH office know at: office@ihhq.net



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a contribution
for Intelligent
Horsemanship
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ON THE COVER: Irish cob in snow © olgalT / iStock

Whilst we endeavour to ensure that all content in the Intelligent Horsemanship Magazine is compatible with broad IH principles, it should be noted that the views expressed by contributors to the Intelligent Horsemanship Magazine do not necessarily represent the views of the Editor or Kelly Marks.

Designed by Sarah Kingsley 07775584479

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By KELLY MARKS

“...look at this positively, it's another opportunity to explore what can be improved.”

'Success' for us is
'a happy relationship
and safety'

Intelligent Horsemanship – that's us; and I frequently ponder about what 'Intelligent Horsemanship' truly entails and how we can best help all those who embrace this philosophy in the most productive way.

We've got the word out that not every resistance is behaviour related. We know we need to consider the physical issues including the equipment we use and how our horses are fed, exercised and kept. We have 39 webinars in the IH Members' area covering a great deal of these subjects. It's fair to say we often have to be sleuths to get to the bottom of many of these issues.

However, I'm confident in saying that not every resistance is pain related, but can also be caused by inadequate, incompetent, or unclear training – we need to get to the bottom of the training issues as well. This is not so we can go on *another* guilt trip; let's look at this positively, it's another opportunity to explore what can be improved.

This article was inspired because I've been reading on Facebook peoples' various interpretations of 'cheating' with horses – these can include but are not limited to: working from the ground to introduce horses to jumps (particularly ditches), using a lead horse in various situations, getting another rider or trainer to help with your horse; the list goes on! How setting yourself up for success became cheating I have no idea!

I'd very much like to give IH people, who all have the welfare of the horse in mind, the same advantages as the competition professionals, who by definition have to have 'success' at the forefront of their minds or they couldn't make a living. Let's be clear that 'success' for us is 'a happy relationship and safety' so no one thinks I'm purely talking about trophies and prize money – although they're fine too!



MyWorld

The Three P's: Philosophy, Positivity & Productivity

The professionals will acknowledge there are cases where horses and riders simply don't suit each other. There are also cases when you and your horse are not right for each other at a particular time of training or even because you're at a time when you're overwhelmed with other matters.

Even though it's ultimately what you'd like to do, if you're not in a good place right now to be hacking or jumping or doing dressage competitions with your horse – be kind to yourself. It doesn't mean you've 'failed' if you take advantage of someone else's experience or facilities or the fact they have more time. You'll rarely see the top showjumpers riding in Novice classes. Carl Hester has other people to start his youngsters. Charlotte Dujardin used to be his apprentice, then the team second rider, then they chose which horse went best for each of them.

There are instances when it's wise for us to examine the trajectories in our lives "Am I making this better or making it worse?" Definitely worth considering in our communication with horses or humans.

ALWAYS BE FAIR

As a teenager in the late 1960s early 1970s, Lucinda Green MBE arranged for her horse, Be Fair, to be hunted by David Tatlow for a season before taking him back and later winning Badminton on him.

Lucinda had 6 Badminton wins each on a different horse so I think we can establish Lucinda is a 'good rider'. However, it may be someone rides better than you or it may be that someone else enjoys the things you don't so much.

This was so similar to 'Problem Pony' Pie in the early days, when in his first demo tour I was just leading him over or through obstacles as he seemed nervous of everything. This was the start of Horse Agility although we called it Spook busting back then. I do wish we'd videoed in those days! We also did lots of hacking and popping over the odd log and then 'suddenly,' though really in stages, Pie had a whole different attitude, he got over the spooking, refusing and broncing and Daisy (aka The Niece) and I, have both had the most wonderful times with him ever since.

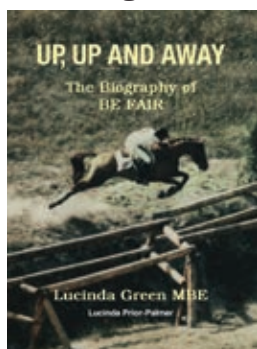
HOW CAN I MAKE THIS EASY?

I'm not suggesting everything should be easy, but it doesn't have to be as difficult as people sometimes make out either.

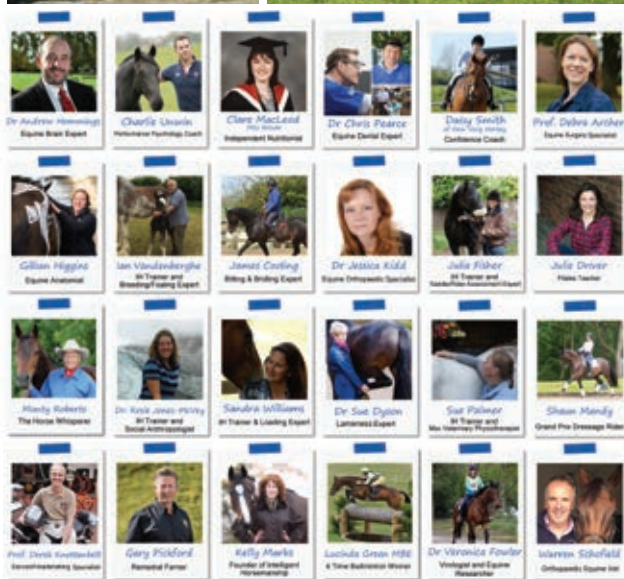
You have a 'challenge,' you could try thinking: 1. How could I make this easy? 2. What would I suggest to my best friend if it were her problem? 3. If you have funds – Can money fix this?

If I was riding a horse that wasn't going well for me, I know the simplest solution would be to find someone who I knew was a good rider and see how the horse went for them. Don't be upset if the horse goes better now – this is good! You now have a pathway to improve things.

“I'd very much like to give IH people... the same advantages as the competition professionals.”



Photos (clockwise) courtesy of: Lucinda Green MBE; Kelly Marks; Intelligent Horsemanship.



Clockwise: Up, Up and Away charts Lucinda's success story with her horse Be Fair; 4-year-old Barney is having some time at IH HQ; The IH Members' Area includes 39 webinars from a wide range of professionals and experts.

There are times when it's sensible for someone else to school your horse. Take starting a youngster – but not limited to this. Let's say you have a gorgeous young horse of 16hh+ you may do a tremendous job of acceptance training, ground work, long lining out and about, but if you've not got a relaxed attitude and some stickability you're not going to be the best person for the early riding days.

This winter, I'm privileged to have the 4-year-old giant, Barney, stay with me. Daisy has to work during daylight hours as well as her Rider Confidence courses in the evening and at least as I'm self-employed I can take some time off during the day and this horse doesn't need circles, circles, circles – he needs fresh air, hills, logs – going forward and that's what he's going to get here until Spring 2024. Win Win.

You can get someone else to school your horse, which as discussed, can be a very sensible thing to do *indeed*. You can also put serious effort into buying the ideal horse for yourself. It may sound rather cold and unemotional compared to 'it was how he looked at me'.

Something else the competition professionals are well aware of is equine

conformation and breeding lines, and these are areas we need to study as well if we don't want to buy future heartbreak. It's different if you want a horse or pony, for say, equine assisted therapy or as a companion, but if you're buying a horse because you want to ride, it's a big bonus when they naturally have the right temperament, and the horse can stay sound.

BEING THE RIGHT RIDER FOR YOUR HORSE

Even with all this sensibleness though – plus the bonding, connection, love and acceptance training that you've learnt through Intelligent Horsemanship and likely other influences – horses can be horses and if a horse does spook or trip it's important you can manage to stay on top. And breathe...

So, with this in mind do go to pages 22-25 to see my breakdown of 'How Happy Hackers Can Benefit from the Skills of Eventing', which I trust you'll find useful in this effort. [IH](#)

“You can do anything, but you can't do everything” is a quote my sister sent me a few years ago

I have an announcement: To ensure the long-term sustainability of Intelligent Horsemanship we need to amalgamate the IH Magazine into Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter editions. This will improve sustainability in so many ways and will allow the team here, including me, to spend more time with horses and getting useful video content onto the IH Members' Area for you. It will also give me more time to write in greater depth. I've done various surveys and research but haven't had the chance to put them together for you. It's very frustrating! This extra writing and horse time will mean I can bring you more exclusive content.

Thank you so much for your continued support and we WILL continue to make the world a better place for horses and humans!

Straight from the horse's mouth...

The writer of our Star Letter wins an IH Membership for a friend



Photo © Caitlin Poole Photography

LETTERS & FEEDBACK from our members

Star
LETTER

A New Challenge

Hi Kelly, I couldn't let today go by without drawing your attention to the time I came out to Oxfordshire to attend your Starting the Young Horse Clinic (now called the Perfect Manners course) on 4/5 July 1998.

Here I was, a person who couldn't ride a horse and was frightened of them, but who was looking for a challenge at the age of 54. That was a wonderful weekend. I got my certificate from you, and I learned so much. A lot of good things happened after that event. I was interviewed by television presenter Rob Curling who was about to try 'horse whispering' himself. I spoke in an arena full of people in Buckingham who had come to attend a Monty Roberts demonstration. I had a two-page spread in Woman's Realm all about my experience.

I met my American pen pal of fifty years for the first time in Solvang then we went on to visit Flag is Up Farms together – we sadly didn't see Monty who was away at the time, but we did meet his wild mustang Shy Boy. However, I did get to meet Monty eventually in Henley-on-Thames at your Perfect Manners book signing.

I learned just last week that my article in Woman's Realm so inspired a friend of a friend, who was feeling a bit lost at the time, that she returned to nursing. This is just to say thank you again 25 years after the event.

I lost my husband, of 53 years, and life is very different for me now but what keeps me going is the belief that if we set ourselves a challenge the universe gets behind us and good things happen. It's rewarding to step outside of our comfort zone once in a while.

Here's wishing you well with the wonderful work you're doing. I still recall saying to you in that cold stable in Oxfordshire all these years ago that I could 'see' just how busy your life was about to become – I wasn't wrong.

Warm regards *Ronnie Hunter*

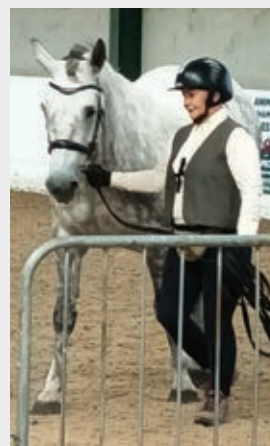
Cat on the back!

by *Natasha Herman*

This inseparable animal partnership features in our competition winner's Short Story – see page 13!



A PROFOUND CHANGE



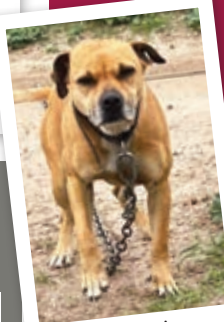
This is Indigo Amazing Grace, my field ornament. Since returning from the Five Day Foundation Course there has been a massive change in us both.

This is our first show ever today and she came first. I found attending the Foundation Course earlier this year made a profound change in my approach to her training. Once home I managed to build a round pen out of jump poles

and over seven days, we managed four Join-Ups®. The long lining I learnt has been put into practice and made it much more interesting for Grace. The only word for it is 'amazement' as there were no big displays of anxiousness, bucking or bolting. It was just Grace enjoying all the attention she was receiving from the fellow competitors and spectators.

We are feeling much more positive about our future. Thanks! **Mel Macrow**

LEARNING & GROWING IN CONFIDENCE



Sally from Spain

Hello IH HQ, I just wanted to say thanks. Last year I attended a Five-Day Foundation course as an observer. It was absolutely fascinating watching both people and horses grow in confidence and increase their learning. I didn't realise at the time, but I was learning too.

The course took place in April, and in October I adopted a dog, Sally, from Spain. She's a Boxer/Staffie cross and is quite a handful. Luckily for all of us (I've got another rescue dog too) I've got a lovely dog behaviourist who lives close by. We've been having some intense training recently and my observation skills gleaned from your course came through again. Being able to be quiet and observe (and not talk all the time) has been invaluable. Seeing Sally process the learning and giving her time to do so takes me right back to the round pen watching Join-Up®.

Paulette, the behaviourist, loves the *IH Magazine*, which I pass on when I've read it. So, you've helped not only horses and owners but me and my lovely dogs. We're on a journey with Sally and she's come a long way (from Cadiz in fact) but it's fabulous feeling the encouragement and support all the way from IH HQ. Intelligent Horsemanship isn't just for horses. Thanks very much. **Sheree**



In other news...

IH updates and other news from around the equine world

The event was held at Hill House Equestrian Centre near Market Rasen



Thank you to our photographer for Lincs Horse Live – Jade Greenfield from Mountain Media Photography www.mountain-photography.co.uk

"We all know it takes a team of people to look after your horse(s) and at Lincs Horse Live we try to bring that team together as well as local businesses and inspiring demonstrations".

Garry Bosworth, IH Trainer & founder of Lincs Horse Live



Kelly Brotherhood on the IH stand



The Lincs Horse Live team

Lincs Horse Live

By Kelly Brotherhood, IH Trainer

This was the third year of Lincs Horse Live, an event led by Lincolnshire-based IH Trainer Garry Bosworth with support from Digital Creator Jodi Wilkinson, IH Student Nicki Marshall (The Horse Coach) and myself, Kelly Brotherhood, a fellow Lincolnshire IH Trainer.

The event brings together local horsemanship, knowledge and skills through demonstrations and presentations from leading practitioners and trainers, as well as a shopping village to showcase local businesses. Held at Hill House Equestrian Centre near Market Rasen, a town famous for having the only racecourse in Lincolnshire, it was a horsey day out not to be missed!

This year was particularly special as we welcomed Sandra Williams – IH Trainer for Buckinghamshire, BHS Awarded Hero in 2022 and more recently a published author of *Loading the Less Easy Horse* – to demonstrate how groundwork exercises can give your horse confidence in a variety of situations, from loading to umbrellas! Sandra worked with the lovely Gladiator and the crowd instantly fell in love with how his confidence grew.

Liz Pears, saddle fitter for Buckets Saddlery and a Saddle Fitter of the Year finalist in The Equestrian Business Awards this year, gave a talk on saddle fit in the shopping village. Liz and her horse Spirit also teamed up with British Showjumping UKCC Level 3 Coach Joanne Burns Firth to give a demonstration about perfecting your

showjumping by using simple exercises that focus on canter rhythm and rider position.

In the main arena we also welcomed IH Student Donna Barker from Equine Therapy & Rehabilitation, who along with Helen Plant and Bamm Bamm, demonstrated the advantages of pole work for young horses. Having met Donna through supporting Monty Roberts demonstrations many years ago, it's great to work alongside her with my clients and see her showcase her rehabilitation work.

"This is an annual grass roots event geared towards a great horsey day out and which provides you with activities that you can take away and do at home with your own horse".

Jodi Wilkinson

The event closed with fun and excitement as you might expect from 4 Strides Barrel Racing, who brought a team of riders from all over the UK to demonstrate the skill, speed and sparkle of barrel racing!



IH Trainer Sandra Williams demonstrating groundwork exercises

As you can imagine, an event of this size takes a lot of organisation behind the scenes and Lincs Horse Live Committee would like to thank its amazing IH volunteers! Every year they have supported the event and share the same passion for passing on the best horsemanship knowledge. We could not run this event without their professionalism and experience, so thank you to: Kathy Whitham IH Trainer, Julia Bradford, Oliver Wilson, Tim Bird, Hazel Bird, James Marshall and Martin Williams.

• We have exciting plans for 2024 and we hope to see you there! 🐾



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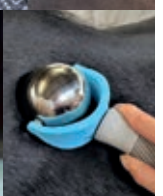
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IH MEMBERS' PICTURES

Thank you for sending us lots more lovely photos of yourselves with your horses and ponies. The winning photo gets a canvas wall-art of their photo. Congratulations go to Pip and Archie, our winners for this Winter issue.

1 Penny Gamble – Dinner Time: Misty, our little 11hh Welsh section A, every bit as cute as this picture suggests. She is standing at the gate waiting for dinner with her tongue sticking out and the sun setting behind her.

2 Karen Miall – We can see you: This picture was taken a couple of years ago of my Blue Cross native ponies Henrey and Monty standing either side and slightly behind my Quarter Horse, Deet's. They were watching a herd of deer pass by in the neighbouring field. I have been a member of the IH family for many years. The skills I developed during my IH journey have helped me manage the different challenges I faced relating to Deet's and Henrey's early lives. Deet's featured in the training section of the *IH Magazine* with IH Trainer Sandra Williams. Sadly, he has now passed over the rainbow

bridge and will always be missed. This picture never fails to bring a smile to my face.

