

MAY 2024

# EQUUS RIAN HUB magazine

Masterclass  
Off the track  
success

Nicole Tough  
Understanding  
collection

Feeding for  
winter

What you should know

An epic trek

Riding New Zealand's  
South Island





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**On the Cover**  
Godolphin Cross Country Masterclass participant Julie Bramucci congratulates OTTB Rafiki Epic Deal on a job well done (Image by [Michelle Terlato Photography](#)).



## 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. In this issue she speaks to Karolin van Onna and Nicole KumpfmueLLer about their remarkable 1,500 kilometre trek on horseback. She also had the pleasure of speaking with veterinarian Dr Jennifer Stewart, to learn more about her long and fascinating career.



### 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. This month, Nicole shares her expert advice on collection and how to understand it.

### Nicole KumpfmueLLer

Nicole has always loved horses, riding and adventure, making her the perfect partner for Karolin van Onna on their epic two-woman trek along the length of New Zealand's South Island. In her day job she is a specialist rope access technician and supervisor, and thinks nothing of high rise abseiling as she works on the outside of Brisbane city's tallest buildings.



### Dr Jennifer Stewart

Readers of *Equestrian Hub* will know Jen has contributed many excellent articles to this magazine. Her knowledge on a broad range of equine related topics is extensive, and is the product of a lifetime's experience. Over the years, her career has led her down some extraordinary roads, both in Australia and overseas. In this issue she shares a slice of her life, which makes for fascinating reading.



### 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.



### Larissa Bilston B.AgrSc (Hons)

Larissa 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 winter feeding for health and immunity, and the importance of making changes to your horse's feeding program in the colder months.



### Dr Lauren Jordan BVSc (Hons) MS DACVS-LA

Lauren graduated in 2011 and interned at Agnes Banks Equine Clinic. She later completed a Masters degree in the USA before returning to ABEC in 2017. She is board certified with the American College of Veterinary Scientists in Large Animal Surgery, and has a special interest in upper airway, lameness, and orthopaedic surgery. Her informative article on splints is essential reading.



**Rider:** Jeremy Janjic

**Horse:** Django of Cacharel

**Event:** Equitana 2016

**Location:** Melbourne, Australia

**Camera & Settings:** Canon EOS7D 70-200mm Lens ISO 1000 f 2.8 1/800 sec

**Challenges:** This image of Jeremy and Django was taken early in my career and looking back on it, I think I would have changed a few things. The main arena at Equitana did not have great lighting for fast action photography, and combined with a black horse this was not an easy shot to capture. However, the photo was taken at a walk at the end of their dressage test as they were farewelling the crowd. Fortunately, the pace was slow, allowing my inexperience to be overlooked, but if I re-shot it now I would have a much faster shutter speed and a higher ISO to account for the light and movement.

**Why this shot is special:** I still find it hard to look at this photo, made all the more special as Django recently passed away at the age of 23, without getting a lump in my throat. Jeremy and Django's wonderful partnership had finally come to an end. Django was retiring and he performed his Grand Prix dressage test, his 'last dance', to an appreciative crowd. Many there had tears in their eyes, and it's obvious Jeremy is fighting back tears of his own while absorbing every moment of this special occasion.

I think the final say should go to Django's owner Lynn Jenkin: "I love this photo. Jeremy fighting back (and losing) the tears. Django walking along on the snaffle like he always did. Such a joy of a horse," and to Jeremy: "We chose to retire you at the 2016 Equitana Grand Final as you had done so much and earned a nice retirement. It was a very special send off. I still cry to this day thinking of that week." What a memory to capture! 🐾

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



## BEHIND THE SHOT

# Jeremy Janjic

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.



**LEFT & ABOVE:** In collection, there is more bending of the hindlegs during the phase of weight bearing and this provides propulsion (Image on left by Christy Baker Photography, on right by EK Photography).



**HANGING TOUGH**

# More energy, more passion, more footwork

What does collection mean to you? It's an important feature of training that **NICOLE TOUGH** believes needs to be properly understood.

Collection at the walk, trot and canter is the result of successfully training your horse through the first five steps of the Training Scale. There are many developmental stages of collection, and each stage requires tremendous effort from the horse. It's the quality of collection that gives them the power and balance to perform the difficult dressage movements required at higher levels.

The increased strength needed for collection is a positive side effect of

correct work with mindful training. It happens throughout the ride - not just with any exercise. Over time the layers of collection are established; beginning at elementary level, with the turn on the haunches in walk, shoulder-in and travers in trot, and simple changes in canter, all requiring more loading/compression of the hindleg i.e. collection.

From here we should progress through the levels, based on the quality of the improved balance, strength and collection of the horse - not just because

our horses can do the movements. Movement oriented riders tend to think that if their horse can do a flying change, they are a medium level dressage horse. Being ready for a level is not about the movements, but more about the ability of the rider to connect their horse and show three balanced gaits with the appropriate level of collection for the movements required at each level.

To feel the effect of collection, imagine walking, trotting and cantering over trot rails on the ground. The horse's increased ground focus will lift the muscles of their chest, under-neck, withers and back, as they take more heightened steps to go over the rails. This is what collected gaits feel like.

Collection shows the development and increasing ability of the horse to lower and engage the haunches for the benefit of the lightness and mobility of the forehand, a shift in balance which improves their ease and carriage.

It's all about the division of labour between the front and hind legs. In collection, there is more bending of the hindlegs during the phase of weight

bearing and this provides propulsion. The long muscles beneath the skin on either side of the spine assist in the lifting action of the back, elevating the shoulders and withers, and allowing the forelimbs to control speed, turn the body, and assist in balance adjustments. The net effect of lowering the haunches and raising the withers is a more uphill inclination (collection). As the degree of collection increases through the levels and self-carriage improves, the back muscles are increasingly recruited to lighten the forehand.

When the horse isn't strong enough to perform the movements in the required collection, they will find alternate ways to evade and compensate: becoming crooked, hollow, tight in the back, losing rhythm, leaning on the hand, tilting or nodding in the contact, and retracting their tongue to name a few. Why do they evade? Because it's hard. We are asking them to lift and engage the muscles of the back, fold their haunches more under their centre of gravity, and take more weight behind. We can liken it to doing squats in the gym; the higher the level of collection, the deeper we squat.

To achieve collection, a complete understanding of the seat, leg and rein aids is required – both their independency and interaction. Of the three natural aids the seat is the most under-utilised, but is the most important in achieving collection. The seat aid encompasses the rider's upper legs, pelvic girdle, trunk (abdomen and chest) and elbows. To collect the horse, these combine to channel energy upwards instead of forwards.

Without effective seat aids, riders use their reins to attempt collection, thereby blocking the back, interfering with the quality of the gait and confusing the horse. Ever tried to pedal a bike with the hand brake on? That's what collecting a horse without the seat aids is like.

The seat, leg and rein aids each have a job to do and they also have to work together as a team. It is the seat aids' job to shorten the steps, it is the leg aids' job to create energy, and it is the rein aids' job to manage the frame.

