

OCTOBER 2023

# EQUUS **RIAN** Magazine **FEED**



**Learning  
to jump**  
First time out

**Nicole Tough**  
The importance  
of the half halt

**The Five  
Domains**  
What are they?

**Breathe easy**  
Respiratory  
issues in horses



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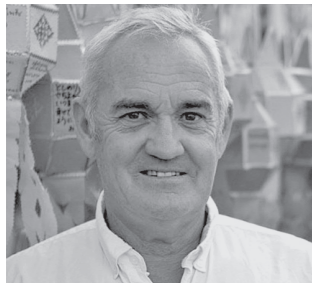
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**On the Cover**  
 Charlie Brister introducing five-year-old Bonita to show jumping at a recent jump club event (Image by GeoSnapShot).



## OUR CONTRIBUTORS



**Dr Andrew McLean**  
Andrew is the CEO of Equitation Science International, an Honorary Fellow and Trustee of the International Society for Equitation Science, Director of the Racing Victoria Equine Welfare Advisory Board, Director of the Human Elephant Learning Programs Foundation, and Patron of Pony Club Australia. In 2020 he helped reshape the Five Domains welfare model, which he discusses in this issue.



**Dr Grace Forbes BVMSc MANZCVSc**  
Grace is General Manager of Racing Victoria's Veterinary Service. She is responsible for delivering world-class veterinary and equine services to the Victorian Thoroughbred racing industry, and directs veterinary programs to ensure the highest ethical obligations are met. We speak to Grace about the rigorous veterinary testing undergone by runners in the Melbourne Cup.

**Nicole Tough**  
An EA Level 2 Dressage Specialist Coach and National A Level Judge, Nicole has over 30 years experience in training, competing, judging and coaching. She enjoys presenting seminars and masterclasses, has trained in Germany, Spain and The Netherlands, and has produced nine very successful FEI horses. In this issue, Nicole explains the importance of the half halt.

**David Shoobridge**  
David is an elite Australian dressage rider and highly sought after trainer and coach. His partnership with KWPN stallion 00 Seven was one of Australia's most successful combinations in the world of FEI dressage. He runs a very successful breeding, training and coaching business from Salisbury, his magnificent equestrian property, and in this issue gives us his thoughts on Equipe dressage saddles.



**Larissa Bilston B.AgrSc (Hons)**  
Larissa, B.AgrSc (Hons) is the Equine Nutritionist for Farmalogic, where she developed Equine Vit&Min and the Farmalogic Equine range. Her extensive experience is highly regarded by trainers, riders and owners who understand the importance of good nutrition. In this issue, she discusses heat stress, its potential to harm your horse's health, and what you can do to help reduce its impact.



**Michelle Terlato**  
Michelle grew up with horses and has always loved them. When she's not travelling the globe photographing the world's top equestrian athletes, she's home riding her own horses. It's the behind the scenes and the unexpected shots that she likes the most, and in our Behind the Shot feature, she shares her favourites and explains what makes them so special.

**Dr Clare Williams-Paterson BVMSc**  
Clare is an equine veterinarian who works with Apiam Animal Health, a leading Australian rural organisation. With 332 highly experienced vets, 73 clinics, and a team of dedicated professionals, Apiam aims to enrich the lives of animals and their humans. Equine respiratory diseases can have quite serious consequences. In her article, Clare explains what to look for and outlines available treatments.



**Charlie Brister**  
Charlie is an all-round horseman and an expert in retraining problem horses. He also coaches riders in the art of cross country, show jumping and dressage. Do you have a young horse you're teaching to jump? Then don't miss Charlie's excellent article in this issue. He's schooled and competed many young horses and has some excellent advice for you.



## BEHIND THE SHOT

# Julia Lynch

One of Australia's top equestrian photographers, **MICHELLE TERLATO** travels the world capturing equestrian athletes in action. Each month she shares one of her favourite shots.

**Rider:** Julia Hargreaves Lynch

**Horse:** Copabella Vegas

**Event:** 2019 Longines Global Champions Tour

**Location:** Stadio dei Marmi, Rome

**Camera & Settings:** Canon 7D Mark II, 70-200mm, ISO 200 f 4.5 1/1000 sec

**Challenges:** Unfortunately, we could not shoot on the side of the arena that was the best possible position in relation to the sun and the jumps. It was the VIP area and the media had to stay away!

However, the arena for the Rome leg of the Longines Global Champions Tour was not too big, and even though this combination were at the furthest point away from me, it was possible to use the 70-200mm lens and get close enough. It was a very bright summer's day so the ISO was low, and although this jump was in the shade there was still plenty of natural light.

**Why this shot is special:** This horse and rider are simply 'camera candy' and combined with the stunning array of

show jumps in the Rome GCT, I captured several lovely images of them.

But I feel this is the best as it encompasses the proximity of the VIP area behind the arena, and the lovely oxer jump with its copy of the Bocca della Verità (the Mouth of Truth, one of Rome's famous landmarks). The blue and mauve hydrangeas add a beautiful pop of colour that ties in wonderfully with the blue apparel Julia is wearing, and of course this beautiful horse.

Sadly, when Copabella Vegas was in retirement an old injury resurfaced. Due to the detrimental effect this had on his quality of life, there was no alternative but to euthanise him. Julia had owned him for his whole life, and at only 17-years-old, he died far too young. And this sad story makes me appreciate this beautiful image even more. I'm so glad that riders can look back on images like these, which hopefully give them lovely memories to cherish forever. 🐾

*Michelle is available for event, commercial and private shoots. Visit [Michelle Terlato Photography](http://MichelleTerlatoPhotography.com).*



## HANGING TOUGH

# The all-important half halt

The half halt is like a comma in a sentence.

If that thought intrigues you, read on and

**NICOLE TOUGH** will explain.

Coaching a new to dressage rider recently, it was time to introduce leg yielding. I had previously explained and demonstrated the half halt, which said student had practised and was beginning to understand. But it wasn't until they had to incorporate it

into the preparation for leg yielding, that they really grasped its importance.

I had explained to them that with the half halt, we put an 'almost pause' into the horse through the combined use of all our aids - seat, leg and rein. Without the

half halt, everything runs into everything else. That we dressage riders use the half halt to keep us in the middle of the spirit level.

To which, she responded: "Like a comma in a sentence?"

Wow! Yes! The half halt is exactly like a comma in a sentence!

Without the comma, a sentence doesn't make sense. Likewise, without an effective half halt, we cannot achieve the shifting of balance from the forehead to the hindquarters that enables the qualities that make the sport of dressage beautiful.

Qualities like impulsion, engagement, collection and self-carriage are not possible without the understanding and effectiveness of the half halt. Carl Hester explains the half halt as essentially building energy by momentarily influencing the cycle of energy.

Ever heard this?: Half halt on the outside rein. This is misleading and incorrect

coaching language. First and foremost because the half halt is not a rein aid. It is a technique requiring the co-ordinated action of the seat, leg and hand to improve, or correct, the balance of the horse from their forehead more to their haunches. And whilst it is a blend of the go and the stop aids, the finesse of the half halt must be so refined as to not create a block in the connection or the movement.

On a young or green horse, the effect of a half halt should steady a loss of rhythm or balance. We teach the half halt in phases to a rider and/or the horse. Riders must first learn to use their aids independently of each other. The lower leg aids are for go, the seat aids make up the core and are for whoa, and the rein aids are for direction and managing the frame, similar to side reins. We practise these independently to ensure the horse understands and is responding to each without hesitation or resistance.

Then we start to blend them. For example, in walk to halt, the easiest transition of all, we should use the seat aids to achieve the halt, with the rein aids to manage the frame into halt, and the leg aids to keep the flow and finish square and balanced in the halt.

Likewise, in the transition from halt to walk, we use the leg aids to produce the forward response, the rein aids to manage the frame, and the seat aids to maintain the balance.