3 Pip Mead – Snowy Riding: Myself and my fabulous Dales pony Roandale Archie, after a recent snowy ride. We spend hours out in our beautiful countryside together on the North York Moors. We have ridden 1000 miles in the last year, he really is my best mate.

4 Poppy Luxford – Grooming Buddies: Minna is 23 years old and has been with me for over 10 years, she's been the reason for me starting my IH journey. She had been left in a field untouched for a few years before coming to me and was hard to handle initially. But over the years we've formed an unbreakable bond. She's now a calm mare and loves attention! She'll do anything for it. This is her relaxing with her field companion Forest.

5 Liz Mortimer – All Masked Up: This was the first time Freddie wore a fly mask! He doesn't really need one with so much hair, but my sharer was keen to try! (HE HATES IT) and just gets it off, so it's in the tack room now! I don't want to win and have a canvas! But I think it's funny so thought you might too!

6 Caroline Timlett – Woodland Glade: This is me and my 15-year-old Welsh Section D, Dylan, riding through the woods. He's my absolute dream. He came into my life a year ago and it feels I've been with him for a lifetime. He's laid back and gentle, I'm very lucky to have him. 

HOW TO ENTER
Please email your photos to editor@ihhq.net
Photos need to be at least 3-4Mb in size – for more information on how to check your file sizes, see the Members' area of the IH website

Sophie Woolf

THE HORSE MIDWIFE



.....

Sophie lives in Gloucestershire and helps to manage a private Thoroughbred stud alongside two other team members.

She discovered IH after attending a Monty Roberts demonstration, then became a member and attended the IH Five-Day Foundation course. Sophie now successfully utilises IH ideals when handling and backing youngsters at the stud

.....



“I get to go to a job every day that I love...”

“I work with the most amazing animals and people”

I have been working in the Thoroughbred stud world since 1998 and moved from Suffolk to my current position in 2015. I manage a small privately owned stud of 12 mares, and with foals and yearlings we normally have around 30 horses on the place, depending on the time of year. As Stud Manager my job is overseeing their day-to-day care.

The team is three full time staff including me, we've all done the IH Five Day Foundation course now and there is also a lady who helps on the yard during the foaling season. This is so if we get busy, we have plenty of time to do all the handling I think the horses need.

All the mares foal at the stud here in Gloucestershire and we "walk in" to whatever stallion we are using. There is no artificial insemination for breeding with racehorses and so the mares take a trip to visit the stallions. Colts are sold in the October of their yearling year. The fillies stay here, we start them and work with them until the point they are ready to go off into training and learn to be racehorses.

From the moment the mare is in foal, and then once the foal is delivered, I am always aware that they ultimately have a job to do as an athlete. As such they are not pets so their care is organised accordingly, however I can't make them fast! That's in the lap of the Gods!! But the one thing I can do for them is to give them as many of the skills they will need to navigate the human world in whatever home they end up in.

I am incredibly lucky in the fact that the owners get real enjoyment from watching them grow up in the paddocks as well as watching them running in the stud colours, and they have been incredibly supportive about the IH methods we now use.

The weanlings now get some short lessons in coming off pressure and are introduced to being led in the Dually® for around a month before they are moved up to their winter paddocks. I'm a firm believer that horses are best off outside, so they stay out as much as possible over the winter and summer (weather permitting) until they come into work. Last year was the first year that the whole process from weanlings to the girls leaving for the trainers was done with the IH ideals. The speed at which they learned and processed was amazing to me and helped with every aspect, not just the carrying tack and rider part, but with things like the first bath and trip in the lorry. I'm sure it made the adjustment for them from a teenager into a racehorse much easier.

I grew up in a totally non-horsey family near Leamington Spa in Warwickshire, with two older brothers. My mum grew up during the war on a farm in occupied Austria and only thought that animals were for working or eating. My dad came to England to escape the Nazi regime and none of them to this day really understand my horse obsession or where it came from.

The family legend goes that my parents went to visit friends dragging me, aged four, along with them. The friends were the owners of a little Welsh Section D mare which was living behind their house, and who happened

to have a foal at foot. At some point I was scooped up and placed on her back while she was grazing, and I have been addicted ever since. My mum's favourite tale is how I screamed blue murder when they tried to take me off the pony and go home – she threatened to leave me there and I just smiled and said, "Yes please!"

Growing up in the 70s and 80s, as a family we didn't have the money needed to support my horsey addiction, so my riding lessons at the local riding school came as a

and came away with an education and the qualifications my parents so desperately wanted me to have. I spent the next 15 years hunting, eventing and show jumping; I was living the dream and then the universe intervened and provided me with the best job of my life – and to use my favourite saying when people ask what I do for a living, "I am a horse midwife." I get to share the special seconds, minutes and hours of a mare's life when she brings her newborn into the world. I have been gifted with the job of helping the babies grow, develop and explore the world, and giving them the skills they need to progress and succeed in life.

I work in an equine profession, in which like all of the horse industry, there are good and bad sides. It's too easy to stand on the side lines, point the finger and criticise but it very rarely changes much. So, my ethos has always been to help one horse at a time, which I hope can affect some small change somewhere down the line.

Since having found the IH team I know I have the start of a skill set that will enable myself and the team here to encourage others to do the same. I was in my early 30s when I actually owned my first horse; my best friend from college and I bred Lia from her retired Thoroughbred mare, and when she was 5 I bought out my friend's half share and Lia quickly arrived down in Suffolk. I had finally achieved my childhood dream of owning my own horse. We had years of fun and adventure, she brought all the best friends into my life and has left me with so many memories. She was 15.3hh and so sharp! She taught me to sit down in the saddle, keep my leg still and only ever just *think* about gear or direction changes. Most

importantly she taught me how to converse with a mare, although at the time I didn't realise how important that was going to be.

It was actually Lia that took me down the Monty and IH road. She was really difficult to load, totally something she was entitled to be as her issues were created by humans – courtesy of a transport company sent to move her as a yearling.

I went to a Monty demo in Essex hoping for inspiration, and boy did I get it in spades! I dutifully stood in line at the end of the evening, shook the maestro's hand, had him sign my copy of his book and then had one of the most rewarding conversations of my life with Kelly. Lia was always a bit of a baggage about going into the trailer, but she became so much easier to understand and develop a partnership with in every aspect of our life together after that. Kelly and Monty's books became my bible and replaced most of my night time reading! >>

.....
“...the universe intervened and provided me with the best job of my life...”
.....



Sophie gets to share the special seconds, minutes, and hours of a mare's life when she brings her newborn into the world

result of birthday and Christmas presents. That was until I reached the magical age of fourteen when I was considered old enough to help out during weekends and holidays in exchange for free lessons. It has to be said that at this point my poor parents entered into the battle of keeping their daughter not only in school but studying anything other than horses, which unsurprisingly was not on the school curriculum. For example, the first time I can remember cutting school was to watch the legendary RED RUM open a local betting shop. Skipping school obviously wasn't that difficult, I wasn't caught, and it happened on many occasions after that for all kinds of horse shows.

We battled until I had taken my O-Levels, when I think they found it easier to surrender, and I was allowed to go to agricultural college where they did let me study horses. I did three years there

Sophie Woolf THE HORSE MIDWIFE



"I have been gifted with the job of helping the babies grow, develop, and explore the world"

Continued from overleaf >>

Lia and I were pals until it was her time to leave some 20 years later. I do still own a horse, a Haflinger called Bruce, he arrived at our mad house one Christmas Eve, and he was the pony that taught me to drive. He is as solid as a rock and regularly pulled us to the local pub for a pint on Sunday afternoon. When my life changed in 2015 and I left Suffolk after 18 years, it proved a little difficult to arrive for my new managers job with sheep, chickens, dogs and horses in tow, so Bruce is currently in a loan home, helping to teach disabled people to carriage drive. Although I'm not sure if he stills goes to the pub on a Sunday afternoon?

Quick fast forward to 2021 and like everyone I guess, I had cabin fever. Following lockdown, with the shops closed, I had managed to save a small fortune (for me anyway) and then fate stepped in. I saw a last minute space on Facebook for the IH Five-Day Foundation course, it was one off the bucket list so I signed up, dug my riding hat and gloves out of the tack room and was sitting two days

later in the Hartsop Farm classroom, Those five days gave me skills and a totally new perspective, not only with my horses but in all aspects of my life.

“The five days gave me skills and a totally new perspective...”



Last year was the first year that the whole process from weanlings to the girls leaving for the trainers was done with the IH ideals

Rachel Murat was also on the course as a refresher and is now a valued member of our team. Charlie More (a previous Meet a Member) has become a great

friend and I have superb fun with her and watching her develop her own youngsters.

Going forward all my staff are now sent on the Five Day course, like Marc, my

assistant here. At only 25, and under Rachel's guidance, he is fast becoming a joy to watch in the round pen with the yearlings. In my honest opinion, it is he and his age group that will affect the most changes in the welfare of our horses in the future. He has time on his side.

Stand out moments for me are hard to pin down to be honest, they range from the small seemingly insignificant ones such as when a weanling comes forward off the Dually® over a sheet in the lunge pen, to the massive ones like when I get to stand and watch one the girls cross the line first in a Group 1 race, remembering how I have watched her get to her feet and start to discover the world.

I've been lucky in life for which I am eternally grateful. I get to go to a job every day that I love. I work with the most amazing animals and people, and it must be said they give me something to look back on and smile about most days.

IH SHORT STORY WRITER OF THE YEAR 2023 The Results!

We called for entries for our Short Story Writer of the Year 2023 competition earlier this year and we're now delighted (after much deliberation by our judges) to announce our well-deserving winner & runner-up!

WINNING STORY "Emily at the Beach" by Ruth Parry

"Oh Kelly, I can't tell you how thrilled I am! I've never deliberately sat down to write a short story before, although I've thought about it many times, and I was VERY nervous asking a couple of my friends to review it. I was scared they'd either hate it and tell me it was great to be polite, or just hate it and tell me so!

"The story was mostly inspired by Shelby, who was enormously overweight when I got her during lockdown, and I do have the most beautiful cat, but sadly she doesn't come riding with me. Shelby and I did go to the beach with some friends earlier this year, and I wanted to try and capture that feeling of outrageous bubbling joy that I think we all experienced that day.

"I honestly don't know how long I've been an IH member – at least 20 years I think – but it was thanks to a post on the IH Facebook page that I found Shelby, so for that alone I will be a member for the rest of my life. I joined IH after seeing Monty and Kelly at a demo, and subsequently took a very tricky horse to a Perfect Partners weekend, at which I learnt more than I can say, including that sadly he wasn't

ever going to be my perfect partner. I think Shelby really might be.

"I like the whole ethos of IH, but I think what really resonates is the lack of ego and dogma. In my experience when someone starts telling you they absolutely know what's best, you can be pretty sure they don't know very much. IH doesn't seem to work like that, it's about experience, feel, and learning to think for yourself, and new ideas are welcomed in order to be thoroughly examined from all angles.

"Here's a photo of Shelby and me at Redcar Beach – and Klaudia, Shelby's friend. I'm far more excited about winning than I am about the prize, but Shelby and I have been doing Lucinda Green's *Feel & Deal Challenge* this last week, and I'm definitely feeling the purchase of some more blocks for my arena!

"Thank you all so much for liking my story."



Shelby's friend Klaudia



Ruth & Shelby out hacking

OUR JUDGE'S REVIEW...

Ruth's story had me intrigued from the very first two sentences. A cat at the beach?? A clever hook to catch the readers' attention.

Then as the story starts to unfold, we are drawn into her struggling relationship with Emily. From the description of their lockdown-governed online meeting and (rather one-sided) love at first sight, we likely assume that this is the tale of the burgeoning early days of the relationship of a couple. Until the adroit reveal that, in fact, Emily is a horse.

With great honesty, Ruth covers the familiar tropes of doubt, frustration, discovery, and joy that so many horse lovers have experienced. And as the story picks up pace, it starts to make perfect sense why, indeed, the cat came to run and run and run on the beach.



Katy and her 'lockdown purchase' Angel

RUNNER-UP "The Memory Box" by Katy Bradfield

"What a lovely surprise! I've always enjoyed writing and now that I'm retired in theory, I should have plenty of time ... So entering your competition seemed like an ideal opportunity to put pen to paper. "I'm so delighted, thank you."

OUR JUDGE'S REVIEW...

I very much enjoyed this charming story of reminiscence, woven together with a touch of comforting, old-fashioned nostalgia.

How a slightly scruffy, hairy little pony of stout heart helped a young girl realise that trust and perseverance bring far greater riches than money ever can.

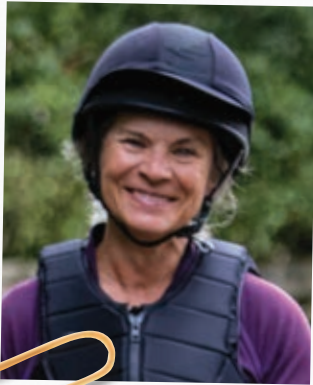
Katy's delightful short story unveils how three generations of Exmoor ponies connect three generations of women through a shared understanding and passion. A simple, feelgood narrative told through the creative medium of a memory box.

Turn over to read our winning story!

IH SHORT STORY WRITER OF THE YEAR 2023



Emily, the cat, and I started exploring together



Emily at the Beach

THE WINNING STORY by Ruth Parry

Today we went to the beach. Emily, the cat, and I went to the beach, and we ran and ran and ran.

I met Emily a couple of years ago, during that strange period when the world shut up shop and everyone stayed at home. We met online, which was pretty much the only way to meet at that time, but then I broke every rule in the book and got in my car to go and visit her in person.

My world is quite small, there's just me, Emily and the cat. Before Emily it was just me and the cat. The cat is great, she looks beautiful, she brings presents, purrs, and generally fulfils all the expectations one might have of a cat, but she is just a cat. During that weird and isolating period of lockdown I felt I needed more in my life, hence the online meeting with Emily.

I don't know how Emily felt initially, but I'm pretty sure she wasn't as smitten as I was, however only a week later she came to live with me.

Like most people at the time, I was working from home, shopping online and not meeting anyone. Occasional Zoom calls with distant family became increasingly stilted and uncomfortable as no one had anything to tell each other. We tried the inevitable quizzes and virtual meals, but gradually excuses became the norm, and the calls petered out. I went for long walks, carefully avoiding getting too close to any other walkers. Dogs were discouraged from

saying hello to strangers for fear of carrying back an invisible virus.

New relationships are strange, both parties trying to understand what the other needs or wants, but too anxious or inept to ask directly. Sometimes just too overconfident that your overwhelming love will provide all the answers. Emily was not very communicative, or at least I didn't have the appropriate language skills to understand her, but without doubt, I loved her on sight. Love at first sight.

Obviously, I think Emily is beautiful. She has huge expressive liquid brown eyes, hidden by a very long dark fringe.

She was enormously overweight when we first met, and I'm usually very judgemental about such things, but even that couldn't put me off. If Emily were a person her weight would be her own business, but Emily is a horse, and as Emily was now my horse her weight definitely became my business.

So, we set to work, Emily and I, me with enormous enthusiasm, Emily with considerably less. I suddenly had a purpose again, despite the continuing weirdness of the world, I was joyous. I was also terrified. What on earth did I think I was doing? I could fall off and end up in a virus infested hospital, and wasn't it terribly selfish to risk putting yet further pressure on already overwhelmed health services? So I swayed between excitement and guilt, and Emily plodded unenthusiastically along, getting out of breath trotting slowly up hills. The weigh tape gradually tightened around her reducing girth, and eventually Emily's true figure was revealed. She may never be svelte, but she was no longer fat.

Then the world opened up again, and suddenly I was back in the office, and expected to interact with people. I had thought isolation was bad, but I discovered that forced socialisation was far worse. I had become used to our little household, me, Emily, and the cat, and found that I no longer knew how to relate to the rest of the world. I retreated from my colleagues, using Emily and the cat as an excuse to escape social events.

But I also retreated from Emily. I was too tired, too busy, too overwhelmed. When I did spend time with Emily, she seemed entirely unmoved by my absence. She continued to plod on our occasional excursions and ignored me in the field unless I had a bucket or treats to offer.

I went through the motions of caring for Emily, but I ceased to try and bond with her. She continued to remain remote, and I began to doubt that I would ever have the ability to communicate with her properly. Then one day Emily did something that made me cross. Properly fumingly cross. And I saw in her eye that she was taken aback by my reaction; she had become used to ignoring me, but this surprising, furious, whirling dervish could not be ignored.

