

FEBRUARY 2025

EQUUS **STRIAN** **HORSE** magazine



Shane Rose

Bimbadeen's
OTT stars

Nicole Tough

Advancing in
dressage

Tanja Krause

Soda Pop
psychology

Your horse's skeleton

The hidden risks



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On the Cover
Shane Rose and The Bandit competing at the 2024 National Capital Horse Trials (Image by [Britt Grovenor Photography](#)).



OUR CONTRIBUTORS



Shane Rose

Shane, a three-time Olympic medallist, is one of Australia's best loved equestrians. In partnership with wife Niki, the couple own and operate Bimbadeen Park, where they offer breaking, pre-training and further education for both Thoroughbred and performance horses. Bimbadeen also has a reputation for producing very successful OTT eventers. Turn to this month's Life After Racing for the full story.



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, she continues her training series, this time moving up a level to advanced.

Tanja Kraus

Tanja is a well-known advocate for practical horsemanship. Based in NSW, she uses her skills to help troubled horses, and travels the world presenting courses. She's authored three popular books and along with her partner, presents a variety of clinics and workshops. Don't miss our fascinating article on Tanja and Soda Pop, a pure bred Arabian who responded to trauma by savagely self-mutilating.



Christine Armshaw

Christine is a qualified EA Level 1 Coach and horse trainer who specialises in building confidence in women returning to riding and young riders getting started on their equestrian journey. Based at Otford Valley Equestrian, she runs clinics in NSW and NZ, and is a keen show jumper. Don't miss her Top Tips article, the second in her two-part series on desensitising your horse.



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 a Senior Veterinary Officer with the Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment for 10 years, and a Biosecurity Veterinarian with the ACT Government for two years. Is domestication good for horses? Not always, as Jennifer explains in her article.

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 Clarissa Brown-Douglas

A rider all her life, Clarissa's career as an equine nutritionist has taken her around the world, working with horse owners, breeders and trainers to provide nutrition advice for their equine athletes. She is a member of the Kentucky Equine Research team, and in this month's nutrition article explains how many bone problems, a frequent cause of lameness in horses, can be avoided.



Sarah Gough BVSc/BVetBio (Hons I) DipECEIM, EBVS

Sarah is a boarded European specialist in equine internal medicine and joined Apiam's Hunter Equine Centre in May 2020 after spending two years at Rainbow Equine Hospital, a busy 22 vet referral hospital in North Yorkshire, UK. Her main interests include neonatal medicine, ophthalmology, and cardiology. In this issue she looks at the problem of anthelmintic resistance and what can be done to prevent it.



BEHIND THE SHOT

Angelica Augustsson Zanotelli

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: Angelica Augustsson Zanotelli

Horse: Danna RJ

Event: 2022 Global Champions Tour

Location: Royal Hospital Chelsea, London

Camera & Settings: Canon 7D Mark II, EF 70-200mm, f/2.8, ISO 200, 1/1250 sec

Challenges: London's purpose-built Global Champions arena is not huge, but it does provide excellent access for

photographers and the media around most of its sides. My first instinct was to shoot with Chelsea Hospital in the background as it is such an iconic building, and I did take plenty of images in that format. However, later in the day the sun started to set and golden hour began, and while I was on completely the wrong side of the arena in relation to the sun, I think this image works even though much of it is in shadow.

The sun is casting a shadow on the horse's hind legs and highlighting the hooves, There is a vague sense of the crowd in the background, but the focus is firmly on Danna RJ's hind legs and hooves, which to me is what this image is all about.

As most equestrian photographers will agree, with only such a small, fast-moving area to focus on, shooting the hooves of a horse while they're jumping is not always easy - but this worked perfectly. Ironically, some of the best images are the unplanned, the impulsive, and the unexpected, when you just decide to have a go - and this image is the result of one of those moments.

Why this shot is special: The image captures a fleeting moment in literally a millisecond of time where the athleticism of the horse is truly on show. The near hind leg is stretched out to the absolute limit to clear the rail, while the off side hoof skims over by a hair's breadth.

The tail is flying and the ears are pricked. Sweden's Angelica Augustsson Zanotelli's coat tails are flapping and grains of sand fly through the air, all of which give a sense of fast movement, finesse and skill, with perhaps the tiniest bit of rail-clearing luck! To my delight, the two back hooves and even the horse's shoes are perfectly in focus as is each tiny grain of sand. Happy days!

I have a love of horses who jump flamboyantly and this one of Angelica's certainly had some pizzazz! As did Angelica, who took the win against some of the world's best. It was an edge of the seat victory fought out against the clock and down to the very last rider around Italian course designer Uliano Vezzani's simple yet challenging 5* course. 🐾

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



ABOVE: Foundational training through the lower levels is essential before progressing to advanced dressage movements such as the pirouette. **LEFT:** Forward refers to the horse always being ready to react to the leg aid (Images courtesy Nicole Tough).

HANGING TOUGH

Advancing in dressage

Moving on to more advanced dressage levels takes patience, consistency and understanding, writes **NICOLE TOUGH**.

Dressage is a sport of development. We start in kindergarten by establishing the basics before progressing through primary school where we implement all the elements of the training scale, hopefully graduating to high school with a clean, straight, single flying change. And then, if the horse is in agreeance and has been championed by a committed rider, they might go on to FEI - the university of dressage.

At the beginning of advanced level dressage training, our horse should know everything they need to know, and from

there onwards, it is the time in the gym that makes the difference between a horse reaching advanced, and a horse who might go on to Grand Prix.

All the training principles and movements thus far lead to advanced training. If a stage has been skipped or blurred, we will soon hit a crossroad - a point where the horse might tell us: 'I don't have the skills or strength to do this'. In this event, both horse and rider will need to revisit some of the basics in order to establish a stronger and more complete foundation before moving on to advanced training.

Dressage judges often give feedback to combinations who have seemingly skipped earlier education and whose horses require more manhandling and force to get around the advanced dressage tests. These horses are inevitably balanced on the rider's hands, some with compromised paces, some with a stiffness to one side, some showing negative tension and even resistance to the contact.

Dressage is not about teaching tricks. At the heart of more advanced training is correct, systematic step-by-step progress. It is about developing greater suppleness, impulsion, collection and engagement to produce more uphill tendency, elasticity and greater degrees of self-carriage. At the heart of advanced training is the invitation for the horse to work - it is not about forcing them to work.

If you are reading this article, I applaud you. Advanced training requires an extensive theoretical knowledge about the requirements, training principles, pre-conditions and the aim of exercises. It also requires patience. It takes two to three years from the completion of basic

training to be proficient at advanced level, with the end goal being to consolidate and perfect all the qualities in the training program.

Key to success is the understanding that every horse is different, with different strengths and weaknesses, and with different motivations - so training progress will vary, and is not linear. They don't get a bit better every day. Some weeks, it will feel like you're going nowhere, or even backwards. The training plan should be geared to each horse, considerate of their conformation and individual qualities. Training must be fair and logical, following a step-by-step process, with timely and frequent praise. This gives the horse confidence and a willingness to try, and the horse that tries and makes a mistake should never be reprimanded.

Another key to success is the understanding of forward. Some horses think more forward by nature, and some we must tune to think with more energy. And by forward, we don't mean speed.

Speed has nothing to do with dressage. Forward refers to the mindset of the horse. They must always be ready to react to the leg aid.

Training at advanced level means following an order of training. Beginning with the warmup, establishing looseness, the connection from the haunches to the bridle and reaction to the individual rider aids - seat, leg and rein.

From here, the sessions should flow from the simplest to the more difficult. For example, before starting the counter change of hand in half-pass, the trainer needs to ensure the horse can perform both the left and right half-passes proficiently. Teaching this movement before the horse is ready, will only lead to loss of balance during the exercise, with the rider likely to react by pulling on the inside rein to the direction of movement, blocking the action of the inside hind. This will result in rhythm faults and tension.

