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January 2018

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- **Wofford's New Year's Wish: Better Horsemanship**

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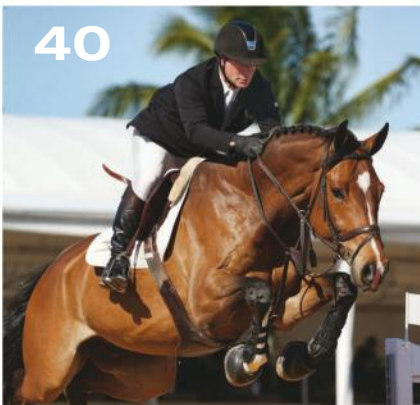
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## Features

### 22 Top-Notch Programs of Equine Superstars

Get a sneak peek into the care routines and management systems of four elite horses competing in the disciplines of jumping, dressage, eventing and hunters.

### 32 Equine Sinus Disease: A Hidden Danger

Improve your awareness of the telltale signs of equine sinus disease so you can react quickly to resolve major issues.

### 40 Develop Horsemanship Instincts

Olympic jumper **Peter Leone** describes how to become one with your horse to experience the perfect ride and maintain that feeling over time.

### 46 Groundwork Exercises for Better Rides

Grand Prix dressage rider **Nicholas Fyffe** details three groundwork exercises that will help you build a relationship with your horse both in and out of the saddle.

## Columns

### 10 Jumping Clinic With George Morris

Three who could move to automatic releases

### 12 Cross Country With Jim Wofford

Jim suggests ways to improve your horsemanship and your relationship with your horse in the New Year.

### 18 Inside Your Ride

Mental-skills coach **Tonya Johnston** and dressage trainer **Jane Savoie** explain how to halt negative self-talk for good.

## Departments

### 8 Editor's Note

### 52 Here's How

How to groom your horse in three minutes

### 56 Practical Tips & Talk

### 60 Health Update

First foal born from frozen, immature egg; antibiotics for castration surgery; ultrasound imaging makes strides

### 62 Tack Room

### 63 Classifieds

### 64 My Life

An adult amateur's off-the-track Thoroughbred overcomes a rare life-threatening diagnosis to regain success in the eventing world.



# CHECK OUT PRACTICAL HORSEMAN MAG.COM

- Video: Peter Leone demonstrates and explains how to ride normal, short and long in-and-outs.
- Learn care routines of equine stars such as Voyeur, Cold Harbor and RF Demeter.
- Top trainer Jane Savoie shares a simple exercise to help put your horse on the bit.

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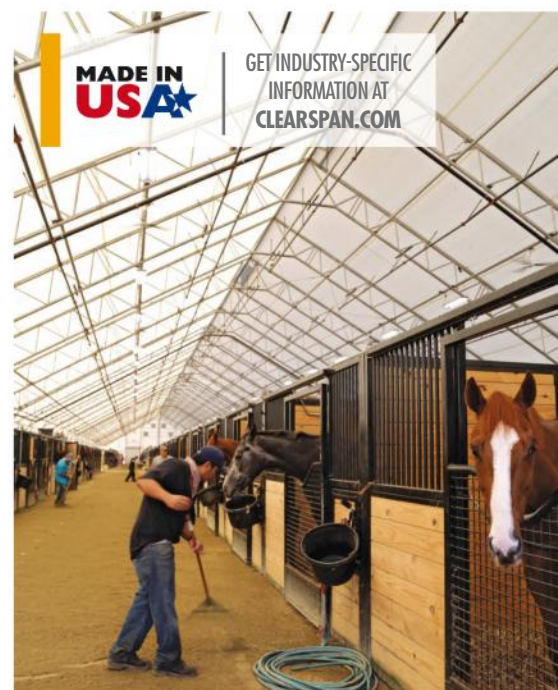
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## Editor's Note

# New Year's Inspiration

I have two confessions: 1) Every time we do an article about carrot stretches, I think, *I should really do those with my horse*. I start to and then get busy and the effort slips away. 2) After mounting, I let my horse walk off before I tell him to.

Guess what two of my new year's resolutions are?

I started to think about these examples after reading this month's Special Sporthorse Health Issue. Our article about the care routines of four equine superstars (page 22) explains that two regularly do carrot stretches. It's such a simple, low-cost way to improve a horse's health. Staying with the concept of simple but effective, dressage rider Nicholas Fyffe talks about being consistent in what you expect from your horse on the ground because it translates to under-saddle work (page 46). One example he gives is about training your horse to wait for your walk aids as you mount. Since I want my horse to wait for my aids under saddle, it makes sense that he needs to do that from the ground up.

More important than just giving me some new resolutions, though, these two stories and others in this issue have made me think a little more about understanding my horse's health and building a stronger relationship with him—and how the two ideas are intertwined.

In the care routines story, the riders and caregivers talk not only about their horses' nutrition, conditioning regimen, leg care and farrier schedule, they share what it means to know their horses—that trust is very important for Rassing's Lonoir and Veronica; that Center Court needs a varied routine or he gets bored while Lonoir thrives on it; that Zeremonie doesn't like running water. The story highlights the idea that health care is based on understanding what makes a horse tick. In other words, it's about having a strong relationship.

Doing these things will go a long way to attaining that perfect ride, where everything feels like it magically falls into place—what Olympian Peter Leone calls the "sweet spot" (page 40). "To truly excel, your horsemanship must transcend correct riding technique," he explains. "You need an understanding and sense of how to communicate with your horse at all times, whether you're on his back or on the ground."

We hope this issue inspires you to better understand the inner workings of your horse and to continue to build the best relationship the two of you can have. My inspiration will start with carrot stretches. How will yours?

Take care.

*Sandy*

Sandra Oliynyk  
Editor



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## Tip of the Month

Once you develop a more sophisticated understanding of your horse, your riding and training will improve.—**Jim Wofford, page 14**

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## Three Who Could Move to Automatic Releases



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**1** This rider has a superb leg and impeccable base of support. She has the right stirrup length with a 110-degree angle behind her knee. Her heel is down, her ankle is flexed and her toes are turned out, which allows her calf to be in contact with her horse.

Her seat has been tossed out of the saddle just enough—she has made no attempt to jump ahead. Her posture is textbook perfect with a flat back and slight hollow in her loins. She has a lot of contact with the curb rein, which tells me the horse is strong. She might have to have this much contact, but it invites the horse to jump hollow and flat. Other than this, she is showing an acceptable short crest release with her hands 2 inches up his neck. She could drop her hands straight down the neck 3–4 inches and create a straight line from her elbow to the horse’s mouth to achieve an automatic release. This type of release requires the rider to be balanced so that her hands can be independent enough to follow the horse’s head and neck forward and down.

The horse looks like a sweet soul. His forearm is parallel to the ground and his knees are up, but he’s loose and uneven below them. He’s not dangerous, but he’s just stepping over the jump. He’s hollow from his poll to the dock of his tail to the point where he’s almost upside down. He’s a prime candidate for equitation because his flat jumping helps a rider maintain position.

I’d give the turnout a C. The horse is adequately groomed and the tack is adequately clean. The saddle pad fits well and the rider’s clothes are conservative and well-fitting. But the horse’s and rider’s boots could be cleaner and the horse’s mane is flying all over the place. While I like that the saddle looks good for jumping—light and not bulky—it looks like it could be better cleaned and oiled, too.

**2** This short-legged rider with her excellent seat looks to be effective, though she’s making a mistake typical of someone her stature by riding with a too-long stirrup. The angle behind her knee looks about 140 degrees instead of 110 degrees, so she needs to shorten the leather one or two holes. She needs to reposition the iron so the outside branch leads the inside, which will create a suppler leg. But her little toe is touching the outside branch and her heel is down, her ankle is flexed and her toes are turned out. She has an even distribution of contact between her thigh, inner knee bone and calf.