So it was that I discovered the unlikely way to communicate with Emily. She is



Without doubt Emily's greatest bond was with the cat

fiery! She likes big, loud emotions.

She likes it when I scream and shout with joy or rage, and she likes to run and jump and buck. She was bored with my quiet, cautious approach to life, and couldn't be bothered with me. Somehow during lockdown and its aftermath I had lost the ability to be anything other than measured and controlled, I had kept a lid on everything, and that lid had somehow become stuck. Prising the lid off was not too difficult, but controlling the emotions that then erupted was. I gave them all to Emily to deal with. I showed her the deep black hole that I was scared of falling into, and I led her up the beautiful verdant mountain where I was happy and enthused. Emily leapt over the black hole with a buck and a fart and cantered up the mountain whinnying with delight.

I tried a bit harder with my colleagues but found that I didn't know how to rebrand myself. I had created a name for myself as antisocial and aloof, and I couldn't find a way back. I realised that I had become two different people. At work I was still quiet, competent, and unhappy. Meanwhile Emily had taught me to be volatile and excitable, and to enjoy myself in her fiery company.

A neighbour had offered me an elderly pony to keep Emily company, and they seemed to hit it off immediately, but without doubt Emily's greatest bond was with the cat. Their relationship hadn't started too well as Emily wasn't keen on the cat sleeping in her manger, which the cat considered to be hers by right, and the cat wasn't happy about being shoved out of the way by Emily's nose.

There had been a few altercations, and Emily's nose bore the scars to prove it. But then the cat discovered that Emily's broad back was a warm and comfortable place to sleep, and an accommodation was reached. When Emily wanted her hay, the cat would climb up her head, down her neck and settle happily on her back. If Emily had been out in the rain the cat would give her ears a thorough clean on the way over which Emily seemed to appreciate. The cat would spend hours asleep on Emily's back as she grazed in the field, occasionally having a rude awakening when Emily's companion approached for a scratch.

Emily, the cat, and I started exploring together. The cat would sit in front of me or on my shoulders or run along beside us, and we would go out for hours. Emily no longer plodded, and I no longer recited my worries. She didn't get out of breath trotting up hills, and I whooped and hollered when we cantered over streams and logs.

One day the cat was asleep on Emily's back in the field when a helicopter flew low over them. I watched helplessly as Emily startled, the cat fell off and Emily trod on her. Emily put her head down, but the cat did not climb up, she staggered onto three legs, holding a floppy forelimb at an awkward angle. The cat's arm was pinned back together, and she was confined to base for a few months. Emily missed her, and the day she was released from confinement she went straight out and climbed into the manger. >>



Emily, the cat and I went to the beach, and we ran and ran and ran

>> The cat will always have a limp, but she still sleeps on Emily's back. She now rides in a saddle bag when we go out as her balance is less certain and she cannot run as well as she used to.

I started dreaming about taking Emily to the beach. We live some way from the sea, so it seemed an unlikely aspiration, but I couldn't stop thinking about it. I pictured us galloping along firm wet sand and splashing in the shallows as small waves washed up around Emily's feet. I researched the nearest beaches, looking at them on Google Earth, studying the options for parking, and access for horses. I studied tide tables. I joined online equestrian forums, asking questions about beaches, virtually meeting other riders who also had dreams of galloping along imaginary beaches. I had found a group of people from whom I did not want to withdraw. I had found my tribe.

Plans were made, dates were fixed, transport arranged. Emily was bathed and plaited, and her tack was polished until it shone. No, I don't know why you would do that before you take it to a sandy, salty beach either, but I was excited.

This morning we set off early. Emily loaded into the box like a pro and stood happily chewing on her hay. The cat was in a basket beside me in the cab. Inevitably we arrived early at the car park, so we left Emily still chewing and the cat and I set off to check out the beach. It was everything I had pictured, miles and miles of sand, with the distant sea gently rolling onto it.

My new online friends gradually arrived, and we greeted each other in the real world for the first time. I immediately felt relaxed in their company. They didn't know the version of me who had withdrawn from the world, only this new version who was connected to Emily and happy to be out with them enjoying new experiences. We unloaded and tacked up our horses and my companions were amused when Emily put her head down for the cat to climb up over her neck and down onto her back. The cat then settled into her saddle bag with her head and crooked front paw sticking out. We were all ready to hit the beach.

We climbed over the sand dunes and waded across a stream before we got out onto the almost endless strand of

beach. The horses were tentative at first, most of them had never felt sand under their feet before, they were unsure of this new sensation, and they spooked at the rivulets running down to the sea. But then they got into their stride, and we set off as one, cantering parallel to the incoming waves, leaping over the streams, and only pulling up when all the horses were blowing. We then pointed them into the water where they stamped and splashed about, snorting into the sea, and throwing their heads up. We laughed and shouted and pulled out our phones to take pictures of each other. And then we returned to the sand, and we set off again.

So today, Emily, the cat and I went to the beach, and we ran and ran and ran.

THE END! ■

We'll be publishing
The Memory Box, the story
written by our runner-up
Katy Bradfield, in the Spring
/ Summer 2024 edition
of IH Magazine.



Welcome to THE WINTER TRAINING SECTION

Our Winter Training Section is packed with information to help keep your horses happy, healthy and comfortable. Sue Palmer 'The Horse Physio' gives us **10 Exercises to Help Check your Horse for Problems** and some **Key Stretches to Release Tension**. Gillian Higgins of Horses Inside Out shares crucial details on the **Growth and Development of Horses** between the ages of three to six. Kelly Marks enlightens us all on **How Happy Hackers can Benefit from the Skills of Eventing** and how we can all gain from sharing collective knowledge, and Abi Pass Above and Beyond Vet Physio gives an in-depth insight into the **Importance of Training Balance & Coordination in your Horses**.

By Sue Palmer



Sue Palmer MCSP is an author, an ACPAT and RAMP registered Chartered Physiotherapist, an IH Trainer, and a British Horse Society Stage 3 Coach in Complete Horsemanship.

• You can find out more at www.thehorsephysio.co.uk

PULL OUT & KEEP IH Training Section

“Tight, stiff muscles and joints can create so-called ‘bad behaviour’”

Stretching can be helpful, whether your horse is old or young



STRETCHING YOUR HORSE

A GUIDE TO KEEPING YOUR EQUINE FRIEND HAPPY & HEALTHY

In this article, I'm going to share some stretches from my upcoming online course, 'Stretching Your Horse: A Guide to Keeping Your Equine Friend Happy and Healthy'. Use these stretches regularly (alongside the others that I teach on the course if that's something that appeals to you), to help your horse to stay comfortable, achieving greater relaxation and freedom of movement.

Stretching can be helpful, whether your horse is old or young, a happy hacker or a competition horse.

I recommend a stretching programme to all my clients at The Horse Physio. Your horse's physical therapist can advise you if there are specific stretches that would be most beneficial for your horse.

Tight, stiff muscles and joints can create so-called 'bad behaviour,' including spooking, laziness, and pinning the ears back or swishing the tail when tacked up. Some people are confident that they know when their horse is stiff or sore, others are less sure of themselves.

Continued overleaf >>

STRETCHING YOUR HORSE

A GUIDE TO KEEPING YOUR EQUINE FRIEND HAPPY & HEALTHY

<< Continued from previous page

Exercises to help check for problems

In my book *Understanding Horse Performance: Brain, Pain, or Training?* I share 10 exercises that you can do with your horse regularly to help check for problems.

Below are the 10 exercises in brief. If the answer to any of these questions is 'No,' then I recommend contacting your vet or local physical therapist for further assessment.

10 EXERCISES TO HELP CHECK FOR PROBLEMS

- 1 Picking up feet:** is your horse able to pick each of his feet up easily and willingly?
- 2 Range of movement:** is your horse able and willing to stretch each front leg forward, each back leg forward, and for you to fully bend each knee (so that his fetlock touches his elbow)?
- 3 Touch inside the ear:** is your horse relaxed when you stroke the inside the tip of his ear?
- 4 Feel through the neck and girth area:** is your horse relaxed and comfortable when you stroke his girth area, and between his front legs?
- 5 Feel along the back and spine:** do your horse's muscles stay soft when you slowly push into them?
- 6 Picking up tail, and tail pull:** can you easily lift your horse's tail to put a tail bandage on? Can he resist against you if you gently lean your weight against him with his tail pulled to the side?
- 7 Walk and trot in a straight line:** is your horse sound at walk and trot in a straight line?
- 8 Tight turns in walk, and backing up:** does your horse cross his hind legs under evenly on a small circle in walk to the left and to the right? Can he back up smoothly and willingly in a straight line?
- 9 Lunging in walk, trot and canter:** will your horse willingly move in walk, trot, and canter in each direction on the lunge?
- 10 Baited stretches (carrot stretches):** can your horse bend equally in both directions to reach a treat?

IH Training Section



REMEMBER!

If the answer to any of the 10 checklist questions is 'No' then contacting your vet or local physical therapist for further assessment is recommended

“Tightness through the hindquarters can occur for many reasons, and can cause a variety of problems...”



Do your horse's muscles stay soft when you slowly push into them?

TIP

In the UK, you can find Chartered Physiotherapists at www.acpat.org, and Registered Animal Musculoskeletal Practitioners at www.rampregister.org (similar organisations exist in other countries)

Back to stretching...

There are two primary categories of stretch: static stretches and dynamic stretches. Static stretches involve holding a particular position for a period of time, while dynamic stretches involve movement. In this article, we focus on static stretches that aim to release tension in the fascia.

When I discuss the fascia with my clients, I like to explain it as the tissue that connects everything in our body – our muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves, internal organs, and more. You can actually see the fascial tissue as the shiny, white substance on meat. Because fascia connects everything to everything else, a fascial stretch can have a far-reaching effect. By relieving tension in one area of the fascia, we can help other areas that seem unconnected. For example, I might work on a horse's head, neck, and shoulders, and find that by doing so, I'm also helping muscles in his hindquarters. It's not a scientific explanation, but I like to think of

releasing fascial tension like smoothing out a crumpled piece of cling film over a dish. You can get rid of the wrinkles by stretching the clingfilm in the areas where it's crumpled, or you can do so by gently pulling on the other side of the dish. Either way, the effects of what you're doing will be felt throughout the cling film – not just in the areas where you're touching it.

A 15-minute stretching session can make a significant improvement in easing tension and alleviating discomfort in your horse. The stretching routine doesn't have to be complicated. Just getting your horse moving can make all the difference. Similar to how you feel after a 15-minute yoga session, your horse can feel looser and more comfortable after he has stretched. With regular stretching, you can help ensure your horse stays happy and healthy.

To stretch fascia, we need to be slow and gentle. Take the time it takes. Perhaps think of 'asking permission' from your horse as you encourage him into the stretch. If you try to force the movement, he will resist against you, and you will create a muscular contraction rather than a fascial release. Learn to feel how much stretch your horse can offer, and work within his comfort zone. If you want to increase the range of movement, try doing the stretches more often, perhaps before and after riding, or every day rather than twice a week.

Photos courtesy of Sue Palmer

3 KEY STATIC STRETCHES TO RELEASE TENSION IN FASCIA

These are gentle, relaxing stretches that can reduce muscle spasm, increase range of movement, and improve performance and behaviour.

1 Forelimb abduction

i What to do: Pick your horse's front leg up as you normally would and ask him to place it slightly out to the side. Wait for him to weight bear through the leg and then ask him to stand in this position for at least 10 seconds, and ideally between 30 and 60 seconds.

? Why: Tightness through the chest and shoulders can occur for many reasons, and can create a variety of problems, including short strides in front, and 'girthy' behaviour.

✓ The ideal: Your horse comfortably moves his leg out to the side and willingly weight bears through it.

✓ Check for: Any resistance to the exercise, or any differences between left and right.

2 Hindlimb protraction

i What to do: Pick up your horse's hind leg as he would normally lift it, but ask him to bring it further forwards than he usually would. Wait for him to weight bear through the leg, then ask him to remain in this position for at least 10 seconds, and ideally between 30 and 60 seconds.

? Why: Tightness through the hindquarters can occur for many reasons, and can cause a variety of problems, including resistance in upward or downward transitions, and toe dragging behind.

✓ The ideal: Your horse comfortably allows you to bring his leg forwards, and easily weight bears through it in this position.

✓ Check for: Resistance to the exercise, or any difference between left and right.

3 Neck bends

i What to do: Running your fingers down in front of the shoulder blade, place your other hand around your horse's nose and gently ask him to bend his head around towards you. When he's bending as far as he feels comfortable doing so, ask him to hold this position for at least 30 seconds.

? Why: Stiffness through the neck can occur for many reasons and can create a variety of problems including taking a long time to warm up in ridden work, and not moving freely through the forehand.

✓ The ideal: Your horse is willing to bend his head and neck around when asked, and hold that position.

✓ Check for: Bending more willingly or further in one direction than the other.

TIP
If you want to increase the range of movement, try doing the stretches more often, perhaps before and after riding, or every day rather than twice a week

TIP
For optimum results, ensure you make these stretches part of your horse's daily, weekly, or monthly routine by scheduling them into your horse's diary



Neck bends can help to reduce muscle spasms

In conclusion...

Regular stretching can be an important part of your holistic approach to horse health. Not only does it give you the opportunity to understand your horse better, but it also helps to keep him comfortable, and can lead to better behaviour, improved performance, reduced risk of injury, and more.

Schedule these stretches into your horse's diary. Make them part of his daily, weekly, or monthly routine. Choose your timing and your environment carefully and stay safe. Be slow, gentle, and encouraging. Take the time it takes because the rewards are worth it, for you and for your horse.

i More about Sue

Sue Palmer MCSP, aka The Horse Physio, is an award-winning Chartered Physiotherapist who promotes kind and fair treatment of horses through education with empathy.

Author of *Understanding Horse Performance: Brain, Pain or Training?* and *Horse Massage for Horse Owners* (which is available at www.intelligenthorsemanship.co.uk) and *Harmonious Horsemanship*, co-authored with Dr Sue Dyson.

Sue is registered with the RAMP (www.rampregister.org), the ACPAT (www.acpat.org), the IHA (www.intelligenthorsemanship.co.uk), the CSP (www.csp.org.uk) and the HCPC (www.hcpc-uk.org).

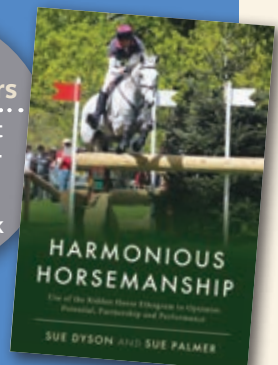
Find out more information and be one of the first to enrol on Sue's upcoming online course *Stretching Your Horse: A Guide to Keeping Your Equine Friend Happy and Healthy* by visiting www.thehorsephysio.co.uk or follow Sue on Facebook at The Horse Physio. [\[i\]](#)

WANT TO READ MORE?

Troubadour Publishing are offering IH Members a 20% discount on their website when purchasing a copy of *Harmonious Horsemanship*. Enter the code HHbook24 in the discount box at the checkout. (Please note the code is case sensitive so ensure you enter it as shown).

20% OFF for IH Members

Use the discount code HHbook24 when ordering online at www.Troubadour.co.uk



Troubadour Publishing is a provider of quality self-publishing services, recommended in the Writers' & Artists' Yearbook since 2008. [\[i\]](#)



By Gillian Higgins



Gillian Higgins is an equine anatomy and biomechanics

specialist, BHS senior coach, equine therapist, and author. She's the founder of the popular teaching organisation, Horses Inside Out. Gillian is most well known for her paintings on live horses, which she also uses to illustrate her books, online courses and events, as well as live lecture demonstrations.

To learn more head to www.horsesinsideout.com

What happens to a horse during the early years will shape its future – hopefully in a positive way. As owners, carers, and trainers, having an understanding and dealing with any issues which can affect young horses is crucial and will ensure their soundness, physical development, mental stability and longevity.

Horses between the ages of three and six years often experience a range of common problems that can affect their overall well-being, training and performance. Gillian Higgins, equine anatomy expert and biomechanist looks at seven of the most frequently encountered problems seen in young horses and gives you effective solutions for each. She will also look at the subject of skeletal maturity so you can support the horse during those formative years.

“...having an understanding and dealing with any issues which can affect young horses is crucial...”



As a young horse grows, their muscles and skeletal structures need time to strengthen and develop

GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

THE JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME

Growth related issues

Horses undergo significant growth and skeletal development between the ages of three to six. Rapid growth spurts can lead to several problems such as developmental orthopaedic diseases (DOD) – including osteochondritis dissecans (OCD), physitis and angular limb deformities.