From this point of understanding, we can introduce the half halt. Again beginning in walk, and using a blend of seat, leg and rein, we ask the horse to almost halt, and before they actually halt, we release our half halt and walk on – in other words, half of a halt. Repeat this a few times, then try it in trot. Once trotting, engage your half halt technique and almost walk, and before the horse actually walks, trot on



**LEFT: Nicole and RoxStar coming out of a corner into half halt to prepare for shoulder in (Image by Christy Baker Photography).**

**ABOVE: Introducing the half halt in 'slowly posting' on 4-y-o DejaVu (Image by No Reins).**


and reward the horse. Same in canter - but note: you will need more leg than you think to stop them trotting.

On the more established horse, the effect of the half halt should increase the activity and uphill tendency; and on an advanced horse, the effect should increase expression (air time) and elasticity (joint articulation). At these more advanced stages, the half halt can be a little bit different each time you use it. Sometimes, it's 45 per cent leg, 45 per cent seat and 10 per cent rein aids; sometimes 55 per cent seat, 40 per cent leg and 5 per cent rein. The horse will tell you when you get the balance right, because it will work (and they will tell you when you get it wrong, because it won't!). I can absolutely say that the more you use your seat and leg, the less you'll need the rein; and the less you need the rein, the better and more correct your horse will go.

The better the rider gets at developing their half halt technique, the better they can transform the horse. As Hubertus Schmidt remarked: "Beautiful moments are only possible when the horse accepts the half halt."

The half halt is a building block of riding, a technique that will improve every year in the saddle ... provided you work on it; and the balancing effect of an effective half halt on the horse amazingly evolves as they become stronger.

When I look back at my riding career, the understanding and continual development of the half halt has been, and still is, a triumph. Mastering it at each stage, on each horse I've had the pleasure of training, is sheer jubilation.

I look forward to getting better at it, and the better I get, the better the horses will go. Better. Never. Stops. 



FEATURE

# Show jumping with a young horse

The first competition for a young horse can be quite stressful, for both you and your stead. Fortunately, **CHARLIE BRISTER** has some sound advice.

Ideally, you should set a horse up for the rest of their career with a stellar maiden performance. Now put your hand up if your carefully laid plans haven't played out the way you expected. Yeah, thought there might be a few of you!

Everything with horses is dependent upon the individual horse and rider. So, take the information in this article as a rough guideline: there's plenty of scope to adjust it and no hard and fast rules. Sometimes a horse might excel in one area and be behind in another.

That's ok. This usually balances out as their schooling progresses.

### It's in the timing

There are many opinions on social media these days. Various people will tell you what age to start horses under saddle and at competitions. But remember, each horse is an individual, not to mention the variation in development between breeds. While it's good not to pressure an immature horse, their education should be progressive.

Start small and make it easy. You may start by lunging a three-year-old over a pole on the ground, which can progress to a cross or small vertical. This gives the horse an understanding of how to jump without the rider's weight on their back. All you need is a couple good repetitions, then leave it at that and maybe in your next session, ask for a couple more good repetitions.

Back to the keyboard warriors. They say you shouldn't be jumping

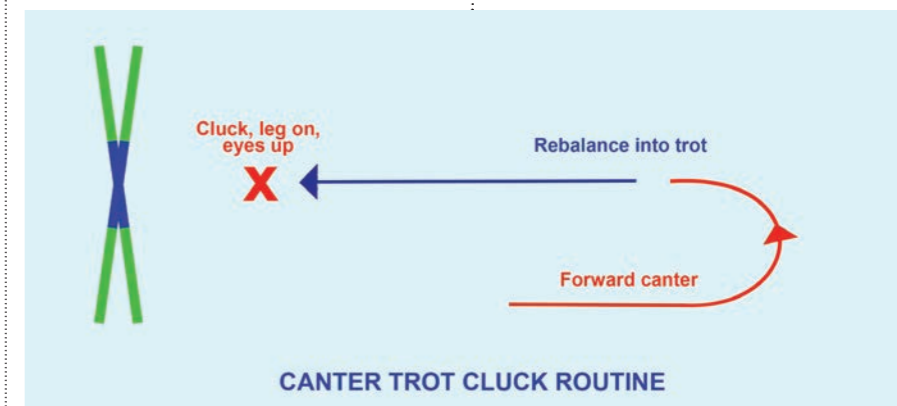
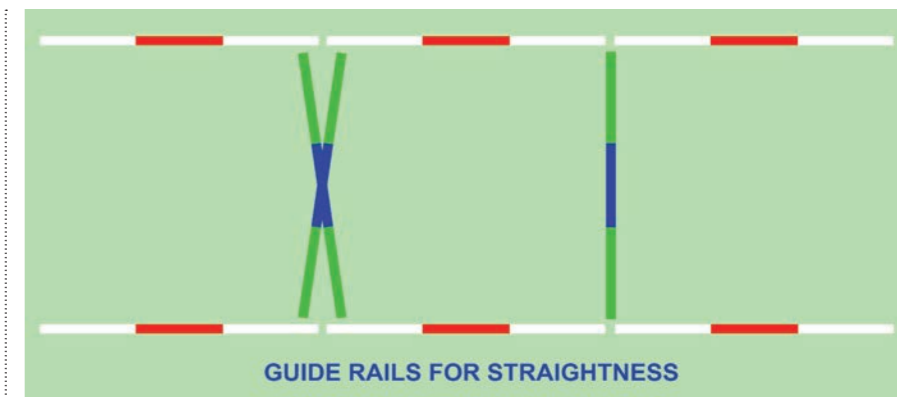
your horse until it's a fully grown. To compare, the male brain is fully developed at 25 and the body at around 18. Imagine if André Agassi never picked up a tennis racket until he was 18, or if Anthony Albanese never started school until he was 25. Would these people still make it to the top of their respective careers. Possible but improbable. Similarly, starting horses later in life can be problematic, as by then they've cemented in bad behaviour and movement patterns. So start young but be gradual and progressive in their training, prioritising building confidence and making it a good experience.

### Flatwork basics

By the time they're four, you can take most horses out to their first show. But what basic flatwork do you need in place? Walk, trot, canter each way and a 20m circle would be nice. A preliminary level dressage test (similar to the requirements of going around a small show jump course) will give you an idea of the rideability needed. You don't need to have the horse in a dressage frame. You do need to be able to turn in both directions, speed up and slow down. Crazy, right! And responding to the cluck and woah is also very helpful!

### Jumping exercises

While grids are helpful for technique, use courses to get a young horse travelling. Remembering there will be several changes of direction in a show jumping course, which may include up to 12 fences. Most riders jump two or three fences in training and then stop. Make sure you condition your horses to be fit enough for 12 fences in a row. You'd be surprised how many people don't train their horse for stamina. And make sure you do some combinations, which are easy to avoid on a young horse, especially if you don't have a big arena. Use cross rails, cross oxers and guide rails. They will help your straightness in combinations.



ABOVE: Handy exercises to work on at home.

LEFT: Charlie developing a very promising partnership with his 5-y-o mare Bonita (Image by GeoSnapShot).

### The canter-trot-cluck routine

Increasing the energy from a slow speed is vital for all horses. We'll call this next exercise the canter-trot-cluck routine. Canter your horse forward through the turn heading towards a jump, and roughly four strides out come back to trot. Then about five meters in front of the fence sit tall, cluck, and close your leg. You want the horse to increase their energy on takeoff. If they pick up canter right in front that's fine. This exercise tests your horse's rebalance and then impulsion when jumping.

Youngsters usually go one of two ways when you start taking them out. Either a bit hot and rushing, or backed off and behind the leg. Learning which way they're likely to go is helpful. Their behaviour at a show can be totally different to their behaviour at home, so taking them out to your coach's place is a good start. Your

coach will help by giving you some practical jumping exercises to do while your horse experiences a new environment. They'll also notice if you ride differently when your young horse is somewhere different.

