

APRIL 2024

EQUUS TRIAN **HUB** magazine

Afterlife
Off the track
success



Nicole Tough
The importance
of counter canter

Sarcoids
Why you can't
ignore them

Recovery
Tips to help your
horse recover



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On the Cover
Jess Morrison and Afterlife are making their mark in the dressage arena (Image by [Equisoul Photography](https://www.instagram.com/equisoul))



OUR CONTRIBUTORS



Amanda Mac

As *Equestrian Hub Magazine's* editor, Amanda's two long-standing passions, one for horses the other for writing, come together perfectly. She recently spoke to Angela Davison about her many years as a horse herbalist, and her fascinating approach to hair analysis. And if an off the track horse appeals, don't miss our story on Jess Morrison and OTT Afterlife, a combination making their mark in the dressage arena.



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 discusses counter canter, its benefits, and how to achieve it.

Jess Morrison
Taught the basics by her mother, Jess began riding when she was three. As a Pony Clubber, she tried her hand at all the disciplines before becoming entranced by dressage. After owning Shetlands, an Australian Stock Horse and a Connemara cross mare, she decided to take on an OTT TB as a project, which has developed into a very successful dressage ring partnership.



Leisa Hofstetter

Leisa is an equine nutritionist and founder of Hof Equine. She has a Bachelor of Equine Science, specialising in nutrition, and lives west of Brisbane, in Queensland's beautiful Lockyer Valley. Is your horse too fat, too thin, just right? Take the confusion out of the equation with the Henneke Body Condition Scoring System. Lisa explains how it works, and how you can easily assess your horse.



Angela Davison

Learning to ride at the age of three, Angela was one of Australia's first female licensed jockeys before shifting her focus to equine health and healing. An equine herbalist with over 30 year's full time experience, she has trained in Craniosacral Therapy, the Bowen Technique, and Equine Muscle Release Therapy. She spoke to us about her career and her unique and very successful approach to hair



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 best, and in our Behind the Shot feature, she shares her favourites and explains what makes them so special.

Dr Jennifer Stewart B.V.Sc., B.Sc., Ph.D.
With over 40 years' experience as a veterinarian in mixed and equine practice, Jennifer's special interest is equine nutrition. She was Senior Veterinary Officer with the Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment for 10 years, and for two years was Biosecurity Veterinarian with the ACT Government. In this issue she explains how to help support your horse's recovery after exercise.



Hunter Equine Centre

Members of APIAM, the Hunter Equine Centre team are world-class equine ambulatory and hospital-based specialist vets servicing the NSW Scone and Upper Hunter region. Their state of the art hospital includes a purpose built surgery, intensive care unit, hospital boarding, and diagnostic imaging services. In this issue, they offer expert advice on sarcoids and why you shouldn't ignore them.



HUNTER EQUINE CENTRE



BEHIND THE SHOT

Kevin McNab

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: Kevin McNab (AUS)
Horse: Scuderia 1918 Don Quidam
Event: 2022 FEI World Eventing Championships
Location: Pratoni, Rome, Italy
Camera & Settings: Canon EOS7D Mark II 300mm Lens ISO 250 f 2.8 1/1250 sec

Challenges: This image was taken in the cross country phase of the eventing championships. Cross country days are always rather stressful as there are over five kilometres and roughly 20 obstacles to try and get around to. Obviously not all are suitable to photograph and some

horses will jump certain obstacles better than others, but it's a day filled with a lot of fast walking and gambling on where to be and when. I tried to be in a different location for each Australian rider and decided to sit at the water complex for Kevin. This offered several different options in and out of the water, but it was towards the end of the course, so there is always the concern they may not make it that far and that you'll have no image at all! The weather was also a little inconsistent with cloud cover, some rain, and intermittent sun.

However, the eventing gods were on my side and it was a fabulous spot to shoot this lovely combination.

Why this shot is special: For me, this image accurately represents the athletic partnership between horse and rider. They are both so focused on their job and what's coming up next. Kevin is in the perfect cross country position and has lovely soft reins allowing Don Quidam to extend his gallop as they leave the water complex. The horse's pricked ears, flying hooves and pulsing veins all exemplify an equine athlete competing at the highest level.

With the Australian flag proudly displayed on his saddle cloth, uniform and helmet, Kevin came home after an amazing round unfortunately marred by a broken rein. Still mounted, he repaired the break with one hand, and continued on. After losing a minute to the gear malfunction, they crossed the finish line only one minute and two seconds over time. If only that rein hadn't broken - but that's eventing! 🐾

Michelle is available for event, commercial and private shoots. Visit [Michelle Terlato Photography](https://www.michelleterlato.com.au) to view her impressive portfolio.



ABOVE LEFT: 8-y-o Leopold in counter canter renvers, a good suppling exercise **ABOVE RIGHT:** In shoulder-fore position.
LEFT: 5-y-o Everdeen improving her canter with counter canter (Images by EK Photography).

HANGING TOUGH

The importance of counter canter

The benefits of counter canter are many. **NICOLE TOUGH** explains her approach to successfully training for this movement.

Improve your horse's canter with the suppling, straightening and engaging effects of counter canter. It also helps to teach obedience to the rider's aids and is an important precursor to flying change training.

Introduced at novice level, the degree of difficulty in counter canter gradually increases through the levels, highlighting obedience and balance. If the horse isn't balanced in canter, they will either become more on the

forehand, lose clarity of rhythm, speed up, or fall out of canter altogether.

Counter canter is when the horse is cantering in a direction with the outside foreleg leading and poll flexion to the same side as the leading leg (in right canter with right flexion going to the left direction and vice versa). Your horse is ready to start schooling counter canter when they have a good quality canter and can lengthen and shorten the steps without loss of balance.

For the rider, mastering counter canter improves co-ordination and develops feel. In a right counter canter (where the horse is in right lead canter and in shoulder-fore right position, travelling in the left direction around the arena), the rider should maintain 'right' position with their right leg at the girth and hold the left leg back i.e. holding right canter aids on.