These conditions may result from imbalances in the horse's diet, exercise, or genetics. Ensuring your young horse is getting a balanced diet and appropriate exercise is crucial. If you have any concerns, contact your vet who will be able to address any growth related issues promptly.

Skeletal maturity

Understanding the process of skeletal maturity is crucial for appropriate management, training and care. Skeletal maturity refers to the point at which a horse's bones have fully developed and growth plates have ossified (closed).

It is important to note that skeletal maturity doesn't necessarily mean the horse has stopped growing in all aspects, as soft tissue and muscle development may continue. The age at which horses reach skeletal maturity varies depending on a number of factors including breed and genetics, but most will reach skeletal maturity between the ages of four and six years. However, it is essential to assess individual horses based on their development rather than relying solely on their age.

Growth plate ossification & closure

Growth plates are areas of cartilage located near the ends of long bones. They play a crucial role in bone growth and elongation.

As a horse matures, these growth plates gradually ossify and close, indicating the end of longitudinal bone growth. The timing of growth plate closure varies between different anatomical regions in the horse's body (the table below gives more detail).

Age ranges for growth plate closures vary from horse to horse. Environmental factors, nutrition, overall health, and training, can all have an influence on the timing of growth plate closure.

i GROWTH PLATE CLOSURE

Anatomical region	Growth plate closure	Reference
Forearm	9 – 12 months	Goergen et al, 2016
Cannon Bone	12 – 18 months	Crevier-Denoix et al, 2016
Knee & Hock	18 – 24 months	Wong et al, 2017
Stifle	24 – 30 months	Goergen et al, 2016
Vertebrae	5 – 6 years	Wilson et al, 2017



The anatomy exhibition will include a number of comparative displays of skeletons of different ages, including this immature thoracic spine section showing growth plates

Training challenges

Young horses are in the early stages of their careers, so it is essential to lay the correct foundations in their training.

Careful management combined with proper training methods that focus on a horse's well-being, musculoskeletal health and strength are vital to ensure a horse's long-term health, soundness and success.

Development of musculoskeletal strength

As a young horse grows, their muscles and skeletal structures need time to strengthen and develop.

Overworking or pushing a young horse too hard physically can lead to strains, stress fractures and other musculoskeletal issues. It is important to train using gradual and progressive exercise routines with appropriate periods of rest and recovery. This will help ensure the young horse's musculoskeletal system develops correctly and reduces the risk of injury.

Hoof & limb conditions

Young horses may experience limb and hoof conditions that can affect their soundness and performance.

Regular farrier visits, proper hoof care and balanced exercise routines will help to maintain healthy hooves and limbs.

Dental problems

As the young horse loses their baby teeth and develops their permanent teeth it can cause dental issues that may lead to discomfort.

Regular dental examinations by a qualified equine dentist will spot any potential issues and rectify them before they cause any problems.

Gastrointestinal disturbances

Changes in diet or access to forage can disrupt the delicate balance of your horse's digestive system.

Young horses can be susceptible to gastrointestinal disturbances, including colic



This skeleton of a 4-year-old Welsh Section D gives an indication of which growth plates are still open at the age most horses are backed

EQUINE ANATOMY EXHIBITION

We are really excited to be presenting an equine anatomy exhibition at the Horses Inside Out Conference in February at Loughborough University.

The theme of the anatomy exhibition is Growth & Development, and it will include a number of comparative displays of skeletons of different ages from yearlings to 4 years to middle age and veteran skeletons too. The latest addition is the skeleton of a 4-year-old Welsh Section D. This will be particularly interesting to study as it gives an indication of which growth plates are still open at the age most horses are backed.

and gastric ulcers. Ensuring a consistent feeding routine and providing a high fibre diet as well as keeping stress to a minimum can help to reduce the risk of gastrointestinal issues.

Socialisation & turnout

All horses thrive on social interaction and plenty of turnout time, but it is especially important for young horses. If this is limited it can lead to behavioural problems, anxiety, and frustration.

Providing young horses with regular turnout and ensuring their social needs are met is a must for their welfare, well-being and to help prevent behavioural issues.

Understanding what age horses reach skeletal maturity and growth plate maturity, as well as common problems a young horse may face, helps us to ensure the horse has appropriate management, training and care. Remember to evaluate each horse on an individual basis and tailor their training and management accordingly so their formative years are positive and set them up for the future. The subject of young horses is a complex one and is something that will be covered in greater detail at the Horses Inside Out Conference in February 2024. 

THE 2024 HORSES INSIDE OUT CONFERENCE

TOPIC: GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT – A JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME

Venue: Loughborough University
Date: Sat 17th & Sun 18th February 2024

• From physical and mental development to aspects of care, training and performance, world leading speakers will take you on a journey looking at; limb deformities, developmental abnormalities,

preventing pain and lameness, recognising depression in horses, training, conditioning, dental related issues, and feeding. There is an anatomy display which rivals parts of the Natural History Museum, limb dissections, the latest scientific research, as well as tried and tested aspects of horse care. Presentation stands will fascinate whilst comfortable surroundings, good food, and friends old and new, will make this convivial and educational event an opportunity too good to miss!

In depth details, reviews and further information can be found here:
www.horsesinsideout.com/c24

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IH MEMBERS DISCOUNT

Get a 10% off tickets with the discount code: IH10

Who better to talk about training for the future than Kelly Marks?

We are delighted that Kelly will be joining the line-up of presenters, all world-leaders in their fields, at the Horses Inside Out Conference in February 2024. Kelly will be sharing stories about her training experiences and what we as humans can learn from horsemanship.



HOW HAPPY HACKERS CAN BENEFIT FROM THE SKILLS OF EVENTING

By Kelly Marks



Photo courtesy of Sandra Williams

Kelly Marks, Intelligent Horsemanship Founder, shares her thoughts and experiences about how happy hackers can benefit from the skills required for eventing.

It's been my intention from the start that Intelligent Horsemanship should benefit from the collective knowledge of horsemanship in as many areas as possible. There is SO MUCH to say about this, but for this article I'll keep to the subject of EVENTING, which has only come into my life relatively recently.

I've only competed once at eventing, and that was at Pony Club as a teenager and Seamus, 13.2hh pony, and I came third. Years later I had jump lessons with Pat Burgess who was one of Lucinda Green's early coaches. Pat was one of the kindest, funniest, most inspirational teachers I've ever come across and I came to consider her a very special friend. Pat taught all her riders the Ready for Trouble Seat although I think Lucinda coined the phrase. You come to the fence 'plugged in' on your two seat bones and you sit up till your horse has committed to jump.

To quote from Lucinda on the subject: 'The security of your lower leg gave your arms, hands and fingers the chance to allow the horse whatever stretch he needed.'



Daisy came 6th in her first event which seemed an excellent result

“I found a lot to like about this low-level eventing.”

Photo © www.equipassionuk.com

HOW HAPPY HACKERS CAN BENEFIT FROM THE SKILLS OF EVENTING

Through Pat I met Lucinda and what struck me most about both these 'Living Legends' is how they were always wanting to learn more. Pat came to a Monty demo and my classroom Horse Psychology course in her 80s. Lucinda came to a Monty demo and asked me to her yard to get a horse of hers loading. I've met Lucinda a few times since and she seems totally unaffected by her incredible success.

With Pat and Lucinda as positive role models from eventing, when Daisy decided to enter a local Cotswold Cup at 90cm I was all for it. To be honest I wouldn't want to watch anyone competing at much higher as I was far more composed as a competitor than I am today as a spectator.

I found a lot to like about this low-level eventing. For one thing entrants are given times so you know where to be when and no hanging around. You get value from the day, it's not all over in a flash. There seems to be a particularly good atmosphere. There were a lot of people having a wonderful time with their horses and these sorts of competitions can be a good incentive to keep your horse or pony fit and well.

Daisy came 6th in her first event which seemed an excellent result.

Carrying on from there my sister and I volunteered at a couple of these events as they are mostly run by volunteers, and they are often desperate. Not suggesting that they were desperate to accept us of course. Well maybe...

The second time we volunteered I had my first opportunity as a dressage writer. What an amazing learning opportunity! It was somewhat nerve wracking, but I loved it!

One of the things I learned was that the judge does have to comment if the mark is below 7 out of 10 i.e., if the movement was below a certain standard. In our class on both days nearly all our competitors marks were under 7 which meant a lot of very fast writing. Note to organisers; the gaps for writing in these instances are not big enough! I had to quickly learn some dressage shorthand i.e., 'BTV' means the horse's face is 'behind the vertical' (not good).

My judge on the first day was lovely and when there was a little time to chat at the end. She told me she'd been taught about stud work by a certain Ian Vandenberghe, and was also a fan of Kay Humphries saddles and we had a lot in common.

My judge on the second day was a top FEI dressage judge who came 'to do her bit'. I got the vibe immediately she was a 'doesn't suffer fools' type, so I set about with mega efficiency and then realised I wasn't sure how to spell her name. I had to ask – eek! This judge didn't keep things in the same order as the first judge i.e., mark first then comment, and she didn't say 'behind the vertical' but 'ears on top' which meant 'ears *should* be on top' i.e., horse *shouldn't* be behind the vertical. And 'cover the ground' meant 'for goodness' sake stop hanging on to that horse's head and let him move forward!!!'



With Pat and Lucinda as positive role models from eventing, when Daisy decided to enter a local Cotswold Cup at 90cm I was all for it

TIP

If your horse can get 7s in a basic dressage test you are going to be safer hacking.

It's interesting when you're trying really hard to get things right and sometimes you have to guess what you're meant to do. Made me think what it's like to be a horse. Also, if you always wrote for the same judge (or horse has same rider) it would become much easier as you'd be able to go 'Ah... she means...'

I did get to ask questions at the end and if I had a horse to event or do dressage with, I'd definitely like to have a lesson with both of these judges. Watching that day, it did seem some people went in somewhat clueless (rather like me dressage writing) and if you can just get the basics right you not only get higher scores, but importantly the ones with the highest scores did much better on the showjumping and cross country. I believe top eventer, Mary King, has suggested that horses that don't get a certain level in the dressage shouldn't even be allowed to go cross country.

To translate this for the happy hacker; if your horse can get 7s in a basic dressage test you are going to be safer hacking.

On the first day I was rather chuffed that the best dressage and ultimate winner of the class was Charlie Piper. I haven't met Charlie, but I was out at Flag Is Up Farm with her dad, Tim Piper, in 1993 and we've been in touch ever since to catch up on horse talk.

It was good to see how the dressage judges marked down too much rein pressure and horses not going forward and being overbent. Quotes: "Horses make their own muscle; you don't do it by pulling their head in" and "Don't people have lessons anymore?!" Anatomical girths were not frowned upon but quite rightly they needed to fit properly. We watched one

horse walking outside the ring and the girth hit his elbow on every stride. You could get the impression from bad press that dressage is all about horribly constricted horses in painful bits. That is definitely NOT what the judges I was with wanted.

Life Lessons from dressage writing

As a self-confessed *armchair* dressage critic, I would suggest you get some education before you go in. I can't help thinking being judged on something when you're not halfway prepared is going to be a bit soul destroying and might even put you off altogether.

You are only eliminated if you get lost 3 times. You can have a disaster in one move but mentally reset and make your next move excellent or at least satisfactory. Now if that isn't a life lesson, I don't know what is!

As in Life: Think Ahead: some riders seemed to be shocked by the next movement that came along. It was like walk walk walk EEEK trot! Trot trot trot EEEK canter! And so on. It was very obvious the next movement was taking people by surprise, and I'd strongly recommend mentally rehearsing the test at least the day before. Preferably the week before. Mentally rehearsing anything is hard work, it's a lot of effort. It's the effort that does the trick though, it's going to mean you're prepared for every move.

What I took from both days was: simple marks were lost at the beginning from drifting, bad halts and moving on too quickly. Much more suppleness was needed. I wrote 'more supp' a lot.

Continued overleaf >>

HOW HAPPY HACKERS CAN BENEFIT FROM THE SKILLS OF EVENTING

<< Continued from previous page

This of course is also in the interest of the horse's welfare. Is the horse past his prime to do these basic moves? Are there exercises possibly with or without a rider that would help him be more supple and comfortable in his movement?

On both days, the judges showed some frustration that the riders had the potential to improve massively if they took some lessons. Or were they taking lessons – just from the wrong trainers?

I asked Top Dressage Coach, Shaun Mandy, for his best advice with regards to getting the best coach for competition, he replied:

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TIPS FOR GETTING THE BEST COACH

- 1 Your coach has trained horses through the dressage levels.
- 2 Your coach has a good technical understanding of exercises they train you in.
- 3 Your coach works with the scales of training in developing you and your horse.
- 4 Your coach encourages you to be a thinking rider.

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TO LEARN MORE

You can see Shaun's webinar in the Members section of the IH website, or find him on www.smequineacademy.com.

(Sadly, Shaun is based in Uruguay now which is most inconvenient!)

IH Training Section

I'd add to these, the slightly obvious; that you and your coach should have mutual respect for each other, and 'obviously' again, have the same ethical approach. And if after giving the coach a fair trial, you feel you're not improving and your results show you're not improving, you recognise it could be time for a change. They may be a wonderful trainer – just not for you. If we're looking to see what we can learn from the very top levels; footballers, rugby teams and tennis players don't stay with a coach who's not getting them the results. I'm sorry but even if your coach is your Mum or Aunt – they may have to be fired!

Saddles for the rider! ...and breathe...

You're going to think I'm exaggerating, but all the 'old school' horse people I've talked to lately have expressed the opinion that the whole 'saddle fitting thing' is a con. 'Another way for people to make money'. And these are people who have been extremely successful with long-term competition horses and want to get the absolute best from them.

As I aim to be a Scout rather than a Soldier (i.e., I'm always attempting to learn more rather than only defending a position I already have) I know I'm missing the point somewhere – but where?

While Intelligent Horsemanship has been a leader in the field of ensuring a saddle is properly fitted and comfortable for the horse, I'm not sure we have emphasised enough the importance of security and comfort for the rider. On the Sunday, the judge was 'not happy' seeing the saddles with huge blocks attached. She said how they destroyed riders' hips and stopped them moving with the horse, 'you should be dancing with the horse' she told me and then told a story that just the other day she changed a horse's saddle, and it then went completely differently. So, there IS value in changing a horse's saddle then? But in this case, it was to assist the rider to ride better. There is definitely value in that. I'd like to think we can do both and have the horse *and* rider comfortable. Simple – but not necessarily easy.

Stickability

A strong priority for me with IH Members is safety. You may have noticed in a couple of the 2022 editions of the *IH Magazine* 'Stickability' was a key feature.

I managed to offend a couple of IH Members (for which I apologise) on the Facebook page when I showed a 'sport' in South America where the riders jumped on the young horses with no



HOW HAPPY HACKERS CAN BENEFIT FROM THE SKILLS OF EVENTING

bridle and saddle and as the horses buckaroo'd around (no straps) the riders were laughing and didn't look for one minute like they'd fall off. Not pleasant for the horses, but my point was for us to appreciate how secure these riders are. What could we learn from them? As I mention in *My World*, while we can do all the good work so a horse doesn't find it necessary to spook – it still may happen and then I want to be sure we all stay secure and on top.

The Trip has been cancelled...

I've abandoned my plan for the IH South American trip where we learn from the Gouchos. I've come up with something MUCH more practical.

If every person who considers themselves 'just' a Happy Hacker could be secure enough to jump their horse, then we'd know you're secure enough to sit a spook, a rear, or a buck or two. Do you ever feel I'm using you as a social experiment? You could be right.

As a former jockey, I know there's nothing like riding with your stirrups short to teach you balance and the 'grip with your ankles in emergencies' (I heard someone describe ankles as 'the rider's safety belt'). I have possibly the last living DVD by Tina Sederholm – the daughter of Lars Sederholm, an Olympic coach based at Waterstock, Oxfordshire. It's great. Tina has gone on to make a career as a comedian and podcaster 'This Is Not Therapy' and so the DVD is really good fun as well as extremely helpful, with her main theme being to practise riding with short stirrups to learn balance.

TIP

As you ride into fences you need to stay secure in the R4T – Ready for Trouble position. Just remember 'gripping with your knees' went out with docking tails.

“If you see a lovely stride ride to it.”