Rider nerves play a big part in this equation. Why do you have them and what can you do about them? Well, riding is a fairly dangerous sport, so that plays in the back of our minds. The more we worry about falling off the horse we ride generally. We also place too much pressure on ourselves and our horses. Set your expectations very low for your first couple of outings. For example, your goal may be just to go to the show and ride around the warm-up. Make the bar low and it's easier to jump over. Stop caring too much what other people think. Just take a deep breath and ride them forward!

### Was it progress?

You go for a jump lesson and it goes really well. Go again in case it was a



ABOVE: Kaden Weaver steering KPH Celeste around a jump club training day course (Image by GeoSnapShot).

fluke! It wasn't? Then with your coach's help, choose some appropriate outings. Ideally, find a jump club training day. These are unofficial days with a low-key atmosphere where there's no pressure (ok, maybe a little bit) to get around within an optimum time. You can circle and quite often jump a fence again if you had a mistake at it. Young horses quite often come ahead in leaps and bounds by going to days like these. In the first round you might find them spooky, but do the same height again five minutes later and things usually improve. If you are jumping 80 at home, do 70 at the training day. Make things physically easier for the horse, because you're making things mentally more difficult with the change in environment.

### The day before

You might be busy or tired, but make sure they get a good ride before their first show! Not to wear them out but to make sure they're listening and won't be full of beans the next day. Again, train the cluck to help the leg aid when in front of a spooky jump. If your horse is extra spooky or lacks confidence, you may want to pop over some fences the day before. Keep

them small, encourage the horse forward, and finish on a good note!

### Easing nerves

No, tequila is not the answer. Be prepared. Simple things like making sure you have all the gear packed and know how to get there. Taking care of these little things will help lower your

“If you are jumping 80 at home, do 70 at the training day. Make things physically easier for the horse, because you're making things mentally more difficult with the change in environment.”

stress levels. And for your stead, many riders are using Hidez hoods or ear bonnets, which can help horses who get distracted or are noise sensitive. The aim is for the horse to pay more attention to you and less on all the other horses at the show.

### The big day out

Arrive on time. While caffeinating may help wake you up, it might also accelerate your anxiety. Give yourself enough time for a light lunge and ride them forward in the warm-up. It's preferable they go a little quicker and get over than too slow and stop. Don't forget to give them a scratch when they do the right thing. Having a jump whip is a good idea too (better to have it and not need it than need it and not have it) but make sure they understand it before hand.

### In the ring

Ride them forward as soon as you go in the gate. The draw back to the gate and the warm-up area is strong. Think leg on when heading away from the gate. Conversely, you may need to rebalance when heading back to the gate. Try and keep the rhythm consistent. If you need to trot that's fine. Keep your leg on in front of the jump and support them on takeoff. Eyes up, leg on! Play it safe and relax, you're not trying to win a jump-off!

Loving Charlie's advice? Then follow him on [Instagram](#).



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VET VIBES

## Breathe easy

Respiratory disease can affect any horse. Dr **CLARE WILLIAMS-PATERSON** of Apiam Equine Services explains various approaches to treatment, and offers some expert tips on prevention.

**R**espiratory disease is a common cause of morbidity and/or loss of performance in horses across all ages, breeds, and disciplines. Signs of respiratory disease are usually self-evident and vary according

to cause. However, they will often include a nasal discharge, an abnormal respiratory noise, a cough, changes in normal breathing patterns and a below expected performance level. Additional historical details such as the duration

of the signs, any recent travel, contact with other horses, or a recent fever, also provide important information.

The challenge with respiratory disease is in making a specific diagnosis. As equine veterinarians, our goals in the diagnostic evaluation of respiratory issues in horses are to localise the problem (lower vs upper respiratory tract), to confirm if the cause is infectious or non-infectious, and to determine the severity and consequences of the condition.

### Viral respiratory infections

These are considered the most important causes of respiratory disease in horses worldwide. In Australia the equine herpes viruses (EHV) are common culprits. Any viral damage to the defence mechanisms of the respiratory tract increases the risk for the development of a secondary bacterial pneumonia.

We should also keep in mind that Hendra Virus is a zoonotic disease of

horses in Australia, causing severe and rapidly fatal respiratory or neurologic disease in horses and humans.

### Bacterial respiratory infections

These infections are also commonly reported in horses. Many owners know about *Streptococcus equi equi*, the causative agent of strangles. This is a primary bacterial pathogen of the upper respiratory tract and is highly infectious among horses.

*Rhodococcus equi* is a primary bacterial pathogen of the lower respiratory tract of foals that produces chronic suppurative (in which pus is formed and/or discharged) bronchopneumonia and pulmonary abscessation. With another breeding season under way now, we are on the look-out for this common respiratory issue in our foal populations. Clinical signs can be mild until disease is advanced, so close observation is key.

### Horses that travel

Horses that travel long distances are particularly prone to developing a pleuropneumonia, commonly referred to as travel sickness or shipping fever. Pleuropneumonia is a bacterial infection that not only affects the lungs but also extends into the space around the lungs. Despite travel being a normal event in the lives of many horses, many owners are unaware that it can adversely affect their horse's health.

Stress related to travel, head position during travel, changes in ventilation and air quality, and length of transport are all contributing factors. However, travel sickness tends to affect horses travelling the longer distances and is not normally associated with short term travel.

### Chronic disease

Chronic, non-septic inflammatory disease of the lower airways is a common respiratory condition that affects adult horses of various ages – and yes, we are talking about equine asthma (EA). This allergen-mediated condition is characterised



**ABOVE: One of an equine veterinarian's goals in the diagnostic evaluation of respiratory issues in horses is to localise the problem (lower vs upper respiratory tract).**

by inflammation, hypersensitivity and remodelling of the airways in response to dust and mould in the environment.

The prevalence of EA in horses is higher than most of us realise. Horses with mild to moderate EA are typically younger to middle age and experience decreased performance and sometimes a cough. When trigger factors are removed these horses typically improve with a low recurrence rate.

In contrast, horses with severe equine asthma are commonly older horses (often seven years plus) and present with frequent coughing and exercise intolerance – many of these guys exhibit respiratory distress even when at rest.

Environmental modification is the mainstay of treatment for EA, in conjunction with prescribed medications when necessary.

There are many additional respiratory

issues that we encounter with horses, both on a regular and intermittent basis – the list is way too long to cover in this brief article.

### Diagnostic tools

Important diagnostic tests, that we as equine veterinarians use in the investigation of respiratory conditions in our patients, include endoscopy (upper and lower airway), respiratory tract fluid analysis, and imaging of the respiratory tract (radiography, ultrasonography).

Endoscopy is an essential tool for direct visual examination of the upper respiratory tract including the nasal passages, ethmoid turbinates, opening of maxillary sinuses, guttural pouches, larynx, and trachea. Endoscopy at rest often provides a definitive diagnosis; however, dynamic respiratory endoscopy allows for evaluation of the horse during exercise on a treadmill or when ridden,

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**ABOVE:** Consider quarantine for all horses returning from events such as shows or sales.

identifying conditions for which clinical signs may not be present at rest.

Imaging is essential for diagnosis of upper respiratory conditions in particular. Radiographs of the skull are useful in the investigation of sinus condition, dental abnormalities and facial deformities. Thoracic radiography and ultrasonography are valuable for assessing lower respiratory tract disease. Thoracic ultrasonography is the most appropriate technique to evaluate fluid in the pleural space and peripheral pulmonary abscessation

A nasopharyngeal swab, flush culture or PCR are indicated tests for upper respiratory conditions such as suspected strangles or a viral infection.

The most important technique for evaluating lower respiratory tract secretions is a lung-wash (the fancy term is bronchoalveolar lavage). This technique is indicated for cytologic evaluation (the diagnosis of disease at a cellular level) of the lower respiratory tract in horses with non-infectious pulmonary disease such as EA, or exercise-induced pulmonary haemorrhage (EIPH).