Horses initially find the concept of counter canter hard. They feel off balance and attempt to correct their balance by themselves, often becoming discombobulated. Give your horse time to learn, and balance will develop along with the straightness, strength, agility, and collection which comes with increased engagement and training.

Progression exercises for teaching counter canter include starting with a single shallow loop from the corner to the quarter line. Straighten for a few steps on the quarter line before using your 'inside' leg to turn back to the corner on the same side of the school. If in right canter, don't use the left rein

to turn back as this will unbalance the horse (and vice versa if in left canter). Next, progress the loop to the centre line (as described in the 2.3 dressage test), before moving on to the three loop serpentine with no change of lead, maintaining shoulder-fore position to the leading leg on the middle loop.

The next step is changing rein across the diagonal and proceeding around the short side in counter canter; or turn up the centre line and return to the track on the same side, maintaining the counter lead around the short side and back across the diagonal to the 'true' canter.

From here, whole laps in counter canter, changing the bend and flexion with no change of lead, and making bigger and smaller canter steps are great exercises to develop suppleness, helping to avoid negative tension when it's time to start the flying changes.

Other counter canter exercises that are equally beneficial include:

- When in counter canter, remain in shoulder fore (with the shoulders

of the horse closer to the wall than the haunches), with the rider in left position for left canter or right position for right canter, regardless of the direction.

- A good suppling exercise is counter canter in the renvers position.
- Another favourite exercise for elementary level horses and one which helps with advanced training later on, is to turn right canter onto the centre line and leg yield back to the long side to the right, keeping the horse's spine parallel to the long side and with flexion left at the poll. On approaching the long side, re-position the horse in shoulder-fore right (changing back to right flexion) and maintain right canter around the short side, coming back across the diagonal in medium canter and returning to 'true' canter (and all vice versa to the left).

The goal in all counter canter exercises

is to maintain the same quality as in 'true' canter; and these progressive exercises improve strength, suppleness, confidence and balance.

The straightening effects of counter canter cannot be overestimated. If your horse continually swings their haunches to the inside, you can take them into counter canter, using your 'outside leg' to straighten the horse's spine to be parallel with the long side. An important tip: if your horse offers an unaided flying change, never flying change back. Always walk and return to the counter lead, even if you have to repeat this ten times. If you correct an unaided flying change with a flying change, you will create a problem – your horse will absolutely change again and will not hold counter canter.

With systematic counter canter schooling, your horse will be calmer in their flying change training, and there will be less room for error in dressage tests up to Grand Prix level. 🐾



FEATURE

The horse herbalist

Angela Davison has had a long and fascinating career. She spoke to **AMANDA MAC** about her work as an equine herbalist.

Angela Davison, now a herbalist and equine practitioner with many years' experience, has always loved horses. She spent her first ten years in a small village near the border between England and Scotland, learned to ride when she was three, and was not too far off that age when she

became fascinated with the travelling gypsies who visited her village every year. Taking up residency on the village green for weeks at a time, they would pay knacker money for poor, sickly horses at the local sales, and then work their magic. Collecting herbs and flowers from nearby fields and hedgerows, they brewed up

remedies to treat the horses, who quickly became sleek, bright eyed and full of vitality before they were sold for much more than their original purchase price. "It was incredible, like a miracle," Angela recalls, and what she observed planted the seeds for what would later become her passion.

A keen show jumper, a bad accident put an end to that career when she was in her late teens. It took a year for her to recuperate, during which time there was a stint as a singer in a rock and roll band, after which she travelled to Australia. "I was just going to have a look around and then go back to the UK," she tells me, "but something felt very right for me here, so I stayed."

Initially, she worked in the music industry, but after 12 months horses drew her back in. "I started looking after Heath Harris's place while they were away doing films, and then I met Tommy Smith's breaker in Sydney." To cut a long story short,



ABOVE: Three liver cleansing herbs Angela frequently uses in her herbal preparations - 1) St Mary's Thistle; 2) Tinospora cordifolia, a vine indigenous to tropical regions of the Indian subcontinent; 3) Dandelion root.

Angela began working with racehorse trainers and became one of Australia's first licensed female jockeys. Her racing career included rides on Emancipation, Kingston Town and other track legends, several hundred wins, and of course, her fair share of spills: "But I had a chiropractor who also gave me herbs, so I was usually quickly back in the saddle," she adds.

Eventually Angela felt she had gone as far in the racing industry as she wanted, and decided it was time for a new path. She had always massaged and stretched horses, which had taught her a lot about their body mechanics. However, to develop her capabilities as an equine therapist and healer, which is what she was strongly drawn to, she decided to study herbal medicine and in 1987 graduated from Dorothy Hall's prestigious College of Herbal Medicine in Sydney. Intent on adding to her steadily expanding therapeutic toolbox, Angela next embarked on studies in Craniosacral

Therapy at Florida's Upledger Institute, followed by a course in the clinical science of mineral therapy, training in the Bowen Technique, and then Equine Muscle Release Therapy with Ali Goward.

For 12 years, Angela operated a busy mixed horse and human herbal practise, until in 2000, she decided to specialise in horses. Now with more than 30 years' experience as a full-time equine herbalist, she is a Fellow of the Australian Traditional Medicine Society, and a member of HATAA, the Holistic Animal Therapy Organisation. She has taught at TAFE, delivered herbal horsemanship courses, and to this day continues with her own studies, gathering even greater expertise along the way.

While herbal remedies have been used successfully for centuries, Angela's method of arriving at a formula appropriate for the horse she's treating is a little different. She has developed a system of hair analysis that is, as she

laughingly says, her point of difference.

And different it is – it's hair testing by holding a sample of horse hair in her hand. But before we go any further, let's address the elephant in the room. Angela's approach sounds a little woo-woo, right? However, although it might appear that way, it's important to keep a couple of things in mind. Firstly, quantum physics, the study of matter and energy at a subatomic level, has led the way for some remarkable advances (think lasers and quantum computing). But it has also revealed some mind-bending truths about the nature of reality, which quantum physicists believe may ultimately show that everything in the universe is connected through 'dimensions that our senses cannot comprehend'. Well, that's food for thought!