One of Lucinda's ideas to train balance is to **stand up in your stirrups** on your horse, without hanging on to the reins, and balance as you walk along, and later trot along. If you've got a really steady horse, you can even put your hands out to the side like you're an aeroplane. If you aspire to excellence in cross country, joining the **LucindaXC Academy** will be well worth your time. I subscribe to the Academy, and I did the *See a Stride* webinar which was really good. I occasionally say to my students "It's often not what you don't know, but what you know that you've forgotten!"

Lucinda is great at crediting people (not like some people who'll quote Einstein and then claim it as their own). To quote Lucinda quoting Harry Meade they say, 'you need to 'cuddle the horse with your legs'. As you ride into fences you need to stay secure in the R4T – Ready for Trouble position. Just remember 'gripping with your knees' went out with docking tails.

I totally appreciate that if you want to do Classical Riding in an arena you adopt the Classical Riding position. However, if you want to keep yourself as safe as possible cross country jumping or hacking, you'd be best following my advice which comes from Lucinda and which came from Harry Meade. Another gold nugget of advice for seeing a stride jumping, that came from Lucinda quoting

? QUESTIONS FOR A HAPPY HACKER

? Would you and your horse get 7 out of 10 or more in a low-level dressage test?

? Can you sit up into a small fence and ride over it with confidence?

? Is your saddle comfortable for your horse and you?

Ginnie Eliot (a great eventer from years back) is: "If you see a lovely stride ride to it – if you see nothing – sit up and keep your leg on."

I don't know if anyone else here has found that there's something about being with horses and ponies that takes you back to your childhood? I've started thinking that when I grow up maybe I could do some eventing? I know – crazy... 



TO FIND OUT MORE

If you're interested in event training you can visit Lucinda's cross country academy website: www.lucindagreenxcacademy.com/

To help build your confidence, see how Daisy can help you: www.howveryhorse.co.uk/product/8-week-rider-confidence-course



One of Lucinda's ideas to train balance is to stand up in your stirrups on your horse, without hanging on to the reins, and balance as you walk along

Photo courtesy of Kelly Marks



By Abi Pass



Abi has a Master's degree in veterinary physiotherapy from Writtle University College and is

working toward her Intelligent Horsemanship Diploma.

- To find out more about Abi, please visit her website at: www.aboveandbeyondveterinaryphysiotherapy.co.uk

Balance and coordination are words commonly used in equestrian sport, whether we are talking about the coordination of fine and precise limb movements in dressage, the ability to stay upright when making tight turns in show jumping, managing muddy descents in cross country, or even just cantering across a field when out hacking.

But what do we actually know about training balance and coordination in our horses? I'm not talking about using inside leg and outside rein when riding a twenty-metre circle. I'm talking about your horse's own ability to judge a situation and adjust their movement where necessary to avoid falling or injuring themselves. Having a well-balanced and coordinated horse ensures that you feel safe and confident taking on a range of tasks, without concern for your horse tripping or falling over. **From my perspective, as a veterinary physiotherapist, this process all begins with one slightly technical word that you may or may not have heard of – proprioception.**

“...a significant function of proprioception lies in injury prevention...”

IH Training Section

“ Proprioception is not exclusive to the horse...”



Having a well-balanced and coordinated horse ensures that you feel safe and confident taking on a range of tasks

Photo courtesy of Kelly Marks

PROPRIOCEPTION

THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING BALANCE & COORDINATION IN YOUR HORSE

? Proprio...what?

Proprioception is the term given to the body's innate awareness of its own positioning in relation to the environment around it at any given moment without the need for vision; this allows for finite adjustments in movement that prevent injury and aid balance and coordination.

Proprioception is not exclusive to the horse, it's an ability that all mammals have, including humans. Imagine, you are blindfolded and walking across a concrete path, then all of a sudden you move onto a patch of grass. Even without sight, you are able to sense when you have moved onto grass, and subconsciously you have adjusted the muscles and tendons that support your ankle and knee joints, so that they don't give way on the softer surface. That's proprioception.

? So... how does proprioception work?

Proprioception starts with the millions of tiny receptors found within the muscles, joints, tendons, ligaments, and skin, known as proprioceptors and mechanoreceptors.

These receptors act like messengers. Depending on their type they receive a range of different stimuli including stretch, tension, force, pressure and vibration, and transmit this information to the central nervous system. The spinal cord and brain then process this information and decide whether any adjustments in the body need to be made to ensure balance and coordination, and to prevent injury or discomfort. In fact, a significant function of proprioception lies in injury prevention. For example, when standing on an uneven

PROPRIOCEPTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING BALANCE & COORDINATION

surface like cobblestones, changes in joint angles and stretch are communicated to the brain via proprioception. The brain then instructs the body to step cautiously, allowing for a controlled amount of stretch as the ankle bends, without risking strain on the supporting ligaments. This is known as a feedback loop.

? If this is a natural process, then why do I need to consider it in my horses training regime?

The nervous system, just like most other tissues in the body, adapts and develops in response to stress.

We all understand that for a muscle to become stronger and work more efficiently you must use and challenge it (put it under stress). The proprioceptive system is the same; the more it is exposed to varied and challenging movements or environments, the more it learns and adapts, which can lead to enhanced proprioceptive function. Activities that require precise coordination, balance, and spatial awareness can stimulate the proprioceptive system, as well as activities like strength training or agility exercises. This is because the body needs to refine its awareness of position, movement, and force to execute these activities effectively.

Overall, targeted and progressively challenging activities can promote the development of proprioception, contributing to better coordination, balance, safety, and overall performance.



Photo courtesy of Kelly Marks

Proprioception is not exclusive to the horse, it's an ability that all mammals have, including humans



Photo courtesy of Mariana Haworth, As Seen Through Horses' Ears, Facebook

Have you ever been on a trekking holiday in rocky or mountainous terrain, and found yourself given a rather ordinary or even seemingly poorly conditioned horse? As you approach a slippery slope, you wonder, "How on earth are we going to make it down?" Yet, to your surprise, the horse handles it with ease, without any direction from you, and without a hint of concern. You might have even been told to loosen your grip and let the horse work it out on their own. In contrast, you know that attempting such terrain with your own horse at home would likely lead to injury, for both parties involved. Why is that? It's because these trekking horses have been exposed to that kind of terrain day in and day out. They've been turned out on it, ridden over it, led through it, and so on. Effectively, these trekking horses have undergone advanced proprioceptive training to achieve that remarkable level of balance and coordination.

? Why might my horse's proprioception be underdeveloped and how can I tell?

There are various reasons why a horse may have an underdeveloped proprioceptive system.

In my experience, many of the horses I've encountered in the UK could benefit from some level of proprioceptive training. This could possibly stem from basic equine husbandry practices not providing our horses with enough challenging stimuli from early life and afterwards. This includes factors like excessive stabling, 'too well' maintained turnout areas, overuse of arenas, and minimal pre-training or groundwork.



Horses that could benefit from proprioceptive training include:

- ✓ **Young horses:** This is a crucial developmental phase where shaping a well-balanced horse not only sets them up for success in their training but also reduces the risk of them injuring themselves.
- ✓ **Horses with restricted or unvaried turn-out:** A horse's proprioceptive system is constantly learning. If most of a horse's time is spent standing still in a stable on a soft bedding surface, their range of proprioceptive learning will be quite limited. In contrast, a horse with ample and varied turn-out will continually challenge their proprioceptive system as they move around their field at different gaits.
- ✓ **A horse that frequently trips:** While it's not the only reason a horse may trip (other factors like conformation issues, medical concerns, or injuries may also be at play), ruling out these issues does suggest a potential proprioceptive deficit.
- ✓ **Any horse that makes you feel unsure about performing relatively straightforward tasks:** This could include crossing over tractor ruts while out hacking, trotting downhill, or cantering through a field that isn't perfectly flat.
- ✓ **Horses recovering from injury or dealing with chronic health conditions like arthritis:** Pain and injury significantly impact the proprioceptive system. Proprioception in the affected area is altered due to pain signalling, leading to an adaptive compensatory gait to avoid further pain or injury. This might involve shorter strides, reduced limb loading, or restricted joint flexion. If an injury has persisted for an extended period, the proprioceptive system adapts to this new compensatory gait. Without targeted proprioceptive training, the compensatory gait may persist because the body now believes it's unsafe to load the limb more or flex the joint further, for fear of causing pain or injury.

Continued overleaf >>

PROPRIOCEPTION

THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING BALANCE & COORDINATION IN YOUR HORSE

« Continued from previous page

i Proprioceptive training in the horse

Now that we understand the importance of proprioception in our horses, let's dive into some specific exercises you can incorporate into your horse's training regime to enhance their proprioceptive abilities.

These exercises are designed to challenge your horse's balance, coordination, and spatial awareness, ultimately improving their overall proprioception.

i Different surfaces & terrains

Perhaps the most basic form of proprioceptive training you can do with your horse is taking them over different surfaces, from deep mud and stony ground to arenas with sand and rubber surfaces.

All these surfaces offer different characteristics in terms of firmness, stability, grip and so on... This can be done in-hand from a young age (2-3 years) and could be incorporated into a horse's turnout routine at any age: paddocks set-up like track systems could include proprioceptive pathways. It's also important to remember that young horses just being started may never have experienced anything like an arena surface. This in itself may be challenging enough for them, let alone with the addition of the weight of a rider. Introduce these surfaces gradually and consider your horse's age and experience. Young or inexperienced horses may find certain surfaces more challenging, so take it slowly and let them build their confidence over time.



Photo courtesy of Ele Millwright

The more you repeat these exercises, the more confident your horse will become at navigating them

IH Training Section



Photo courtesy of Kelly Marks

More challenging exercises are often best found out and about in fields or woodland

i Groundwork challenges & obstacles

Once your horse is comfortable with various surfaces, it's time to introduce them to more challenging groundwork and obstacles.

Ideally you want to challenge your horse with several stimulus at once, like long grass, changes in incline, stepping over obstacles, etc... These more challenging exercises are often best found out and about in fields or woodland. This can be done in-hand or under saddle, depending on your horse. The more you repeat these exercises, the more confident your horse will become at navigating them, and the improved proprioceptive function will help your horse successfully navigate new obstacles when faced with them.

GROUNDWORK CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER

1 Navigating uneven ground

2 Stepping over roots & branches

3 Crossing ditches & mounds

4 Weaving across tractor ruts

5 Navigating challenging slopes

6 Walking through long grass & shrubs

7 Crossing water & streams



Photo courtesy of Kelly Marks

Proprioceptive training can be done in-hand or under saddle, depending on your horse

i REMEMBER SAFETY IS PARAMOUNT!

Always inspect new routes on foot without your horse to ensure they are safe. Gradually increase the difficulty of these challenges over time to prevent injury and build your horse's proprioceptive abilities gradually.

PROPRIOCEPTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING BALANCE & COORDINATION

i Balance pads

Balance pads ask your horse to actively engage their proprioceptive system as well as core and postural musculature to help fine-tune their weight distribution and stay balanced.

They can be a great exercise for inexperienced horses, or young horses (3-6 years of age), as well as those recovering from injury.



Photo courtesy of Abi Pass

5 BALANCE PAD EXERCISES

1 Start by placing one hoof on a reasonably firm pad, it's usually easier to start with a forelimb.

Make sure you are doing this exercise on a flat firm surface, grass is fine but can be a bit slippery, so a concreted yard or stable block would be more suitable.

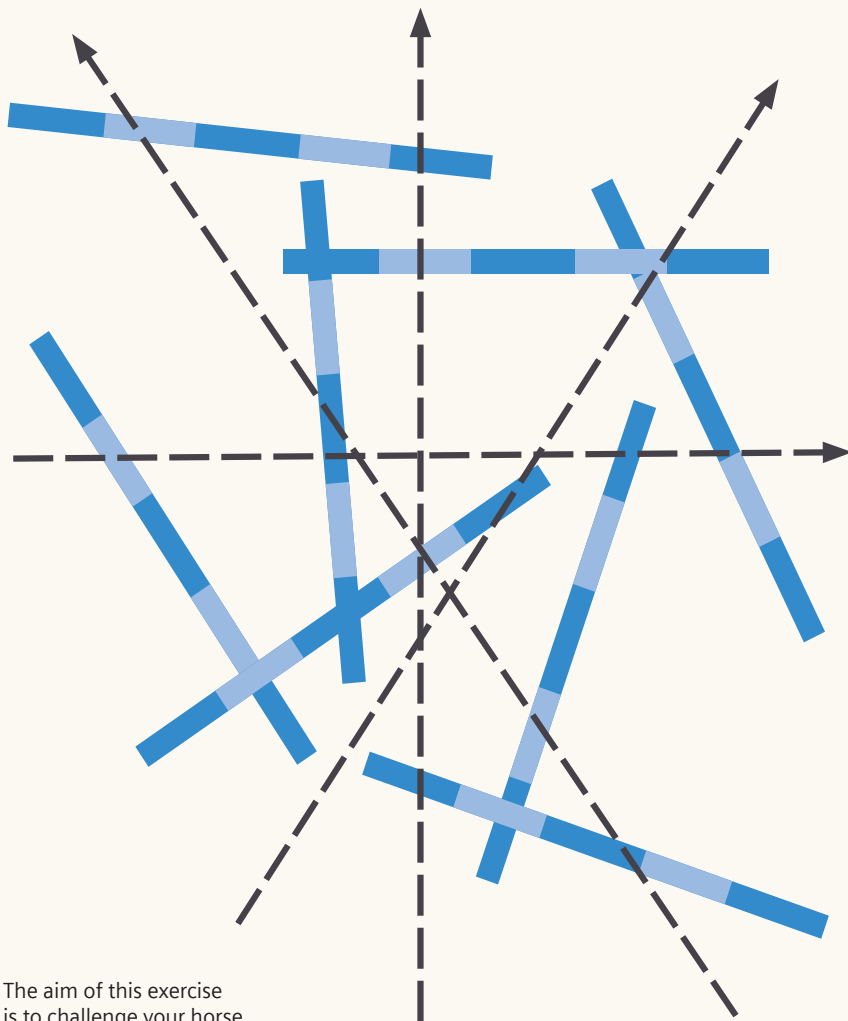
2 Apply gentle pressure to the side of your horse or hold the top of their withers and rock back and forth gently to test their balance.

3 Lift the opposite limb to increase the weight of the limb on the balance pad and shift the horse's centre of mass.

4 Engage multiple limbs: As your horse gains confidence, place another pad under an additional hoof. You can work up to them standing with all four limbs on a pad, building core strength alongside proprioception.

5 Adjust pad firmness: Gradually reduce the firmness of the pads as your horse's balance improves.

SCATTERED POLE PROPRIOCEPTIVE EXERCISE



The aim of this exercise is to challenge your horse to navigate over the poles

i Scattered poles

Scattered poles are great for proprioceptive training as well as working on visuomotor control (the coordination between vision and movement).

As you can see from the diagram, the aim of the exercise is to set up several poles in a completely randomised order and challenge your horse to navigate over them, just in walk, first in hand and then you can try ridden. It is important to give your horse a loose rein/line and allow them to have control over their head, this not only allows them to look at the poles first but also because the head and neck play an essential role in balance. You should start relatively simple and then make the exercise more complicated as your horse learns to navigate the poles. However, remember that this exercise needs to be safe, so test all the poles first and make sure they are not going to roll or fall easily if knocked.

i

REMEMBER!

Test all poles first to make sure they are safe and not going to roll or fall easily.

TIP

It is important to give your horse a loose rein/line and allow them to have control over their head, this not only allows them to look at the poles first but also because the head and neck play an essential role in balance.

i

TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

Embracing the concept of proprioception in your horse's training regime is a key element to unlocking their full potential and developing a balanced and sound horse long-term.

By incorporating targeted exercises that stimulate proprioceptive function, you're not just enhancing their balance and coordination, but also improving their overall safety and performance.

Heather Moffett
riding Ribereno in
the Vogue Dressage



“The memory
foam panels and seat mold
beautifully and comfortably
both to my horse's back and my
buttocks – it's got to be one of
the most mfy saddles
I've ever sat in.”
Gavin Connell

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Helping Farriers Learn The Benefits Of Barefoot

Registered farrier since 1975 and now dedicated barefoot specialist, Robbie Richardson is one of the UK's leading authorities on using and adapting hoof boots on horses.

Richardson understands the resistance some farriers may have towards considering hoof boots as an alternative, given their extensive training in traditional shoemaking.

He has been a long-term user of Scoot Boots and believes all farriers should have the opportunity to learn more about hoof boots and adaptations and add those skills to their tool kit.

Richardson's practice involves initially fitting horses with boots and customising them as necessary, resulting in more efficient solutions and maintaining income stability.