As in all horse training, at times more assertive aids can and will be applied more deliberately. But provided these aids are given at exactly the right

time and with the right intensity, and the horse is allowed to react freely to them, they should increase obedience, sensitivity and attentiveness. In short, the horse should understand what is meant by more intense aids.

As always, a coach or eyes on the ground is imperative to further progress. Even the world's number one tennis player, rower, or dressage rider doesn't train on their own. There is always more to learn and more to achieve. A coach should provide specialised training, exercises and feedback to help riders and their horses reach their full potential. Tips for pirouette training such as: 'you can't be turning the pirouette if you're still collecting for the pirouette'; or for tempi changes: 'the change is only as good as the canter, so don't keep riding more changes if the canter has lost any quality, balance or straightness', can make all the difference to your progress as you continue along your dressage journey. 🐾

If you'd like to know more about lessons or a clinic with Nicole, visit [Nicole Tough Dressage](https://www.nicole-tough.com.au).



ABOVE LEFT: Soda Pop reacted to his trauma by self-mutilating. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Rugging, a wooden collar and at one point even a muzzle did nothing to solve the problem (Images courtesy Tanja Kraus). **LEFT:** Tanja and Versatility ready to compete in a cowboy dressage competition (Morgan Grace Photography).



FEATURE

Soda Pop psychology

Tanja Kraus is an advocate for practical horsemanship, and uses her skills to help troubled horses, writes **AMANDA MAC**.

As a child, Tanja Kraus was horse obsessed - a bit of a problem if your family is as non-horsey as it's possible to be. Nevertheless, young Tanja wasn't going to let that stand in her way. She became friends with the neighbour's pony-owning children, and

when they went out on rides she followed on foot.

It took a couple of years but Tanja's parents eventually got the message.

"They came to the conclusion that I must be pretty serious about horses to be trekking along behind my friends.

So, they got me my first horse, Shadow, when I was 12. We didn't have a Pony Club nearby, so I joined Currumbin Horse Club on the Gold Coast where we lived."

The club met regularly and held novelty, jumping, hack and dressage shows. Tanja was in her element and competed with Shadow, an off the track Standardbred, in everything she could. Her next horse, Tank, an off the track Thoroughbred who had raced as Thank Heavens, didn't come along until she was in her early twenties. "And at that moment, I realised I didn't know anything about horses!" Tanja laughs. "I put him in a paddock and on day one he ran straight through the wire fence. On day two, he tripped down the hill because he'd never seen a hill before, and it started to occur to me that maybe he wasn't fully trained." He wasn't!

Tanja's parents had sent their daughter for regular lessons as soon as she started riding, something she continued to invest

in as an adult. "My riding instructor was helping me with Tank. I was trying to compete with him in dressage, but we'd get into the ring and he would rear, spook and generally carry on."

At a loss as to what to try next, an advert for Ken Faulconer Australian Horsemanship caught Tanja's eye and the trajectory of her riding career was forever changed. She took Tank along to a four-day clinic and was bitten hard by the natural horsemanship bug: "I was getting things done with him that I hadn't been able to. Ken was all about the psychology, and that was 25 years ago so there wasn't a lot of talk then about what a horse might be thinking."

Although Tanja's parents had brought her up to consider an animal's feelings, when it came to horses, she had understandably taken on board the accepted philosophy of the day, which was essentially that you had to show the horse who was boss. But when Ken explained how and why fear might be driving Tank's behaviour, it took Tanja no time at all to grasp the concept, and to realise that she could help alleviate Tank's worries by adopting a natural horsemanship approach.

Eventually, encouraged by her partner Phil, a skilled horseman with a passion

for Western horses, she began training horses for clients. "But when I sent the horses home, their owners started asking me for lessons. That led to teaching private lessons, then clinics, and now Phil and I focus on running clinics both individually and as a team."

Tanja has worked with a lot of troubled horses over the years and had formulated strategies that have certainly helped, but keen to learn more, she recently completed a professional development course offered by Understand Horses, a UK-based education provider founded by certified equine behaviour consultant Justine Harrison. The course, 'Working with Fear and Trauma in Horses', fed into Tanja's long-standing interest in horse psychology. "It's always been my passion to make the way we train easy and stress-free for the horse, and I think that, like people, different horses learn in different ways and react to stimuli in different ways."

And then, as if to try out Tanja's theories, along came Soda Pop, a horse who had learned to react to trauma by self-mutilating. Soda Pop was sent to Tanja by the woman who had bred him, so fortunately, Tanja had a pretty good handle on the horse's history and the

sequence of events that had affected him so badly. "He was a very well-bred Arabian who was a perfectly normal, happy foal. When he was 12 months old, he had surgery on a problem with his stifle, but recovered well and was still a happy youngster."

His owner then leased him to a friend, who sent him to a trainer to prepare him for showing in hand. "Unfortunately, in order to have the horse present themselves in a certain way in halter classes, the methods used by some trainers, particularly in Arabian circles, border on the barbaric," Tanja says. "We don't know what this particular horse was exposed to, but generally speaking, self-mutilation is a response that comes about from the horse having been in a traumatic situation." (*Editor's Note: We are not suggesting that this applies to all trainers, most of whom do an outstanding job.*)

Horses, like humans, respond to trauma in different ways. What will traumatise one will barely affect another, but for Soda Pop, the outcome was horrific. He started to self-mutilate by biting himself around the barrel of his body, hard enough to break the skin and leave open wounds. "When his owner spoke to the person who had leased Soda Pop,

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ABOVE: Before his trauma, Soda Pop was a normal, happy horse living a healthy life (Image courtesy Tanja Kraus).

she was told that he had developed the habit of biting his rug and tearing it, but was otherwise fine," Tanja explains. "But when he eventually came home, she realised that he wasn't just trying to rip his rug, he was ripping pieces of flesh from his own body."

To protect Soda Pop from himself, his owner tried rugging him, putting him in a wooden neck guard, and at one point even a muzzle. He reacted by racing around the paddock before spinning in circles in an effort to bite himself, colliding with fences and other horses in the process. And that's when his owner, knowing that Tanja had a keen interest in these kinds of cases, reached out for help. "She told me they were considering euthanising him because his behaviour was so dangerous and his quality of life so poor."

Tanja suspected that boredom and isolation (Soda Pop was at that point still a stallion and kept apart from most


of the herd) were adding to his trauma-induced behaviour, and that he needed to learn how to live a normal life. On a vet's advice, the horse was gelded, but unfortunately that made his behaviour even worse. However, Tanja had a plan. "He was with me for around six weeks. He was pretty confronting but I started him under saddle and after two weeks I got him to the point where he didn't need a rug, or cradle, or a muzzle."

The new behaviour lasted for only two weeks after he was returned to his owner, who ran an Arabian stud farm. Tanja suggested that the busy environment might have unsettled him. "So he was rehomed with a mutual friend, who happens to be my neighbour, and I was able to follow his progress. He reverted to being a normal horse, who no longer hurt himself, and developed a beautiful bond with my friend's young daughter."

Soda Pop has since been sold to a classical dressage rider and has

now been free of his trauma-induced behaviour for nine years, a wonderful outcome for a horse that could so easily have been euthanised had it not been for Tanja's knowledge and understanding of the psychological effects of trauma on a horse.

Long term, Tanja would like to become involved in researching stereotypical behaviours, crib biting, for example, with the aim of finding solutions to help horses in troubled circumstances. "I have a really methodical mind and I would like to link the experiences I've had with horses to a more scientific approach, so that if I think something has worked, I would have a way to put it to the test."

And being able to quantify what was so helpful for Soda Pop could surely only be a good thing. 

Visit [Tanja Kraus Equine Education](#) for information on her upcoming clinics, or to buy her books.



TOP TIPS

Seven tips for desensitising your horse

There's more to desensitising a horse than might meet the eye. **CHRISTINE ARMISHAW** goes into detail in the second of two informative articles.

If you haven't already, please read Part 1 of this article in our Dec/Jan issue (where you'll also find the first three of our eight tips). Before you work on desensitising your horse, it's important to understand the signs that indicate your horse is either starting to relax, or is in a relaxed state. These signs, which include a lowered head, blinking, licking, chewing, yawning and head shaking, are indicators as to whether what you're

doing is working, or whether you're making matters worse. I go into much more detail on these signs in Part 1 – so be sure to read it.