A few helpful exercises include:

- Going from walk to halt without the rein aids

- Mastering the half-halt in walk, trot and canter
- To achieve greater bending of the hocks and some heightened steps, from working trot use the seat aids to ask for smaller trot steps while at the same time tapping the horse lightly on top of the croup in time with the trot
- Count how many working canter steps down the long side between K and H, then try again, this time adding two to three more canter steps.
- Collecting the canter to the speed of walk, and then asking for walk with the seat aids. Any trot step or change of weight in the hand means the horse used their head and neck to achieve the transition. Repeat with the aim of improvement.

Anyone wanting to transform themselves in the gym knows it takes time, dedication and discipline. The same goes for the dressage horse. There are no short cuts to Grand Prix - we have to take the steps. 🐾



FEATURE

# A life less ordinary

Dr Jennifer Stewart studied hard to become a vet, and her career has taken her down a few unexpected roads, as **AMANDA MAC** discovers.

**D**r Jennifer Stewart has earned a number of impressive qualifications: a Bachelor of Veterinary Science, a Bachelor of Science, and, to put the finishing touches to a successful time in academia, a PhD.

Since then, she has been a practicing equine veterinarian and nutritionist, working with horses, their owners, trainers, breeders and other vets in

locations across the globe, including the UAE, Bahrain, Oman, South Africa, Botswana, Japan, India, New Zealand, Ireland, China, the Philippines and Korea.

For ten years she was a Senior Veterinary Officer with the Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, and was a Biosecurity Veterinarian with the ACT Government for a further two years. With such a varied

and unusual background, Jen has some interesting tales to tell, beginning in New Zealand when her grandfather, a farrier, sat her on one of his ponies, which was the beginning of her life-long passion and fascination with horses.

Following a move to Australia with her family, first to Adelaide and then to Wollongong, Jen got her first horse. "Our neighbours in Wollongong were selling a horse and I saved up to buy it. I was just smitten," she recalls. Next stop on the family's Australian travels was Canberra, where Jen, by then in her early teens, was gifted an older mare who was in foal. "When she foaled, that was it! That was the start of my love of foals and my interest in them," she recalls.

After graduating with her veterinary degree, she worked in mixed practice for a year before returning to Sydney Uni to begin her PhD. "Initially my thesis was going to focus on problems in performance horses. But at the time

**ABOVE:** Hoof wall surgery at Silver Pines Veterinary Clinic in the NSW's Southern Highlands.

**LEFT:** At the Al Ameri Raha Ranch in Al Wathba, Abu Dhabi in 2007 (All images courtesy of Dr Jennifer Stewart).

there were more grants available for foal research, so my supervisor suggested we look at newborn foals instead." No hardship for Jen, who opted to research cardiopulmonary function in newborn foals, which she says, involved "a lot of pregnant mares and late nights."

Completing her PhD in 1982, Jen married, had children, and for ten years operated a very successful practice on the NSW's Central Coast, looking after horses for many well-known equestrians, including the Roycrofts and Heath Harris, and servicing an area that stretched from the Central Coast to Newcastle and Cessnock. "Eventually I sold the practice because being on call and working all the time wasn't really helpful for the children," she tells me.

A new opportunity came knocking when Sam Rutherford, one of Jen's old clients, called. "Sam was involved in the Mitavite feed company, which was based on the Central Coast, and he asked me

to come and work as their nutritionist," she explains. With her veterinary career temporarily on hold, she had been studying for a diploma in scientific publishing and editing. So, working three days a week with Mitavite proved to be the ideal alternative, allowing her to reconnect with her passion while still being there for her four children. The research, study, and the conferences she attended rapidly expanded her knowledge of equine nutrition, and by the end of her eight-year stint with the company, her expertise was well honed.

It was during this time that Jen's marriage ended. "It was really difficult. Mitavite had quite a big international market and I had to travel to Turkey, the Middle East, Bahrain, Japan, Korea, Africa, New Zealand and all sorts of places, so it was a pretty tough few years," she recalls.

There were some humorous moments, however. On a work trip to Turkey, Jen decided to go for an early morning run

and got completely lost. She found a police station and tried to explain that she was in the country working with horses and needed to get back to her hotel. Thanks to the language barrier, the officers concluded that Jen was a jockey who had fallen from her horse and had concussion. One of Jen's Turkish colleagues still likes to tease her that the police haven't stopped searching for the horse that got away!

By the time 2007 rolled around, equine influenza (EI) had arrived in Australia. Jen enlisted with the Department of Agriculture and began swabbing, vaccinating and microchipping horses as part of the eradication program. In an unfortunate accident, she was kicked in the back by an irritated mare, fracturing two of her vertebrae. Bleeding and in shock, she asked a young assistant to drive her to hospital. After a near collision at a roundabout, Jen discovered the young man was still on his learner plates



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**LEFT: Inspecting weanlings at a farm in Pune, India. RIGHT: Viewing yearlings at Katsumi Yoshida's Northern Farm in Abira Hokkaido, Japan.**

and, fractures notwithstanding, decided it was safer to drive the rest of the way herself!

Desperate times call for desperate measures, and Jen often found herself testing horses and ponies on backcountry properties, surrounded by corrugated iron, discarded fridges, and rusting cars. "There were some creepy places where you could hear Dueling Banjos playing as you arrived," she jokes.

One thing led to another and Jen took up a job offer from the Department of Agriculture in Canberra, where she joined a task force developing an E1 risk assessment protocol to establish from which countries Australia would still accept horses, and the quarantine measures necessary for any horse arriving here. "Then we were sent to inspect pre-export quarantine facilities around the world, where we watched to ensure swabs were being taken correctly, that their laboratories were using best practice, the staff were properly trained, and that the appropriate biosecurity procedures were in place – we were checking on all the possible infection control risk factors," Jen tells me. "We also did a couple of trips back on planes with horses to see how the quarantine

requirements were managed." The responsibility was considerable.

After a decade with the Department, monitoring biosecurity protocols for horses, pigs, birds and other animals in Australia, England, Ireland and New Zealand, it was time to move on, and Will Andrews, then the ACT's Chief Veterinary Officer, needed someone to do farm biosecurity. "So Will and I visited all the farms and the primary producers around Canberra checking for worm resistance, or if animals had died, to work out why."


But Jen's passion for equine nutrition had never left her. For years she had been involved with the research and nutritional management of conditions such as calcium deficiency, laminitis, developmental orthopaedic diseases, colic, and tying-up, and had developed premium formulas for studs, trainers and feed companies – all of which eventually came together in Jenquine, her very successful equine supplement company which she runs with her partner Derek Major, the founder of Agnes Banks Equine Clinic.