Secondly, Angela's methods work! So well in fact, that some veterinarians have recommended her to clients because although they're not sure how she gets



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results, they know that she does. As Angela says, "I have clients who have been with me for over 20 years who still don't understand how I do what I do, but they don't care because they get great results from the treatments."

Hair analysis is more usually carried out under a microscope, and detects problems such as heavy metal exposure and mineral imbalances. Angela's hair assessment technique, which she officially brought into her practice in 1998 after seven years spent working on and refining it, is more closely related to kinesiology, a modality she also studied and had for many years used in her practice with both humans and horses.

Simply put, kinesiology involves muscle testing as the practitioner asks a series of questions relevant to the person's wellbeing. Based on the premise that subconsciously we already know within ourselves what we need to bring about healing, kinesiology creates a biofeedback mechanism for identifying physical and psychological stressors within the body.

In a random 'aha' moment, it occurred to Angela that kinesiology and hair testing might work well together. Could she, she wondered, hold a sample of horse hair in her hand, ask a range of questions about the horse's wellbeing and intuit answers accurate enough to confidently blend together herbal preparations to benefit the horse?

And if that sounds a little out there, consider this: it worked! "In the beginning, I only dealt with horses that vets wanted to euthanise because they were in such poor health," she tells me. In most cases, the horses' wellbeing improved to the extent that still today, long after working on them, she receives messages from owners thanking her for all the extra years they wouldn't otherwise have had with their horses. "People need to know that there is another option. Many horses wouldn't be here today if their owners hadn't given me the opportunity to help them."

Angela offers a staged treatment program. Owners can begin with




ABOVE: Angela at work in her dispensary blending herbal remedies.

hair testing, which includes an initial investigation into their horse's wellbeing followed by a phone consultation. If they wish (and most do), they can move on to a full program of testing and treatment, in which Angela blends the herbs necessary to help remedy their horse's problem. Seven weeks later she retests to gauge the horse's progress and reassess the combination of herbs, followed by a final check at 15 weeks. She is also happy to advise owners which of her range of unique tried and true formulas might be most appropriate for their horse, whether or not the horse has been hair tested.

One thing that Angela is adamant about is that the success she has with her approach is the result of her continued study across an extensive range of healing modalities, coupled with many, many years' experience. She also points out the importance of using only the best quality herbs. "There are herbs and then there are herbs. All the herbs I

use are the highest grade, concentrated, practitioner only tinctures that go through strict Therapeutic Goods Administration testing in the same way as all orthodox drugs," she explains.

Over time, she has treated horses from every conceivable English and Western discipline, including Olympic and other well-known horses. Although professional confidentiality quite rightly prevents her from naming names, there are some glowing testimonials on her website from clients who swear by Angela's testing methods and her herbal preparations.

And if those methods are giving you pause for thought, keep in mind that as quantum physics has shown us, there's more to our universe than might otherwise meet the eye. 

Visit [The Horse Herbalist](http://TheHorseHerbalist.com.au) to learn more about Angela and her work.



VET VIBES

What you should know about sarcoids

Sarcoids, the most common skin tumour in horses, are non-malignant but should not be ignored. The team at **HUNTER EQUINE** explain.

Sarcoids, the most common type of tumour to affect horses worldwide, develop in the fibrous connective tissues under the skin. A form of skin cancer, they spread locally in the skin and sometimes to tissues beneath the skin. Although they do not spread to internal organs, they can be very invasive

and destructive and should not be treated lightly.

Sometimes confused with proud flesh, sarcoids can occur anywhere on the body but the most usual locations are the face, limbs, armpit, belly and groin areas - thin-skinned areas that are commonly traumatised and often the site

of fly bites. Areas that have previously been injured are especially vulnerable. Non-healing wounds (particularly those above the knee or hock) should be treated as suspicious and evaluated by your veterinarian. The tumour's location affects prognosis: sarcoids on the legs and around the eye have a lower chance of resolution and a higher risk of recurrence following treatment.

Sarcoids are more common in younger horses and in certain breeds. For example, Quarter Horses and stock horses are twice as likely as Thoroughbreds to be affected, while Standardbreds are half as likely as Thoroughbreds to develop the tumours. This is suggestive of a genetic or heritable component.

Although thought to be caused by bovine papilloma virus (BPV), a virus which causes warts in cattle, not every horse infected with BPV develops sarcoids. Some evidence, although far from conclusive, suggests BPV is spread by flies, and if combined with trauma and genetic factors, may play a role in the



LEFT & ABOVE LEFT: The face is one of the most usual locations for sarcoids to appear (Images courtesy APIAM). **ABOVE RIGHT:** Located on the shoulder, this sarcoid was surgically removed (Image courtesy Dr Doug English).

growth of the tumours. However, the virus requires genetically susceptible horses in order for sarcoids to develop, which is why not every horse exposed to the virus suffers from them, while those that are genetically susceptible are likely to keep developing them.

It is possible that sarcoids are spread contagiously, which has worried some people, but as yet, the transmission of sarcoids by either direct horse-to-horse contact or indirectly by flies remains unproven. Although parts of the virus (its DNA and protein) have been detected on flies, the infectious, whole virus has not. Some owners of sarcoid-affected horses have run into difficulties registering them at livery yards because of fears of transmission to other horses. But at present, there is no evidence to suggest that horses with sarcoids are a threat.

Once infected with BPV, it is likely that it will remain with the horse for life - once a sarcoid horse, always a sarcoid horse! As the genetic susceptibility also remains, horses that have been treated for sarcoids often get them again. BPV

in horses behaves in a similar way to the papilloma virus (which can cause cervical cancer in women) in people; the virus becomes incorporated into the DNA of infected skin cells and can cause those cells to transform into tumour cells.

Sarcoid subtypes

Occult: Flat patch of hair loss with a scaly surface. Similar to ringworm. Common on face, neck and between back legs. Earliest and least aggressive form.

Verrucous: Slow-growing, flat, scaly. Similar to occult but deeper and often more raised than occult tumours. Often appear as multiple lesions.