### Treating the disease

Treatment for horses with respiratory disease varies dramatically according to the cause – there is no blanket

approach or set formula. However, regardless of the type of respiratory disease, environmental factors and supportive care are important to aid recovery. For example, a dust and ammonia-free stable environment prevents further damage to the respiratory tract lining. Adequate hydration and nutrition assist in decreasing the viscosity of respiratory secretions thus facilitating their removal from the lower respiratory tract.

### Vaccinations


Vaccination remains the cornerstone of prevention for many infectious respiratory pathogens in horses and should be a part of your preventative management plan. Whilst vaccination does not always prevent respiratory infections, regular vaccination can lessen the duration and severity of some diseases. In Australia, vaccines are commercially available for strangles and EHV (types 1 and 4), and Hendra Virus. Vaccination recommendations will vary according to the use of each individual horse and their potential for exposure to infectious animals.

### Biosecurity protocols

Vaccination is not a substitute for good management practices – so do not solely rely on it! Horse owners can minimise the spread of infectious

organisms by adhering to a well-planned biosecurity protocol. Be a proactive horse owner. For example, make a habit of washing/sanitising your hands when moving from horse to horse, and don't share tack or equipment between horses. This simple practice alone is an important start because respiratory infections spread through groups of horses by inhalation and by direct contact between animals, handlers and contaminated surfaces. And consider quarantine (ideally up to four weeks) for all animals brought onto your property, especially those returning from events such as shows or sales.

One key point is when traveling with horses, use your own water buckets. Some viruses and bacteria can survive in communal watering points. Taking the temperatures of all traveling horses twice daily is a must. Know your horse's normal temperature! And take temperatures after returning home from a trip!

Given the variety of respiratory presentations and causes early veterinary intervention is recommended to identify the best treatment protocols and to deliver the best outcome. 

Visit [Apiam Animal Health](http://Apiam Animal Health) to learn more about their range of services





FEATURE

# Social licence and the Five Domain Model

Following on from last month's feature, we spoke to **DR ANDREW McLEAN** on the topic of social licence and the Five Domain animal welfare model.

**D**r Andrew McLean is the CEO of Equitation Science International, an Honorary Fellow and Trustee of the International Society for Equitation Science, Director of the Racing Victoria Equine Welfare Advisory Board, Director of the Human Elephant Learning Programs Foundation, a Patron of Pony Club Australia, and in 2020 he was instrumental in reshaping the Five Domains welfare model.

An expert in his field, we invited Andrew to discuss both social licence and its relevance to horse sports, and the Five Domain model for animal welfare assessment.

## Dr Andrew McLean

Because of the increased public interest in how we manage horses, and some of the things that have happened in horse sports and in racing, I have no doubt that we need to be very concerned about the social licence to operate horse sports

The issue of social licence is one that is continuing to grow: all equestrian codes and all animal industries are subject to the same community expectations of good and appropriate animal welfare, and to community reassessment of animal management practices. As equestrians, it's no longer good enough to say that that's what we've always done, or this is tradition, or even that we, as people who work with horses, know what we're doing while those that don't do not. Now it's really all about perception: what the public sees in the media and through camera lenses that capture everything that happens in fine detail.

I think it's the end of the 'behind closed doors' mentality in all aspects of animal training and welfare. And that's thought-provoking for me because of my interest in elephants. For example, it's now rare to be offered elephant riding in Thailand because of a BBC

documentary showing how they were trained (which was pretty brutal) behind the scenes – but in saying that, when elephant trainers see what happens in horse training, they too can be quite shocked!

Now that riding elephants has become vilified, you're more likely to be offered other experiences with them, which ironically are not necessarily beneficial for the elephant. There are good arguments that at least when elephants were ridden, they had social contact and could explore and forage. Now they are chained and for the purpose of tourist entertainment are maybe walked 20 meters to do a painting or something equally absurd before they're taken back to their lonely stall.

So, it's not always a positive thing when animal rights drive change, and I believe this is why we have to be proactive in the horse world and to think about the future, how we can maintain our horse sports, and be prepared to move on and try new things.

To do this, our own perceptions of what is 'normal' need to change. Spurs are a good illustration of this: in my foray into the world of dressage it was compulsory to wear spurs, and I just took it for granted that that's what you did. And then a friend, who didn't know anything about horses or horse sports, came with me to a dressage competition and asked what the steel pieces on riders' boots were. When I told him they were spurs and explained what they were used for, he was horrified - and it made me realise how much of what we do becomes normalised.

## New normals

New normals are being established all the time, sometimes for better or, in the following example, for worse. Other than double bridles with cavesson nosebands, hardly anyone used nosebands in the '60s. Then that



**ABOVE:** In some European yards, a progressive stabling concept incorporates grids between boxes permitting restricted tactile contact.

changed (possibly with the advent of Röllkur, which could be achieved more effectively with the use of a tight noseband) and suddenly tight nosebands had become standard practice.

So, to be sustainable, what must happen in horse sports, which I love, is for us to create and embrace new, best practice normals. Eventing has been very good in that respect. The old, extreme, long format three-day event has changed considerably because of the public outcry regarding horse welfare. Now policies have been implemented to make it safer. And all horse sports need to be moving in that direction. I think disciplines such as dressage and perhaps show jumping have in some respects defended what they do rather than rethinking their sport.

## Positive changes

In order to maintain our social licence to operate, I think there are a number of

positive changes we could make. One is to demonstrate self-carriage, in other words that the horse has been trained to do something without any further nagging from the legs or being held in a frame. If we can show, by loosening the reins or by taking off our legs for a couple of strides, that self-carriage is maintained, then we're proving that in a sense, the horse is choosing to do it, and that their mental security and wellbeing are therefore much better guaranteed.

Another change is to rethink the gear we're using. Perhaps we should be rewarding our horses in training, rather than using all manner of coercive gear, while at the same time trying to justify that gear as if it isn't coercive.

Some animal rights activists are promoting the idea that it's wrong to ride horses. I don't agree, they've been with us and ridden for probably over 5,000 years, and I believe there is such





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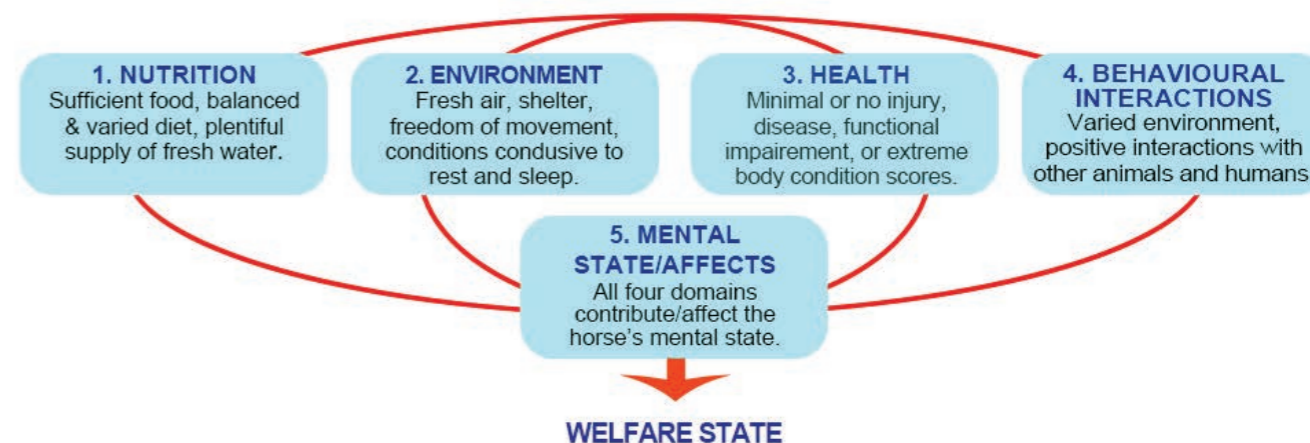
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### The Five Domains



**ABOVE:** The first four domains all have an affect on the fifth domain, the horse's mental state, while collectively, all five domains affect the horse's overall welfare (Adapted from [The 2020 Five Domains Model: Including Human-Animal Interactions in Assessments of Animal Welfare](#)).

a thing as a species right to exist. In many ways I think horses may even get some enjoyment out of going places and doing different things, rather than living an empty life in a paddock. But if we don't listen to mounting public sentiment, horse training may go the way of greyhound racing, where suddenly it could be severely curtailed.