"Being able to offer a vet/farrier/trimmer or owner the option of fitting a boot with an adaptation for any compromise is so helpful," he said.

"It means no longer nailing a surgical shoe on and waiting for the result, which if successful could mean it will be on for 4/6 weeks, and if it isn't then will need to be replaced asap."

Richardson recently published his latest book titled, 'So you want to take your horse barefoot?' which helps horse owners, vets, farriers, and trimmers during the transition of their horse going barefoot.

In the field of farriery, Richardson recognises the reliance on anecdotal evidence and eagerly anticipates the release of research papers to substantiate the benefits of boots and barefoot referral work.

Collaborating with experts like Mark Johnson, known for his expertise in equine dissections and movement, has been instrumental.

Together, they're pioneering courses to empower farriers to incorporate boot fitting and alteration into their skill set.



SPOTLIGHT ON IH TRAINER Jim Goddard

Jim is based in Heathfield, East Sussex and covers the South of England

“Once we understand... we can set everything up to get the best possible results...”

GET IN TOUCH

Jim is based in Heathfield, East Sussex and covers the South of England.

Contact him via mobile 07540 607231 or email info@jimgoddardhorses.com

Follow him on Facebook @JimGoddardHorses

How long have you been involved with horses and how did you get involved with them? I started riding as a young child in Africa, where we rode old polo ponies to get about, then I progressed on to Connemaras in Ireland and hunters and eventers in the UK. I was lucky enough to then work as a wrangler and stunt rider in Canada, before coming back to the UK and starting youngsters and working with remedial horses.

How did you become involved with Kelly and Monty? I started as a volunteer at demos, then started training with Intelligent Horsemanship and over the next few years I worked hard to learn everything I could until I took over managing the tours on the road and became an IH Trainer.

Why did you decide to qualify as an IH Trainer? I love the way Kelly works with horses and after volunteering for her and Monty on some tours I started to train with her. She opened up a new way of working in partnership with the horses I was training, and I knew that was the way I wanted to spend my time with them. I've always loved teaching and coaching and so becoming an IH Trainer was a no brainer!!

What is a typical day for you? Since we stopped training horses at home, I now go out and help people at their own yards. I get on the road early and see two or three clients a day depending on the needs of horse and rider/handler. I have a great body of regular clients whom I've developed really good relationships with and it's lovely to see their equine partnerships grow.

What's important to you when you see an owner and their horse for the first time? The most important thing for me is to take a good honest history. Once we understand all the needs of horse and rider/handler we can set everything up to get the best possible results. Then a good positive practical session so we can see if there's anything that we can do to understand the challenges in front of us.

What are the common challenges you face in your work as an IH Trainer? There are definitely a few of these! I think training peer pressure, facilities, and openness to new training options are all top of the list. Feeling confident enough to work at a pace that you feel comfortable with and sticking to your own training boundaries sometimes takes some courage in the face of peer pressure and it's our responsibility as trainers to support that and try our best to make those new training options workable and successful. Working around facilities is sometimes tricky, I've worked everywhere from very smart arenas to a communal garden!

If you could change one thing in the world of horses, what would it be, and why? As both a Western and English trained rider/trainer I would like to see more open dialogue and sharing of best practice across all disciplines. I have learnt so much from many different trainers, I'd love to see us all working together for the horses we love.

What would be the first piece of advice you would give someone looking at buying/loaning their first horse? Get the right horse for the job that you want them to do. It can be frustrating if you're a budding show jumper but the conformation or breeding of the horse you choose lends itself to a different job.

What is the most common issue you have to deal with when working with horses?

I think making sure our horses are fit, supple and experienced enough to be able to cope with the level of training we are asking of them. Sometimes as humans, we want the end result

so much we forget to give our horses time to develop the body and mind that they need to succeed.

What are your plans for the future? We are planning on developing our fun ridden clinics and letting people have a feel of how some slightly different riding styles can be incorporated into their general toolbox.

What three things should everyone practise with their horses?

1. Standing still, chatting to your neighbour, on a loose rein in different environments and locations. 2. Developing softness and suppleness throughout your horse's body, especially their barrel (torso). 3. Patience!

Do you have any memorable moments/stories of working with Kelly or Monty? I loved watching Kelly work with a tricky loader on tour once. She wasn't getting the answer that she was looking for, so she paused, had a think, tried something different and hey presto – success!

It really taught me to look and listen to the horses and that they are a part of solving the challenge in front of you – so pay attention!!

What's the best bit of advice you've ever been given? It's our responsibility to get our bodies breathing and understanding correctly, only then can the horse find the space to hear what we are asking.

What has been the proudest moment/biggest achievement in your career? Using IH methods in our Equine Therapy clinics to help military veterans and blue light workers with complex mental health needs.

What would your advice be to someone hoping to become an IH Trainer? Be patient both with the horses and gaining the experience needed to have a great big bag of tools! 🛠️

REHOMING
A HORSE WITH
HORSEWORLD

Special
Feature

Rehome one; save many.

Why rehoming a rescued horse saves
more than just one set of hooves

“We want to
give them the
second chance at
a happy life.”

HUDSON & CAROL

**“He has won the hearts and the minds
of the whole village! He’s a sweetheart.”**

Hudson the rescued pony has made quite the impact since being taken home by HorseWorld rehomer Carol Wright. Carol's mare Clover had a foal called Lillie, and Carol felt her youngster needed an equine companion of a similar age to grow up with. “Hudson is a delight to have around. I’m so grateful for the work that HorseWorld did with him as he’s so easy to handle. There is something so nice about taking on a pony who just needs a home. I would take on another one like a shot if I could!”

There is something
so nice about taking
on a pony who just
needs a home

Did you know one of Monty Roberts' goals is to "leave the world a better place than I found it, for horses and for people, too"? It's certainly one we echo here at HorseWorld. We've been dedicated to saving the lives of abandoned, neglected, and mistreated horses, ponies, and donkeys since 1952.

Our hope for every equine who arrives on our yard is simple. We want to give them the second chance at a happy life they all deserve. After spending time with our teams who tailor a rehabilitation programme for their specific needs, we will consider what that 'second chance' could look like for that particular horse. Some may join our Discovery team, working with vulnerable young people to teach them essential life-skills. Others with complex health or behavioural issues will live for the rest of their days as part of our herd.

Those for whom either Discovery or herd-life isn't quite right, will start the journey of finding a loving home. Our brilliant (if we say so ourselves) teams will begin a comprehensive training and rehabilitation plan for each equine; closely working with each one to see what their ideal life could look like.

Every equine has their own unique personality (of course we don't need to tell you that!) so there's never a 'one size fits all' approach to the rehoming process. But once our team feels confident the equine is at an appropriate stage in their journey where they could happily be rehomed, the search begins.

Sadly, as many horses will have been rescued due to extreme neglect or trauma, they can never be ridden. But that doesn't mean their possibilities are restricted. Our teams will have done work to help them cope with spending short periods on their own, without an equine friend, so many could be a perfect companion.

If a foal has been born on site, or a youngster comes to us before they were too badly impacted by their experiences, we can give them as much of a positive start to life as possible. These bundles of joy may be rehomed as 'youngsters with potential,' usually having been started by our teams (mostly using Intelligent Horsemanship methods) and will be looking for an experienced rehomer who is as excited about their future as we are.

So, whilst rehoming from a charity is obviously a lovely thing to do, what impact does it actually have for a charity like HorseWorld? Well, more than meets the eye.

Head of Equine Welfare at HorseWorld, Sarah Hollister, says "Our work is needed now more than ever. We've had an increase in the number of calls to our Welfare Team; people either telling us about a horse they're concerned for, or calling because they are no longer able to care for their equine and are facing heart-breaking decisions.

"Right now, we are over capacity here at our site in South Bristol. It really does feel like the current cost of living crisis is putting pressure on horse owners, and as a charity we're feeling that too. The calls don't stop coming but we are dedicated to finding loving homes for as many as possible.

"Every time someone can offer one of our horses the perfect home, it gives us the space to take in an equine in desperate need. It's that simple. When you magnify that impact to the two hundred horses and ponies, we currently have rehomed around the South West, you can see the impact that rehoming from a charity like us has on the rest of our work."



"Why rehome just one horse from HorseWorld when you could rehome two?"

"When we were introduced to two youngsters, it was impossible to decide between the two!" says HorseWorld rehomer Anne Warner. Little did she know that both had very different journeys ahead of them. "Dizzy is like a big teddy bear. Being around him is very grounding. He's extremely popular with my therapy clients." Sunny has excelled at TREC, and this year became Novice Horse Champion for the Winter League 2022-2023. "They really are like yin and yang but they're both amazing! I would recommend rehoming from a reputable charity for many reasons. Sadly, there are so many horses that need a loving home. You know you're doing something good."

Rehoming myth busting!

"It's just old horses who need a home." >> Not true! Whilst some horses may be more mature and unable to be ridden, many others have potential to do plenty of other fun things and (hopefully) years of a happy, healthy life ahead of them.

"Rescuing one doesn't make much of a difference." >> Every horse rehomed from a charity makes space for an equine who is in desperate need of rescue and rehabilitation. Multiply that by the thousands of rescued horses currently rehomed across the country and you can see the difference it makes.

"Rescued horses have complex physical or emotional needs." >> It's true that sometimes the traumatic past of a rescued horse may influence their day-to-day needs. However, any reputable charity will always be totally transparent about the levels of care and further training needed by any equine they're rehoming so don't hold back from asking plenty of questions.

"If my personal circumstances change, or if the horse and I aren't a good match, I'd be stuck with it!" >> Any horse rehomed from HorseWorld has a home here for life. Should a rehomer no longer be able to care for the horse, or things don't work out as we hope, they can always return to us. (Check what the policy is of the charity you're interested in rehoming from.)

"I'll be subject to lots of inconvenient home-checks." >> Different charities operate their home-checks in different ways. At HorseWorld, whilst the welfare of the equine is always our primary concern, we see our homechecks more as opportunities for our team to keep in touch and ensure all is going smoothly. All our visits are arranged in advance to fit in around our rehomer's busy lives.

"You'll never know what you're really getting." >> Whilst it's true that most rescues will usually have some unknown history, at HorseWorld our Training and Rehoming Team will always share a full assessment of the horse and discuss with any rehomer their suitability for your home and aspirations. Our team offer ongoing support and check in with rehomer's at regular intervals.

• To learn more about HorseWorld see the equines currently available for rehoming, scan this QR code or visit: www.horseworld.org.uk/rehoming

All rehoming charities have their own criteria for how they work. If you're interested in rehoming a horse, check with each charity for more information on their processes and procedures. Or if you've already given a home to a horse from a rescue or rehoming charity, write in and tell us about them! 📧



**BOOK
REVIEW
& EXTRACT**

*by Kelly
Marks*

The author is a great
proponent of horses
being able to learn
by observation

HORSE BRAIN HUMAN BRAIN

THE NEUROSCIENCE OF HORSEMANSHIP

*Getting Smart About How Horses &
Humans Think, Act, and Work Together*

by Janet L Jones PhD

“At first glance this seems a reliable book with in-depth information. I do recommend this book as there is a lot to like in it but do be aware that some of the references are outdated and certainly debateable i.e., just because something was written in a book 20 years ago doesn't make it worthy of quoting or referencing today*. *Fellow geeks feel free to write in and let me know your point of view on these matters.

Not specifically about this book but just a general warning it's not only outdated references we need to be concerned about:
“There's far more scientific fraud than anyone wants to admit”
The Guardian, 9th August 2023,
Ivan Oransky & Adam Marcus

We need to evaluate scientific studies, reports and 'stuff written in books' with our own common sense and experience before passing the information on as fact.

In the behavioural science field, data fraud has been uncovered in the work of various superstars such as Professor Dan Ariely, Francesca Gino and more. While anecdotal evidence is frowned upon, I feel we can glean useful information if we combine science with shared practical experiences.

One of the first statements that struck me as strange was the statement by the author that 'the horse does not have a prefrontal cortex,' which goes against what I've learned from reliable sources such as Dr Andrew Hemmings of The Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester.

The prefrontal cortex is generally thought of as 'the executive function' where thinking, imaging, planning, and talking take place. I did find this US 'myth buster': www.equusoma.com/myth-busting-do-horses-have-a-frontal-lobe

Perhaps it's only in America where there's the rumour that horses have no prefrontal cortex for their reasoning powers? In the UK we've discussed that the neo-cortex (where the prefrontal cortex is situated) is far smaller in the horse than it is for humans but haven't gone as far as to suggest that the prefrontal cortex doesn't exist at all.

Being well aware this isn't my specific area of expertise (but I know the man who knows...) Dr Andrew Hemmings was enormously generous with my questions and got straight back to me: *“The equine PFC has not been extensively studied or indeed delineated accurately. However, I can confirm that all mammals (including the horse) have a Prefrontal Cortex. However, there are some areas of the Prefrontal Cortex that are primate specific: These are known as the granular areas characterised by the presence of Stellate Cells. These tiny cells give the tissue a granular appearance under the microscope. As far as I am aware, only primates and their direct lineages possess these regions...”* For reference: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8617185

You may think I'm being too picky, but I'm concerned if statements like



The book's author, Janet L Jones PhD, talks about negative and positive reinforcement

Photo © Allison Ragdale Photography

‘the horse doesn't have a prefrontal cortex’ are quoted from what seems like a reliable book, then this quote could get repeated – similar to when ‘the horse has a brain the size of a walnut’ was at one stage widely quoted. To my mind, it's more or less saying ‘the horse is stupid, and you can treat them how you like’. Statements like those don't seem to be making ‘the world a better place for horses’ to me. How we use language makes a difference.

Also, in the book the author states that a horse's visual acuity is ‘considerably worse than ours’, i.e., they'd be unlikely to be able to read as we do. Then later she states how ‘remarkably’ horses can read human emotions from **photographs** – taking this information from THAT study** which was so widely publicised. While I have no doubt that horses read our emotions when we are with them ‘live’, to believe that they can translate the pixels on a photograph to read our emotions is a stretch too far. This study needs replicating to see which results come up a second time.

“...we can glean useful information if we combine science with shared practical experiences...”

Another anomaly [in a book that has many good points!] is in Chapter 11 titled ‘Negative Reinforcement’, where the author talks about negative and positive reinforcement – so far so good. You'll be well versed in these and other points of behaviourism if you've attended an IH Horse Psychology course. Speaking seemingly confidently on these subjects, under the subject of ‘Displacement’ the author describes it as though it's a form of negative reinforcement that moves the horse. I found it quite odd. For instance; ‘Horses displace people by swinging their hindquarters towards us, stepping into us, pushing against us, biting or kicking.’ Well, yes, but this isn't a description of ‘displacement’ in behavioural terms, yet this was the section it was under.

I think most IH Members will know displacement in behavioural terms is a defence mechanism in which a person (or horse) redirects an emotional reaction from the rightful recipient onto another person or object. i.e., your horse performs horribly on a ride and so you go home and take your (misplaced) anger out on your partner.

Also, there are displacement *activities*, usually caused by frustration, so a horse might paw the ground or chew wood when he isn't free to walk around as he wishes. Humans might pull at their hair, chew a pencil or rock on their chair as displacement activities.

This may be an example of ‘England and America are two countries separated by the same language’ – a quote attributed to George Bernard Shaw. It took me years to figure out that when Monty said, ‘That's good’ he meant ‘Stop now.’ And did you know in America it's rude to talk ‘to’ someone? You must talk ‘with’ people?

There's another point I found that goes against ‘accepted wisdom,’ but I was very happy to see it, and that is ‘Observational Training’. Can a horse learn by observation? The author is a great proponent of this and explains the many ways it can be a humane and helpful way to train horses.

According to Paul McGreevy's *Equine Behaviour – A Guide for Veterinarians and Equine Scientists* – ‘Studies have failed to demonstrate that observational learning enhances an individual's ability to perform an operant task or make a choice between two feeding sites. As such they have challenged the notion that stereotypes can be acquired by mimicry.’

This statement in the ‘Science’ book has frustrated me as I have seen too many cases, both good and bad, of horses copying other horses. This has given me renewed confidence in saying (well to be honest I've always said it) ‘The scientists may say horses don't copy, but I've seen too many examples of it to have any faith in this statement.’ Science language sometimes has a similarity to legalese, the specialised language of the legal world which is hard for outsiders to interpret. So, one minute the lay reader is understanding that ‘horses don't copy or learn by observation’, but then the Equine Behaviour book also states, with no further explanation, that ‘it's important to distinguish between social facilitation, stimulus enhancement or true cultural transmission’, which will leave the average reader baffled. So... ‘horses don't copy except when they do copy’!