Her seat is being tossed slightly out of the saddle with no signs of jumping ahead. Her posture is beautiful and her eyes are looking to the right for a turn. She is showing a short crest release, though her hands are floating above the neck. I’d rather see them resting against the neck to support her upper body. To be textbook perfect, she needs to drop her hands straight down about 3–4 inches and maintain a light contact in the air. But very few people today practice the automatic release—we’ve lost the ability to ride in balance.

This horse has a soft expression with a beautiful eye and ear and quality head. When a horse has quality, he has Thoroughbred blood—and the more, the better. His left leg is lower than his right. It worries me that he could hang that left if he came in deep to a vertical. So I’d like his front end to be more even. The horse drops his head and neck and wants to be round.

This girl and her horse are turned out in a simple way, which I admire. Everything is spotlessly clean—the horse, the tack, the breeches. The horse has been clipped but he has great bloom and he’s in good weight. The braid job is beautiful and the tack is simple, conservative and flat. The stirrup irons gleam.



© SANDRA OLIVNYK

**George H. Morris** is the former chef d’équipe of the U.S. Equestrian Federation Show Jumping Team. He serves on the USEF National Jumper Committee and Planning Committee, is an adviser to the USEF High-Performance Show Jumping Committee and is president of the Show Jumping Hall of Fame.



**3** This is an athletic rider with good conformation whose riding would improve with a few adjustments. She has long legs and she's riding a narrow horse. The angle behind her knee is about 150 degrees—from the point of her hip to the point of her heel is practically straight. All of these things indicate that she needs to shorten her stirrup. This will allow her to have more contact with her calf. She also will have a suppler leg if she adjusts her iron so that the outside branch leads the inside and her little toe touches the outside branch. And she needs to move the iron so that only one quarter of her foot is in it.

Because her knee is acting like a pivot, sending the lower leg back, her upper body is too far forward and she is jumping ahead. Her posture is good, her back is flat and her eyes are looking up and ahead. She is demonstrating a short crest release and her hands are just alongside the crest, pressing into it. Once she adjusts her stirrup length and practices keeping her leg underneath her, she could try an automatic release by lowering her hands down 4–5 inches to maintain a straight line from her elbow to her horse's mouth.

This is an earnest little horse with a very alert, conscientious expression. He has a plain, big head and short, thick neck. Though he doesn't have much bascule, he has a beautiful front end with his knees up and legs so symmetrical they practically look like one. He looks like he's a careful, fast jumper.

Their turnout would get a C-plus. I'm not saying her horse is not cared for, but I'd like to see more spit and polish. His mane could be pulled and trained to lie flat. It's a little hard to tell because of the shadow, but his coat could probably use more elbow grease to bring out a bloom. It looks like his fetlocks could be trimmed more.



© MARION COX

**4** With her heel up, leg slipped to the rear and her seat almost ahead of the pommel, this rider has to work on the basics. She is gripping with her upper thigh and her heel has come up so she is unintentionally asking her horse to go forward. First, she needs to move the iron closer to her toes so that about one quarter of her foot is through it for more flexion in the ankle. Then she needs to drop the weight into her heel and stretch her leg down so she has an equal distribution of contact among her thigh, inner knee bone and calf. She must practice this leg position at the walk, trot and canter. Once her leg is stable on the flat, she can work to maintain it over crossrails.

Her knee is acting like a pivot so that as her lower leg goes back, her upper body goes forward too much and she is jumping ahead. This is a safety issue because, along with her unstable leg, if the horse props or stops, she could tumble over his neck. She is releasing her horse, but her hands seem to be floating above the neck a little. I want to see them pressed into the horse's mane so they support her upper body. Her eyes are looking up and ahead and her posture is OK.

This is a big, handsome horse, but unfortunately, he's got a poor front end. His right knee is pointing down over an oxer, making me think it could be worse over a vertical with no ground line. He wants to be round, though I don't sense he's very careful. I dislike any curb or gag bit that has only one rein. With these bits, you should always have a snaffle rein and that should be the primary rein. Using the curb rein will eventually make a horse jump flat because he can't bend in the poll.

This pair's turnout gets a C-minus grade. The tack and their boots do not look very clean. Whatever equipment you have cannot be too clean all the time. 🐾

**Do you want George Morris to critique your riding?**

*If so, send in a color photograph, at least 3 x 5 inches, taken from the side, in which your position is not covered by a standard. Mail it to Jumping Clinic, Practical Horseman, 178 Thomas Johnson Dr., Suite 204L, Frederick, MD 21702 or email a high-resolution (300 dpi) copy to practical.horseman@equinetwork.com. Please indicate photographer's name/contact information if professionally taken. Submitted photos may also appear on Practical Horseman's website and be displayed on Facebook.*





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Based at Fox Covert Farm, in Upperville, Virginia, Jim Wofford competed in three Olympics and two World Championships and won the U.S. National Championship five times. He is also a highly respected coach. For more on Jim, go to [www.jimwofford.blogspot.com](http://www.jimwofford.blogspot.com).

## Some Res ... er, Wishes For the New Riding Year

For 2018, Jim shares his thoughts on making your life with your horse even more beneficial to you both.

The last New Year's resolution I ever made, I kept—I promised to never make any more resolutions. So far, so good. Still, horsemen need to keep improving, and it takes resolution to continue your education and performance. That being the case, I came up with a few topics for you to think about in the New Year. I can't really call my suggestions "resolutions," because I don't make resolutions any more. I guess these are in the form of a wish list.



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There is no such thing as a "little problem" when you are training horses for competition. The best way to avoid problems is to get to know as much as you can about your horse. Even blindfolded, the late Hall of Fame event trainer Jack Le Goff could tell which horse was which by running his hand down the lower leg. You should be able to detect slight changes in the soft tissue of your horse's lower legs. These changes are Mother Nature's warning signs. If you stop training immediately and get your vet to diagnose the cause, you can prevent injury and the long lay-up necessary to rehabilitate the injury. When you walk your horse in-hand on pavement, listen to his footfalls. Do you hear a single "clop" each time a foot hits the ground or do you hear "ka-lop," meaning the foot is out of balance? When you hear your horse's footfall go "clink," it means the shoe's clinches are working loose. If you fix it now, it is not a problem. Otherwise, you will lose a shoe, and possibly some of your horse's foot, in competition. Show this photo to your farrier and ask him about what he sees. He will explain how this horse was shod incorrectly in the past and what the current farrier is doing to put this horse's feet back into alignment.

### Learn Your Horse's Body Mechanics

The first thing I wish you would do is to get to know your horse a little better. I don't mean you should learn his stable name as well as his show name or become able to pick him out of a group. (If he is like most of mine, he is the one with manure stains on his ear.) No, I mean learn more about your horse as a *horse*, not just as an individual, but also as an animal.

Learn how his skeleton fits together. Learn about the equine foot, how it is constructed and the function of its various parts. Many of the soundness issues you will ever have to deal with will be in your horse's foot. You might as well understand what the vet is talking about if she says (for instance) that your horse is developing navicular disease.

When working on dressage, everyone knows their horses should not overflex (except for most dressage judges—they seem to like it). What happens to the tendons and ligaments surrounding the cervical vertebrae when the horse is overflexed? Is this position injurious to your horse and if so, is it repairable? I'm going to return to this in a minute in another part of this article, so hold that thought.