4: See, hear, or touch: Some horses can be spookier in response to visual stimuli (things they see), or auditory stimuli (things they hear), or kinesthetic stimuli (things they touch). Your goal is to figure out what it is that your horse is

most bothered by, which involves a bit of trial and error. Some won't care about pool noodles but will be petrified of walking across a tarp. A tarp can trigger all of their senses because it looks funny sitting there on the ground, it makes a noise when they walk on it, and it moves.

5. Basic tools: Two of my favourite tools are a tarpaulin to lay on the ground, and different coloured pool noodles to wave around, touch the horse with, and raise above their heads. In their world, there's nothing much taller than a horse, so while they may be fine with things at ground level or chest height, lift it above their head and that's a very different thing! Similarly, something they may be happy with in front of their eye they will react to if placed behind the eye, which is where you sit - so you need to have every angle covered. I also have a little tin full of stones to rattle to help horses who react to auditory stimuli, and an umbrella is always a good thing to have on hand - it moves, it opens and closes, it makes a noise, and you can lift it up high.

You can literally walk around your house or go to an op shop and find things to

use. You don't need to spend a lot of money. Even an old horse rug with the straps removed can be used as a tarp. Be inventive, because as long as it can't injure your horse, the world is your desensitising tool oyster!

6. Left or right: Here's a fun fact - a horse's left eye and right eye are not connected in the same way ours are, they almost work independently of each other. There's a couple of things to consider here. When you walk past something and show it to your horse from one side, they might be fine. But come at it from the other side so they see it out of the other eye, and it's a different story! You have to take the time to do everything from both sides, or else you're only doing half a job.

Additionally, researchers discovered that when they put something new into a horse's environment, the horse would look at it out of their left eye when they were assessing it for danger. Once they were sure it was non-threatening, they would investigate further by looking at it out of their right eye. If you try and force a horse to look at something for the first time out of its right eye, they'll get quite bothered because that's not the eye they use to assess for danger. So, always let them experience something new out of their left eye.

7. What's the goal? The goal of desensitisation is not to flood the horse with stimuli. If you rattle a plastic bag until the horse finally gives in, calms down and stands there, you've missed the point. The goal is to teach the horse to create a relaxed, calm, self-soothing body posture, with their head dropped and their eye below the wither. For example, if you're rattling a tin of stones and the horse throws their head up and/or takes a step backwards, don't increase the intensity of the noise. Keep an even pressure on your rope, and as soon as the horse takes a step towards you, stop the rattling. If their head is up, as soon as they drop it down even for even a second, stop the rattling. By



ABOVE: Five-year-old Melman has benefited from multiple desensitisation sessions (Images courtesy Christine Armishaw). **LEFT:** Search your house or go to an op shop and don't be afraid to get creative with your desensitisation tools.


stopping the rattling every time they do what you want, they'll begin to offer you more. Gradually they learn that they can get rid of the scary thing by lowering their head, and when it's lower than the wither, they stop producing the stress hormone cortisol, and physically become more relaxed.

But don't forget that not every horse is going to react in the same way. I have three Thoroughbred geldings who react to the exact same things in different ways. So it's down to different levels of spookiness, different levels of confidence, and different horses. It could be quite disheartening if you start desensitisation training expecting a text book result – you might be lucky and get it, but don't become frustrated if you don't. If your horse is very reactive and doesn't offer much head lowering, then you have to accept even the briefest nod and take the pressure off before they throw their head back up again. By accepting an attempt in the right direction, you encourage them to try the same thing again - and as time goes on, you can ask for a little bit more.

Or maybe your horse is so nervous that

they don't want to pop their head down at all and instead they're backing away from you. In that case, before you even get their head down, you have to get a step towards you. As soon as you do, take the pressure off. You might have to lower your expectations and take something that's a very general thought in the right direction and build on it.

A final note

As a final note, if you can think like a horse, you can do things in a way that's so much more beneficial. It makes the horse feel that they're understood, and it keeps both the horse and rider much safer. What we're trying to achieve is to prevent the horse from spooking, exploding, and becoming dangerous. We want to work towards preventing it before it even happens. Obviously, we can't control everything, but we can certainly minimise risk, and having this kind of awareness and understanding of your horse is a sure-fire way to do that. 

Christine Armishaw Equestrian offers a variety of coaching and other equestrian services at her [Otford Valley Equestrian Agistment & Training Centre](#).



VET VIBES

Dealing with anthelmintic resistance

The resistance of parasites such as intestinal worms to anthelmintic de-wormers or drenches shouldn't be taken lightly, as **DR SARAH GOUGH** explains.

The introduction of modern day anthelmintics heralded the steady decline in some parasite associated diseases, some of which were severe. Earlier treatment recommendations were aimed at parasite eradication, which led to a

considerable reduction in some target parasite species, but unfortunately, frequent anthelmintic use also led to the development of resistance in other species.

Antimicrobial resistance is a health concern many people are aware of,

but less well known is the problem of anthelmintic resistance, the resistance of parasites such as intestinal worms to the active ingredients in anthelmintic de-wormers or drenches. The impact of anthelmintic resistance is more covert as we can't readily see the worms within the gastrointestinal tract, and the disease caused by them is slow and insidious in many instances. It poses a big threat to our equine companions, as well as other domestic and farm species. As such, parasite management plans, and associated recommendations for horse owners, have changed considerably in the last few years.

Susceptibility and resistance

Anthelmintic resistance is the term used to describe the ability of the parasite to withstand or survive in the face of a treatment with a specific anthelmintic. Some parasites have an inherent resistance, that is they have never been

susceptible to that class of anthelmintic, while others are developing resistance genes similar to the way that bacteria develop resistance genes to antimicrobials. The development of resistance genes in parasites is, to some degree, inevitable. However, the overuse of anthelmintics leads to increased exposure and hence an increased rate of resistance development. Conversely, a more prudent and targeted use of anthelmintics slows the rate of resistance development.

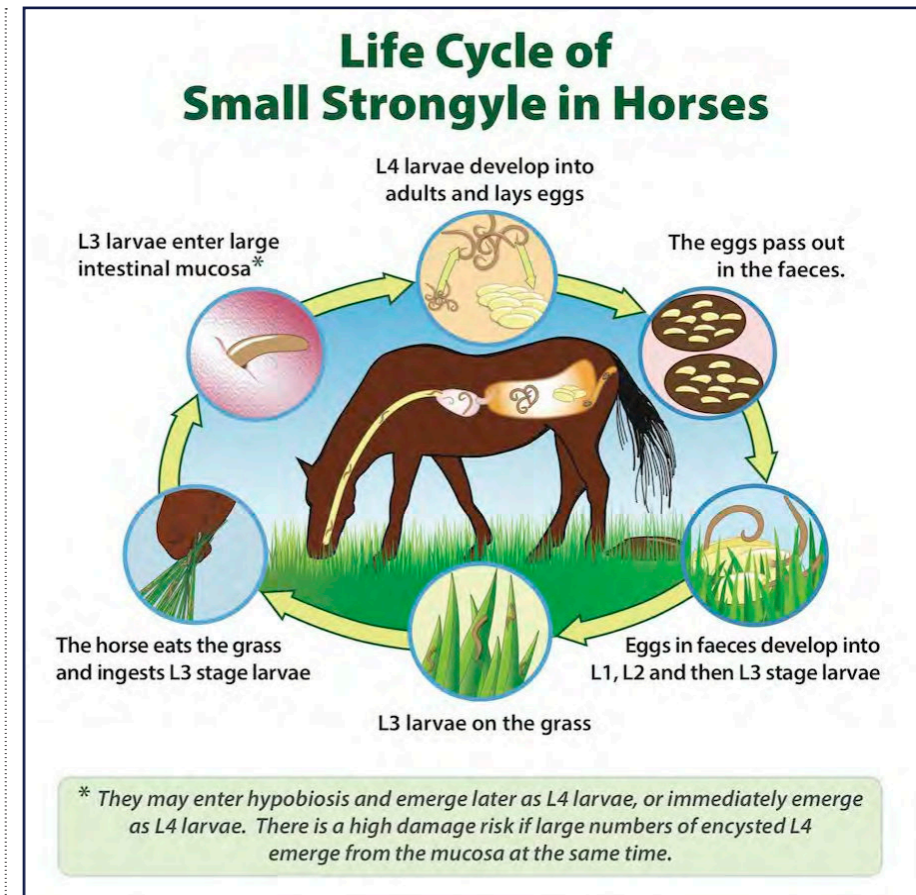
Parasites of concern

There are many different parasites that affect horses, and depending on the horse's age, some may be more important than others. Ascarids such as *Parascaris equorum* can cause disease in young horses up to one year old, after which they are rarely associated with disease. Small strongyles cause disease in horses of any age and are the primary parasite of concern in adult horses. Tapeworms can also cause disease in horses of all ages, although this is not common.