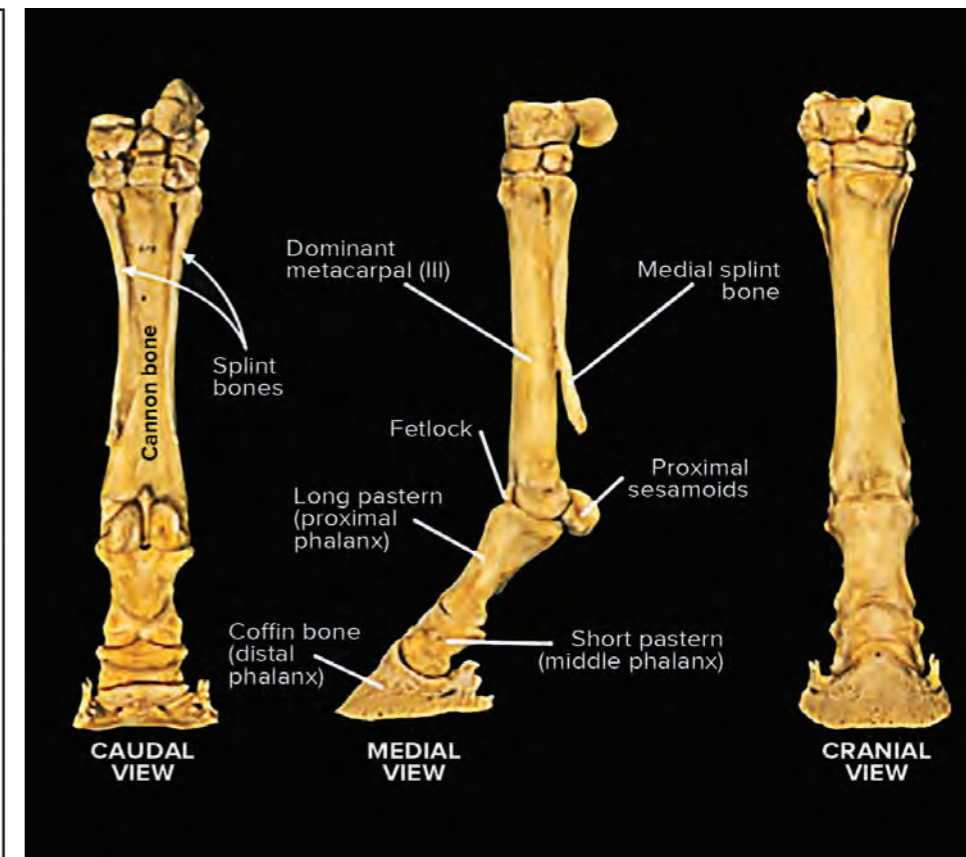
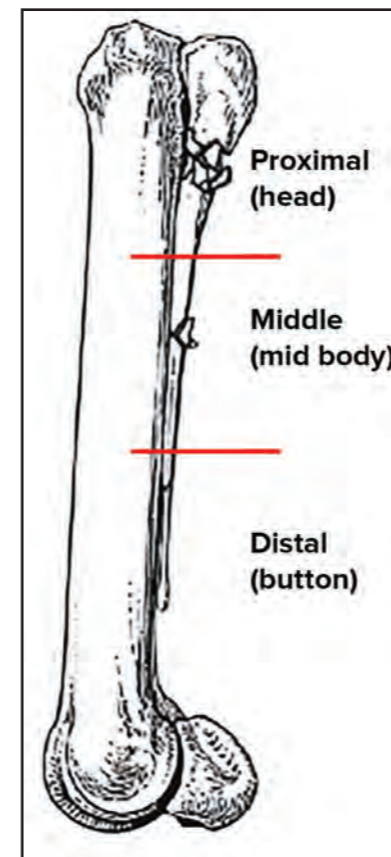
As a result, Jen's focus has moved away from hands-on veterinary practice. "Most of my work now comes from vets who

have a horse with an issue, whether it's laminitis, myofibrillar myopathy, tying-up, poor performance, foal leg diseases and so on. After they've done all their tests and diagnostics, they'll ask me to look at the horse's diet - and that's now the focus for most of my data analysis."

Jen is particularly concerned by the confusion she sees in the equine nutrition space, and offers one of many such examples: "I was looking at the diet of an eight-month-old Warmblood that had osteochondritis dissecans in their stifles. It turned out the owner had been told to feed the foal the same amount required by a mature horse! Because of their sugar and starch levels some of these feeds are really dangerous for younger horses, particularly in those quantities."

Although it has led to a wealth of fascinating experiences, in Jen's estimation her life hasn't been carefully planned. "Well, I've just followed my passion, I haven't really had a career path," she explains. "But then I suppose there aren't many people who have ridden on the beach with the Oman Royal Cavalry at six in the morning."

True that! Which all goes to show that there's a lot to be said for living a life a little less ordinary. 



**ABOVE LEFT: Fig. 1** The anatomical divisions of the splint bone. **ABOVE RIGHT: Bones of the leg** (Images courtesy APIAM). **LEFT: Swelling over the affected splint bone and surrounding area is usually sore to palpate.**

VET VIBES

## Fractures and exostoses of the splint bone

They're small, but they play an important support role in your horse's leg. **DR LAUREN JORDAN** discusses splint bone injuries and their treatment.

**H**ave you ever heard your vet say that your horse has 'popped a splint' or that they have a splint fracture and thought what on earth does that mean? The splint bones are small vestigial bones that run along the inside and outside of the cannon bone in each leg. Whilst comparatively small, they are

important bones in the support structure of the horse's carpus (knee) and hocks. Lengthways from top to bottom, the splint bones can be divided into three regions: proximal - the head; middle - the mid body; or distal - the button (see Fig.1). The two main types of injuries we

see with these bones are from traumatic injuries, causing a fracture or an exostoses (generally known as a splint).

Fractures of the splint bone can occur anywhere along the length of the bone and are most common in the lateral splint bones (which are on the outside of the limb), as these are the areas more exposed to kicks and other traumas. In contrast, exostoses or splints tend to occur more often in the medial splint bone (especially in the front limb) and can be related to poor conformation, working on hard surfaces or trauma.

### Splint bone exostoses

Exostoses can be acute or insidious in onset depending on their cause. The condition is an inflammatory reaction in the bone and periosteum (the membrane covering the outer surface of the bone), resulting in a firm, painful swelling over the affected splint bone and surrounding area, which is usually sore to palpate. Mild to moderate lameness is usually present in the acute phase and is worse

when the horse moves on a circle or is on a hard surface.

The mainstay of treatment of exostoses in the early stage is rest and anti-inflammatories. Ice, phenylbutazone and topical DMSO are used. The horse should often be confined to a smaller area for a period of two to six weeks until there is an improvement in the lameness. When examining splint bone exostoses, radiographs are indicated (Fig.2 A) and careful palpation of the tendons and ligaments is important as there can be impingement on the suspensory ligament when the exostoses occurs closer to midline. Sometimes an ultrasound is recommended to check the suspensory ligament especially with larger exostoses. Most horses respond well to this treatment plan and the lameness resolves. However, the bony protrusion does not resolve but may flatten out over time and will become nonpainful.

In some rare cases surgery may be indicated if the exostosis is particularly

large and towards the back of the limb, or if it is impinging on the suspensory ligament, or if there are recurring flareups. Surgery can be performed to remove the affected splint bone or a portion of it, but it is important to let the acute inflammatory phase resolve completely before considering surgery. However, there is the possibility of regrowth following surgery, especially if factors such as the horse's conformation were the initial cause of the problem.

### Splint bone fractures

Depending on their location, splint bone fractures can be divided into those that are proximal, closest to the middle; the middle; and distal, the furthest from the middle (Fig.2 B). Their management depends on the location and also which splint bone - inside or outside, front or back leg - is affected.

The mainstay of therapy in the acute phase is stall confinement, anti-inflammatories, bandaging support, and perhaps antibiotics if there is an

open wound. Radiographic and possibly ultrasound assessment is warranted to guide the most appropriate treatment plan, which can be highly variable based on the above factors.