Nodular: Firm lumps under unbroken skin. Common around the groin and around the eyes.

Ulcerative: Large lumps with open, ulcerated wounds. Often have a stalk (pedicle) and are locally very invasive. Can invade into tissues deeper than the skin. Attractive to flies and infestation with maggots is common.

Mixed tumours: A combination of two or

more types of sarcoid forming a colony of tumours.

Malevolent: Most aggressive type. Infiltrate along fascial planes and blood vessels, grow rapidly and often have ulcerated areas with a high recurrence rate after removal.

Diagnosed based on their visual appearance, sarcoids can change subtype, usually after ineffective treatment, and may grow back more aggressively. However, a biopsy to confirm diagnosis of the tumour prior to its removal is usually avoided due to the risk of causing accelerated growth or the worsening of the tumour. Once removed, the tumour can be sent for analysis.

Unfortunately, there is no single treatment to cure all sarcoid types, and there is a risk that treatment may actually aggravate the sarcoid, stimulating it to enlarge and become more aggressive and invasive. The most important recommendation is to treat them when they are small and manageable. The bigger and more aggressive they become, the more difficult treatment

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becomes. Spontaneous regression has been documented, although this is very rare and more common in young horses. Get advice from your vet as soon as you notice a sarcoid, no matter how small.

Sarcoid treatments

Surgical excision: There is a 15-82% recurrence rate when used alone, and fronds of the tumour can be missed on excision. At 86%, electrosurgery has the best success rate.

Laser ablation: The laser vaporizes the tissue as it cuts, resulting in less damage to surrounding tissue and a reduced risk of spreading cancerous cells. Also reduces bleeding, swelling and pain, and depending on the location, size and number of tumours, can be done standing or under general anaesthesia. There's an 83% success rate when used alone, while combination therapy (chemotherapy, topical treatments or electrochemotherapy) increases success.

Cryotherapy: The rapid freezing and slow thawing of tissue which kills rapidly dividing tumour cells, while sparing normal cells. The success rate is very variable, and recurrence can be high. Multiple repeat treatments are required, which are slow and time-consuming.

Radiotherapy: A form of radiation therapy called brachytherapy is very successful. However, limitations include high cost; highly specialised and difficult to access equipment; and its potential danger for patients, personnel and clients. General anaesthesia is usually required.

Immunotherapy: BCG vaccine stimulates the immune system to eliminate the tumour. More effective for small tumours, tumours around the eyes, and nodular or ulcerative tumours. Local reactions can be very severe, and death from an anaphylactic reaction has been reported.

Autogenous tumour vaccine: Cryopreserved tumour tissue frozen from liquid nitrogen. Resolved in 68%; reduced in size in 94%; reduced in number 75%. Easy with minimal side effects.

Chemotherapy: Interferes with DNA copying in cells to prevent tumour cells replicating, and causes cell death. Can damage healthy tissue and should be



ABOVE: BCG vaccine is more effective for tumours around the eyes (Image courtesy APIAM).

used with caution over sensitive areas. These drugs cause inflammation, and the area often becomes sore and swollen as the sarcoids regress.

Cisplatin: injected into the tumour every 2-4 weeks for 4 treatments. Surgical removal of part/all of the tumour is helpful for larger tumours. Variable success rate.

Imiquimod: Immune modifier with antiviral and antitumour activity. Quite effective in reducing tumour size. A layer applied over sarcoid 2-3 times weekly for 2-4 months. Owners can apply this medication themselves (with gloves) and it can be used over sensitive areas. Severe reactions are not uncommon, and it can cause significant discomfort, making some horses difficult to treat. Clean and dry before application, wash off 8 hours after application.


AW4-LU (Liverpool Cream): 35% resolution rate reported, but significant scarring. Avoid on tumours close to the eye. Only veterinarians can apply this cream as it contains a chemotherapeutic drug (5-FU) and heavy metals which are dangerous if handled incorrectly.

Bloodroot (Xterra cream): There are few controlled studies and it can reportedly make sarcoids significantly worse.

Electrochemotherapy: Chemotherapy drugs with high voltage electric pulses

(electroporation). Increases penetration of the drug into cells by around 70 times. 90-100% resolution rates at four years. General anaesthesia required. Multiple treatments may be necessary.

A combination of treatments is recommended, especially with large, aggressive or multiple tumours – and while there are any number of alternative and home remedies available, speak to your veterinarian because irritation of sarcoids can lead to a significant worsening, including their spread or enlargement.

No preventative vaccine is currently available, although protection from flies may help. When purchasing a horse, it's vital to have your vet examine them carefully for sarcoids, which are likely to interfere with tack in the head or girth area, and if on the legs are liable to be traumatised during exercise. Sarcoids on the udder or in the groin region of a potential broodmare are also a problem, so consider carefully the expense of potential and repeated treatments, including prolonged recovery. 

Visit [Apiam Animal Health](https://www.apiam.com.au) to learn more about their extensive range of services.



FEATURE

Reducing recovery time

Recovery from exercise is as important as training and competition, and the recovery routine needs careful thought and planning, writes **DR JENNIFER STEWART**.

Preparation for the next work session begins as soon as the last one finishes, and the recovery routine needs as much thought and planning as the training program.

Recovery after exercise has different components: respiration, body temperature and heart rate all recover rapidly, while others such as the immune, digestive and musculoskeletal systems can take days or weeks.

Depending on exercise intensity, duration and recovery strategies, the

respiratory system and energy stores in the muscles and liver recover within 24–48 hours; digestive function within 2–3 days; hydration and electrolyte balance 5–7 days; muscle repair 7–10 days; up to 2 weeks for the immune system to recover; and 3–4 weeks for bone, tendon and joints to recover (assuming that there's no actual injury).

One of the first things we usually do after exercise is to allow the horse to cool down. What happens during this period? Body temperature, respiration,

heart rate and blood lactate return to normal. Monitoring skin and/or rectal temperature during recovery is important. The increase in body temperature depends on the workload and weather (temperature and humidity). To recover in mild, dry conditions may just require 15–20 minutes of walking. In warmer or humid weather we may need cold water, and in hot/humid conditions, ice water, showers, fans and misters.