Parasite management plans are typically designed to control strongyles and tapeworms (and ascarids in young horses) and these programs, if executed well, also manage other parasites such as Habronema, bots and pinworms, while taking into account individual factors such as immune status, concurrent health conditions and so on, all of which may influence your horse's ability to manage their parasite load.

Intestinal worm lifecycle

Parasites complete some of their lifecycle in the horse and some of it on the pasture. The exact lifecycle of the parasite varies by species, but as a general rule, infective larvae are consumed from the pasture by the horse whilst grazing. They develop into adults within the horse, and the adult females then lay eggs which pass in the faeces onto the pasture. Once on the pasture, the eggs hatch and the larvae



ABOVE: Lifecycle of small strongyles (Adapted from Bimectin).

LEFT: Don't overstock paddocks. Aim for one horse per two hectares in non-improved pastures, or four horses per two hectares in improved pastures.

undergo additional moults to develop into infective larvae which are ingested by the horse (see diagram above).

Current recommendations

The objective of parasite management in horses has changed over the past several decades from elimination of parasitism (the relationship between the parasite and the host) to the modern approach of maintaining an acceptable level of parasitism without driving resistance. The former approach of elimination is neither achievable nor appropriate, and has come at the huge cost of widespread resistance development.

As such, interval drenching is no longer recommended. Now considered best practice, a targeted approach is used to count the number of eggs per gram of faeces (epg), allowing horses to be identified as high 500+epg, moderate 200-500epg, or low shedders at less than 200epg (see p.17). This enables the

strategic and more frequent drenching of moderate and high shedders (in comparison to low shedders), which helps control pasture contamination and hence parasite transmission among horses.

We now know that 80% of the worms are in 20% of the horses. That is, most horses are inherently good at maintaining their parasite load at an acceptable level, while some horses (approximately 20%) are less effective at this parasite minimisation. Why does this matter? The 20% that have a high parasite load contribute large numbers of parasites onto the pasture, increasing the infectivity or contamination of the pasture, leading to more parasites that can be picked up by the same or other horses, contributing to their parasite load.

What does this mean? It means that for most horses (approximately 80%), an annual or bi-annual drench is sufficient to maintain an acceptable parasite load



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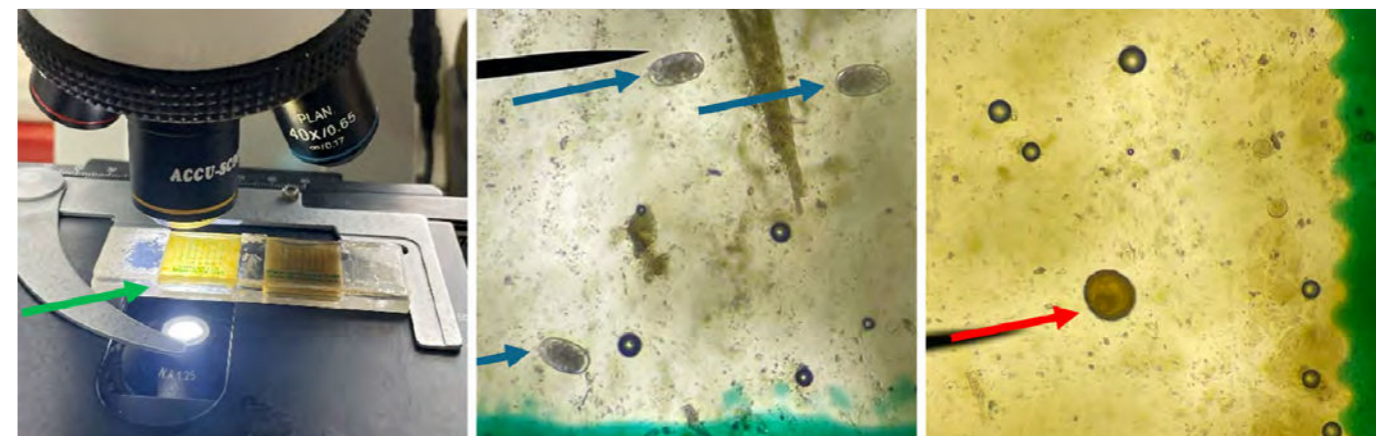


Figure 2. A faecal egg count using a MacMasters slide (left), identifying strongyle eggs (middle) and an ascarid egg (right).

that is not causing the animal harm or excessively contributing to pasture contamination, while also helping to manage other parasite species such as Habronema, tapeworms and bots.

The remaining 20% of horses considered to be moderate to high shedders, may require three to four drenches annually to reduce their parasite load and the shedding of parasite eggs onto the pasture. As part of managing parasite associated disease in horses, we need to manage the level of pasture contamination or infectivity, and as such, targeted treatment of these moderate and high shedding horses provides a similar impact on pasture infectivity whilst maintaining refugia in the untreated low shedding horses.

The term 'refugia' refers to the population of parasites that are in refuge from (not exposed to) the anthelmintic at the time of treatment. These include parasites within a horse that has not received an anthelmintic, and parasitic larvae that are on the pasture at the time of anthelmintic administration. The parasites that are in refugia help to dilute out the resistant parasites left behind after the treatment has been administered.

What should I be doing?

Talk to your veterinarian about creating a targeted parasite management plan for your horses. The number of horses, their age, the management practices

achievable on your property, and the inherent level of susceptibility to parasitism of your individual horses (high, moderate or low shedders) will determine the most appropriate parasite management plan for you. Additionally, due to the already existing widespread resistance of parasites to anthelmintics, testing the efficacy of different anthelmintics to identify products that work on your individual property may be

The old advice to drench every six to eight weeks and rotate your drenches needs to be forgotten. Unfortunately, there is not currently a wealth of new anthelmintics on the horizon, and as such, we need to prioritise appropriate use of our anthelmintics to strike the balance between parasite management and development of resistance before it's too late.

necessary. This involves a faecal egg count (FEC) reduction test, which your veterinarian can perform. Some general recommendations include:

- An initial baseline assessment to categorise your horses as high, moderate or low shedders, which involves performing three to four FEC in a 12-month period.
- Based on FEC results, moderate to

high shedders may require three to four treatments per year, and low shedders one to two treatments per year (administered during the high transmission periods of spring and autumn).

- Poo picking: removal of manure from the pasture two to three times per week reduces pasture infectivity.
- Pasture spelling for several weeks during hot weather (25-33°C) reduces survival of infective larvae. During cooler weather this strategy may be less effective or ineffective.
- Mixed grazing with cattle or sheep can reduce the pasture parasite load.
- Don't overstock paddocks. Aim for one horse per two hectares in non-improved pastures, or four horses per two hectares in improved pastures, plus decreasing stocking density when grass is less than 2.5cm high helps reduce ingestion of larvae and hence parasite transmission.
- Do not spread manure: this almost always increases the likelihood of ingestion during grazing by spreading the larvae. 🐾

Dr Sarah Gough is a European and Australian specialist in equine Internal medicine, and can be found at the [Apiam Hunter Equine Centre](http://apiamhunterequinecentre.com.au) in Scone, New South Wales.