Distal fractures occur at the bottom end of the splint bone and can be secondary to either internal (suspensory ligament desmitis) or external trauma. If the fracture is minimally displaced it can be treated with rest. However, as this end of the splint bone is fairly mobile, surgical removal of the fragment usually results in a better outcome.

Fractures of the middle part of the splint bone are a common traumatic injury and can involve multiple fracture lines. If the fracture is fairly simple with minimal displacement, treatment with rest and anti-inflammatories is typically recommended. If the fracture is associated with an open wound, the area will need to be flushed and debrided and the horse treated with antibiotics. Sometimes these fractures

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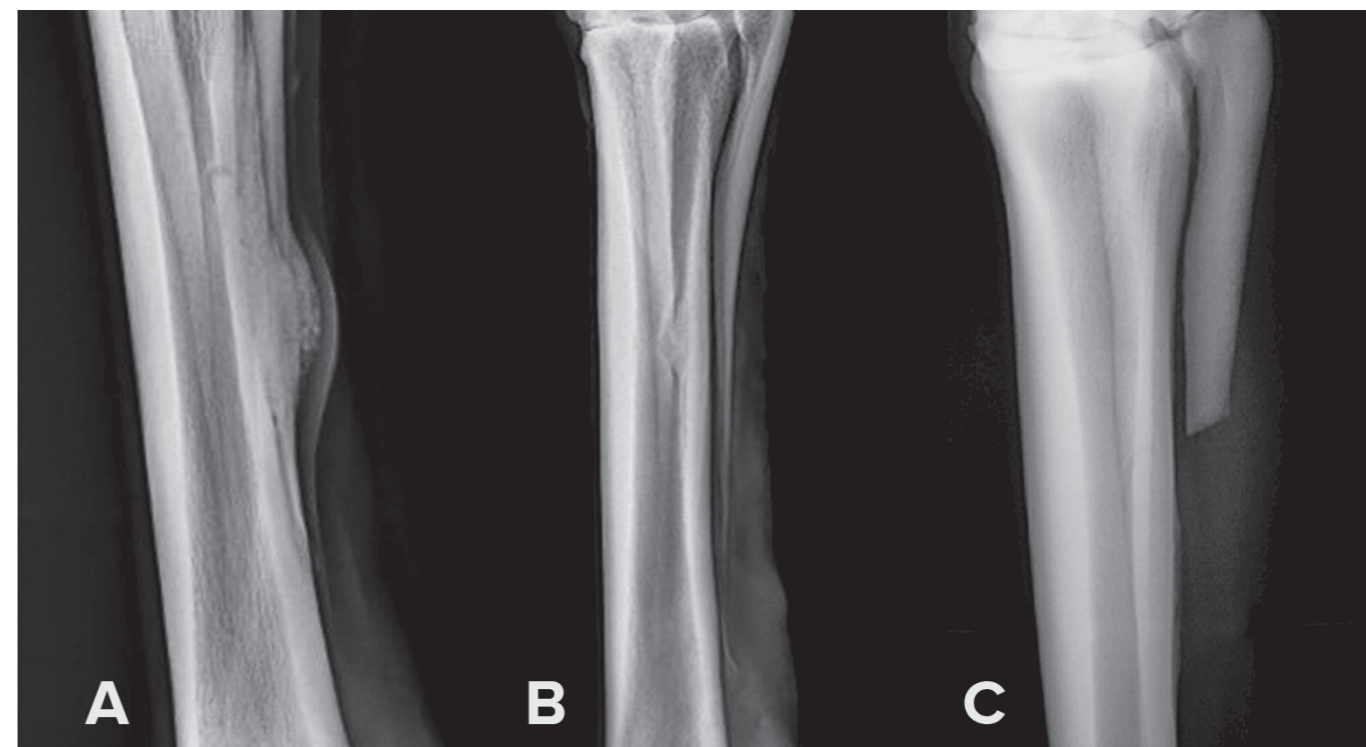


Fig.2: A) Splint bone exostosis; B) Distal splint bone fracture; C) Amputated splint bone (Images courtesy APIAM).

can heal with excessive callus formation, or smaller pieces of bone can go on to become sequestered (a small piece of dead or infected bone that forms a draining tract). Typically for these cases, conservative management is recommended in the initial period, but surgery to remove a portion or lower half of the splint bone may be needed in the weeks or months ahead (Fig.2 C).

Depending on which splint bone is affected determines how much of the bone can be safely removed, as the medial (inside of the leg) splint bones have a much greater role in support of the upper joints – the knee and the hock - and in weight bearing, so no more than two-thirds of their length can be removed. The lateral hind splint bone is the only one that can be removed in its entirety if needed.

Fractures of the proximal splint bones are more serious as they are more challenging to treat and can develop complications involving the knee and hock joints. When the fracture is open and involves multiple pieces, they are best managed conservatively with standing

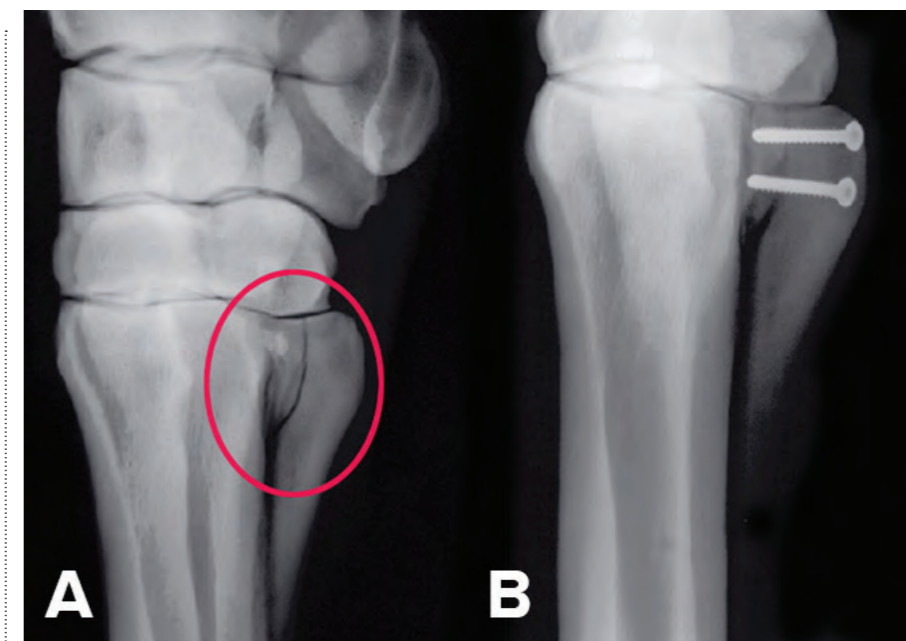


Fig.3: A) Proximal splint fracture; B) Fracture fragments stabilised (Images courtesy APIAM).

flush, debridement and antibiotics. There are some fractures that may require surgery, however, in this location the fracture fragments usually need to be stabilised with internal fixation which comes with a higher risk of infection and postoperative complications (Fig.3 A & B).