When we're training or interacting with our horses, we must do it from their perspective and with their welfare front of mind – and the Five Domains model is an excellent tool for assessing and monitoring our horses' welfare. Revised in 2020, the Five Domains are:

- 1) Nutrition
- 2) Environment
- 3) Health
- 4) Behavioural Interactions
- 5) Mental State

The fourth domain was previously known as 'Behaviour', but the name was changed to reflect sentient animals' innate capability to consciously interact with their environment, and with other animals and humans.


#### A life worth living

Developed around 25 years ago, the Five Domains model is about looking at animals not as objects, but as subjects capable of having positive as well as

negative experiences. Interestingly, the Five Domains are inherently about us realising that we should do our best to give animals more positive mental affective states, in other words lives worth living. Therefore, the fifth domain, the mental state, should be the outcome of a horse receiving adequate nutrition in a physical environment conducive to their wellbeing, appropriate veterinary care, and optimal interactions with humans and other animals.

This is a very interesting shift, which I think tells us a lot about the evolution of our own consciousness, and reappraising what we do. For instance. The first domain is related to nutrition, but it is also about foraging behaviour. It's important for horses to munch on hay for as many as 13 hours a day (you can always offer the hay in a slow feeder if you're concerned about your horse gaining too much weight) not just for nutrition, but also for their mental state. We know if we deprive them of that, it can trigger oral behaviours such as wood chewing and wind sucking, and if they're deprived of movement, they may weave or box walk.

These are markers of welfare that tell us what we're doing wrong from the horse's perspective. Similarly, although accept and understand that humans

are social beings for whom isolation can be devastating, we isolate horses, who also thrive on social interaction. In the past few years I've been promoting taking down bars in stables so horses can access each other if they want to touch, because seeing is definitely not enough; being able to touch is vital for social animals. 

*No doubt this important article has given you plenty to think about. Head to [Pub Med](#) for a full explanation of the Five Domain Model, as well as some helpful diagrams.*



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FEATURE

## There for the horses

The veterinary checks undergone by Melbourne Cup runners are extensive. **AMANDA MAC** spoke to Dr Grace Forbes to learn more.

Instead of our usual *Life After Racing* article, we thought that with the Melbourne Cup nearly upon us, now would be a great time to find out how the health and welfare of horses racing in Victoria is managed - and who better

to speak with than Dr Grace Forbes, General Manager of Veterinary Services for Racing Victoria.

Grace grew up with horses. Not racehorses, although she did have a retired Thoroughbred, but ponies

she rode at Pony Club and later at Interschool competitions. There was a hiatus when she went to university to study veterinary science, but she always knew that ultimately, she would work with horses. "Having grown up with them that's really where my passion lay. So I worked in mixed practice for a number of years before going to Melbourne University's Equine Centre for specialised training."

It was after specialising that Grace began working privately for racehorse trainers, her interest in horse racing originally sparked by her grandfather, a farrier and a trainer. "I enjoyed it a lot," she says. "Working with elite athletes, and helping their trainers manage their preparation was really fulfilling."

Then Grace, who had also been working casually as a racecourse vet, was offered the opportunity to take up a full-time position as a regulatory vet

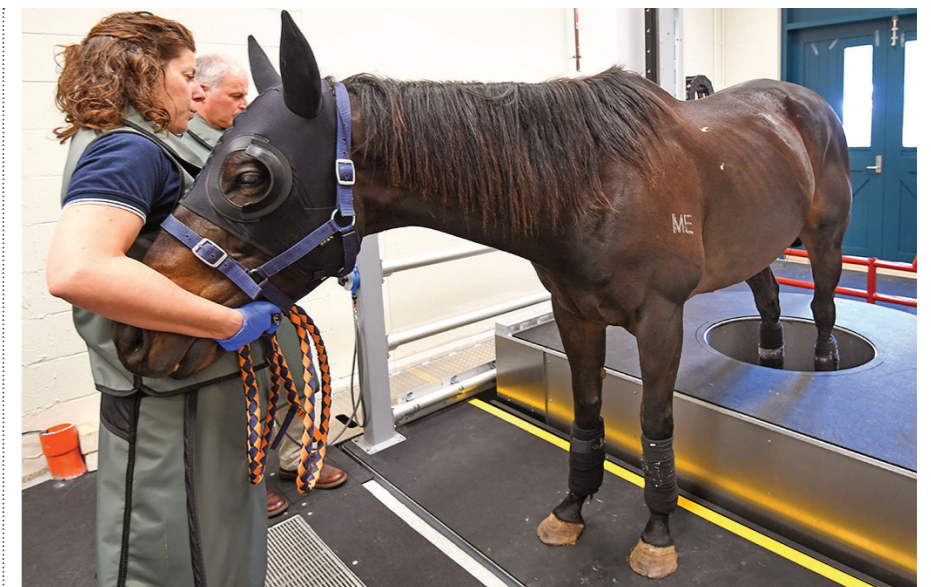
with Racing Victoria, an opportunity she seized: "I really wanted to impact the whole racing population, to work with private vets and trainers to help them ensure that the health and care of their horses was at the highest standard possible."

Ten years later and Grace is still loving her job. It's a broad role which can roughly be divided into two key areas: the oversight of Racing Victoria's services, offered at race meetings conducted across the state by a team of experienced and dedicated vets, vet nurses, and assistants; and in an advisory capacity relating to equine welfare, particularly with horses during their racing career, which can include liaising with stewards, the licensing panel, and race day programming staff. "We're really there to provide advice and to be an advocate for the horse across many elements of the industry," she adds.

The team Grace works with most closely is Integrity Services. "That's the area that veterinary services sits within, alongside a dedicated equine welfare team, the stewards, licensing, and our investigatory team. We have two core goals that complement each other: one is to ensure a level playing field, and the other is to ensure the welfare of the horse."

And within Grace's ambit are those stringent pre-race veterinary checks, which have undergone a significant upgrade. "After the running of the 2019 Melbourne Cup, Racing Victoria conducted an extensive risk assessment of the Cup and the international horses that compete in it, with a view of trying to understand and then develop a number of strategies to minimise the risk of injuries," she explains.

The University of Melbourne was engaged to review the data that had been collected, and a large number of trainers, veterinarians, jockeys, and track managers in Australia and



**ABOVE:** All Melbourne Cup entrants are required to have a standing CT of all four fetlocks. **LEFT:** Dr Grace Forbes' goal was always to work with horses (All images courtesy Racing Victoria).

internationally were consulted. The result was an extensive list of recommendations designed to work together to minimise the risk to international and domestic horses competing in the Spring Racing Carnival.

For the international horses, veterinary assessment begins some time before they leave for our shores. Because Australia is an island and free of many diseases endemic or common in other countries, every horse must comply with Australian regulations and quarantine for two weeks in their own country, followed by a further two weeks upon arrival here.

Then there are the three components to their pre-travel assessment. "Firstly, we gather the horse's veterinary and medical history, as well as a report from their private veterinarian after they've examined the horse," Grace tells me. "Secondly, the horse undergoes advanced diagnostic imaging of all four fetlocks, either with a standing CT scan or a standing MRI. We then send those results to a panel of three experts to review and provide feedback."