FEATURE

Diseases of domestication

Horses have been domesticated for thousands of years, but this has not always been to their advantage, writes **DR JENNIFER STEWART.**

Domestication is '... to adapt by selective breeding an animal or plant from a wild or natural state to life in close association with and to the benefit of humans.' Long before domestication, lies 60 million years of horse and 6 million years of

human evolution. No clear centre of domestication has been identified for the horse, instead it appears that there were multiple sites across the plains of Eurasia around 5,000 to 6,000 years ago. At 5,500 years ago, the Botai culture of Northern Kazakhstan is thought to be

the earliest, with evidence of harnessing, milking and corralling, followed by other centres in Iberia, Eastern Anatolia, Western Iran, Levant and Hungary. However, substantial changes in the ancestry, physical form and structure that differentiate wild and modern domesticated horses only appear 3,000 years ago in the early Iron Age. Coat colouration was one of the earliest traits and around 2,500 years ago, horse breeders from Central Asia targeted genes selecting sturdier limb formation and quieter temperament, while around 1,000 years ago, speeds and gaits were the focus. Early breeders maintained diverse genetic resources from multiple stallions and an endless supply of mares, but in the last 250 years, overall genetic diversity has dropped by 16 per cent. Domestication is generally associated with certain genetic costs, including overall fitness. Smaller population sizes

during domestication and targeted artificial selection for breed-defining traits has, compared with their wild ancestors, unintentionally increased the number of harmful genetic variants and mutations. This is one of the so-called 'costs of domestication'.

Horses have been selectively bred for performance traits such as speed, endurance, strength, gait, appearance and temperament, resulting in 400 to 500 different breeds and over 130 hereditary diseases. Inbreeding and low genetic diversity, particularly over the last 200 to 400 years has resulted in some breeds having increased susceptibility to hereditary diseases and reduced fertility rates.

A free-living lifestyle

Free-ranging and feral horses live in large, stable groups with the most dominant mare at the top and a circular hierarchy below. They roam over up to 48 square kilometres, spending 12 to 18 hours each day foraging on roughage, mostly grass. Variable nutritional values of grass required the digestive system to evolve for continuous grazing and a high throughput. To match this, there is continuous gut motility, continuous secretion of stomach acid, and no gall bladder. The role of the gall bladder is to store bile between meals and because horses don't naturally eat meals, there was no need for a gall bladder! The rest of the daily time budget in the free-living lifestyle typically involves 2.5 hours lying down, 5 hours standing and 2.5 hours grooming and socialising (see Figure 1).

Due to seasonal changes, feral and free-ranging horses gain weight during summer when food is abundant, losing it again during the winter when food is scarce. Even today, feral and free-ranging horses and ponies retain strong seasonality with respect to appetite and body condition, and an annual cycle of gaining and losing weight without negative health effects. Domestication hasn't changed these natural, instinctive behaviours and in this, our horses are not far removed from their ancestors. In fact, horses who escape captivity

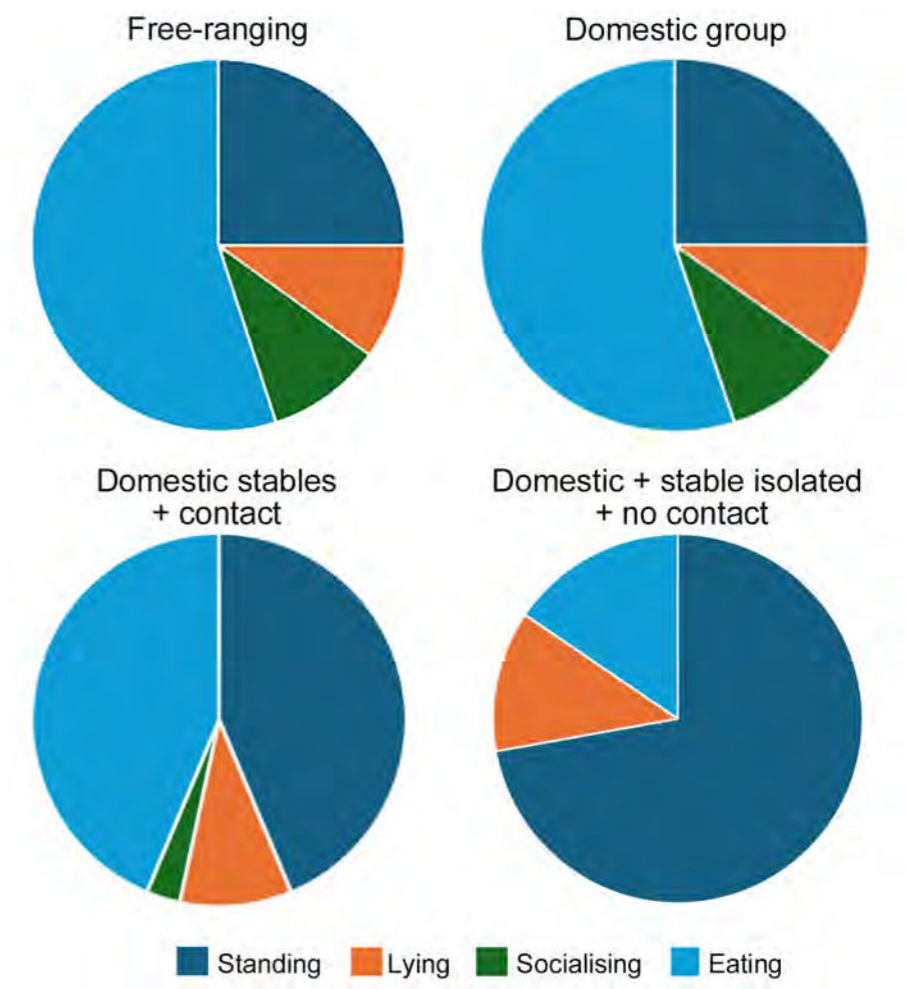


Figure 1: The time budget of free-ranging, domestic horses living in groups, stabled horses able to connect with others, and isolated stable horses. LEFT: Health problems in wild-living horses are difficult to assess.

readily re-establish similar behaviours to their free-ranging counterparts – indicating that horse behaviour is largely unchanged despite domestication.

The process of domestication introduced new challenges for the horse, including restricted movement, changes in diet, and reduced social interaction. Some of the changes introduced with domestication conflict with the horse's natural lifestyle and can result in abnormal behaviours and increased health problems.

The modern lifestyle

Confinement and abundant food parallel the modern human lifestyle responsible for endemic levels of obesity, cardiovascular disease, arthritis and diabetes. Domestic horses have become more sedentary since the industrial revolution. For horses, diseases of domestication associated with

restricted movement and modern diets include stereotypies, colic, stomach ulcers, equine metabolic syndrome/ insulin dysregulation/laminitis and developmental orthopaedic diseases: **Stereotypies:** Stereotypies in domesticated but not free-range or feral horses, are coping mechanisms that result from a man-made environment. Found in 15 to 38% of domestic horses, they are compulsive behaviours that occur when they are faced with insoluble conflicts. Environments are particularly stressful if they inhibit the expression of instinctive behaviours. Compulsions reflect aspects of natural movement, feeding and sexual behaviours. Compulsive stereotypies related to movement include stall walking, weaving and pawing. Domestic horses are often unable to move around freely over large areas and those kept in

small yards or paddocks travel around 1km/day compared to pastured horses travelling 7.2 km/day – still much less than their ancestral or their free-ranging counterparts.

Stereotypes linked to diet and feeding management include cribbing, wind-sucking, weaving and circling. Other factors contributing to weaving include decreased social contact, restricted exercise, concentrate feeds, limited roughage availability and anticipation of meals. Stereotypes related to an unnatural diet may include lip flapping, wood chewing, cribbing, tonguing, and aerophagia. Crib-biting, which reflects adverse early life experiences, specifically weaning, occurs in around 19.5% of endurance and 32.5% of dressage horses. Feral horses dig, chew wood, and eat earth as part of natural behaviour, but compulsive behaviours do not occur. Masturbation and flank biting (also known as self-mutilation) are related to inhibition of natural sexual behaviour. Overt aggression is rare in feral and wild horse herds once the social hierarchy is established and aggression in domestic horses is related to reduced opportunities to socialise.