It was once believed that cooling the large back muscles (gluteal and biceps muscles) caused muscular problems but cold water only affects skin temperature, not the deeper tissues. Rolling is also helpful for reducing heat load by transferring heat from the body to the ground and significantly reducing body temperature. Coat colour impacts body temperature with black hair absorbing twice as much heat as white/grey.

Cold water is more efficient for cooling than tap water. However, preparing cold water in hot and humid conditions requires a lot of ice or refrigeration. Recent studies leading up to the Tokyo Games compared several cooling

methods: 30 minutes walking; walking in front of fans producing an air current of 3.0 m/s; walking with the intermittent application of 10°C cold water with and without scraping; and standing the horse under a shower of tap water at 26°C. Standing still under a shower resulted in the most rapid decrease in core temperatures (9 minutes); walking produced little decrease over 30 minutes; walking plus fans 15 minutes; cold water without scraping 11 minutes, and with scraping 13 minutes. Continual application of running tap water offered the most effective method to decrease core temperature. The essential feature is not the water temperature or the use of scraping, but that the water temperature is lower than the body temperature.

After heavy, more intense exercise, cooling down requires different recovery strategies (refer to the chart on this page) as it results in lactic acid accumulation. Instead of walking, these horses often need 15 to 30 minutes trotting at 250 metres/minute at a heart rate of 100 to 120 beats to reduce acid levels.

As well as bringing in oxygen, the respiratory system is involved in body temperature regulation. Horses breathe 6–18 times per minute and move around 80 litres of air. This triples at the walk and may increase 10-fold, moving 1,800 litres per minute during exercise. When training matches the fitness level of a fit horse, this should return to 40–50 breaths per minute after 15 minutes recovery time. The heart rate is usually 4 times the respiratory rate and if respiration rate exceeds the heart rate, it needs investigation.

Heart rate recovery is an important measure of how well a horse is coping with the work. You want a horse to recover to a heart rate of 60–64 bpm within 15 minutes of recovery. Fit horses generally reach this level within 2 to 3 minutes, and at least within 10 minutes. Endurance and cross-country horses in good condition reach heart rates of up to 200 beats per minutes and recover to below 70 within 10 to 15 minutes.

Exercise level	Time/week	Gait	Heart rate average beats/minute	Discipline
Light	1 - 3 hours	40% walk, 50% trot, 10% canter	~80	Recreation, early training, showing
Moderate	3 - 5 hours	30% walk, 55% trot, 10% canter, 5% jumping or skill training	~90	Recreation, schooling, showing, polo
Heavy	4 - 5 hours	20% walk, 50% trot, 15% canter, 15% gallop/jumping	~110	Polo, low to medium eventing
Very Heavy	Over 6 hours	Speed work 1 hour/week + 6 to 12 hours slower work	~110 - 150	Racing, endurance, 3DE

ABOVE: Exercise levels, time, gait, heart rate and discipline (~ means approximately). **LEFT:** After intense exercise horses need undisturbed rest to aid their recovery.

If the heart rate doesn't recover, the horse might have worked too hard, be developing metabolic disturbances, dehydration, or musculoskeletal pain. Heart rate monitors provide real-time feedback on a horse's exertion level, helping you to avoid undertraining or overexertion. During recovery, they provide a key indication of the fitness level. A rapid return to resting heart rate (ideally reaching 120 bpm or less within 2 minutes post-exercise) signifies a high level of fitness and indicates the horse's readiness for subsequent training or competitions.

Walking during the cooling period allows muscle to relax and return to their normal resting length and tension. Stretching is also recommended as part of warm-up and cool-down routines, important for all horses especially those stalled or stabled. These horses do not have the opportunity to graze, flex, and extend joints through their full range of motion and if the exercise program isn't based on cross training many muscle groups may rarely be engaged, if at all. Anyone can learn to effectively and safely stretch a horse. Daily stretching can be too intensive for most horses, and three to five stretches, three to five times a week is ideal. Always start conservatively then gradually increase the length and the angle or height of the stretch, then the number of repetitions. Stretching after exercise reduces the risk of injury and promotes recovery

by counteracting stiffness and over-contraction after exercise. A good stretching routine can also improve heart rate recovery, muscle waste product removal, and lactic acid levels.

Food and water

During recovery, horses need to be allowed to drink and have access to electrolytes to rehydrate as soon as they finish exercise. Allowing them to drink even if they are hot and breathing hard doesn't increase the risk of colic or laminitis. On the other hand, dehydration slows the clearance of mucus from the airways, can exacerbate conditions such as equine asthma, and when combined with dry feed can increase the risk of an impaction colic or choke.

Because sodium is needed to move water into the cells, providing water alone to a horse with electrolyte imbalances will only further dehydrate them. However, adding salt to drinking water should be done sensibly and with great care. Trials have found that horses have an abrupt 15–50% reduction in water intake the first day high sodium water is given. Do not exceed 30g of salt per 5 litres of water and always provide separate plain water.

There are plenty of other electrolytes (potassium and chloride) in roughage, and lucerne is high in calcium. Extra magnesium may be needed. Soaked hay can also increase water intake, but a mineral supplement and extra salt must be added. Large quantities of

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electrolytes are lost in the process of soaking, but are retained in steamed hay. Rehydration also improves appetite and digestion, and refuelling the muscles requires water and electrolytes. The muscles also require nutrients that support the anti-oxidant defence system, and amino acids to repair and rebuild muscle tissue.

To optimise recovery once heart rate, body temperature and breathing have settled, it's important that horses have unlimited access to forage. The digestive system is exposed to increased heat during exercise. Combined with the redistribution of blood flow away from the gut to the muscles and skin (especially during hot/humid conditions), the gut biome and digestive function can be compromised during recovery. Forage, beet pulp, and soymeal are excellent prebiotics, and support digestive function.