In summary, while the splint bones are small structures, they have an important role in the biomechanics of the horse's

limb, and the treatment of splint bone problems are highly variable based on their location and specificity of the injury. A thorough assessment is always recommended to ensure the most appropriate treatment plan is made for your horse. 🏠

Lauren Jordan BVSc (Hons) MS DACVS-LA, is a vet at the [Apiam Agnes Banks Equine Clinic](https://www.apiam.com.au).





## FEATURE

# A long and winding road

Two friends decided to set out an epic journey on horseback. How did it turn out and what did they learn along the way? **AMANDA MAC** has the details.

**W**ould you be prepared to step right out of your comfort zone in return for the experience of a lifetime? It's a big ask that might appeal to some, but not quite so much to others. However, for Karolin van Onna and Nicole Kumpfmüller, the opportunity for an adventure ultimately proved irresistible.

Karolin, who has been riding since she was seven years old, owns and operates [Golden Hills Horse Treks](#). Located in Cromwell, some 60 kilometres from Queenstown in New Zealand's picturesque South Island, she, along with her team of nine horses, offers guided treks through Central Otago's impressive hill country.

An adventurer at heart, she had for many years contemplated the idea of undertaking an extended trip on horseback. "Exploring countries in that way has always been my dream, and it was my goal to one day be able to do that," she explains.

Meanwhile, although Nicole has never owned a horse, when younger she had riding lessons for some years and was always the one who wanted to go riding whenever she and her family went on holiday together. Now living in Brisbane, she is a specialist rope access supervisor and technician, and thinks nothing of high-rise abseiling as she works on the outside of the city's tallest buildings. Her long-time love of horses and adventure made her the perfect candidate for an epic trek along the approximately 1,000 kilometre length of New Zealand's South Island.

The two women, both originally from Germany, met in New Zealand six years ago when Nicole was working in hospitality at a business almost next door to Karolin's horse trekking

**ABOVE:** Karolin van Onna with Moose (L), and Nicole Kumpfmüller with Rasta (R), were accompanied by packhorse Alex. **LEFT:** Alone amid the sweeping hills of a majestic landscape (All images courtesy nzonhorseback).

premises. They quickly became good friends and often went riding together.

When Karolin told Nicole about her dreams of an extended trek on horseback, Nicole jumped at the idea. Initially it was a bit of a running joke between the two of them – but then the project gained serious traction. "We motivated each other throughout the time when we were planning it, but it did take a while to make it a reality. And obviously we decided on New Zealand because that's where my horses are," Karolin says.

With Nicole living in Brisbane, the planning phase was at times long distance, but almost every year she flew back to New Zealand to touch base with Karolin. They researched the experiences of other riders who'd undertaken long distance treks to get some idea of what to expect, and compiled lists of equipment, clothing and food for both themselves and the horses. "There was so much involved with the logistics and background

planning," Nicole recalls, "and it was all self-organised, so it really was massive."

And expensive too! Besides the purchase of supplies and equipment, including tents and sleeping bags, there was fuel for the support vehicle, the loss of income due to a four-month leave of absence from work and the closure of the trekking business, plus rent to pay while they were away. It was an adventure that they had to save for but it was, Karolin remarks, "absolutely worth it."

Critical to the venture's success was choosing which of Karolin's horses to take. That, she says, was relatively easy: "I've had Moose, Rasta and Alex with me since starting my trekking business. They're the best in the backcountry, sure footed, brave, and willing, and they get on well with each other. They also respect fence tape, which was a major thing. We didn't want to lose them, so knowing they'd stay behind the tape we put up every night was important."

Although Karolin's horses are normally barefoot, she decided that they should

be shod for the trek: "There was going to be a lot of rocky terrain, lots of river crossings, and gravel roads. We had them shod just before we left, then once again about half way through the ride. We took nails and a hammer with us in case we needed to put a shoe back on, but the farriers did a great job and it wasn't necessary."

They had decided to travel through the summer months and by early 2023, were ready to set off. Karolin's sister arrived from Germany to take care of the remaining six horses, and Nicole flew over from Australia with her partner Sam, who had agreed to drive the support vehicle.

On the 14th of February, they left Bluff, a small town nestled on the coastline of one of the South Island's most southerly points, for an epic three-and-a-half-month journey of some 1,500 kilometres – the additional 500 kilometres the result of finding alternative routes around steep mountains, marshland and other obstacles. "If you look at a map of the South Island, we basically rode straight through the middle up to the ocean at

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LEFT: Taking a moment to celebrate high above the valley floor. RIGHT: Nicole and Rasta, on the way to completing an epic trek.

Picton," Nicole explains. "There was not much backcountry at the start, so we were mostly on roads. But from then on, we rode over the shoulders of mountains and through a lot of privately owned stations. We had to ask for permission, and went from station to station. The property owners were really helpful; we'd ask if we could ride through their property, and they'd get in touch with their neighbours and ask on our behalf. So we were able to avoid roads for a lot of the way."

However, there were more than a few challenges. For example, on many backcountry stations, mustering is done on horseback by riders who are prepared to take the kind of risks with their horses that Karolin and Nicole were not, so asking which was the safest track didn't always have the desired outcome. Then there were the downright scary moments when one of the horses lost their footing and fell, and, thanks to an unusually wet summer, when they found themselves bogged in unexpectedly swampy ground, something that was a particular worry for Karolin.

Travelling through backcountry where there were no tracks to follow


sometimes required hours spent finding safe passage, particularly when riding over terrain at altitudes of 2,000 metres with snow still laying in patches on the ground; while dangerous river crossings, including one that, to avoid becoming stranded, had to be made as night fell, left the women wet, shivering and exhausted. "The river crossings in general were really my biggest concern. The horses were in water up to their chests in some of the rivers, and the currents were pretty strong," Nicole recalls.

This journey was anything but a walk in the park. It was challenging both physically and mentally, and getting through the tough moments was helped by their strong friendship. "We were by ourselves for such a large portion of the time," Nicole says, "and we relied on each other for support when one of us had a meltdown because of difficult things that happened. We always had to find the solutions." Also essential, for their own wellbeing and that of their horses, were regular multiple day rest breaks along the way, plus meeting up

with Sam and the all-important support vehicle to restock their supplies.

But then there were the rewards: "The country was incredibly beautiful, and it was amazing to see it at such a slow pace. It's just so different to any other way of travelling," Karolin tells me. "Then the people we met, they were also incredible. They were so helpful and welcoming to us, often giving us a bed and food."

Also rewarding, she says, are the feelings of empowerment at successfully completing such a huge undertaking, something with which Nicole heartily agrees: "We learned so much and I'm so proud of us that we managed to do this and that we got through it all. And it's crazy to think that we did it by ourselves. We didn't even have a satellite phone!"

And when the dust has finally settled and this adventure is a distant but enticing memory, is there a chance that they'll do it all again? I guess we'll just have to wait and see. 

You can learn more about Karolin and Nicole's epic journey on [Instagram](#).



ABOVE: Masterclass participants Audrey Nicolai and Insidious Ghost (L), and Charlie Germain on GE Orlando (R).  
LEFT: Connie Miller and Delicato safely over one of the houses (All images by Flash Pony).

LIFE AFTER RACING

# Adelaide's cross country masterclass

Olympian **AMANDA ROSS** put five riders and their horses through their paces in an informative Godolphin sponsored cross country masterclass.