### ... For Instance, the 'Engagement' Thing

What muscles are we talking about when we talk about a horse using his topline? What is the muscular process by which a horse reaches forward under his body with his hind leg? What is actually going on with your horse's body when he engages? Riders are increasingly sophisticated about what their horses are supposed to do in their dressage work, but many do not understand the mechanical process involved.

You probably have been told that when your horse engages, he lifts in front and grows taller. Is that what really happens? Does he suddenly grow from 16.2 to 17 hands? Obviously, that is not what happens. I have heard dressage profes-

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Your competition results will improve when you gain a deeper understanding of your horse's skeletal and muscular composition. For example, your horse can more easily engage his hindquarters if the muscles in his topline are relaxed. In this photo, Will Faudree and Quintessential show the results of correct training, where the elevation of Quintessential's neck is produced by Will's leg, not by his hand. The riders you watch and admire at upper-level competitions are usually expert horsemen and horsewomen, not just good riders.

sionals talking about a horse's ability to "sit" during his work, and this is another way of describing the process of engagement. Once we understand the roles that muscles, ligaments and skeletal parts play, we get a better all-around view of riding and training.

The first thing that springs to my mind when I am thinking about getting a horse to engage is the absolutely essential role that relaxation plays in this process. Rulebooks speak of the well-trained horse as being "free from the paralyzing effect of resistance." If your horse is tense in his topline, this limits the range of motion of his hindquarters, which, of course, prevents him from answering your leg aid correctly.

Once you develop a more sophisticated understanding of your horse, your riding and training will improve. For example, turns on the forehand and hindquarters, half-circles, half-circles in reverse, leg-yielding and shoulder-in are

all valuable suppling exercises. However, their value is greatly increased when you understand the specific effects of each. (I will get back to the interaction of theory and practice in a minute, but I am on a roll here.) Turn on the forehand, or work around the shoulders, tends to lower the horse's forehand, while turn on the hindquarters, or work around the quarters, tends to lower his hindquarters, thus engaging them. Both exercises are valuable, but they are even more valuable when you choose a particular exercise based on its ability to specifically address your horse's problem. It seems to me that the more you learn about your horse, the more you will be able to teach him.

### ... And How You Engage With Your Horse

Another wish I have for you is to think deeply about the role your horse fills in your life. Do you ride for physical ex-



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ercise? Riding for physical exercise is a wonderful way to maintain your health, but the better you ride, the less actual exercise you will get. As your riding becomes more efficient and you become able to not just understand the concept of invisible aids, but to apply it to your daily riding, you will work less to obtain the same result.

What about riding as mental therapy, a relief from the stresses and strains of modern life? It is certainly true that the outside of your horse is good for your inside, but if your interaction with him is to be truly therapeutic, you must be present in the moment. Cell phones and ear buds are hugely distracting at a time when you should be relaxing and interacting with a fellow denizen of the natural world. Horses do not perceive the natural world in the same way that we do, and we should attempt to understand them and relate to them. It is ironic that in order to support

their horse addiction, many people work all day in a gray, featureless work cubicle, staring at a flickering computer monitor while dreaming of escaping to the stables to ride their horse. Yet too often they clamber aboard and walk away aimlessly with a fixed hand while talking to their pal in the next arena about the cutest horse photo they just saw on social media. Your time spent riding your horse is priceless—don't waste it by shutting yourself off from him.

### **Base Your Practice On Theory**

I mentioned earlier that I wanted to talk a little more about thinking deeply in regard to riding and training. This process will be greatly enhanced when you learn more about the *theory* of riding and training. Humans have interacted with horses for much of our history and have recorded their observations about riding and training since early times. One of the

earliest is probably Xenophon's *On Horsemanship*, published about 350 B.C. If you want some good advice, read it. Some of the many things I took from it are: a humane and enlightened approach to the training of horses; to patiently teach any task to a horse by small, simple steps; and (my personal favorite) that breaking horses was a dangerous process and one that was better left to others. I really took that one to heart.

Lateral work is the key to suppleness and engagement, so we should study its development and correct usage. A good place to start is the Duke of Newcastle's *A General System of Horsemanship*, published in 1658. You will find an excellent discussion of the theory and practice of lateral work here. I will leave it to the inventor of the shoulder-in and counter-canter, François Robichon de la Guérinière, to have the last word on this. In his excellent work *École de Caval-*



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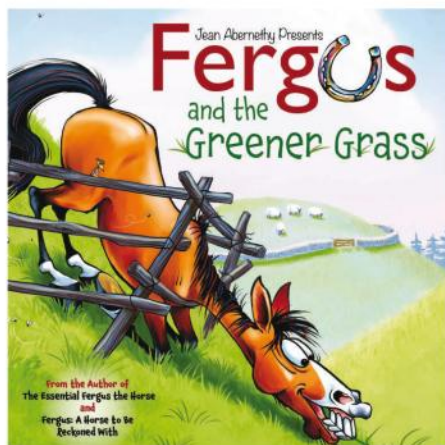
rie, published in 1730, he said, "The opinion of those who feel that there is no need for theory in the art of riding will not prevent me, in any way, from supporting it as one of the most important necessities for the attainment of perfection. Without theory, the practice will always be uncertain."

Most of us ride with some future goal of competition in mind, but practice without theoretical underpinning and planning is not really practice, it is just exercise.

## ... And Compete to Test Yourself

Well then, what about riding to compete? I saw an interesting bumper sticker the other day. It said something to the effect that you go to school, are taught lessons and then tested, but in life we are faced with tests, which teach us lessons. Unfortunately, many riders these days view competition as a lifestyle rather than an examination of their state of training. Many of our successful coaches have developed business models that encourage this viewpoint, and in this I think they are wrong. Competition should provide us with an accurate evaluation of our state of training, not a ribbon. Certainly, we should take pleasure in social interaction with fellow horse lovers. We should support organizers who provide good facilities, excellent footing and intelligent course design. However, our goal should not be to get a better placing or another qualification, but rather to test ourselves and our horses against our desire to enter into a perfect partnership with our horse. When we get close to this, we are in balance with our horse, connected and in balance with nature and—for those rare few moments—truly at peace with the world.

I hope you find peace in your world and that you approach the New Year with increased resolution. 🍷



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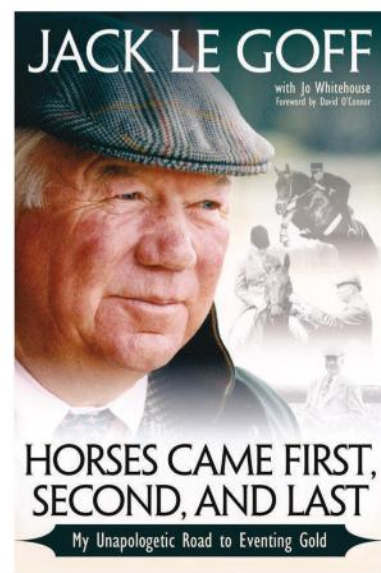
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## The Superpower Called "Self-Talk"

Generating success with the voice in your head

By **Tonya Johnston**

**Y**our naturally occurring mental skills are like superpowers. Similar to a superhero, you were born with them and now you must make sure that you use them for good and not evil. How does this relate to you as a rider? Well, one of the superpowers you were born with is the voice in your head. It is an incredible tool that you must be aware of, utilize wisely and rein in when necessary. If you leave this skill unattended it can run amuck and cause a lot of needless trouble.

Have you ever caught yourself saying something similar to these statements in your head during a ride? *I am so stupid—I can't believe I made that mistake again* or *I am the worst* or *Everyone here is so good, why am I wasting my time and money at this show?* These are examples of negative self-talk that can lead to poor focus, lack of confidence and a less-than-optimal performance. Working to build your awareness of how to speak to yourself, halting your negative self-talk and editing your vocabulary are all things you can start doing today to build consistency in your riding.