After exercise, swelling of the fetlock area is common. Also known as 'stocking-up' it is more common in confined than paddocked horses. Walking is important as lack of physical activity after exercise delays recovery. There are many ways to assist recovery of the lower legs. Hosing with cold water or a spa for 10–20 minutes two to three times a day, and ice boots, wraps or placing the limb in a bucket of ice water for 20-30 minutes two to three times daily, help reduce inflammation and pain.

Correctly applied wraps and bandages exert gentle compression promoting movement of excess fluid from the soft tissues back into the lymphatic system and bloodstream. Ensure the leg is not wrapped too tightly and check the response after a couple of hours. Sweat bandages and poultices (applied over several days, 12 hours on/12 hours off) often include DMSO, Vaseline, mineral oil, Epsom salts, bentonite and glycerine, and help to reduce swelling.

Sometimes overlooked in recovery is undisturbed rest, especially after travelling, intense exercise (cross country in a three-day competition), or



ABOVE: Integral to riding and competing is supporting your horse's recovery.

after each day in multi-day competitions. Horses can only achieve proper sleep when lying down. They are able to sleep standing up due to the specialised stay apparatus in their legs, but they only enter deep REM sleep when lying down with their head on the ground.

In horses, sleep occurs in cycles or episodes of five minutes light sleep followed by five minutes of deep REM, then five minutes more of slow wave sleep. The usual sleep pattern for horses takes three to five hours per day, mostly between midnight and 5:00am.

Adult horses can't maintain longer than 15 minutes in full lateral recumbency because the weight of the abdominal contents compromises respiration.

During exercise there are intricate processes and changes occurring throughout the body systems. As a general rule, the harder/more intense and/or longer the exercise, the longer the recovery period needed. Inadequate recovery leads to stress, and health and behavioural changes. Understanding how to support recovery is an integral part of training, riding and competing. ◻

Dr Jennifer Stewart BVSc BSc PhD is an equine veterinarian, CEO of Jenquine and a consultant nutritionist in Equine Clinical Nutrition.

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ABOVE: On the way to two big wins at the Hi Form Autumn Dressage Championships (Image by Equisoul Photography).

LEFT: At the 2023 Home & Acreage Summer Dressage Championships (Image by James Abernethy Photography).

LIFE AFTER RACING

Living his best life

Afterlife wasn't a racetrack star, but when he partnered with Jess Morrison, he found a new way to shine, writes **AMANDA MAC**.

Jess Morrison's introduction to horses began on her third birthday when she was presented with not one, but two Shetland ponies. She still owns the Shetlands – a mare, now 24, and her

20-year-old daughter - to this day. "They're my little soul animals," she says, "they're beautiful."

Although Jess's mum, who herself had been a keen horsewoman, taught Jess

the basics, Jess didn't do much riding until she joined her local Pony Club in 2015, where the then 14-year-old tried out all the disciplines on the Australian Stock Horse she owned at the time.

Next in line for Jess was Alley Cat, a Connemara cross Thoroughbred mare with a mind of her own. "When she first arrived, she was really headstrong. But we got her going nicely and I started competing in jumping with her in 2017," Jess says. But it was after more than a few nasty spills that Jess later decided the sport wasn't for her.

Another deciding factor in that scenario was Jess's discovery of a different discipline. She had begun having lessons with well-known dressage rider, coach, and judge Christine Sievers, and was hooked on the sport. "The more I learned, the

more I excelled at it, and the more I loved it," she says.

Around this time Afterlife (aka Barney) arrived on the scene. It was 2020. COVID had changed our collective way of life and with time on her hands, Jess thought that another horse, "a bit of a project pony" would be a good idea. After a visit to [McMaster Family Performance Horses](#), Acknowledged Retainers in Racing Victoria's excellent [Off the Track](#) program, she settled on Afterlife, her very first OTT horse. "Barney was everything I had been looking for. He's so willing to please and I've learned so much from him," she says.

Despite his distinguished bloodline – he was sired by Dalakhani (IRE) out of Heaven Instead (AUS) – Afterlife's track performance was lacklustre

and he was retired in 2020 after two unimpressive starts. But a new career path was about to change all that. "To start with I just did a little bit at home with him. Then after lockdown there was an occasional Pony Club rally, or an occasional lesson but I wasn't getting out and about with him much. I was still competing on Alley Cat because I was trying out for the Pony Club Nationals with her, and I was also doing Young Riders" Jess explains.

But in 2021, Barney and Jess did their first Pony Club show together. Barney went well, to the point where Jess wanted to be able to take both horses to competitions. However, there was a problem. Due to a personality clash, Alley Cat and Barney could not be floated together. "So, I had to make a choice, and because I was thinking

of buying a Warmblood, I decided to sell Alley Cat and work on Barney for another six months before selling him and putting the money towards the Warmblood, which I thought would be my dream dressage horse," Jess tells me.

All well and good in theory, but then Jess took Barney to a dressage lesson with Christine. When she told her coach that she planned to sell Barney, Christine was horrified: "She was like, 'You're not selling him. He's got so much potential'," Jess laughs, "and that was the start of our journey together."

And Jess would be the first to tell you that it's been quite the journey: "When I first took Barney to Pony Club, someone said I wasn't going to get anywhere with him because he was

such a plain looking horse. But he's gone to more places than you would ever have imagined. He stands out too, I think. He used to look all legs before he put on a bit of weight. Now he's much better proportioned and his top line has improved so much."

It would seem that Barney has taken to dressage with much the same enthusiasm as Jess. In the Equissage Victorian Amateur Owner Rider Dressage Championships held at Boneo last September, they placed 5th out of 30 combinations in the Novice 2.3 with a personal best score of 69.286%, scoring 65% to finish 9th overall in the Novice Championship and earning Barney the title of Novice OTT Champion, his first trophy rug, and \$200 in prize money. Additionally, they finished 3rd in Racing Victoria's Off The Track Dressage series Novice division that same year.

But the icing on the cake of an exciting year came when Jess received a call from Equestrian Victoria, letting her know that Barney had been named one of three finalists for the Equestrian Victoria 2023 OTT Dressage Horse of the Year Award. "I was in utter shock and I started crying," Jess tells me. "It was just so exciting to be recognised in that way."