**University of Sussex ‘Horses can read human emotions’

Continued overleaf >>

HORSE BRAIN, HUMAN BRAIN

THE NEUROSCIENCE OF HORSEMANSHIP

Getting Smart About How Horses & Humans Think, Act, and Work Together

by Janet L Jones PhD

Neural Fatigue

The second brain-level process we'll take on here is *neural fatigue*. Imagine you're a receptor cell (a rod or cone – see p.42 of book) in the human eye. (It's a stretch, I know, but work with me.) There you are, faced with a beautiful pony. Millions of receptor-cell buddies are standing near you, each responsible for one teensy pixel of the view. Your portion is an infinitesimal gleam of shine on the pony's shoulder. Together all of you send your neural impulses to the visual cortex of the brain. The brain interprets them and says, "Aha! Look at that gorgeous shining pony!"

Great fun. Okay, but here's the thing: You can't send that glimmer of shine to the brain forever. At some point, you're going to get tired standing rooted to the spot saying, "Glimmer of shine, glimmer of shine, gli...." Receptor cells fatigue. Fast. In fact, human visual receptor cells can transmit a signal for only a few seconds. Normally, our eyes make tiny involuntary movements all the time, like automatic tremors, so that each receptor cell gets a different view from one fraction of a second to the next. This prevents them from tiring. When an image is held still artificially, it disappears! This occurs because the cells cannot continue firing their impulses to the brain.

Illusions of Movement

You can experience neural fatigue for yourself by staring at movement. Stand by a rushing river or a waterfall, even a heavy rain, washing downhill, and watch the water move in one direction. Stare at the motion for a couple of minutes then turn your eyes to a stationary sight. You'll notice that the water seems to have stilled while the banks of the river, or the sides of the waterfall, appear to be moving in the opposite direction. What happened? The motion-detector cells in your eyes became fatigued after sending "downward, downward, downward" signals to the brain. When they stopped due to exhaustion, nearby opponent cells sent the brain a flurry of "upward, upward, upward" signals and your brain briefly interpreted that as the motion of a stationary object. It's an illusion of movement that horses can experience, too. They just can't tell us in speech, "Hey, that ground is moving!"

I've used the example of vision for neural fatigue because it's easy for us to understand. But all sensory neurons – visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile – get tired and stop responding until they have recovered. The brain adapts to static cues; that's why we stop feeling rings on our fingers or hearing fans a few seconds after they're on. Instead, the brain picks up *change*. Change, after all, is most important to survival. If a horse is grazing in a field, he doesn't need to know that a blade of grass is still. He needs to know when it moves.

Many trainers – unaware of neural fatigue – advocate constant aids.

Examples occur in all riding disciplines:

- Dressage trainers often teach riders to hold steady on the outside rein at all times, as a support to the horse.
- Racing trainers encourage jockeys to apply constant pressure with both hands, to help horse and rider balance on the bit as they run.
- Hunter/jumper trainers frequently ask that riders maintain strong lower-leg pressure, to keep the horse forward and the rider secure.
- Many Western Pleasure trainers teach drape reins even at the slowest possible jog, so that the horse receives a steady lack of contact on his mouth.
- Some eventing trainers advocate that the rider should match with her hands the weight of pressure produced by the horse's mouth. For example, if your horse gives you 5 pounds of mouth pressure, you respond with 5 pounds of hand pressure and keep it constant.

All of these are static cues; they are applied, maintained, and unchanged. They defy the reality of neural fatigue, causing us to ride against a horse's brain rather than with it. Very quickly, receptor cells in the horse's mouth or sides tire. They can't continue to send "pressure" signals to the horse's brain. That's why constant aids become meaningless – it's not that the horse is refusing to respond, it's that he has to override his own brain cells to do so. To ride with a horse's brain, apply aids intermittently. Teach the horse to carry his own body at other times. Self-carriage is easy for a horse to learn because it matches the way his brain works.

Self-Carriage

Green babies under saddle must learn to balance the weight of a rider, maintain consistent pace, hold straight lines, bend inward on curves, and attend to a rider's aids. Trainers spend a lot of time in the first few months helping horses with these basics. But once taught, a horse can manage them on his own. Riders don't need to place every foot, round the horse's back every minute, or balance the horse around every corner. There won't be enough attentional capacity for all that when the horse-and-human team begins complex manoeuvres.

The basics of teaching the horse to carry his body can be summarized in the phrase correct-and-release. Suppose you are teaching a horse to trot at a consistent pace. You pick up the trot, but even with accurate rhythm, weight distribution, and upper-body position on your part, it's too slow. You correct the horse by applying leg pressure. If he speeds up, praise him! If he doesn't, try again. But either way, *release* the pressure after you have made the correction. Horses are not cars – they do not require constant weight on the accelerator to continue moving forward at the same pace. They are thinking, feeling animals who can learn to maintain any pace you teach.

A couple of caveats might help here. A *correction* is not a punishment or a lingering coercion; it is simply a piece of information that tells or reminds the horse what you want. And a *release* is not a drop. We release a correction back to the neutral point, not back to zero. So, for example, we adopt a neutral amount of leg pressure for each horse, depending on his needs, and hold it steady. Increasing that pressure momentarily is a correction; returning the increased pressure to neutral is a release.

“...neural fatigue will make his brain unable to sense that pressure.”

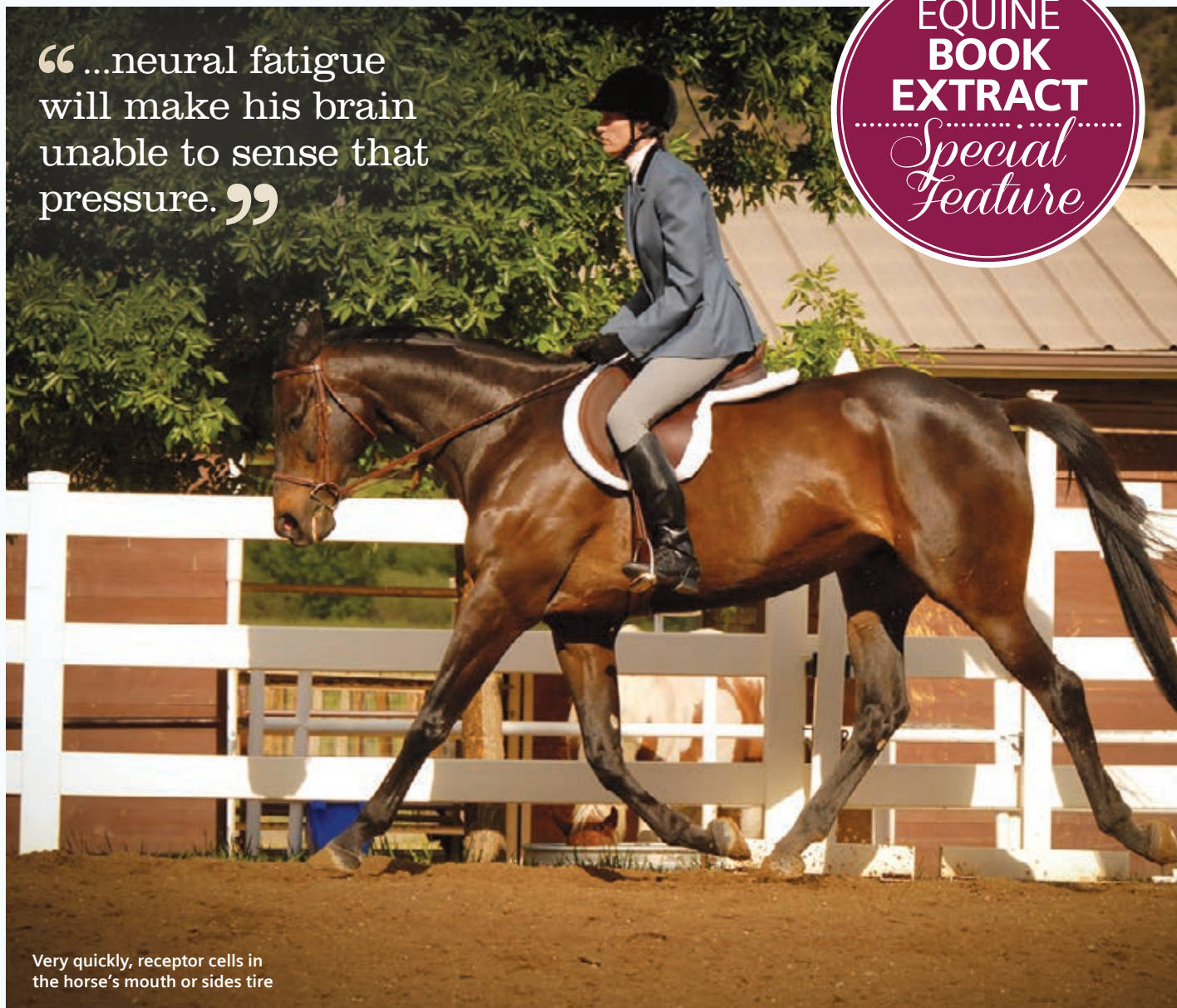


Photo © Allison Ragsdale Photography

Very quickly, receptor cells in the horse's mouth or sides tire

Altering it to zero would be the equivalent of hopping off the horse for a quick burger.

Often, correct-and-release becomes a series of small touches at this early stage. When the horse trots too fast, we sometimes use correct-and-release in our hands, reminding him to slow down, but always releasing. We don't hang on the reins in an effort to slow the horse, because neural fatigue will make his brain unable to sense that pressure. He'll only learn to pull. By releasing, the horse learns to trot at a set pace until you ask him to change it. He learns that he is responsible for doing that. The horse's job is to respond to new stimulation, not to make you do all the work.

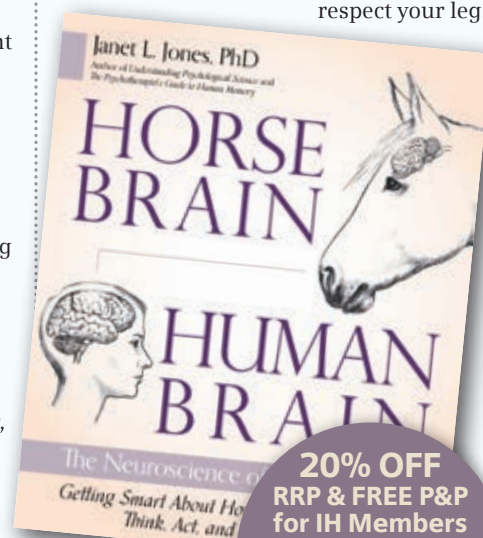
A very common mistake occurs when riders cluck incessantly to a horse in an effort to increase speed. The sound interferes with every other horse-and-

human team within earshot, teaching all of them to ignore clucks. Every month or so – to encourage a horse to leave the ground on a sketchy jump approach, or to increase the pivot angle of a reining spin – you might need to cluck. Once. And you want it to mean something! Clucking till the chickens come home ruins the effect entirely.

Spurs or crops are also misused far and wide because of a failure to understand sensory adaptation. Sometimes an uncooperative horse needs spurs. But letting them rest against his sides at all times is a huge error. Just as the receptor cells in the skin of your wrist adapt to your watch, the horse adapts to your spurs and soon loses sensation of them entirely.

Riders end up pressing harder and harder, or using stronger spurs – all to no avail. Instead, the horse needs to feel the spur or crop rarely but firmly, as a reminder

that is immediately released. The purpose of a spur, crop, or cluck is not to make the horse go faster. It's to teach him to respect your leg.



WANT TO READ MORE? This extract is reprinted with the permission of Trafalgar Square (USA) publishing house and the author, Janet L Jones PhD. *Horse Brain, Human Brain – The Neuroscience of Horsemanship* is available from Quiller in the UK: www.quillerpublishing.com/product/horse-brain-human-brain

Use the discount code **INTEL20** when ordering online at www.quillerpublishing.com

By NICK OSIPCZAK

The wonderful hemp plant is a botanical class of Cannabis Sativa

“I want him to feel comfortable now he is living out 24/7. He moves happily around the field and my farrier feels CBD helps him be a little more flexible when being shod. My priority is for Barney to have a happy, healthy retirement and I believe CBD contributes to that.”

Jane de la Mare, owner of ex Olympic dressage horse Nip Tuck

CBD, or cannabidiol, is a naturally occurring compound best sourced from the hemp plant. Unlike its well-known counterpart, THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), CBD is non-psychoactive, meaning it doesn't produce the “high” associated with cannabis. Instead, CBD interacts with the endocannabinoid system (ECS), a complex network of receptors and chemicals present in the bodies of all mammals – humans and horses included.

With over 11,000 results displaying after a simple “CBD” search on PubMed^[1] – there is a vast amount of research that has been carried out on this natural cannabinoid for humans, including 476 clinical trials. Unsurprisingly, this natural compound is perfectly safe for horses too. As the authors of one recent equine study put it: “CBD is well tolerated....and does not produce any permanent biochemical abnormalities.”^[3]

The Equine Endocannabinoid System

The endocannabinoid system is a fundamental physiological system found in all mammals, regulating various bodily functions, including mood, appetite, pain perception and immune responses.

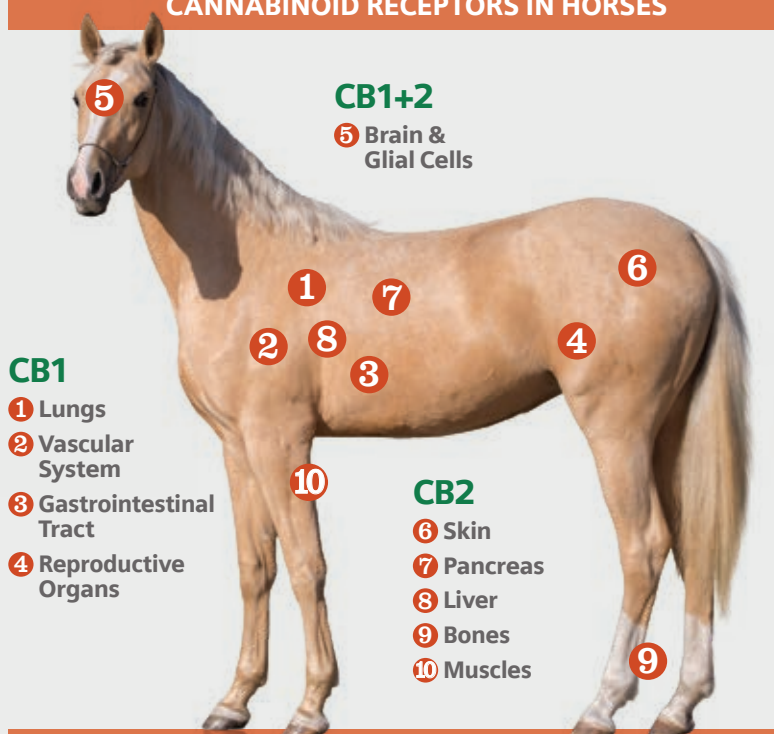
In humans, CBD's interaction with this system has been well-documented, and given that horses share this same system, it's possible that CBD would offer similar advantages to horses too.

While research specifically on the equine endocannabinoid system is ongoing, the fundamental principles of the endocannabinoid system remain consistent across species.

CBD FOR HORSES

A game changer

CANNABINOID RECEPTORS IN HORSES



CANNABINOID RECEPTORS IN HORSE BRAINS

Cerebral Cortex > plays a role in memory, thinking, awareness & consciousness.
Amygdale > plays a role in emotions.
Hippocampus > key to memory storage & recall.
Hypothalamus > governs metabolic processes such as appetite.
Basal Ganglia > governs motor skills & learning.
Cerebellum > governs coordination & muscle control.
Brainstem > controls many basic functions including blood pressure & heart rate. Also plays a role in pain sensation, muscle tone & movement.

The Benefits of CBD for Horses

As the benefits of this natural plant extract are becoming more widely known, vets are increasingly recommending it to their clients:

“I use CBD predominantly for treating chronic pain issues, as a calmer and for general wellbeing of older horses.” Roman Villar, Senior Partner at M.N. Mollon & Partners Equine Vets

✓ Pain Relief

CBD is a very powerful analgesic, working by interacting with pain receptors.

In a 2020 study comprising of 41 horses to determine the effectiveness of CBD, the authors concluded that, “There is significant evidence of an association of CBD with an improvement in health and a reduction of pain observed in horses.”^[4]

Anecdotal evidence extends to CBD offering relief to horses suffering from various sources of discomfort, including arthritis, injuries, or post-surgical recovery.