### **Jane Savoie: Helping Equestrians Create Positive Attitudes**

Jane Savoie has been an inspiration to equestrians for years. She is a dressage competitor, instructor, coach and member of the U.S. Equestrian Team. She is the author of five books, including the classic *That Winning Feeling*, in which she teaches readers to train their minds and create attitudes that help build mental strength. Jane is constantly creating new programs to help riders better understand their horses and their own learning process. In a recent conversation, we focused on one of her favorite mental skills, self-talk, and she described her wonderful perspective as well as some concrete suggestions for improving your internal conversations.

### **Awareness of Your Inner Dialogue**

"We talk to ourselves all day long: We can't go more than 11 seconds without saying something," says Jane. "It is usually something harmless ... but when it's neg-



© CINDI STEPHAN

An equestrian mental-skills coach and A-circuit competitor, Tonya Johnston has a master's degree in sport psychology. Her book, *Inside Your Ride: Mental Skills for Being Happy and Successful with Your Horse*, is available in paperback or e-book editions. For more info on Tonya's work, go to [www.TonyaJohnston.com](http://www.TonyaJohnston.com).



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Jane Savoie and her 20-year-old semi-retired Grand Prix Friesian gelding, Moshi.





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**INDICATION:** For the control of clinical signs associated with navicular syndrome in horses.

**CONTRAINDICATIONS:** Horses with hypersensitivity to clodronate disodium should not receive OSPPOS.

**WARNINGS:** Do not use in horses intended for human consumption.

**HUMAN WARNINGS:** Not for human use. Keep this and all drugs out of the reach of children. Consult a physician in case of accidental human exposure.

**PRECAUTIONS:** As a class, bisphosphonates may be associated with gastrointestinal and renal toxicity. Sensitivity to drug associated adverse reactions varies with the individual patient. Renal and gastrointestinal adverse reactions may be associated with plasma concentrations of the drug. Bisphosphonates are excreted by the kidney; therefore, conditions causing renal impairment may increase plasma bisphosphonate concentrations resulting in an increased risk for adverse reactions. Concurrent administration of other potentially nephrotoxic drugs should be approached with caution and renal function should be monitored. Use of bisphosphonates in patients with conditions or diseases affecting renal function is not recommended. Administration of bisphosphonates has been associated with abdominal pain (colic), discomfort, and agitation in horses. Clinical signs usually occur shortly after drug administration and may be associated with alterations in intestinal motility. In horses treated with OSPPOS these clinical signs usually began within 2 hours of treatment. Horses should be monitored for at least 2 hours following administration of OSPPOS.

Bisphosphonates affect plasma concentrations of some minerals and electrolytes such as calcium, magnesium and potassium, immediately post-treatment, with effects lasting up to several hours. Caution should be used when administering bisphosphonates to horses with conditions affecting mineral or electrolyte homeostasis (e.g. hyperkalemic periodic paralysis, hypocalcemia, etc.).

The safe use of OSPPOS has not been evaluated in horses less than 4 years of age. The effect of bisphosphonates on the skeleton of growing horses has not been studied; however, bisphosphonates inhibit osteoclast activity which impacts bone turnover and may affect bone growth.

Bisphosphonates should not be used in pregnant or lactating mares, or mares intended for breeding. The safe use of OSPPOS has not been evaluated in breeding horses or pregnant or lactating mares. Bisphosphonates are incorporated into the bone matrix, from where they are gradually released over periods of months to years. The extent of bisphosphonate incorporation into adult bone, and hence, the amount available for release back into the systemic circulation, is directly related to the total dose and duration of bisphosphonate use. Bisphosphonates have been shown to cause fetal developmental abnormalities in laboratory animals. The uptake of bisphosphonates into fetal bone may be greater than into maternal bone creating a possible risk for skeletal or other abnormalities in the fetus. Many drugs, including bisphosphonates, may be excreted in milk and may be absorbed by nursing animals.

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\* Freedom of Information Summary, Original New Animal Drug Application, NADA 141-427, for OSPPOS. April 28, 2014.

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ative then you are undermining yourself. You need to learn to be aware enough to censor your own speech because those negative thoughts are going to pop up. Sometimes I will be in the middle of giving a talk and I will give myself a half-halt to censor my speech—even after doing this for 30 years ... but you [can] do something proactive to reprogram yourself.”

When you reflect on your own self-talk, what do you notice? Are you immediately aware that you can improve what you say to yourself? Or do you not have a clear sense of your self-talk? Often these messages run like a software program that starts up automatically when you power up your computer, and therefore it is critical to remember that they are under your control.

To be more aware of your patterns of thought, try using a special reminder at the barn for several days. You can put a Post-it on your helmet bag or even inside your helmet, tack an index card in the lid of your trunk or set the lock screen of your phone to say something like, “Think smart” or “Support yourself.” These sorts of targeted reminders can tune up your awareness before a ride and enable you to make more positive choices to support your psychological strength and focus.

## Halting Negative Thoughts

“You need to make some kind of ‘Stop’ [if you catch yourself saying something negative],” explains Jane. “You might say something to yourself like, *Oh, I am such an uncoordinated idiot*, but then you could put a stop sign up at the end of the road in your mind’s eye. Or you could see yourself erasing the [negative] words from a blackboard or see a big red ‘X’ through the words ... You then have to replace them with something positive.”

Once you have heightened awareness of your self-talk, you want to have a surefire, consistent method in place for halting your negative language in its tracks. This method is called a “thought-stopping cue,” as its job is to completely

stop the negative and give you a chance to switch gears. Jane provided some great examples of visual cues (the stop sign, red “X” and erasing a blackboard). You can also create a word or phrase (“change gears” or “delete”) or a physical cue (a deep breath with a big exhale out of your mouth or glancing up at the sky and back down to a specific point in front of you).

Note that whatever thought-stopping cue you use, a positive, solution-oriented statement to channel your energy toward success must come next. For example, pretend you say, “I always chip the single oxer” to yourself as you stand ringside at the horse show. You immediately use your thought-stopping cue of shaking your right hand while imagining your negative thought flying out of your fingers. In this case, you would finish by telling yourself two specific positive things that could help



Note that whatever thought-stopping cue you use, a positive, solution-oriented statement to channel your energy toward success must come next.

you ride a consistent rhythm effectively: “I count loudly in my head and keep my elbows loose on the way to the single.”

## Words to Permanently Delete

“Eliminating words like ‘don’t’ and ‘what if’ are a good start,” says Jane. “I hear trainers teach and ‘don’t’ is such a common instruction. Eliminate the word ‘don’t’ from your vocabulary. One of the other words that students say out loud or verbalize internally is ‘what if ... As soon as you hear yourself say ‘what if,’ stop yourself and say ‘so what if’ and then follow it up with ‘I can handle it.’ For example, ‘So what if I get bucked off, I can get back on.’”

As you can see from Jane’s suggestions, there are words and phrases that can be permanently censored from your self-talk. She mentions two that are a great start: “don’t” and “what if.”