The final component involves an examination by a Racing Victoria vet, or one appointed by them, prior to

the horse's departure. Grace herself recently went to the UK and Ireland to assess horses due to compete in our Spring Racing Carnival.

Once the horse has arrived, they undergo weekly inspections and a standing CT scan prior to each race start they have while they're in Victoria. "And for the Melbourne Cup," Grace continues, "all the horses, local and international, undergo two veterinary inspections; one on the Thursday or Friday prior to the Melbourne Cup, and the second on the day before the Melbourne Cup. They're also all required to have a standing CT of all four fetlocks within the two weeks prior to competing."

On the morning of the Cup, as on any other race day, a large team begins work: "We would typically have five veterinarians, at least one vet nurse, and four assistants. Jobs are divided into four main areas, one of which is overseeing the anti-doping program, taking samples from horses before and after they race," Grace explains. "We also inspect horses for their suitability to race, and that might be at the barriers. Then we'll examine horses after the race where the horse has perhaps performed below expectations, or if



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“It’s really important to have a direct line of communication with your farrier ... that direct line is very, very crucial, and important to having a successful barn and a successful life of competition.”

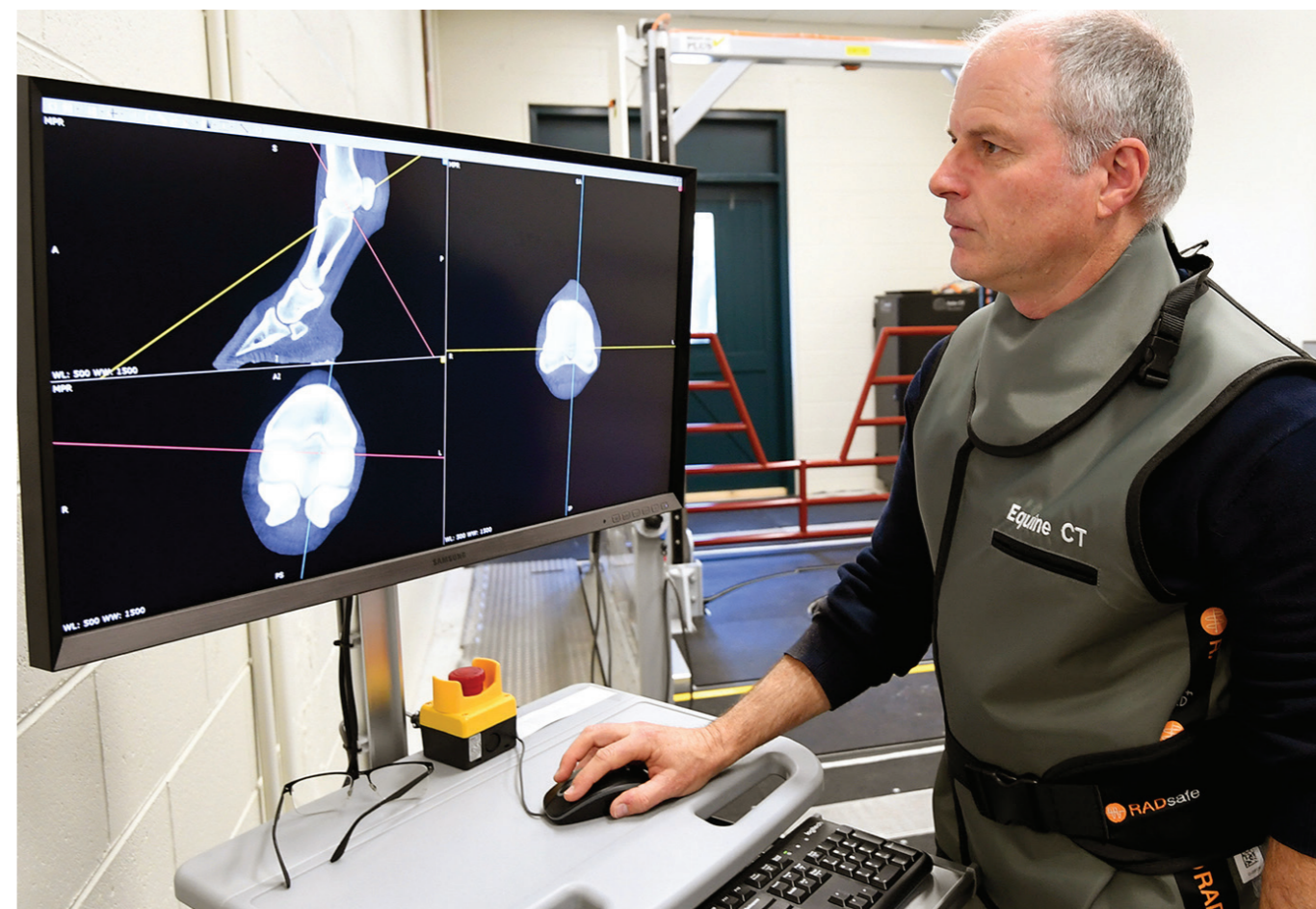
Chris Martelli

We speak to Chris Martelli  
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ABOVE: Standing CT fetlock scans are carefully assessed to determine whether the horse is fit to race.

the trainer is not happy with how the horse has run they'll present them to us to examine. And then finally, we're on hand to provide first aid if necessary.”

It's interesting to note that concern for the welfare of racehorses hasn't stopped with these stringent protocols. For the past five years, Racing Victoria, the Victorian state government, and the University of Melbourne have been jointly funding research into an equine limb injury prevention program, at a cost of approximately \$11 million.

The research is focussed on identifying why injuries occur and what can be done to minimise the risk of them happening. And there are other projects that Grace is equally excited about: “These involve a significant investment in technology,” she explains. “In 2019 we installed the first standing CT in Australia, and this year we've purchased a second unit which will be installed at

the Cranbourne Training Center's new veterinary hospital. We've also purchased a standing PET scan, the first in Australia, which is relatively new technology in equine diagnostics. It was developed in California several years ago, and it's been successful as another way to detect injuries at an early stage and so avoid them from becoming more serious.”

And then there's Racing Victoria's rather novel program, dubbed 'Medicare for Horses', which began in 2021. “This ties in with the proactive approach to injury prevention, and encourages owners and trainers to make use of these different types of advanced diagnostic technologies. So we now subsidise fifty per cent of the cost of advanced diagnostic imaging, which could represent a saving of up to \$1,600 for a trainer or owner.”

In this case, proof of the pudding is in the uptake, and in the last two years

there's been a steady increase in the use of diagnostic technologies, as well as some encouraging feedback, which, as Grace points out, is positive in a variety of ways. “Being unfamiliar with that type of technology had made trainers a little hesitant to use it. But with the encouragement of the subsidy, the trainers' knowledge and understanding of when best to use the technology, as well as the benefits of each type in terms of finding out exactly what's wrong, has increased.”

Accurately identifying an injury helps the trainer to know how best to manage it, including whether a time out from racing is appropriate. It also helps in planning the horse's return to training, so that every effort can be made to ensure that the injury doesn't recur.

And as Grace says, that really is a very exciting initiative.



## NUTRITION

# Heat stress: a serious health threat

This summer is shaping up to be a warm one, so your horse will need a little extra care, writes equine nutritionist **LARISSA BILSTON**.

**K**eeping and riding horses through summer requires an understanding of how to minimise heat stress and manage electrolyte balance. Working horses during very hot and/or humid weather can be potentially dangerous (even fatal) for

both horse and rider, who both rely heavily on their ability to sweat to cool their bodies during exercise. Respiratory cooling (puffing or blowing) also helps animals cool down but horses and humans rely less on this method of cooling than dogs, who cool

by panting. Cooling by sweating and respiration is effective when humidity is low and a breeze is present. Hot, humid, still weather conditions make it much harder for the body's core temperature to cool back down to a safe level.