Colic: Limited physical activity can reduce or change the sequence of intestinal contractions, increasing the risk of colic. Meal feeding and lack of exercise (Figure 1) change the water balance in the gut and contribute to intestinal inflammation, diarrhoea and diseases as severe as colitis, large colon volvulus and torsion. Colic is more common in crib-biting, wind-sucking or weaving horses – all associated with low-fibre diets and high concentrate intake. Another risk factor is changes in the biome, which differs between feral and domesticated animals. Horses fed a concentrate diet versus a grass-only diet have an increase in lactic acid-producing microbiota, which is found in horses that develop colonic distension or impaction. In semi-feral and free-ranging horses, the intestinal microbial richness, abundance and diversity are high due to the variety of plant species in the diet.

Breed/Discipline	Prevalence
Thoroughbreds and Standardbreds in training and racing	60 - 92%
Endurance Arabians	57 - 93%
Western performance Quarter Horses	40%
Mixed breeds, dressage, show jumping, Western, endurance	17% before competition, 56% end of season
Warmblood show jumpers	25%
Polo ponies	37%
Riding school horses	11%
Broodmares	67 - 76%
Pleasure horses	48% horses with no symptoms, 66% in horses with symptoms
Donkeys	38%
Zoo zebras	64%
Feral horses	22%
Foals 2 to 85 days old	47 - 57%
Warmblood foals 82 to 200 days old	7% before weaning, 97% after weaning

Table 1: Breed, discipline and the prevalence of stomach ulcers.

Domesticated horses adapted to diets higher in sugar and starch have a lower microbial species diversity and richness. There are also differences in microbial composition in horses with chronic laminitis, and those with EMS.

Ulcers: Given that stomach ulcers are also encountered in feral horses, they are likely to have been around for as long as horses – suggesting that some degree of ulceration is natural. However, the prevalence, severity and incidence is much higher in domestic horses (Table 1), the signs more intense, and healing slower. Interestingly, other factors affecting the incidence, location and severity of gastrointestinal ulcers include the trainer, high starch/low roughage diets, fasting, confinement, transport, and limited access to water. In free-ranging and feral herds many horses don't show signs and mild ulcers can heal spontaneously.

Another aspect of natural feeding behaviour is the position of the head.

Natural grazing occurs at ground level and any higher position during feeding contributes to dental problems. In addition, widespread dental pathologies found in domestic but not free-roaming horses include wear on the lower second premolar, and bone spurs between teeth caused by the bit, which can result in trauma to the jawbone and much faster erosion of the rigid enamel plates.

EMS, insulin dysregulation & laminitis: Laminitis occurs in wild-living horses if their carbohydrate intake is high during seasonal abundance of grass. Studies on free-living herds in Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Europe have all found that although most animals had no visible signs of laminitis, up to 80% of horses had hoof rings characteristic of laminitic episodes. The natural seasonal weight loss and gain typical of feral horses may serve as a counterbalance to periods of increased nonstructural carbohydrate-rich food consumption.

Many domesticated horses experience chronic over-nutrition and the seasonal changes in body condition and insulin sensitivity are replaced by progressive obesity and insulin dysregulation, predisposing them to laminitis. The heritability for traits associated with equine metabolic syndrome (EMS) is quite high and linked to genetics - all breeds that have a higher risk share two major genes responsible for elevated blood insulin and triglyceride levels.

Hooves & feet: The concepts of 'good' and 'bad' foot in domestic horses refers to horses living their entire life without any hoof problems as opposed to those with chronic hoof maladies from a young age. However, a genetic survey found no marked difference in the breed origins. In feral horses, small hoof cracks seem to be a natural occurrence in self-maintaining hooves and are influenced by ground hardness and seasonal environmental changes. Soft substrate and wet periods with lush forage appear to induce growth, while hard substrate and dry weather induce self-trimming with the appearance of cracks. Large cracks running from the sole to the coronary band of the hoof are uncommon in wild-living horses because in most wild-living conditions they are able to move sufficient distances on diverse surfaces to wear their hooves down.

With podotrochosis (navicular disease), nature and nurture are both implicated. In some horses there is an inherited risk while in others, management, conformation and work predispose to the disease. Genetics is the most common risk factor. With their small feet, Quarter Horses have the highest occurrence, followed by Warmbloods and Thoroughbreds. Foot conformation has a big impact on the amount of strain the navicular apparatus endures and concussion causes tissue damage. Many horses with caudal heel pain have a low heel and long toe which forces the pulley system in the foot to work harder to lift the foot off the ground. In horses with such conformation, the navicular



BELOW: The prevalence of stomach ulcers in sport and endurance horses is 17% before competition and 56% at the end of the season.

apparatus isn't being used as designed, resulting in abnormal concussion on the bone and soft tissue structures.

DOD: Another disease widely recognised as man-made is developmental orthopaedic disease (DOD). In feral horse populations it is very rare (around 2-5%); in domestic horses it affects 10-65%. The incidence is highest in Warmbloods, Thoroughbreds and Quarter Horses, and is linked to rapid growth and biomechanical factors. Contributing influences include nutrition, exercise, conformation, trauma, stress, maternal nutrition, and hormonal interactions. Genetics is also heavily involved contributing 40% of the risk, with 60% environmental/man-made. New genetics research shows that environmental influences can actually affect whether and how genes are expressed. In fact, scientists have discovered that early experiences can determine how genes are turned on and off and even whether some are expressed at all. The old ideas that genes are 'set in stone' or that they alone determine development have been disproven. Altered gene expression has been found in DOD lesions in young horses fed a high energy diet for several weeks.

The pros and cons

Health problems that may be encountered in wild-living horses are difficult to assess. But in case we let ourselves be carried away with the magic of the wild horse's life of liberty and freedom, it's worth remembering that free-living horses are subject to perils that make survival precarious. Predators, high levels of parasitism, harsh weather and insects, scarce resources, and fights between stallions all endanger free-roaming horses. Without human protection, they can suffer hunger, thirst and health problems. However, wild-living horses still have a considerably healthier lifestyle compared to their domestic counterparts and the question of whether diseases of domestication are due to nature of nurture is no longer a debate - it's nearly always both!

Dr Jennifer Stewart BVSc BSc PhD is an equine veterinarian, a member of the Australian Veterinary Association and Equine Veterinarians Australia, CEO of Jenquine and a consultant nutritionist in Equine Clinical Nutrition.

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ABOVE LEFT: Shane and Matrixx have had a string of CCI 3* and 4* wins and placings. **ABOVE RIGHT:** All Luck, Shane's silver team medal partner at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, competing in Melbourne. **FACING PAGE:** The Bandit, another OTT star, negotiating the 2024 Quirindi Eventing CCN One Day course (Images courtesy Shane Rose Eventing).



LIFE AFTER RACING

Bimbadeen Park's OTT stars

Over the years, the name Bimbadeen Park has become synonymous with successful OTT Thoroughbreds and for very good reason, writes **AMANDA MAC**.

Located at Werombi, 80kms to the south west of Sydney NSW, Bimbadeen Park is the breaking, pre-training and spelling facility owned by Shane and Niki Rose.

There's really no need to introduce Shane, the three-time Olympic eventer

who last year went from multiple broken bones and a stay in the ICU to, by dint of awe-inspiring determination, riding in the Paris Olympics a mere four months later, while Niki, an accomplished eventer who was on the National Elite Squad and represented Australia, has successfully

campaigning any number of off the track Thoroughbreds, some to 4* level. The couple also organise the always well-attended Equestriad, a popular event held twice yearly, one a CCI competition and the other a CCN, in Camden NSW.