And from there, the pair's progress has been quite phenomenal. At last month's Autumn Dressage Championships held at Boneo Park, they were Off The Track Novice Dressage Series Champions and Overall Novice Champions (not bad for a long-legged horse that wasn't going to get anywhere!) with some impressive scores: 1st place out of 16 competitors with 71.12% in Saturday's Novice 2.2; 1st out of 11 with 70.782% in Sunday's 2.2; and 1st out of 9 with 71.643% in Sunday's 2.3. And let's not forget their very first Elementary 3.1 where they placed 6th out of 13 with a score of 64.78%. Taking home around



ABOVE: Taking 3rd place in the 2022-2023 Racing Victoria Off The Track Novice Dressage Series (Image by Tania Morrison).

BELOW: Racing Victoria's 2024 Off The Track Novice Dressage Series Champions and Overall Novice Champions (Image by Tania Morrison).

\$1,000 in prize money from that outing alone, Jess reckons it's safe to say that Barney has now won more prize money from dressage than he ever did in his racing career!

Jess and Barney have successfully competed against more experienced riders and horses (some of them Warmbloods) and yet have still achieved remarkable results, so what's next? "With two scores over 71%, I need one more to be eligible for a Novice Bronze Medallion. So short term, I'd like to achieve that. Also, Barney and I did our first Elementary dressage test last month at Boneo, so I would like to try and get out and do some more Elementary," Jess says.

And with potential to burn, you can't help but think that the best is yet to come. 🐾



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NUTRITION

Body conditioning: what's the score?

Too fat, too thin, just right? Determining a healthy weight for your horse can be confusing. Equine nutritionist **LEISA HOFSTETTER** has some food for thought.

When assessing your horse's body condition, it is important to adopt a somewhat different approach. Often, we will have a well-formed idea of what a healthy horse looks like, but if we break this down into individual areas of the horse's body and what that all means, we may find that

the horse is actually not as healthy as we thought. Then how should we assess body condition to get an accurate picture of our horse's overall wellbeing? This is where body condition scoring can help. In the early 1980s, Don Henneke, an equine scientist in the USA, developed a standardised scale system for

assessing equine body condition. This system is still used by equine scientists and horse owners today. Called the Henneke Body Condition Scoring System (BCS), it allows everyday horse owners to make an informed assessment of their horse's body condition with the aim of improving their health and wellbeing.

One of the things that makes the Henneke System so accessible is that no technical equipment is needed to carry out the scoring. Instead, the horse is assessed by palpating (feeling with your hands) and a visual evaluation.

The objective is to quantify, or put a score on, the amount of fat tissue as opposed to the amount of lean tissue or muscle. In order to do this objectively, individual parts of the body often associated with fat deposits, or the lack thereof, are assessed, then the scores are averaged for the final result.

The areas assessed in the Henneke system are behind the shoulder, the tail



NUTRITION

TOP: The six assessment points in the Henneke Body Condition Scoring System (BCS).

LEFT: It is critical to differentiate between fat and muscle when conducting a BCS assessment.

head, ribs, wither, the back top line, and the crest of the neck. One of the most common indicators of an obese horse or pony is a 'cresty' neck, so termed because the fat deposited along the top of the neck just under the mane actually changes the shape of the neck, giving the appearance of a crest.

On completion of the BCS assessment, the horse is assigned a number from one to nine based on the collective observations of each of the six areas of the body. The healthy weight range for horses is generally accepted to be from four to six:

1: Poor

Poor horses with a score of one are in a dangerously thin condition. They appear extremely emaciated at all six assessment points, with no fat tissue felt whatsoever. Bones protrude visibly at every assessment point and the bone structure itself is easily noticeable. The horse may be lethargic and/or depressed.

2: Very thin

Very thin horses appear emaciated.

There will be limited fat felt along the spine, but the vertebrae will still be visibly protruding. You will be able to faintly see the bone structure around the neck, shoulders and wither. The ribs of the very thin horse are clearly visible, as is the tail head, and the points at the hip and the buttock.

3: Thin

The thin horse has a slightly visible neck, shoulder and wither structure. The ribs can still easily be seen, but there is a slight fat covering over them. Fat covers halfway up the sides of the spine, but again, the spine is visible. The bones at the point of buttock can't be seen, but the bones at the point of hip, although rounded, will protrude. The tail head is also more rounded than in extremely to very thin horses, but still protrudes.

4: Moderately thin

The neck, shoulders and wither of the moderately thin horse are not obviously thin. A faint outline of the ribs is visible and the back has a peaked appearance.

At the moderately thin score, the prominence of the point of hip, point of buttock and tail head can depend on the individual horse's conformation. For example, Arabians and some Thoroughbreds often have protruding tail heads even at a score of five. The point of the hip at the moderately thin score is usually not visible.

5: Moderate (optimum)

The moderate horse's neck and shoulder blends smoothly into their body. The wither looks nicely rounded and the back is level, with no crease. Ribs cannot be seen, but should be easy to feel. The beginnings of spongy fat deposits can be felt around the tail head.

6: Moderately fleshy

In the moderately fleshy horse, fat deposits have begun at the crest of the neck, wither and behind the shoulder. The fat covering over the ribs feels spongy, but the fat around the tail head feels soft. A slight crease or groove may be seen along the back.



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Images by *Manning Photography*



ABOVE: Arabians and some Thoroughbreds often have protruding tail heads even at a BCS score of 5.

7: Fleshy

The fleshy horse has unmistakable fat deposited along the crest of the neck, wither and behind the shoulder. The ribs can still be felt, but the fat deposits between the ribs are easily distinguishable and easy to find. There may be a noticeable crease or groove down the back. The fat around the tail head is quite soft.

8: Fat

The fat horse has noticeable fat on the crest of the neck as well as general thickening of the neck. Fat is clearly deposited over the wither and shoulder to the point where muscle is not able to be felt. The ribs are difficult to discern underneath a layer of fat. There is a definite crease down the back and the tail head fat covering is very soft.