Symptoms of heat stress include excessive sweating, lethargy, rapid, heavy breathing, high and/or erratic heart rate, salivation and redness of the mouth/tongue, muscle spasms, stumbling, uncoordinated gait and collapse. The skin may feel hot and dry, and a pinch test will indicate if dehydration is also present.

### Treatment for heat stress

The normal rectal temperature of a horse lies in the range 37.0 to 38.0°C. Once this temperature exceeds 40°C the horse should be cooled down. If the core body temperature becomes too high (42°C) the horse will suffer from heat stress (hyperthermia).

Heat stress is a veterinary emergency. As quickly as possible pour cold (or iced)

water over the entire body including the head, neck, belly and inner legs where large blood vessels are close to the surface.

### As a matter of urgency:

- Call your vet for assistance
- Continue hosing with cold water
- Move the horse into the shade
- Provide a breeze or fans to assist cooling
- Offer small amounts of cool drinking water frequently.

### Prevention of heat stress

Many official equestrian sporting organisations around the world now use the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) Index or a Heat Index to decide whether competitions should be run, or cancelled due to the risk of overheating horses and riders.

As individuals riding at home it is important to make sensible decisions about how much work to safely subject horses to during hot, humid weather.

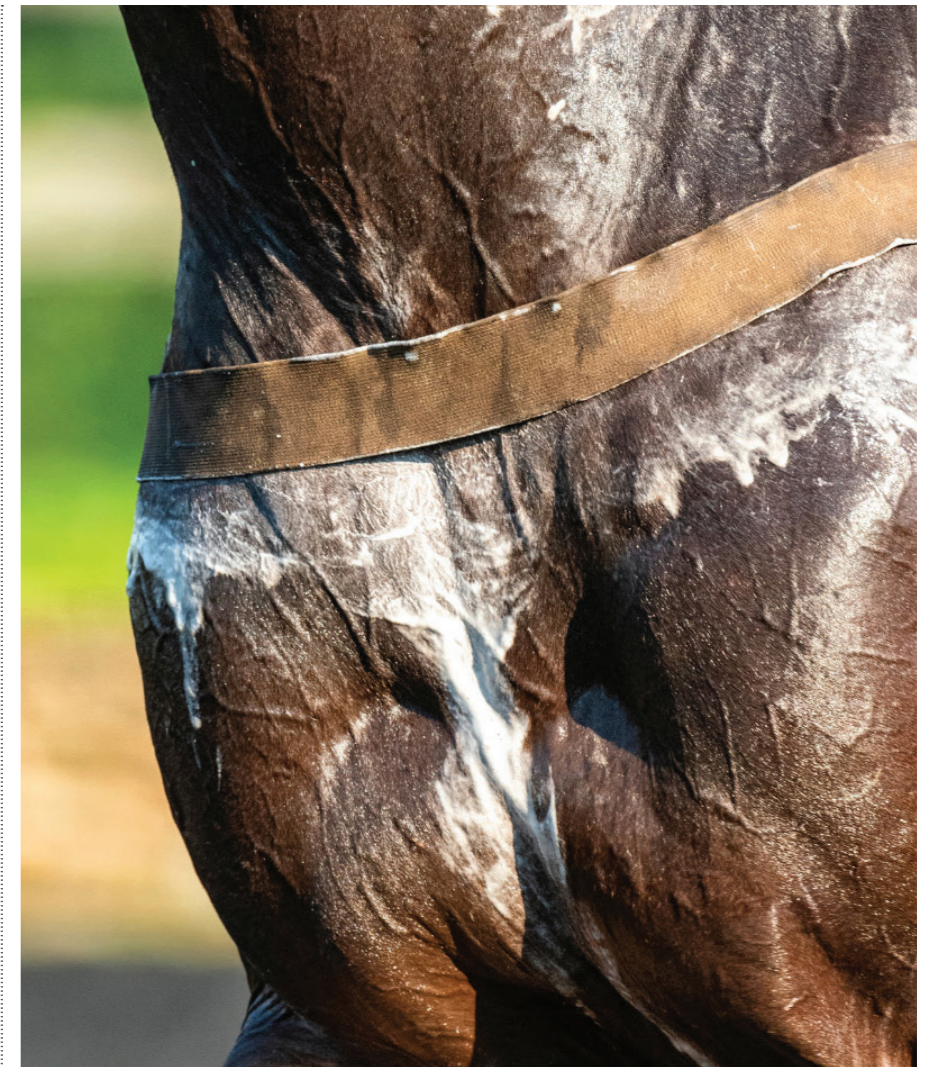
When a horse must be worked during very hot weather, try to ride during the coolest and least humid part of the day and reduce the length and intensity of the training.

It is important to provide shade and preferably a breeze (this can be supplied by a fan) for horses in their paddocks, yards or stables during very hot and especially hot, humid weather. Shade and hosing with a breeze or fan during recovery from exercise helps to reduce core temperatures quickly.

### Antioxidants reduce the impact of heat stress

Strenuous exercise and hot environmental conditions are two major factors causing oxidative stress in animals.

Oxidative stress occurs when free radicals (reactive oxygen species) outnumber the antioxidant levels in the body, causing cellular and muscle



**ABOVE: Heat stress is a veterinary emergency that requires urgent action.**

damage, fatigue and decreased performance.

Supplementing with additional antioxidants such as organic selenium,

“ Hot, humid, still weather conditions make it much harder for the body's core temperature to cool back down to a safe level. ”

organic chromium, vitamins C and E, carotenoids and enzymes such as superoxide dismutase (SOD) during very hot weather or heavy exercise can reduce the risk of oxidative stress.

Research in intensively farmed animals including poultry, pigs and dairy cattle

shows measurable improvements in animal welfare, growth rate, milk production, meat and egg quality in response to supplementation with antioxidants.

Horse-specific research has demonstrated synergistic benefits from the combined antioxidant action of SOD-rich freeze-dried melon pulp, vitamin E and organic selenium. By measuring muscle enzyme levels, scientists were able to demonstrate that exercising horses resulted in significantly less muscle damage after they were fed the antioxidant combination.

The study concluded that the antioxidant blend was able to restore and maintain cell membrane integrity in muscle cells thereby improving the horse's resistance to physical training.

## Managing electrolyte balance

### Daily salt requirements

Horses require between seven and 12 grams of plain salt per 100 kilograms of bodyweight every day. This is the amount required for maintenance: even more is needed for sweat replacement on very hot days and following heavy exercise.

Since salt is usually added to pellets and grain mixes designed for horses, this salt must be counted in calculations of how much extra to add. Top up with plain salt (sodium chloride) which can be purchased as table salt, pool salt, flossy salt or stock salt. Free access to a container of clean, loose salt rather than a salt block is also advisable because many horses will not lick a block for long enough to meet their salt requirements.

### Sweat replacement

Sweating horses can lose as much as 10 to 15 litres of fluid per hour. Dehydration occurs if this liquid is not replaced. However, it is not as simple as just adding water.

The fluid in an animal's body contains various salts called electrolytes (sodium, chloride, potassium, calcium) which help manage the hydration of individual cells and blood volume. The water and electrolytes lost in sweat will be gradually replaced over the course of a few days rest as the horse drinks water and eats a diet with the correct mineral balance.

You can make a simple electrolyte blend that provides the major electrolyte salts lost in sweat. Add 45g plain table salt (sodium chloride) and 45g of lite salt (potassium chloride/sodium chloride) to 10 litres of water. Apple juice can be added to improve palatability. This will replace the sodium, potassium and chloride lost in approximately 9 litres of sweat.

However, a faster recovery is often desirable for horses who work every day, are living in hot and humid environments, or are competing over a number of days. These horses will benefit from a well formulated commercial electrolyte supplement.



Exercising horses too hard and too often under hot, humid conditions can cause heat stress and may lead to the development of anhidrosis. Horses suffering from this condition lose the ability to sweat sufficiently to regulate their body temperature.