Off the track Thoroughbreds have become renowned for their versatility. They are well suited to most disciplines from dressage and show jumping, to recreational

and therapy horses. Their intelligence, willingness and stamina also make them excellent eventers, as Shenae Lowings and her OTT Bold Venture proved when the pair took out the CCI4\*-S at the

2024 Adelaide Equestrian Festival for the second year in a row.

But that wasn't the only festival event in which OTT Thoroughbreds stood out from the crowd. This year, Godolphin (their excellent [Lifetime Care](#) program supports Godolphin-owned Thoroughbreds as they transition from the track into new lives after racing) sponsored a cross country masterclass, presented by Olympian Amanda Ross.

With the aim of showcasing the breed's exceptional athleticism, trainability, and their suitability as eventers, the festival organisers had put out a call for rider and horse combinations to participate in the masterclass, on the understanding that the horses must be OTT Thoroughbreds competing at a minimum of 1\* level. The five lucky participants chosen to benefit from Amanda's wealth

of cross country experience were Julie Bramucci and Rafiki Epic Deal, Charlie Germain and GE Orlando, Connie Miller on Delicato, Audrey Nicolai and Insidious Ghost, and Jaimie Stichel with Sun Quest.

One of Amanda's main objectives during the 45-minute masterclass was to demonstrate how cross country training can be broken down in order to produce horses who are confident, brave, and know their job. She had devised three exercises that were first worked on separately before all three components were put together to form a course.

The class began with a warm up over a low crossrail at trot. "I think eventers need to learn to trot a fence well, because inadvertently we end up trotting cross country off big banks and you need to be very good at that, and

at being able to keep your rhythm," Amanda explains.

The first exercise was over two houses, both placed at an angle, three strides apart, and set up in such a way that they could be jumped individually: "We first jumped both fences separately so the horses could have a look at a cross country fence and jump one," Amanda says. "We also talked about different stride lengths with different horses. The average stride is 12 feet, and as a rider you should know how near to true your horse's canter stride is, and what you need to do to adjust it to make sure you can place the horse with the right length of stride and the right amount of power."

The riders put together the three-stride exercise well, although there were a few examples of the horses chipping in a fourth stride.

The second exercise involved an apex (a skinny) with a rolltop and about seven strides on a curve. "There's a formula for where you jump an apex and we talked about how to jump it a third to a quarter from the pointy end," Amanda says. "We worked on keeping the rhythm with the stride length they needed approaching the first fence and maintaining that the whole way through the curve. I think we saw some really good examples of very smooth riding, which looks very efficient and takes less energy from the horse."

A roll top with a hedge in the centre of the arena came in handy for the third exercise when Amanda created a combination fence by laying poles in front of it to simulate a ditch. "When you're jumping a combination, the lower level horses don't have the experience or the reaction time to respond quickly. You'll see in the 5\* that the combinations



ABOVE: Olympian Amanda Ross with (LtoR) Julie Bramucci and Rafiki Epic Deal; Jaimie Stichel with Sun Quest; Audrey Nicolai aboard Insidious Ghost; Charlie Germain riding GE Orlando; and Connie Miller on Delicato. BELOW: Amanda at work (Image by Michelle Terlato Photography).

are put very close together, so the horse has to stay on the line and read the fences really quickly, whereas in the lower levels there'll be three or four strides between the combination so the horse has a little bit more time to react," she explains.

Once the riders and horses were confidently negotiating the combination, it was time to put everything they'd learned together in a course, comprising the combination ditch and hedge, the rolltop apex, and the angled houses set three strides apart. "And that," Amanda says, "was to show that once you've once learned the concepts of cross country, and understand the different types of fences and how to travel across country, then you have the ability to divide the course up and know how to ride each piece."

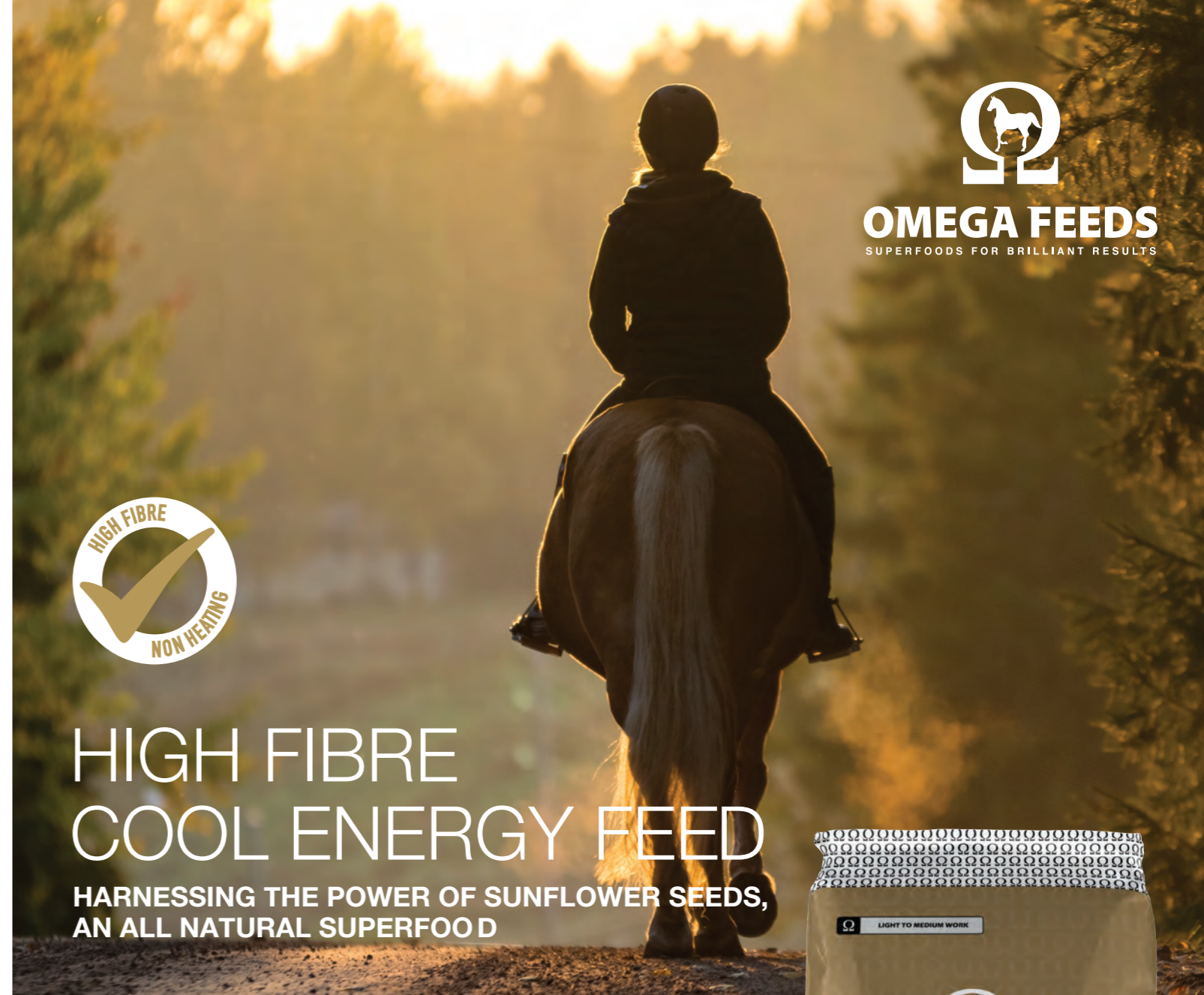
Overall, Amanda was very pleased with the way the masterclass unfolded, saying that all the riders did very well, and that the horses were fantastic. "Each horse showed a willingness to work with a forward attitude, although they were all quite different. We had a shorter, more compact horse that was a little hotter. Then Julie's horse who is

bigger and rangier, and easily managed the six strides down to the apex, doing it beautifully because he covers more ground in a relaxed way. So, I think we successfully showcased that Thoroughbreds come in a lot of shapes and sizes, but they're all willing to work and are self-propelled. You don't have to push them; when you explain what you want them to do, nine times out of ten they're really happy to do it for you."