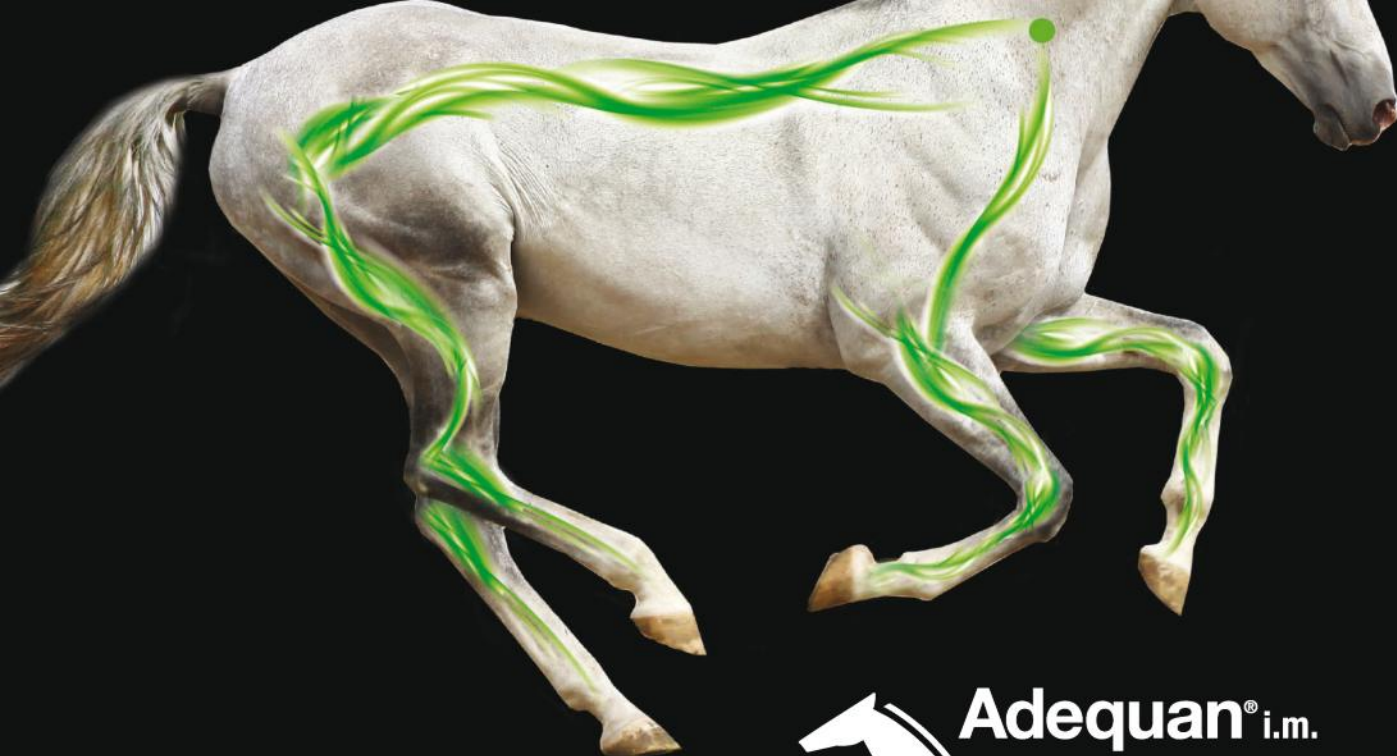
“Don’t”: You may know intellectually what “don’t” means, but your body only understands the action word it is connected to and immediately starts working on how to make that happen. “Don’t look down” triggers your mind’s eye to imagine what looking down feels like and then you end up strengthening a bad habit. Each time you are tempted to say “Don’t \_\_\_\_\_” to yourself as an instruction, replace it with what you want to have happen instead. “Don’t look down” can become something like, “Look up at a focal point,” which is a specific positive action that your body can easily help you achieve.

“What if”: You create stress with your self-talk when you start sentences with “what if” because it is focused on trying to predict the future—which is absolutely out of your control. “What if he spooks?” It’s true, your horse may spook because he is an animal and is not 100 percent under your control at any time. You can change your language to focus on the present: “I keep my heels down to stay connected to my horse.” Or, as Jane suggests, follow up a “what if” with how and why you can

handle that scenario: “What if he spooks? I am keeping my heels down and eyes up to stay in balanced in the tack.” Either way, the emphasis is on the solution and not the worrisome uncertainty of the situation.

In addition to these suggestions, be sure to brainstorm and add other words to delete from your vocabulary. For example, “never,” “if/then” and “can’t” are unproductive and can be terms you eliminate.

As you go forward in these next few weeks of riding, be aware of what triggers your negative self-talk. Stay on the lookout, catch it early and then change your internal messaging so that it helps you rather than hurts you. As we learned from Spiderman, “With great power, comes great responsibility.” Never underestimate how much you and your horse rely on your positive mindset to meet the challenges you face as a team, and do what it takes to keep it locked in place. 🐾



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# TOP CARE FOR TOP PERFO

A behind-the-scenes look at four of the nation's most successful sporthorses' care routines.

**By Elizabeth Iliff Prax**

**T**o keep horses feeling and performing their best, you have to know their unique quirks and preferences. This is demonstrated by four of the United States's current world-class athletes: Nations Cup medal-winning jumper Zeremonie, dressage star Rassing's Lonoir, Olympic eventer Veronica and High Performance hunter champion Center Court.

Zeremonie and Veronica both love to nap. Veronica is also a big fan of acupuncture, but Center Court hates it. He requires frequent changes in his routine, while Lonoir thrives on predictability. All four horses are excellent travelers, which is fortunate given how far away from home some of their competitions are.

To keep these horses healthy and happy, their support teams try to stay one step ahead of any potential problems. Veronica's team does periodic bloodwork to monitor her health and identify any additional nutritional needs. Lonoir's rider, Olivia Lagoy-Weltz, schedules occasional veterinary wellness checks, "even when things are going great—just to keep track of what's going on."

On the following pages, these teams share how they shape the individual care routines for each of their equine superstars.



COURTESY, MARY ELIZABETH KENT

**ABOVE:** Zeremonie (left) with Lord Lucio, a foal she had before Laura Kraut owned her. Now grown, Lord Lucio is in training with Laura and her partner, Nick Skelton.

**TOP RIGHT:** When Veronica is inside, she spends most of her time sleeping, often snoring and dreaming.

**FAR RIGHT:** Center Court with owner, Kristen Hiller, who plans to ride him in a few competitions as an Amateur while John French continues to campaign him in the High Performance and Derby divisions.

**NEAR RIGHT:** Olivia Lagoy-Weltz and Lonoir had their personal best score of 74.58 percent at the 2017 FEI Nations Cup™ CDIO\*\*\*\* Rotterdam, where Team USA won gold.



COURTESY, LAUREN KLEFFER

VERONICA

# FORMERS



RASSING'S LONNOIR

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COURTESY, KRISTEN HILLER

CENTER COURT



# ZEREMONIE

**NICKNAME:** Moose

**OCCUPATION:** Jumper

**HOMETOWNS:** Wellington, Florida, and Alcester, England

**BASIC STATS:** 10-year-old, 16.3-hand Holsteiner mare

**SIRE:** Cero II

**DAM:** Toulouse

**ZEREMONIE'S PEOPLE**

**OWNER:** Old Willow Farms

**RIDER:** Laura Kraut

**BARN MANAGER:** Mary Elizabeth Kent

**BACKGROUND:** Laura and Nick Skelton found Moose in northern Germany when she was 5 years old. She is much bigger than Laura's typically compact mounts, like now-retired 15.2-hand Cedric. "She was quite green and a little bit gawky in the early years of her career," says Mary Elizabeth, so Laura took her time with Zeremonie, helping her gain the experience and confidence she would need to compete at the highest levels. "Now she's an old pro," says Mary Elizabeth. "She loves the crowds and does her best every time she walks in the ring."

The mare competes about twice a month on a schedule geared toward international championships. Following each major championship, she takes a few weeks off from work and enjoys grazing and napping in her paddock.