There are various electrolyte supplements on the market containing the major electrolyte salts (sodium, chloride and potassium) as well as the electrolytes that are lost in smaller quantities (calcium and magnesium). They may also include amino acids and vitamins to aid recovery, and sweeteners to improve palatability. A quality electrolyte supplement should not contain more than 20 per cent sweeteners or fillers.

Electrolytes can be bought in a powdered form to be added to the feed, as a paste or gel to be given over the tongue, or as a liquid to be mixed with water for an electrolyte drink. Horses usually have to be 'trained' to drink electrolytes, so if planning to use them

at a competition, make sure your horse is familiar with the taste in the weeks beforehand.

Always make fresh clean water available to a horse after sweating. Do not offer electrolyte-enhanced water without providing access to plain water.

It is important to feed just the right amount of electrolyte salts because giving too much or too little can actually increase dehydration. Optimise the health of your horse this summer with a combination of electrolytes, antioxidants and avoiding hard work during hot and humid weather. 🐾

Larissa Bilston, BAgSc (Hons) is the Equine Nutritionist for [Farmalogic](#).



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**PRODUCT REVIEW**

# Sitting pretty

We speak to elite dressage rider David Shoobridge about all things Equipe.

David Shoobridge, one of Australia's top Grand Prix dressage riders, is based at [Salisbury](#), the equestrian property he built from the ground up in central Victoria, and from which he runs his very successful breeding, training and coaching business.

Taking selected students from the

lower levels to Grand Prix, David and his team also occasionally campaign competition horses for a handful of lucky owners.

On the breeding side, Salisbury is home to some very promising youngsters courtesy of a herd of truly exceptional mares, and David's four outstanding stallions: KWPN Toto Nation De Jeu,

a combination of some of the world's best Grand Prix stallions; Vittorio DS, the Australian Champion Hanoverian on Tour 2022 and the highest scoring stallion at the licensing; Maracaná, who qualified for the Bundeschampionat with a to die for score of 9.2; and DeLorean, a Premium Hanoverian stallion who won his Stallion Performance Test with a score of 10 for rideability and canter, and 9.5 for trot and character.

Underlying David's considerable success is hard work, a carefully considered approach, and attention to detail. It underpins everything he does, and it's one of the reasons why he chooses Equipe dressage saddles.

When choosing a saddle, he has some very specific criteria; "First and foremost, it's got to be the right fit for the horse. And then we want a saddle that's going to give us a





PREVIOUS PAGE: Vitorio DS, Australian Champion Hanoverian on Tour 2022. ABOVE: David and the KWPN stallion Toto Nation de Jeu, a combination of some of the world's best Grand Prix stallions (Images by Jessica Atkins Studio).

really close contact between our seat and the horse's back. The saddle is fundamentally one of the main mediums between us and the horse. So we need to ensure that we have a really clear way of communicating with the horse, and it's absolutely imperative that we have a saddle that allows us to do that."

When it comes to Equipe, it was the company's approach to technology that attracted David. "It's the way they apply the technology to their saddles that's state of the art," he explains. "It's absolutely phenomenal. What we're after is a really good surface area with the back and really good balance. We want to make sure that the saddle is as close and as comfortably fitting as possible." And Equipe ticks all those boxes.

David has been riding in Equipe saddles for 10 years now, and over that time has ridden in most models,

from the [Emporio](#), the company's entry level dressage saddle, to the [Viktoria](#) and [Kalifornia](#), which are both built on a carbon fibre tree. While this type of tree has previously been very rigid and fixed, the new generation of Equipe saddles have fully adjustable carbon fibre trees that are not only very light, they also enable a closer fit.

But what if you have one of those horses for which fitting a saddle is close to a nightmare? Turns out that Equipe has that base covered too. "Part of the flocking system in the Equipe saddle has always been really high-quality hospital grade memory foam, and there's an option with the new saddles to have flocking panels," David says. "Riders with horses that are difficult to fit tend to head towards a flocking filled saddle, and now Equipe have developed a panel designed to cater

for those really tricky horses."

In his opinion, Equipe technology is second to none, not only allowing for a superior fit but also offering the option for you to customise your saddle. "And that's really important too," David remarks. "If you've got a rider with really long legs and a tiny bottom, you don't necessarily want a 17 or 18 inch seat, but you might need the length of flap that those size saddles give – and Equipe saddles can be customised to suit every rider. The customisation is done at the Equipe factory in Italy. Once the saddle has been made specifically to order it's flown out to the customer wherever they might be in the world."

Currently in David's tack room are a variety of Equipe models. When a horse is about to be ridden, the saddle chosen is the one that's a good match for them. "It depends on the shape of the back and the fit. We most commonly ride our young horses in either [Emporios](#) or [Olympias](#), and then the older competition horses in mostly [Viktorias](#) or [Kalifornias](#).

If by now you're thinking of investing in a new saddle, David has some sound advice, starting with ensuring you have a clear understanding of what you want from the saddle and what your riding goals are. "Next," he says, "is to understand the shape and mechanics of your horse, the balance of their back, and the areas over their back where the muscle quality and density might change with work."

And finally, chose a saddle that fits your horse like a glove and fits you comfortably too. "But," David adds, "I would go for fit before comfort, because if the saddle fits your horse, then it will be comfortable to ride in. If the saddle doesn't fit, then it's not going to work for you or your horse." 🏠

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The American style barn has two 4x4m stables that easily convert to an 8x4m foaling stable.



PROPERTY

# Development potential plus

This magnificent property at 103 Bungower Road in Somerville, Victoria, is waiting for you to make it yours.

Positioned at the end of a tree-lined drive, Capall Park is a picturesque and private estate that brilliantly merges a quiet lifestyle with a strong equine focus. Approximately 2.37ha. (5.8 acres) of rich pastures deliver a sanctuary of space along with huge business potential. Enjoying rolling vistas from every angle,

the property includes a four bedroom luxury farmhouse, five paddocks (two with mesh fencing suitable for foals), a holding yard, a full-size professionally built and surfaced dressage arena, a hot/cold wash bay, and a magnificent American style barn with two 4x4m stables separated by a swinging partition to allow conversion to an 8x4m foaling stable.

Owner built in 2012 and constructed to the highest standards, the home features three luxuriously appointed living areas, a formal entry hall with corbel detailing, and a Blanco kitchen with stone benchtops, freestanding cooker, and dishwasher. Bi-fold doors open to reveal a covered and generously proportioned entertaining deck with sweeping views.

Built for premium functionality, three spacious bedrooms - each with robes, and two with exterior French doors - a second lounge, family bathroom and separate powder room ensure that family and guests are catered for. A spacious rumpus room could easily convert to a large fifth bedroom. Meanwhile the sprawling master bedroom includes a bathroom with a luxurious spa bath – a

peaceful and relaxing retreat. Evaporative cooling, gas ducted heating, chandeliers, ceiling roses and period-inspired interior details all enhance the sense of refined country living. A semi-detached salon/office, complete with plumbing and split system AC, offers the potential for a home-based business or short-stay accommodation.

With its ample parking bays; mains gas, electricity and water; a professionally installed camera security system; automated front gate; veggie patches; and room for a swimming pool, the property is only minutes from Somerville's township, and a short drive to the Mornington Peninsula's winery and day-spa region. Visit the listing on [Horse Property](https://www.horseproperty.com.au) for more.



Bi-fold doors open to reveal a covered and generously proportioned entertaining deck.



Floating timber floors add a spacious elegance throughout the home.

# EQUESTRIAN HUB

## Celebrate with us!

We're excited to announce the launch of our special collector's edition magazine.

*Celebrating Life After Racing* is filled with your favourite Life After Racing stories: the very best of the horses, the retrainers, the riders, the competitions, and the OTT programs that make it all possible.

It's informative.

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