9: Extremely fat

The extremely fat horse has bulging fat on the crest of the neck, shoulder and wither. There is an obvious crease down the back and fat deposits on the flank,

as well as bulging patches of fat on the ribs and tail head.


Do the maths

Once you have assessed the six areas of your horse and allocated each one a score, add the six numbers together and then find the average by dividing by six. This final figure is the horse's body condition score. It is important to note that different breeds have different conformations, and to account for this in the assessment process.

Also critical is that the difference between fat and muscle is distinguished when conducting the assessment. For example, many Quarter Horses bred for cutting have a lot of muscle on their rump and in other areas, and can look overweight because of this. However, it is never normal for a horse to have too much fat deposited anywhere on their body, no matter what breed they are, or how well accepted this might be by some in the equestrian community.

Although there are numerous detrimental effects arising from a horse

being underweight, many of these are reversible as the horse gains weight up to a healthy score. By contrast, chronic obesity in horses often results in more permanent problems, even after the horse has reached a healthy weight. These issues may include laminitis (founder), equine metabolic syndrome and/or insulin resistance.

Being either underweight or overweight can have a detrimental effect on your horse's health and wellbeing, so it's important to assess their body condition objectively. The Henneke System gives you an easy-to-use tool to do just that. Once you have an average score, you can make informed decisions about feeding regimes and if you're in any doubt, contact your equine nutritionist to enlist their expert help. 

Leisa Hofstetter is an equine nutritionist offering ration analysis, designer diets and customised mineral supplements. She can be found at HofEquine.com, or email hofequine@gmail.com.



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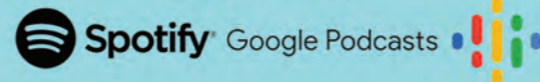


We speak to Ashley Copping

Ashley is the Marketing Coordinator for Kentucky Equine Research's Australasian network. Actively involved in the eventing and dressage worlds for many years, she is an eventing TD and CD, as well as the Director of Naracoorte Horse Trials, and Arena Manager at the Australian International 3DE.



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The Air's Dressage Edition Stirrup from [Freejump](#).

Flex-On Green Composite Stirrups with Inclined Ultra Grip are designed with an elastomer-based shock-absorption system to aid in reducing muscle and joint fatigue. The frames and stirrup leather slots are offset, reducing stress on the rider's joints and offering an improved connection with the horse. The green composite range is designed with naturally-sourced polyamide with a steel core to provide optimum flexibility.



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PROPERTY

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Welcome to Aylesbury Manor, an exquisite equestrian estate featuring two grand homes on just over 50 elevated acres. The embodiment of luxury country living, this deluxe horse property is a dream come true.

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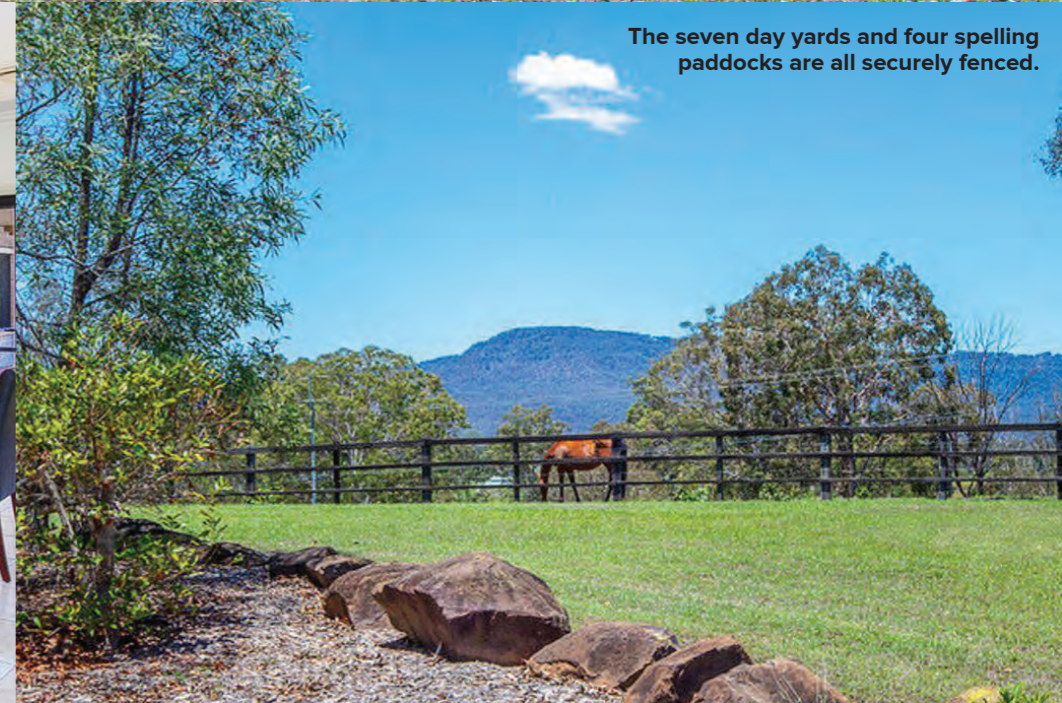
The main family home, a generous 746sqm, is spectacular. With soaring cathedral ceilings, abundant natural light, and four spacious bedrooms, plus a grand master suite with walk-in wardrobe, it's luxury all the way. Immerse yourself

in the movie theatre, take a dip in the stunning pool, or simply enjoy the manor's immaculate gardens.

At 250sqms, the second two-bedroom European style home includes a comfortable lounge with access to the verandah, while the open plan kitchen and dining area features a breakfast bar, and stainless steel electric oven and cooktop.



Soaring cathedral ceilings and abundant natural light are a feature of the main family home.



The seven day yards and four spelling paddocks are all securely fenced.

And it doesn't end there. Aylesbury Manor is also a superbly equipped horse property. The stables have been crafted with the finest in European design, seamlessly blending elegance with functionality. The stable complex includes six 4x4 stables and a tack room. There's a vet crush, a round yard, seven day yards and four spelling paddocks, all with shelters. Waterers are fed by the

damn, and all the paddocks are securely enclosed with electric fencing.

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