✓ Anxiety & Stress Reduction

So many of the common equine ailments are a direct result of excessive stress levels.

Box travel, separation anxiety, trauma...these are all fruits of the same root, stress. By reducing stress in our equine friends, and making them more comfortable, the manifestations of some of the most common ailments will begin to fade away. This is the holistic approach to healing – treating the cause not just the symptoms.

From the same study of 41 horses mentioned above, the authors concluded that, “CBD demonstrates a trend towards improvement in the anxiety score.”^[4]

“One thing I offer CBD for is pain and separation anxiety, it works extremely well.” Emiliano Espinar, Mobile Equine vet at Espinar Equine

✓ Anti-Inflammatory Effects

In both humans and horses, inflammation is a common issue, often leading to joint pain and reduced mobility.

CBD's anti-inflammatory properties mean many horse owners are switching their horses suffering from arthritis or other inflammatory conditions onto CBD, as not only is it very effective, but it also has the added benefit of having no negative side-effects, due to being a completely natural product.

✓ Improved Sleep

A good rest is essential for helping manage stress levels and to promote better recovery from injury or surgery.

CBD's potential to improve sleep patterns in humans may translate into better sleep quality for horses, ensuring they are well-rested and alert.

✓ Epilepsy

With CBD now being prescribed on the NHS for epileptic seizures^[5], horse owners are encouraged to try CBD for similar benefits on their horses.

✓ CBD – The Alternative to Pharmaceuticals

Now that we've explored the potential benefits of CBD for horses, let's consider why CBD stands out as a helpful supplement:

Natural and Safe: CBD is a natural compound with minimal to no side-effects, making it a safe option for horse owners to try. Side effects are very rarely seen, and mild in cases where they are seen... the horse might have increased thirst or display lethargy – both can easily be addressed by simply reducing the dose.

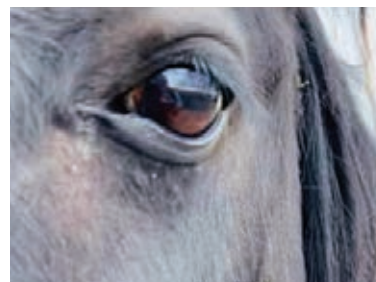
Versatile: CBD addresses a wide range of issues, mirroring its versatility in humans. From anxiety to inflammation, CBD offers potential solutions to a vast array of the most common equine ailments.

What to look for when buying CBD

- **Full Spectrum** is a term that means a CBD product contains all the cannabinoids present (there are over 100 cannabinoids in the hemp flower), as opposed to just isolating the CBD cannabinoid and taking it away from its natural environment. By staying in contact with its other cannabinoid cousins, a greater healing effect can take place, known as the “entourage effect.”^[5]
- By buying **organically grown** hemp, you will be getting the Full Spectrum of cannabinoids in your product.
- Read online reviews to ensure you are purchasing from a reputable CBD company who get their products **lab-tested** to show that they contain the CBD content as advertised.
- CBD is fat-soluble, so the greatest **bio-availability** is achieved by infusing the CBD in healthy fats, such as coconut oil. By buying a CBD-infused product, your horse will receive better results and it will be more cost-effective.

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- [7] www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLd2kDVYuos&t=184s



Top: the Fell pony's eye pre-CBD trial.
Bottom: the same eye 2 weeks into CBD trial

Real-Life Success Stories

One CBD company recently selected some horses with a variety of the most severe cases to trial their CBD supplement. The applicants were required to take one video of the horse prior to starting the 3-week trial, and one video at the end^[6]. The results were impressive, and included:

- **11-year-old Fell pony:** painful eye flares, rare autoimmune disease. **> Results:** eye flares stopped on day one. The rare autoimmune disease is completely under control now.
- **13-year-old Irish Sports Horse:** arthritis, ligament/PSD issues, kissing spine. Unrideable for 2 years. Vet and insurance write off. **> Results:** sound, doing liberty work and light hacking.
- **10-year-old Andalusian Mare:** suffering with severe anxiety. **> Results:** stopped banging her stable door, less anxious, more settled inside the stable, in the field and being handled.
- **22-year-old Gelding:** suffering with a cyst in his throat for a year. **> Results:** the cyst has considerably reduced in size.
- **7-year-old Irish Sports Horse:** anxious, reactive, hormonal, nappy. Dangerous to handle so no longer being ridden. **> Results:** much calmer and able to be handled. More relaxed in the field and doing groundwork.
- **7-year-old Thoroughbred:** suffering from severe headshaking related to anxiety for over a year. Unrideable. **> Results:** no longer headshaking and now going on gentle hacks, often alone. 🐾



Here at Intelligent Horsemanship, we love a good debate, and while we are all united behind the common values of non-violent horsemanship, that doesn't mean we have to agree on everything!

In each issue, we tackle a different controversial issue that's rocking the horse world (or our Facebook feeds!) and we'll attempt to look at it from both sides. Names will be kept anonymous so that we can speak freely and say EXACTLY what is on our minds, and we won't be holding back!

Are horses the mirrors of our souls?

Are we to believe that our immortal souls, those mystical entities that supposedly guide us to the great beyond, are reflected in the behaviour of the many breeds of our equine friends?



'Horses are the Mirrors of Your Soul' – A Dubious Claim

'Horses are the mirrors of your soul.' For goodness' sake, what on earth does that even mean? Are we to believe that our immortal souls, those mystical entities that supposedly guide us to the great beyond, are reflected in the behaviour of the many breeds of our equine friends? Is the soul of the Connemara pony somehow superior to the owner of the Shetland pony? You know, that pony that keeps escaping from his field.

First and foremost, let us disentangle this bewildering statement. It suggests that the behaviour of horses somehow represents the moral and spiritual compass of human beings. So, if we are to follow this line of reasoning, anyone who has ever encountered an aggressive horse must be condemned as a wretched soul, destined for eternal damnation. Conversely, those who handle

kind and gentle horses are apparently virtuous beings fit for sainthood. Excuse my confusion, but I find this notion absurd.

The fact is horses are not mystical beings with the power to divine the depths of one's soul. They are not seers who can discern the inner workings of our conscience. They are, in reality, prey animals with instinctual responses to stimuli. When a horse exhibits aggression or fear, it is not necessarily a reflection of the handler's moral fibre. It may be the result of past experiences, pain, discomfort, or simply their natural temperament. To attribute a horse's behaviour to the character of a human is not only simplistic but also grossly inaccurate.

Furthermore, this notion fails to take into account the complexity of human emotions. We are multifaceted beings with a wide range of feelings, many of which are influenced by external factors such as stress, fatigue, and personal history. To suggest that our entire souls are mirrored in a single interaction with a horse is laughable. Human beings are capable of growth, change, and redemption. We can learn from our mistakes and evolve as individuals. A momentary interaction with a horse

should not be used as a definitive judgement of one's character.

Moreover, the 'horses are the mirrors of your soul' mantra neglects the crucial role of education and experience in horsemanship. Just because someone may initially struggle with handling a horse does not make them inherently bad. It means they may need guidance, education, and support to develop the skills and understanding necessary for a positive equine-human relationship. We should not rush to condemn individuals based on a superficial interpretation of their interactions with horses.

In conclusion, the notion that 'horses are the mirrors of your soul' is nothing more than a whimsical idea that crumbles under the weight of scrutiny. Horses are sentient beings with their own personalities, histories, and responses to stimuli. Their behaviour cannot be reduced to a simplistic reflection of human souls. To judge the worth of a person based on their interactions with horses is not only illogical but also deeply unfair. Instead, let us appreciate the profound connections we can forge with horses while recognising that human beings are far more complex than any equine mirror could ever reveal.

Their behaviour cannot be reduced to a simplistic reflection of human souls

“Horses also teach us the value of communication and partnership.”

Get involved!

This isn't about who's right or wrong, or picking a winner – the aim is to get you thinking and more importantly, considering different points of view. So get involved and let us know your opinions!

Did we miss a key point? Think we've both got it wrong? Got a great idea for a debate topic that you'd like us to discuss?

Let us know at editor@ihhq.net



YES The Profound Connection Between Humans and Horses: Mirrors of the Soul

Horses have been companions to humans for centuries, offering not just transportation and labour but also a profound connection that transcends words. This connection, often likened to a mirror reflecting our innermost selves, is a testament to the power of equine-human relationships.

When we say, 'horses are the mirrors of your soul,' we mean that horses have an uncanny ability to reflect our emotions, intentions, and inner states. They are incredibly perceptive creatures, attuned to the subtlest changes in our energy, body language, and emotions. This sensitivity forces us to confront our true selves and the emotions we carry beneath the surface.

Horses can detect fear, anger, anxiety, and joy in us, often before we are consciously

aware of these feelings ourselves. They react to our emotions by mirroring them in their behaviour. If we approach a horse with fear in our hearts, the horse may become skittish or nervous. When we approach with calmness and trust, the horse is more likely to respond with trust and relaxation. In this way, they reflect our inner state back to us, making us aware of our emotions and encouraging us to address them.

Moreover, horses demand authenticity from us. They do not respond well to pretence or inauthenticity. If we pretend to be confident while harbouring doubt, the horse will sense the incongruence and respond accordingly. This insistence on authenticity compels us to confront our inner conflicts and work towards genuine self-improvement.

Horses also teach us the value of communication and partnership. To connect with a horse, we must learn their language, communicate effectively, and establish trust and respect. This process requires patience, empathy, and self-awareness, qualities that extend beyond our interactions with horses and into our daily lives. The lessons we learn from horses about communication and partnership can improve our relationships with fellow humans, making us better individuals overall.

Furthermore, the connection between humans and horses goes beyond the physical. It taps into the emotional and spiritual realms. Many riders describe a sense of peace, oneness, and a deep spiritual connection when riding or spending time with their horses. This connection can be therapeutic, helping individuals cope with stress, anxiety, and trauma. It provides a profound sense of belonging and purpose, enriching our lives in ways that are difficult to put into words.

In conclusion, the profound connection between humans and horses is a reflection of our inner selves. Horses mirror our emotions and authenticity, challenging us to be better versions of ourselves. They teach us valuable lessons in communication, partnership, and empathy. This bond extends beyond the physical and touches our emotional and spiritual cores, offering healing and a sense of purpose, our relationships with horses are not just about riding and training; they are about personal growth and self-discovery. Thus, the saying 'horses are the mirrors of your soul' embodies the deep and transformative connection we share with these magnificent creatures. 

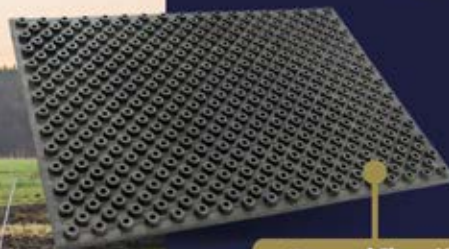
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Susan Clark

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INTELLIGENT HORSEMANSHIP TRAINERS

client feedback

Intelligent Horsemanship (IH) Trainers specialise in helping owners understand equines of all ages using empathy, psychology and behaviour principles. Whether you need help with a foal, starting, clipping, loading or general advice, contact the IH Office or one of our experienced IH Trainers who can help with solutions, training or point you in the right direction for specialist help.

IH Trainers marked with a 🐾 are first year trainers, and those marked with a ★ can help you achieve your IH Awards.

Here's what horse owners are saying about our IH Trainers:

▼ IHT KATHY WHITHAM Sheffield, Derbyshire



"I needed help with a three-year-old Draught horse."

I had been getting conflicting advice from lots of horsey neighbours, which left me feeling confused and anxious. When Kathy arrived, she made me feel in control within minutes and at the end of the session I was so proud of my young boy and myself. When I saw Kathy's smiling face on the

IH website I felt so lucky she was in my area, I slept that night for the first time in months. Thank you, Kathy.

Jane Webb, Sheffield

▼ IHT KELLY BROTHERHOOD Horncastle, Lincolnshire



"I was recommended to contact Kelly for help."

Kelly was great, she made me feel at ease (I get anxious) and my pony Ted responded really well. Kelly gave me lots of advice and help and I felt happy and confident to continue on my own in the few days following the visit. I would be very happy to recommend Intelligent Horsemanship to others.

Jodie Shaw, Foston

▼ ADAM GOODFELLOW Stroud, Gloucestershire



"I want to be safer after a serious riding accident."

It really works! Polly used to go into flight mode just going in the school, she's now less reactive and is becoming more relaxed and I'm gaining confidence, we are both happier. I'm having ongoing lessons which are proving so beneficial.

I want to tell you if your horse feels unsafe, don't give up on them immediately by selling them on – every horse deserves a chance. Book in with an IH Trainer! Adam is brilliant.

Gail Calder, Olveston

▼ IHT SUZANNE HALSEY Hartlip, Kent



"I was experiencing problems loading my mare."

I never thought I would see those words, "happy to travel" next to a photo of Hedge. We've just been on our first trip out since we saw Suzanne and I'm so happy and grateful that she loaded literally straight on. It took a couple of tries on the way home, but two

minutes max and away we went! She was super relaxed and happy – so thank you.

It's all going really well, and Suzanne's advice and help has been a game changer, and I'm keeping up with my groundwork.

Hannah Perry, Canterbury

▼ IHT LEANNE ROSSIN St Columb, Cornwall



"I bought Kelly Marks' book Perfect Manners to help me with my new young horse who is very spooky and runs from anything he perceives as scary, this led me to Leanne."

Leanne explained things extremely well. She is patient, thorough, understanding, calm, confident and knowledgeable. I would highly recommend Leanne and Intelligent Horsemanship to others.

Donna Sellick, Tavistock

▼ IHT LUCY NEWHAM Fareham, Hampshire



"My new horse reared after seeing a donkey."

Lucy was brilliant. She was very calming for both me and my horse. She explained everything clearly and left me feeling more confident.

Within two weeks I can clearly see the difference in my horse, and we are building a much more positive relationship. I know we still have a long way to go but I know if I have any problems Lucy will be there for us both. Anyone having problems should reach out to Intelligent Horsemanship; the understanding you have of horses is amazing.

Pam Walker, Lymington

Contact details for all Intelligent Horsemanship Trainers can be found at www.intelligenthorsemanship.co.uk in the Horse Help section.

UNDERSTANDING HORSE PSYCHOLOGY ONLINE 8 WEEK COURSE

The IH Horse Psychology Online Course is an 8-week LIVE equine certification course* – taught by Kelly Marks with Sandra Williams in the comfort of your own home.

The one hour classes run on TUESDAY EVENINGS AT 8PM for 8 weeks via Zoom. There will be a Questions & Answers session at 9pm, plus additional email support. Recordings will be available for students to watch for 7 days after each course.

The 8-Week Zoom Horse Psychology Course Syllabus:

WEEK 1

Pros and Cons of using food in training

WEEK 2

Recognising when it's Pain, not Brain

WEEK 3

An introduction to Behaviourism

WEEK 4

Beyond Behaviourism

WEEK 5

The Senses

WEEK 6

The Problem Solving Procedure

WEEK 7

How do we teach horses to be bad?! (Don't worry, we'll let on how you might cure them again!)

WEEK 8

Solving a Real-Life Problem and any final questions.

LIMITED PLACES! *This course also counts towards taking your IH Diploma AND Monty Roberts Introductory Certificate *

• Contact courses@ihhq.net to discuss any of the courses or to find out how to use Zoom if you're unfamiliar with it.

Just wanted to say many thanks for the last 8 weeks. I feel like I've learnt a lot of detective skills, looking at the steps in assessing horses' behaviour to work out why they do things. The week about "How would I get my horse to kick/bite/nip/bolt etc" was really useful in starting with the 'problem' and working backwards, to understand the reasons behind a horse behaving in that way.
Amy Dee

What I think is great about IH is that it brings together learning from the old and the new, taking all the best points and helping us develop the best partnership we can with our horses. Kelly Marks has that rare talent of being able to bring together her practical experience and knowledge, and communicate it in a way which inspires and encourages. The online learning material is excellent and covers a broad range of subjects – it's great for those not able to participate in-person.
Janice Milne

Mirror, mirror, on the wall...
IH runs the best courses of them all!

STARTS:
Monday 8th
January 2024
– on Zoom!

The Horse Psychology Course was absolutely superb! The content was really interesting and taught in manageable chunks, full of real life examples which made it really relatable. It's really helped me with my own horse, but also giving advice and support to friends and I will certainly be offering insights to my coaching clients too! Thank you for a brilliant course. I would totally recommend this to anyone.
Cara Chapman

Why not bring some cheer into your New Year and make 2024 magical!