Amanda, who grew up learning to ride on Thoroughbreds, is a huge fan. "They feel like home to me," she says. "Once they understand what you want, you don't have to make them, they just take you. Some of my friends who usually ride Warmbloods have bought Thoroughbreds and can't believe how willing, light and easy they are. I love them. I really like training them, and I like being part of the off the track movement."

Most of the success that Amanda has enjoyed has been with Thoroughbreds. There was Otto, who took her to the Sydney Olympics, and Koko Popping Candy, her long-time eventing partner, now retired. Not surprisingly, next on Amanda's agenda is to find another

special horse: "I'd really like to find a super jumping Thoroughbred. Imagine if you could do a World Cup with a Thoroughbred. That would be amazing." 🐾



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## NUTRITION

# Winter feeding for health and immunity

Making changes to your horse's feeding program during the colder months can improve their wellbeing. Equine nutritionist **LARISSA BILSTON** explains the benefits.

**S**ometimes it only takes a small feeding or horse husbandry change to provide significant health benefits over winter. But why is it that horses need a change to their feed regime over the colder months?

Winter pastures in many parts of Australia can be lower in quality and

quantity at the very time of year when horses' requirements for good forage are increasing as they burn extra calories to keep warm. Older horses in particular can have trouble maintaining weight through cold weather as their bodies become less efficient at producing, processing and absorbing nutrients.

Horses can also be prone to developing a runny nose through the change of season, and in some areas wet weather increases the risk of mycotoxin ingestion. So having strategies in place to help your horse through winter is a sensible approach. These strategies might include:

### Health checks

If you have a horse who struggles to hold weight over winter, now is the time to ensure that your worming program is up-to-date and that dental and other health or veterinary issues are dealt with before the full stress of winter hits.

### Keep them warm

The two most important things you can do to help horses prone to winter weight loss are also the two easiest: keep them warm and feed them plenty of hay.

Keeping warm in cold weather burns body fat, so the appropriate use of rugs, wind breaks, shelters and stables helps less thrifty individuals hold

condition over winter. And a bonus for horses eating plenty of forage during cold weather is that the microbial fermentation of fibre in the hindgut produces heat and has a 'warming' effect.

### Provide adequate roughage

Plant growth is naturally slower in winter due to the longer nights and less sunlight hours for photosynthesis to occur. Growth is further restricted by cold weather, frost, drought and water-logged conditions. When pasture is in limited supply, it is essential to provide enough good quality grass or meadow hay to fill the gap in pasture availability. If you feed lucerne or cereal hay, limit these to no more than 30% of total intake.

Hard-keepers and underweight horses will benefit from access to free choice grass hay whenever pasture is overgrazed or the average length of leaves in the pasture falls below ankle

height. Horses with poor teeth who 'quid' or 'ball up' long stem roughage will need chaff (made predominantly from grass hay if possible) rather than hay or long grass.

Although spring and autumn are the highest risk times for laminitis, it is important to carefully monitor pasture and horses through winter as well. Overweight horses and those with metabolic conditions should not have access to short, green, or frost affected grass as these are higher in the sugars and carbohydrates that can trigger laminitis.

### Keep them drinking

Some horses don't drink enough water during colder weather, which can lead to impaction colic. Encourage drinking by:

- Providing fresh clean water that is not too hot or too cold
- Keeping water under cover especially if bat or bird droppings are likely to contaminate it
- Emptying and cleaning the water

trough every few days to avoid algae, bird droppings and dead insects building up in the water

- Adding 7-10 grams of salt per 100 kilograms of horse bodyweight to their feed to encourage healthy levels of water intake. Remember to include the salt content of pre-mixed hard feeds when calculating how much to add.

### Is there enough protein?

An adequate quantity of moderate to good quality roughage usually provides enough protein to meet the needs of adult horses. Pregnant, lactating or growing horses may need extra protein in their diet. Some older horses are less efficient at digesting protein and may need supplementary protein. Higher protein feeds include lucerne, clover, soy or legume products. Performance horses can benefit from a boost of the amino acid leucine immediately after work to help switch on muscle building and repair pathways.

# Optimise your horse's health this winter with Farmalogic's premium nutritional solutions



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## Add calories, but only as required

Although many mature easy-keeper horses and ponies at rest or in light work hold body condition easily from hay and grass alone, others need more calories over winter to prevent an unwanted loss of weight. A hard feed of grains and/or superfibres is often necessary for Thoroughbred types, those in harder work, and ageing horses - but when choosing a hard feed for older horses you need to take into account the condition of their teeth and digestive efficiency. Remember to always ensure adequate roughage (as pasture or hay) is available before deciding to introduce or increase hard feeds.

It is healthier to make small and regular adjustments to the diet to maintain optimal body condition rather than making drastic changes once a horse becomes very overweight or underweight. If using oils as a means of adding calories, be aware of their omega-3, 6 and 9 content and include an appropriate omega-3 balancer to optimize immune system function.

The amount of concentrate required depends on the horse's size, level of activity or breeding status, and the individual's metabolism (easy keeper or hard keeper). Another major factor impacting concentrate requirements is the ever-changing calorie content of pasture. Because changes in roughage quality are often not visible, it is important to remove winter rugs at least every two weeks to monitor for changes in body condition.

## Balance vitamins, minerals and fatty acids

Feeding a correctly formulated diet complete with all the vitamins, minerals and fatty acids in balance allows the horse's body to function optimally. This can result in improved fuel efficiency and immune function to help them through the cold of winter.

Grass and hay alone do not give a horse all the minerals required for optimal health. Supplement by providing the full recommended amount of a quality

### WINTER FEEDING TIP #1

Help your horses get even more feed value from their roughage by adding a daily serve of live yeast probiotics as an aid to digestion.

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### WINTER FEEDING TIP #2

When a horse's roughage intake is predominantly hay, provide a concentrated source of omega-3 fatty acids.

Plants contain omega-3 in the form of ALA, some of which is converted by the horse into other forms (DHA and EPA). Marine-sourced omega-3 can be used to provide DHA and EPA directly.

Marine sourced omega-3 supplements can also assist horses with inflammatory conditions such as arthritis, airway disease, allergies and itchy skin.

pre-mixed feed, or by adding a balancer powder/pellet to an unfortified feed. If feeding a reduced rate of pre-mixed pellets or muesli, use a balancer powder to top up and balance your horse's vitamin and mineral requirements. If your horse is prone to respiratory disease or over 15 years old, consider adding extra antioxidant nutrients such as vitamin C, natural vitamin E, and organic selenium.

