

SPOTLIGHT ON IH TRAINER Emma Sharman

Emma is an Intelligent Horsemanship Trainer with over 10 years of experience with horses and has worked as a rehabilitation groom for the RSPCA and World Horse Welfare, which started Emma's journey into Veterinary Physiotherapy.

With the knowledge Emma has gained over the years, she has found that there is so much that could be given to horse owners. Her goal is to provide courses and workshops for everyone and anyone who wants to expand their own knowledge.

Emma started riding as a child to help her with her dyslexia – and has never looked back!

“I’m always learning new things and want to extend that to other people.”

How long have you been involved with horses?

And how did you get involved with them? I first got involved with horses when I was 8 years old, though I always had a fascination with them. In primary school, I struggled with dyslexia. We had a child psychologist come into school and as one of her cases, she saw how much extra work and after-school lessons I was being given by school. Her advice was to stop the extra school work and find a hobby that really interested me. Thankfully, my parents listened and off we went riding and I have never looked back. It was truly a life-changing moment for me!

Here I am today, having attended college, done an apprenticeship with horses, and qualified in Veterinary Physiotherapy. I now run my own business. All of this started from getting involved with horses!

Why did you decide to qualify as a recommended

trainer? From the first Monty/Kelly demo I went to, I became passionate about horse behaviour and wanted to learn more about it. I was so excited to see that you can learn IH methods. I still remember how I felt when I went to the Five Day Foundation course, completely star-struck when Kelly casually walked into the room. I'd watched every Monty and Kelly episode available on Horse and Country TV, so it felt unreal that she was there. By the time the first day was finished, I knew this was something I was going to love and started to plan my way to becoming an IH Trainer. Another side of things was how the whole Intelligent Horsemanship Team is always looking to improve techniques and investigate research. They really embody the phrase 'you never stop learning'. Now that I am an IH Trainer, I love the community that we have with each other and like-minded people, and the support you get if you need any advice or help.

What is a typical day for you?

As I run my own business as a vet physio and IH Trainer, my days are always different depending on if it is an office or an out-and-about day. I always start the morning by checking emails and a cuddle with my cat, Penny. On office days, I work towards creating talks, materials and clinics that aim to grow people's horse knowledge. There is so much I have learnt over the years (especially in Vet Physio) that had me going 'Why doesn't everyone know this!' I am hoping that this work will see the light of day in the coming year. When I'm out, I go to clients who need horse help or equine physiotherapy, sometimes both. I am fortunate that when we find that the behaviour is because of a physical problem, I can start to help there and then. At the end of the day, it is all about writing up client notes. A written record of what we have done including plans going forward helps people to keep on track without having to remember.

What are the common challenges you face in your

work as an IH Trainer? I love my work and wouldn't change it for the world but there are days when it's raining, the drive is long, there are limited facilities (though you can have fun making up things and problem-solving on the spot) and of course, the admin part that can bring down the fun of it all. Running your own business, as I have discovered and been told, is a full-time job! So, I've been learning how to do it the right way and have had some amazing support and advice.

If you could change one thing in the world of horses, what would it be, and why?

I'd love to have every owner understand the basics of equine anatomy, biomechanics, and psychology, as I feel this would help them manage their horses in the best and kindest way possible. A lot of problems I see are a lack of education. Also, for everyone to have the mindset of 'you never stop learning'.

What would be the first piece of advice you would give someone looking at buying/loaning their first horse?

Take your time! This is from experience, try them out on different days, ride in the school and hack out. Take someone with the knowledge to help give you another point of view and opinion. Do your research; how much will this all cost you a month? What about insurance, vaccinations, and worming? How often might you need the farrier, saddler, and physio out?

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

Even when I go for a specific reason, I find the most common issue is handling and misunderstanding between horse and owner. It's one of my favourites, as once everything is explained and with a bit of practice there is a big difference in their relationship and most problems are sorted naturally with the correct handling and communication.

What are your plans for the future? I plan to expand my business and to teach a lot more, through talks, and clinics, I love sharing knowledge. I'm always learning new things and want to extend that to other people.

What three things should everyone practise with their horses?

Backing up! People who know me know that I am a little obsessed with backing up, especially after I did my dissertation on the subject and found so many benefits from it, both behavioural and physical.

Vet preparation: Getting the horse used to trot ups, skin pinching, looking at their front teeth and being generally looked at can keep your vet safe and also reduce the stress of vet visits for your horse.

In-hand exercises: As a physio, in-hand exercises are always prescribed. The aim is to improve your horse's way of going by improving posture and strengthening their core and stability muscles. These also improve the bond, relationship and communication between you and your horse, plus, it's a lot of fun!!

What's the best bit of advice you've ever been given?

When things aren't going right, take a step back, breathe, and reassess the situation.

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“I love my work and wouldn't change it for the world...”
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As a Vet Physio and IH Trainer Emma's days are always different


What has been the proudest moment/biggest achievement in your career?

Achieving my degree in Veterinary Physiotherapy was the proudest moment! I never thought I'd even survive university with my dyslexia so I have surpassed my expectations. It has also let me see horses from a different angle and I work with them differently, combining training exercises with physio ones.

What would your advice be to someone hoping to become a recommended IH Trainer?

Get as much experience as possible and take your time. When I first started the training courses, I decided to become a rehabilitation groom so that I could get experience with untouched, neglected and abused horses, I also had the opportunity to volunteer at Animal Care in Egypt (ACE). This did extend my journey to becoming an IH Trainer, but the confidence and experience I gained was more than worth it.

What has been a big learning curve for you?

When I was 19 years old, I bought my first project horse. I learned that you shouldn't buy the first horse you see, how to stay on a rearing and bolting horse, as well as how to retrain them using their personality and coping methods. His name was Tommy, and we went through so much together, learning in hand and ridden exercises as well as working with his big personality to problem solve and improve his coping mechanisms so that he didn't just run from everything. Tommy was truly the horse I learned the most from and I'm sure that the people he touched will never forget about him. 



TO FIND OUT MORE

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