Moose is as confident and brave around the barn as she is in the show ring—except when it comes to running water. She's fine with water in the wash stall—fortunately, as her original dapple-gray color is now quite white, requiring frequent baths. ("She spends a lot of her time wet," says Mary Elizabeth.) But she sometimes shies away from other sources of running water. This can cause a few minor detours at shows, where water trucks are used to wet down the footing. "I have to avoid them at all costs," says Laura.

Before Laura and Nick found Moose, she produced a colt named Lord Lucio, by the Holsteiner stallion Legolas. Mother and son were reunited two years ago when Laura and Nick purchased Lucio at a sporthorse auction. Now nicknamed Baby Moose, he was one of only two 6-year-olds to jump clear throughout the entire competition at the 2017 British Young Horse Showjumping Championships.

**DAILY ROUTINE:** To maintain fitness, Moose goes on a hot walker for an hour a day, in addition to six to seven days a week under saddle. When she's in England, she's



Laura and Zeremonie put in a double-clear round at the 2016 Barcelona CSI\*\*\*\*\* Furusiyya FEI Nations Cup Final, which helped the U.S. team secure bronze.



also ridden out once or twice a week on a 3-mile loop following local roads into the neighboring hills. She also enjoys grazing in her grassy paddock for several hours each day. "She never picks her head up," says Mary Elizabeth.

In the barn, Moose spends her time either watching out her stall windows—one looks out toward the ring and the other opens into the barn aisle—or sleeping. "She takes a lot of naps, even at horse shows," says Mary Elizabeth. "She doesn't care what's going on around her stall. She's always covered with shavings in the morning—and other times of the day, too."

Friendly and easygoing with both people and other horses, Moose adores attention. Most importantly, "she is ruled by food," says Mary Elizabeth. "She loves cookies, treats and peppermints."

**NUTRITION:** Moose's healthy appetite serves her well in her worldly travels,



© SHANNON BRINKMAN

Laura and Zereemonie went double clear in rounds 1 and 2 at the 2017 Mercedes-Benz Nations Cup CSIO\*\*\*\*\* at CHIO Aachen, earning team silver, and Zereemonie was awarded the Halla Challenge Trophy for being the leading jumper of the show.

which have included frequent trips between Europe and the U.S. as well as more remote destinations, such as China and Brazil. Many countries don't allow riders to bring along the grains that their horses are accustomed to eating at home, so they often have to switch feeds. That's no problem for this happy globetrotter, says Mary Elizabeth. "She's not one to go off her feed."

Despite her "steel stomach," Moose receives GastroGard® when she competes as a preventive measure to protect her from gastric ulcers, which are unfortunately extremely common among show horses.

Her two daily meals of low-energy pellets are supplemented with Remard™ Total Joint Care Performance and Total Blood Fluids Muscle. In the States, she also eats three meals of timothy hay. In England, she eats haylage, a traditional British forage

consisting of grasses sealed in plastic wrap immediately after cutting and preserved by the fermentation process resulting from the air-tight, high-moisture conditions.

Before traveling, Moose always receives a bran mash. Although she isn't especially mare-ish, she is also kept on a routine oral dose of Regu-mate® during the show season. "She just becomes a little moodier when she's in heat," says Mary Elizabeth. The synthetic hormones ensure that her heat symptoms don't distract her—or any nearby stallions—at competitions.

### MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Team gold medal, CSIO\*\*\*\*\* Nations Cup in Wellington, spring 2016 · Team silver, 2016 Rome CSI\*\*\*\*\* Furusiyya FEI Nations Cup presented by Longines · Team bronze, 2016 Barcelona CSI\*\*\*\*\* Furusiyya FEI Nations Cup Final · Third individually, 2016 Loro Piana Grand Prix of Rome · U.S. team reserve for the 2016 Rio Olympics · Second individually, 2017 \$35,000 Sovaro Longines FEI World Cup™ Qualifier CSI\*\*\*-W at the Palm Beach Masters · Team silver and fourth individually, 2017 Mercedes-Benz Nations Cup CSIO\*\*\*\*\* at CHIO Aachen, where she also won the Halla Challenge Trophy as the leading jumper of the show

**OTHER CARE:** Moose wears normal shoes, routinely replaced every five weeks. At home, she wears regular stable bandages in her stall. After jump schools and competitions, she stands in ice boots. Ramard ReliefGel™ is then applied to her legs underneath her stable wraps.

At shows, bodywork specialists stretch and massage her before classes—and sometimes in between rounds. She also enjoys acupuncture and massage blankets. "We believe that any physical therapy is beneficial," says Mary Elizabeth.



# CENTER COURT

**NICKNAME:** Billy

**OCCUPATION:** Hunter

**HOMETOWN:** Templeton, California

**BASIC STATS:** 8-year-old, 16.3-hand Holsteiner gelding

**SIRE:** Ustinov

**DAM:** Tropical

## CENTER COURT'S PEOPLE

**OWNER:** Kristen Hiller

**RIDER:** John French

**ASSISTANT TRAINER:** Theresa Petyo-Wallace

**GROOMS:** Daniel Soto, Pepe Ortiz

**BACKGROUND:** John discovered Billy, who was 4 at the time, in a video from England. "He's super scopey and brave. He could jump a mountain!" he says, adding that the big horse could have been a jumper if he were faster.

Billy gets bored easily, so his team's constant challenge is to keep his routine interesting both at home and at shows. He performs best at new, unfamiliar venues. Now that he's so experienced, John limits his schedule to special classes, derbies and, occasionally, the High Performance Hunters. "We can't show him in the Regular [Working Hunter] division," he says. "He would get sick of that."

Billy is very lazy, says Theresa, especially when it comes to doing flatwork. "Once he starts jumping, he's great," adds John. "But he doesn't put as much effort into his flatwork." As a result, some of his skills on the flat have taken longer to develop. Last spring, John sent him to trainer Susie Hutchison to work on his lead changes for a few weeks and help him be more consistent with them.

After the 2017 USHJA International Hunter Derby Championships, John sent the big horse to an equine "spa" in northern California for a month to maintain his condition and strengthen his flatwork muscles. Billy swam five days a week and returned stronger than before. "He came back feeling really good," says Theresa.

On the ground, the big horse "used to be a little bit of a handful," says John. He was difficult to catch in the paddock and sometimes broke free from his handlers when



being led to and from the barn. "He's really smart and knows when he can take advantage of somebody." Since moving to a new facility in 2016, Billy's behavior has improved dramatically. Theresa thinks this may be because his box stall is attached to a 12-foot-by-24-foot run, giving Billy 24/7 access to the outdoors. "He spends most of his time outside," she says.

While John will continue to campaign Billy this year in the High Performance and Derby ring, Kristen plans to ride him in a few shows as an Amateur as well.

**DAILY ROUTINE:** Maintaining Billy's fitness without dampening his enthusiasm for work is John's primary goal. He rotates through the facility's multiple arenas frequently, but tries to keep the gelding out of the ring as much as possible. He rides him on trails and practices flatwork on the farm's hilly perimeter track, which is great for strengthening his hindquarters. Billy also goes on the hot walker for about 45



John French discovered Center Court as a 4-year-old in a video from England. The big horse impressed him with his scope and bravery.





© ESI PHOTOGRAPHY

**John and Center Court finished second in the \$50,000 USHJA International Hunter Derby at the HITS Desert Horse Park in Thermal, California, last February.**

minutes a day. "It's very important that he keeps moving," says Theresa.

He is turned out in a large, irrigated paddock every day. However, because he gets fat easily, his turnout time has to be limited to about two hours.