## Manage mycotoxin risk

Fungi love growing in wet conditions and unfortunately this includes the fungi that grow on grass, grass seeds, hay, silage, grains and stored horse feeds, producing harmful and invisible mycotoxins. Horse health, welfare and physical performance can be severely impacted by eating mycotoxin-contaminated food and pasture.

Because there are many types of mycotoxins which can act on many organs, symptoms can vary widely. Symptom severity depends on the type and amount of toxin present and the individual's immunity or tolerance to mycotoxins. Affected horses need the help of a broad-spectrum mycotoxin binder to stay in top health.

## Nutraceuticals for joint care

Horses with osteoarthritis often 'feel their bones' and suffer more pain during the cold of winter. Whilst feeding cannot cure degenerative joint problems, adequate vitamin and mineral supplementation supports your horse's joint health. Vitamins B6, C and E and the minerals manganese, copper and zinc are required to help the body build, maintain and repair joint fluids, connective tissues, muscles and bones.

Orally ingested joint supplements containing hyaluronic acid (HA), MSM, glucosamine and DHA omega-3s can have anti-inflammatory and analgesic (pain relieving) effects. These can be used in addition to veterinary oral or injectable treatments where required.

## It's worth the effort

Maintaining horses in optimal health and condition over winter takes a little extra attention to forage availability, body condition, and tweaking a well-balanced hard feed. Your efforts will be rewarded with the satisfaction of horses that glow with a healthy winter shine! 🐾

Larissa Bilston, BAgSc (Hons) is the Equine Nutritionist for [Farmalogic](http://Farmalogic.com.au).

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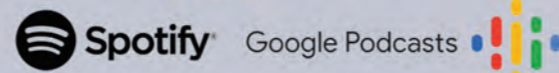
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## We speak to SHANE ROSE



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Style meets function with **Dublin's Pull-On Glitter Mesh Back Riding Gloves**. Crafted from soft drum-dyed goat aniline leather, air vented mesh over the back of the hand adds to their breathability and your comfort. Features include touch screen capability, and elasticated wrists make pull-on pull-off easy. Glitter detailing at the wrist adds a glamorous sparkle.

Compatible with touchscreen technology, **Ceravent Gloves by Uvex** are made from abrasion resistant synthetic leather, incorporating ceraspace's™ advanced ceramic coating. With that all-important grip, along with ideal fit and flexibility, these gloves are lightweight and extremely durable. The snug cuff is hardly noticeable and can be perfectly matched with any style of riding outfit.

**TEK Grip Gloves** are the all-purpose go-to gloves for riding and schooling. Their synthetic suede palm offers grip without sacrificing sensitivity. You'll find that the stretch twill uppers fit comfortably, while the articulated fingers bend easily with the hand. The reinforced stress points add to the glove's durability, and the cuff fastenings offer a secure and comfortable fit.



Dublin Pull-On Glitter Mesh Back Riding Gloves from [Horseland](#)



TEK Grip Gloves available from [Ariat](#)

The horse facilities include three stables and four paddocks with shelters.



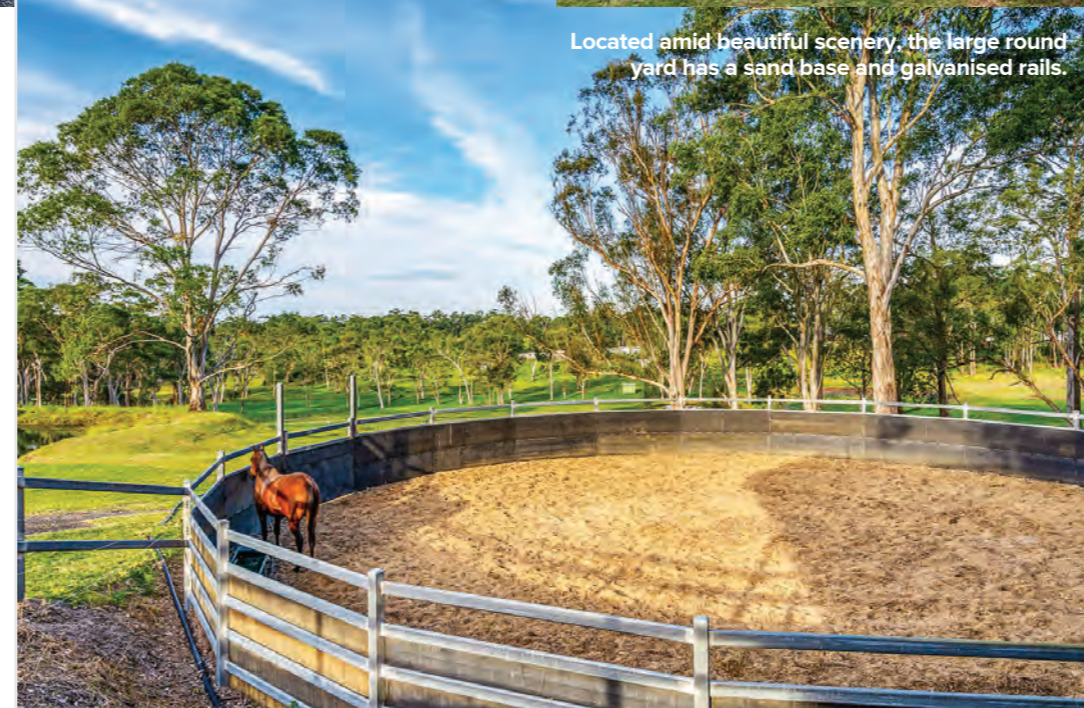
PROPERTY

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Located at 30 Lamrock Avenue in Glossodia, New South Wales, this premium property is guaranteed to stop you in your tracks.

This stunning 14.75 acre (5.97 hectare) property has been listed for auction on Saturday 25 May. Located in Glossodia, a small town in the historic and picturesque Hawkesbury region north west of Sydney, the CBD is just under 70 kilometres away and easily accessed by road, or by train from nearby Windsor station.

On premium quality acreage, this first-rate property is ideal for any number of equine pursuits. The possibilities for your entire family, and even your home-based business, are limited only by your imagination. With multiple open spaces for maneuvering trucks and parking for up to 18 cars, as well as over-height roller door



Located amid beautiful scenery, the large round yard has a sand base and galvanized rails.

access to the enormous workshop, this set up is perfect for anyone wanting a large workspace, a storage area, or to expand upon the existing equine facilities. The impressive home offers four beautifully appointed bedrooms, three bathrooms and a large, separate, self-contained studio ideal for visitor accommodation.

Ducted air conditioning, a pot belly stove, ceiling fans, and a stunning open plan kitchen includes a gas cooktop, and stunning views over the well-established gardens. There's a sparkling inground pool, and a more than generously sized covered entertaining area with a breathtaking outlook.



With plenty of indoor and outdoor areas, plus an inground pool, entertaining is made easy.

The horse facilities include three brick stables with galvanized post and rail fences, a round yard with sand base, and four paddocks and shelters. Three dams ensure a plentiful water supply, and a 32m x 13m industrial sized shed with 5.3m peak height and 3.5m door clearance has potential plus. Access to the sheds and equine facilities is via a separate driveway.

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