OTT horses have taken Shane to the Olympics and to World Championships, but as an 18-year-old at the start of his eventing career, his choice of breed was pragmatic. "Thoroughbreds were cheap and readily accessible," he laughs, "and at the time I had no money."

Now the Bimbadeen Park name, renowned for its excellent Thoroughbred and performance horse facilities and services, is also synonymous with some of Australia's top OTT eventing horses including All Luck, Shane's team silver Olympic ride, and his current 4* horses The Bandit, who recently took out Racing Victoria's Best Performed Thoroughbred award, and Matrixx.

For Shane, Thoroughbreds tick all the right boxes. "They're very trainable, they're athletic and they want to win. They're competitive animals so if you get a good one, they're very good."

It's A Knockout, who came along in 1997, was one of the good ones. "He went to the World Championships in Rome in 1998. Then possibly a level above him was All Luck, who went to the Beijing Olympics. He's probably the most talented OTT I've had in all three phases, but unfortunately, he wasn't quite as sound as you would like. Winning a silver medal was good, but he could have won individual medals if he had been a little sounder. He was a pretty special horse."

It was Niki who bought All Luck off the track when he was quite young. She educated him and Shane took over the ride a little later. It's A Knockout, on the other hand, was competing at 2* when Shane bought him, while The Bandit and

Matrixx came almost straight off the track. "Matrixx had done a couple of Young Horse classes, but that was about it," he says.

Matrixx has been with the Rose's for five or six years now by Shane's reckoning: "He's won a 4*-Long and placed in 4*-Shorts. He's a really nice horse, a genuine individual who really likes his job," Shane tells me. "When we got The Bandit he'd been in a paddock and hadn't done anything for a couple of years. We started working with him probably four or five years ago. Some of the youngsters who worked for me rode him to begin with, before I decided to take him on and do a bit more with him, and now he's going pretty well."

It's a fact of life that in the equestrian world, finances sometimes come before keeping a horse, no matter how badly you'd like them to stay. And a few years ago, that was the case with Il

Vici, another Bimbadeen protégé who was pre-trained for Gai Waterhouse. Ultimately, he wasn't fast enough for the track, but Shane could see his potential as an eventer. "But I only had him for a short time. He'd just gone 4* when I was offered a lot of money for him by Phillip Dutton in America. He was a lovely horse; really great nature, moved well and a good jumper. But as I said, money talks!"

If you're in the market for an OTT, Shane has some words of advice. "If you find a nice one, they're really lovely horses. The one thing with Thoroughbreds is that the good ones race quite often, so making sure they're strong and sound is important. If you've got that and they've got a good attitude, most of the other things you can train, although obviously the better they move, the better they'll jump. Temperament is definitely massive because it's the one thing you can't really change a lot. So, if you can start off with



ABOVE: Niki took Glenorchy South Park up the ranks to 4*. BELOW: Dreamcatcher is one of Niki's all-time favourites (Images courtesy Niki Rose).

a good temperament, then they're very trainable and you can get them to do a lot of cool things for you."

Niki is of the same opinion. "They're amazing athletes," she says. "If you get a good one that comes off the track sound and sane, you can't really go past them. They've got natural stamina and a great work ethic, as well as a desire to work with you."

Niki's first OTT was her Pony Club ride Dreamtime Jess, followed by Double O Seven, who she took eventing. "He was an amazing horse. I was very lucky to start on him because he was a good mover with a very good brain. He was also a great jumper who rarely hit a rail. He went through to probably what is currently 3* and won both Lochinvar and Goondiwindi."

Next in line was Lion King, the horse who won the Adelaide 4*-Long, and, Niki says, was probably the best she's ever had. "He was incredible, too good for me at the time - I was only 17 when I got

him. He was very careful and didn't like to touch a fence, and I think I gave him a few frights. At the end of his career he wasn't enjoying cross country and I sold him to Jocelyn Park my coach, who took him thought to FEI level dressage."

More recently, there has been Dreamcatcher and Glenorchy South Park, both who went to 4* level, although Shane competed in the Adelaide 5* with Glenorchy South Park while Niki was pregnant. "He was just a lovely horse," she says, "nice to work with and nice natured."

But it was Dreamcatcher that Niki particularly loved. "He pre-trained with us, and I stalked him while he was at the track and managed to get hold of him when he finished racing. He won the Sydney 3*-Long, then I had to have back surgery and Shane rode him in a few 4* events. I was planning on riding him again, but Olivia Shaw came along and was looking for a horse, and they really suited each other so he was sold to her. She's going great guns on him and just did the Sydney 4*. But the good thing

about it is that because Olivia is based here, Dreamcatcher still lives with us so I see him all the time."

Perhaps sometimes it is possible to have the best of both worlds. 🐾

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NUTRITION

Your horse's skeleton: the hidden risks

They're among the most frequent causes of lameness in horses, but many bone problems can be avoided with proper management. **Dr CLARISSA BROWN-DOUGLAS** explains.

Did you know that your horse's skeleton is constantly changing and very sensitive to its environment? Bone problems are among the most frequent causes of lameness in horses, but many of these issues can be avoided with proper management. Bone-related lameness is often linked to training, nutrition, and confinement such as yarding, or box rest.

Bone is a dynamic, living tissue that is always undergoing remodelling in a process called bone turnover. This involves the action of bone-resorbing cells called osteoclasts, and bone-forming cells called osteoblasts. Bone turnover is essential for repairing microdamage, adapting to physical stress, and maintaining mineral balance.

In general, bones strengthen with use and weaken with inactivity.

Mechanical stress from exercise, whether through daily training or even playing in the paddock, stimulates osteoblasts to form new bone tissue, creating stronger, healthier bones. If a horse doesn't get regular exercise, bone renewal slows down, and bones may begin to demineralise. Over time, the demineralisation process weakens bones, increasing the risk of fractures. Horses that are exercised regularly tend to have stronger skeletons than those kept in stables.

Building strong bones

One major concern for performance horses is the frequency of skeletal injuries. When the demands on the skeleton outpace its ability to adapt - such as from overtraining, returning to exercise too soon after rest, or excessive strain - microfractures (also called stress fractures) can occur. Some horses show no signs of lameness,

so these tiny fractures might not be noticeable initially. However, horses with microfractures are at a much higher risk of developing serious fractures, which can be career-ending or even life-threatening.

Young horses that are moved from a paddock to small yards or stables to begin training are also more susceptible to injury. Research shows that young horses kept in confined spaces experience a decrease in bone mineral density, particularly in the cannon bone. In contrast, horses that are trained out in the paddock have better bone health as they have free access to exercise, which helps maintain bone density.

Even a few quick bursts of speed each day can be enough to prevent the bone loss that occurs with limited movement in yards or stables. This reinforces the importance of ensuring horses in these environments have enough space to move, as keeping them confined for convenience can come at the cost of their skeletal health.

Stall rest

Stall rest is often necessary when horses are recovering from injury or illness, but it must be carefully managed. When a horse has been inactive for a period, it's crucial to gradually reintroduce exercise to allow the bones to adapt. During confinement, supplements can help counteract the bone demineralisation that comes with prolonged stabling. A recent study found that supplementing with bone-supporting nutrients, including a special calcium source, helped maintain bone mineral density in horses that were confined to stalls.

Nutritional support

Providing a balanced diet that includes high-quality roughage and meets energy, protein, vitamins, and mineral needs is vital for all horses. Nutrients essential for bone health include protein, calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, copper, zinc, and manganese, as well as vitamins C, D, A, and K, which all play a role in bone remodelling.

The ratio of certain minerals in the diet are also vital for bone health - specifically calcium to phosphorus, calcium to magnesium, and copper to zinc. The ideal ratio of calcium to phosphorus in the equine diet is 1.5:1 and should never fall below 1:1 or exceed 2.5:1. Too much calcium can affect phosphorus status, particularly if the level of phosphorus in the ration is marginal. Conversely, high levels of phosphorus in the ration will inhibit absorption of calcium and lead to deficiency, even if the amount of calcium present is normally adequate.