Around the barn, Billy is "kind of a ham," says Theresa. "He loves treats. In his stall, he's very quiet, but he's always paying attention. You can tell he's always thinking." Pepe says that Billy can be a little grumpy in the grooming stall sometimes and is picky about what tools are used on him. "He likes being *gently* groomed with a currycomb," he says.

Before Billy's rides—and sometimes afterward, too—Pepe puts a BEMER electromagnetic blanket on him. "It loosens up his back and sacrum," says Theresa. They also routinely stand him on a vibrating TheraPlate. After jump schools, Pepe ices and wraps Billy's legs. Otherwise, he usually leaves his legs bare.

A few days a week, Billy's team uses carrots to encourage him to stretch his body.

**NUTRITION:** To keep this easy keeper's weight under control, Theresa feeds him just a pound of low-starch grain twice daily, mixed in with his thyroid medication, vitamin E and Red Cell® vitamin and mineral supplement, which she says seems to keep his energy levels up. She soaks his orchard-grass hay to lower its sugar and starch content, then feeds him just a flake and a half morning and night, plus another flake for lunch.

Early in Billy's career, he suffered from stomachaches. "He's so laid-back, you

wouldn't think he'd have such a sensitive stomach, but he does," says John. The low-starch diet has made a significant difference, along with GastroGard, which he receives during competitions starting about five days before he travels.

**OTHER CARE:** Billy is shod every five weeks with normal shoes. He receives Ad-equan® and Legend® monthly to maintain his joint health. Daniel poultices his legs after big classes. Otherwise, his care has been relatively uncomplicated to date.

The one treatment Billy cannot abide is acupuncture. "He hates needles!" says John.

## **MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Began competing in the High Performance Working Hunter division as a 6-year-old · Won the High Performance Working Hunter championship at the 2015 Washington International, where he earned the best score of the show, a 92 · Has won 19 High Performance championships and reserve championships to date · Finished first or second in 11 International Hunter Derbies to date, including the \$50,000 USHJA International Hunter Derby at HITS Desert Horse Park in November 2016 and the \$50,000 USHJA International Hunter Derby at HITS National Sunshine II in November 2017



# VERONICA

**NICKNAME:** The Troll

**OCCUPATION:** Eventer

**HOMETOWNS:** Middleburg, Virginia, and Ocala, Florida

**BASIC STATS:** 15-year-old, 16.1-hand Dutch Warmblood mare

**SIRE:** Pacific

**DAM:** Kimbel

## VERONICA'S PEOPLE

**OWNER:** Team Rebecca

**RIDER:** Lauren Kieffer

**GROOM:** Shannon Kinsley

**EXERCISE RIDERS:** Kim Ceceer and Lauren Mair

**BACKGROUND:** Australian Olympian Scott Keach imported Veronica to the States and competed her through the Preliminary level before sending her to Lauren as a sales project. Team Rebecca then bought the mare for five-time Olympian Karen O'Connor, who guided her up to the four-star level before handing the reins back to Lauren upon her retirement in 2012.

The Troll's nickname comes from her cranky facial expressions. She makes faces in the cross-ties and pins her ears at horses and people who pass her stall. "We joke that it hurts her to put them forward," Lauren says. "The only time she puts them forward is when she works. She has a huge work ethic. She loves jumping and galloping."

Earning The Troll's trust is key. She likes to be cared for by people she knows well. In fact, despite her intimidating faces, she enjoys being hugged and scratched by "her" people. "She's a very individual, smart mare—and she's a survivor," Lauren says. "She's the horse you want to be on in *The Walking Dead*."

In Veronica's extensive travels around the world, "she's taken every form of transportation there is—planes, trains, lorries, ferries—and she always eats, drinks and ships well."

Her competition schedule typically includes two major CCI three-day events per year. She enjoys at least a month off after her spring three-day, then about two months off in the fall and early winter. Around Christmastime, she begins legging back up with hours of hacking and roadwork. "That's when podcasts and audiobooks come in handy," says Lauren.

**DAILY ROUTINE:** Lauren believes the best way to promote horses' health is to keep their lifestyles as natural as



Groom Shannon Kinsley (left) with Veronica and rider Lauren Kieffer

possible by giving them plenty of forage and time outside. "It prevents ulcers and keeps horses happier, too." Veronica loves to be outside. Usually turned out overnight, she comes into the barn at around 7 a.m., then goes back out again in the early afternoon. During her breaks, she's turned out 22 hours a day.

When she's inside, she spends most of her time sleeping, often snoring and dreaming. "She twitches and canters in her sleep," says Lauren. "She even snacks on her hay while she's lying down." If Shannon finds her napping when it's time for her ride, she tries not to interrupt her and takes another horse out instead.

**NUTRITION:** Despite her strenuous conditioning regimen, The Troll requires very little grain to maintain her weight, even right before a four-star event. She eats a small amount of Buckeye® EQ8™ Gut Health twice daily, plus all the high-quality





© SHANNON BRINKMAN

Lauren and Veronica finished 17th at the 2017 Badminton Horse Trials, where they also earned their personal best dressage score of 38.

timothy-mix hay she wants.

She also receives two routine supplements: SUCCEED® for digestive health and APF (Advanced Protection Formula by Auburn Laboratories Inc.) to support her immune system.

The night before a long trip, The Troll's team soaks her grain and gives her a bran mash. She's also on Regu-mate during the show season. Lauren explains, "She's not mean or witchy when she's in heat, but she comes into heat so often that I figure this makes her more comfortable. And if there's something we can do to help her, we do it."

One of The Troll's favorite treats is beer. She likes it warm—never cold. Shannon pours it directly into her mouth and Veronica sticks her tongue out to catch every drop.

**OTHER CARE:** After jump schools and gallops, Shannon cools down Veronica's

legs with Ice Horse® wraps. The mare then wears stable bandages for the few hours while she's in her stall. After cross-country courses, she stands in whirlpool boots that extend above her knees. Then she wears stable wraps overnight.

Whenever The Troll competes or gallops on unusually firm ground, Shannon packs her hooves afterward with Hooflex® Magic Cushion® Hoof Packing. She also does a little extra icing to soothe her legs.

Occasionally, Veronica's farrier will apply pads under her shoes or pour urethane over the soles of her feet to protect her from especially hard ground. At the end of the competition season,

he pulls her shoes so she can enjoy her holiday barefoot.

When in training, Veronica wears a magnetic and massage blanket every day. She's also treated with a functional electrical stimulation unit once or twice a week, which Lauren says helps to relieve any soreness in her back.

The Troll's favorite therapy is acupuncture. While she's receiving it, her ears flop, her lower lip droops and she yawns frequently. She usually lies down to take a nap afterward. Lauren likes to use it at events the morning before dressage and about once a week at home when her work is more intense.

## MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Second in the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event CCI\*\*\*\* in 2014 and 2016 · Placed well in numerous other three- and four-star events around the world · Named the U.S. Eventing Association's Mare of the Year in 2014 · U.S. Olympic team in Rio, 2016 · Top-20 placings in two of the sport's most iconic four-star events, Badminton and Burghley, in England, in 2017



# RASSING'S LONNOIR

**NICKNAME:** Lono

**OCCUPATION:** Dressage

**HOMETOWNS:** Haymarket, Virginia, and Wellington, Florida

**BASIC STATS:** 13-year-old, 17.2-hand Danish Warmblood gelding

**SIRE:** De Noir

**DAM:** Lorani

## LONNOIR'S PEOPLE

**OWNERS:** Olivia Lagoy-Weltz and Mary Anne McPhail

**RIDER:** Olivia Lagoy-Weltz

**GROOM:** Nicole Ardito-Ng

**ASSISTANT GROOM/EXERCISE RIDER:** Micah Andrews

**BACKGROUND:** When Olivia imported Lono from Denmark as a 7-year-old, he was extremely sensitive both on the ground and under saddle. Flags snapping in the wind especially set him off, she says. "We'd turn across the diagonal, for example, to do an extended canter and he'd squeal and accelerate, then launch into the air at X."