Magnesium is also important for bone health. Commonly fed to influence behaviour, nearly 60 per cent of the horse's magnesium is stored in bone. Ideally diets should have a calcium to magnesium ratio of 2.5:1 to 3:1. If supplementation with magnesium is warranted, make sure the amount of calcium in the diet is adequate. It is not uncommon for diets that have added magnesium supplements to have

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very skewed ratios nearing 1:1, which will invariably influence bone health. Although required in much smaller amounts than calcium and magnesium, copper and zinc are important trace minerals for bone and cartilage health. The ratio of zinc to copper should be 3:1 to 4:1.

Balanced mineral nutrition is particularly important for growing and breeding horses, horses on tropical pastures like kikuyu, and horses on certain medications. Working with an equine nutritionist is a good way to ensure your horse's diet is specifically tailored to their needs.

Tropical pastures

In many regions of Australia, horses are grazed on tropical pastures such as kikuyu. Kikuyu has many advantages. It's hardy, drought-tolerant, able to handle heavy grazing pressure, and is a productive grass that grows quickly after rainfall. And unlike cool-season grasses, kikuyu doesn't contain fructans, which can cause digestive issues in horses.

However, kikuyu has some downsides. It tends to dominate other grasses, dries out in winter, and is less digestible than cool-season grasses. One of the major concerns with kikuyu and other tropical pasture grasses is their effect on calcium levels. Kikuyu has a lower calcium content and higher phosphorus levels than other grasses, leading to mineral imbalances. Kikuyu also contains oxalates, which bind calcium in the gut and reduce its absorption. As a result, calcium is often leached from the bones to maintain blood calcium levels, which can weaken the bones over time and contribute to issues such as shifting lameness or Big Head disease, technically known as nutritional secondary hyperparathyroidism, which causes the bones in the head to enlarge.

To address this, horses grazing on kikuyu pastures need additional calcium and other minerals to prevent bone loss. Adding lucerne hay, which is rich in calcium, can help, but often a supplement with a high calcium



ABOVE: Daily training or even playing in the paddock stimulates osteoblasts to form new bone tissue, creating stronger, healthier bones.

content and other important minerals is necessary. If extra energy isn't required, a feed balancer is a good option, as it provides concentrated nutrients at a lower feeding rate.


Ulcer treatment

Another factor that may impact bone health is the treatment of gastric ulcers. Omeprazole is a commonly used medication for treating and preventing ulcers, particularly in horses under heavy training. However, studies have shown that omeprazole can significantly reduce calcium absorption in horses. Interestingly there has been an increase in reported Big Head disease in performance horses routinely fed low doses of omeprazole as an ulcer preventative. Since calcium is crucial for bone health, it's extremely important to provide horses on omeprazole with a bioavailable form of calcium to support healthy bone mineralisation.

Balanced diet, balanced training

Incorporating targeted supplements alongside a balanced diet can support strong, healthy bones, especially when combined with a training program that

matches the horse's current level of skeletal fitness. Proper training, with adequate rest and a gradual increase in intensity, allows the bones time to adapt to the stress. A well-structured program should avoid overloading the horse with too much too soon, and allow enough recovery time to ensure healthy bone remodelling.

Bone health in horses is influenced by a range of factors, including nutrition, confinement, exercise, and grazing practices. Understanding how bone remodelling works and adopting appropriate management strategies is key to maintaining the long-term skeletal health and performance of your horse. By prioritising a balanced diet, regular exercise, and thoughtful management, owners can help their horses enjoy long, sound careers. 

For a tailored diet analysis or advice on optimising nutrition for bone health, contact Kentucky Equine Research at advice@ker.com, and for information on all topics related to equine nutrition visit [Equineews™](http://Equineews.com).



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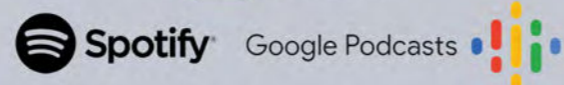
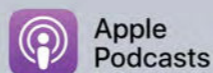


We speak to Olympian STEWART TINNEY



Gold medal Olympian Stuart Tinney has a list of accolades too long to mention and has represented Australia on multiple occasions. He competes, trains horses to Elite level, tours Australia coaching, and is a Level 4 cross country Course Designer.

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WHAT WE'RE LOVING

Grooming goodies

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Hairy Pony Wool Brush from [Trailrace](#)

Hairy Pony's wool brush is perfect for last minute ring-side touch ups. Super-soft and designed to pick up fine dust particles, the wool inner pad ensures a sleek, shiny, dust-free finish. Easy to clean and hard wearing, it's perfect for sensitive horses.

Get braiding faster with this new 2-in-1 **Braiding Comb** that cleverly doubles as a hair clip. Use the comb to organise the mane or tail, then turn it around to clip unwanted hair out of your way, giving you the room to create that perfect braid.



Braiding Comb with Clip from [Horses Warehouse](#)

These **Hindquarter Marker Patterns** are pre-marked stencils that will help you to create professional looking hindquarter patterns. Simply spray the hair on your horse's rump, brush in the direction of the coat, set the hindquarter marker pattern in place, and then brush the coat downwards.



Hindquarter Marker Patterns from [Ashbree Saddlery](#)

Shear Magic Rocket battery operated clippers are the perfect touch up trimmers. Ultra lightweight, ergonomic and with an easy-grip handle and powerful rotary motor, they outshine other trimmers in their class. Battery powered by two AA batteries (not included).



Shear Magic Rocket Battery Operated Clippers 4500 from [The Vet Shed](#)

For the practically minded rider, these **Genie Brushes** are a must-have. Combining a brush, plait aid and elastics in one easy to carry container, you'll never be without plaiting equipment when you need it. With its easy to open and close storage compartment, what's not to love.



Genie Brush with Comb & Bands from [Greg Grant Saddlery](#)

The **Hairy Pony** brush kit is a must-have. It includes four bespoke brushes all neatly stowed away in a gift bag. The brushes are hand crafted from beechwood and include features such as padded leather handles, natural fibre bristles, and synthetic bristles. 🐾



Hairy Pony Brush Kit from [Trailrace](#)



The Rower & Rub stables, with indoor wash bay, storage/ feed rooms and a kitchenette, adjoin a vast shed.



PROPERTY

The one you've been waiting for

Equestrian properties like the one located at 40 Hyde Hill Road, Harkaway, Victoria, don't come along every day, and this one is a rare gem.



Spacious open plan living offers comfort, and light filled luxury.



The master suite is a sanctuary, with a dressing room and contemporary ensuite.

Nestled within the exclusive, tightly held and private pocket of Harkaway, this breathtaking property spans approximately 20 acres, and offers an unparalleled lifestyle of privacy and luxury, yet is just minutes from the heart of town. Perfectly positioned near prestigious schools and with easy freeway access, it delivers an

ideal blend of rural tranquillity and urban convenience.

The residence has been designed with versatility in mind, and the layout is perfect for the needs of a modern family. Featuring four generously sized bedrooms with an additional room ideal as a fifth bedroom or a multi-purpose room, the home offers both flexibility and

comfort. The master suite is a sanctuary, with a luxurious dressing room offering abundant storage and a contemporary ensuite. Four additional bedrooms, including one on the lower level (all with built-in robes) are serviced by two main bathrooms and a powder room, ensuring functionality and convenience for the entire household.

The home includes multiple living zones with a split-level theatre, an oversized rumpus room and a formal living area both with marble fire places, a light filled dining area, and a spacious family room that seamlessly integrates with the kitchen and meal areas.

Stars of the purpose-built equestrian facilities are the designer Rower & Rub stables, which offer the added

convenience of an indoor wash bay, storage/feed rooms and a kitchenette, all adjoining a vast shed. There is a full-sized arena and five paddocks, all fenced and equipped with water troughs, including a five-acre paddock with dual access.

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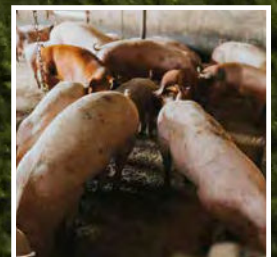
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