In the barn, Lono was initially very head-shy and frequently pulled back on the cross-ties. Olivia spent a long time teaching him to lower his head to be bridled. She also learned to choose his support team carefully. "He's very specific about how he's handled. Any new vet or farrier has to earn his trust."

As Lono matured, his confidence grew and his behavior improved dramatically. He now adores attention from those within his trusted circle. "He loves going on the road

Lonoir, who adores attention from those he trusts, pauses with his people for a quick selfie in Rotterdam.



and being the only horse that we're focused on. He knows he's special."

Now that he has reached the top level of the sport, Olivia competes him only as much as is necessary to qualify for major international competitions. "I don't want to put any unnecessary wear and tear on him," she explains. After the Florida season or trips abroad, she gives him three weeks off from training. "But then he gets bored," she says, so she gradually brings him back into work.

**DAILY ROUTINE:** Lono thrives on a predictable routine and a simple training program. In addition to ringwork, Olivia rides him almost daily on a hilly loop around her 20-acre property. "It's good for his brain and his body," she says.

Lono's team does lots of carrot stretches to keep his body loose. They also "really dig in" when they curry him to relax and loosen his muscles. He particularly enjoys this on the gluteal muscles of his rump.

"He will wiggle around and position you where he likes to be rubbed," Olivia says.

In Virginia, Lono is turned out for three to four hours each day. He doesn't go out for quite as long in Florida, because it's sandier and less grassy, so he gets bored more easily. He does, however, love to roll in the deep sand in the roundpen.

During their 2017 Europe tour, in light of multiple variables—the cooler weather, foreign barn and unfamiliar situation—Olivia decided not to turn Lono out. His team hand-walked and grazed him frequently instead.

**NUTRITION:** When Lono was younger, avoiding high-starch food sources was critical both for controlling his excitability and for treating a bout of ulcers. Under the guidance of a local nutritionist, Olivia found a high-fat, high-fiber grain for him. He's an easier keeper now, so her focus is more on maintaining his strength and endurance. She also continues feeding him some of the products that are allowed in Europe so she doesn't have to disrupt his diet when he travels abroad.

Lono eats three meals a day: a combination of Nutrena ProForce Fuel and Cavalor FiberForce, plus Platinum Per-



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**Olivia and Lonoir at the World Equestrian Festival CHIO Aachen in July**

formance<sup>®</sup> CJ and Progressive Nutrition<sup>®</sup> ProAdvantage<sup>®</sup> Grass Formula pellets. He has 24/7 access to a hay mix of orchard grass and timothy served in a NibbleNet<sup>®</sup>, which reduces waste. During less intense training periods, his lunch is a light mash.

**OTHER CARE:** “I try hard not to have him live in stable bandages,” says Olivia. After hard workouts at home, Nicole cools his legs with ice boots, then leaves them bare the rest of the day. When the weather makes horses’ legs get puffy—as it does sometimes in Virginia—she applies stable wraps. In Florida or on the road, she often puts either a poultice or cooling gel under his wraps—or uses Back on Track<sup>®</sup> Quick Leg Wraps, with nothing underneath them.

In addition to his routine stretching and massage, Lono also receives a gentle chiropractic treatment (nothing aggressive that might alarm him) about once a year.

One of the most critical components of Lono’s care routine is his shoeing. “He has two different front feet: one upright and one flat,” Olivia explains. To

keep him sound and healthy, it’s important to make the two feet as similar as possible without disturbing each one’s natural balance. Periodic X-rays help to ensure that his breakover points are biomechanically ideal. “That way we can check that what his feet look like on the outside matches the angles of the bones on the inside.” 🐾

### **MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Won the small tour CDI (Prix St. Georges, Intermediate I and Intermediate Freestyle) at Dressage at Devon, 2014 · Won the small tour at the 2015 Adequan<sup>®</sup> Global Dressage Festival · Team gold medal, CDIO Wellington Nations Cup, 2015 · U.S. traveling team alternate, 2016 Pan American Games · Multiple 2017 Grand Prix and Grand Prix Special wins in Wellington, the Stillpoint Farm FEI Nations Cup™ CDIO\*\*\* and the Dutta Corp. U.S. Dressage Festival of Champions · Nations Cup team gold in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, 2017 · Nations Cup team silver in Aachen, Germany, 2017





Two of the six pairs of equine sinuses are located on either side of the horse's head around the eyes and extend to the lower end of the cheekbones. A: frontal sinuses; B1: caudal maxillary sinuses; B2: rostral maxillary sinuses. The remaining four pairs are called dorsal conchae, middle (ethmoidal) conchae and ventral conchae (see illustration, p. 33) and sphenopalatine (not shown).



# CLEANING UP EQUINE SINUS DISEASE

By Leslie Threlkeld

A minor runny nose may be the sign of a major problem.

**V**iscous, straw-colored mucus lingered on my vibrant 5-year-old Thoroughbred's right nostril, punctuated by a dark trickle of blood that returned minutes after I wiped it away. A few days later, the volume of discharge increased, but my horse seemed otherwise healthy. He had no fever, a good appetite and was enthusiastically learning to jump under saddle.

Unseen past the dark recesses of his nasal passages was a mass growing in his sinus. A veterinarian soon identified the growth as a progressive ethmoid hematoma, a benign tumor at the back of the nasal passages, that required surgical removal.

This is just one of several types of sinus disease that occurs in horses and will be described in this article. But first a basic understanding of the equine sinuses will help.

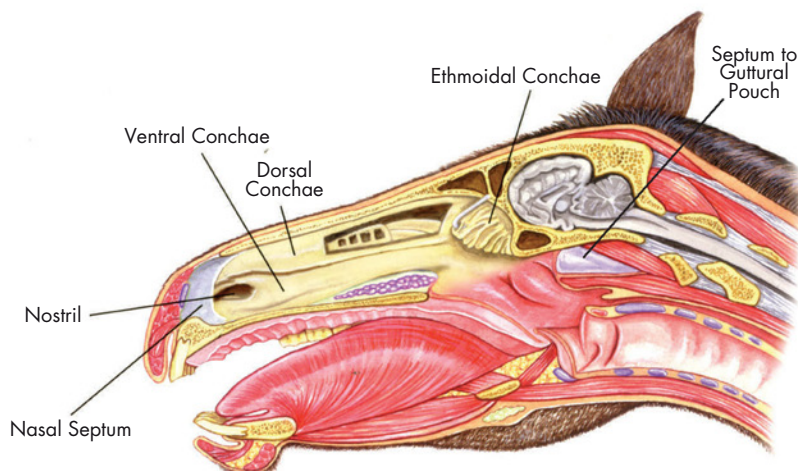
## Equine Sinuses Defined

Sinuses are air-filled cavities located on either side of the horse's head, above,

below and between the eyes. They extend down the face to the lower end of the cheekbones. Often referred to as paranasal sinuses because they are near the nose, sinuses have a smooth interior lining and are covered by a thin layer of bone.

There are six pairs of paranasal sinuses on each side of the horse's head.

- The two frontal sinuses are closest to the surface of the forehead.
- The two maxillary sinuses are the largest sinuses and divided by a thin wall (septum) into two parts called rostral



COURTESY, ILLUSTRATED ATLAS OF CLINICAL ANATOMY AND COMMON DISORDERS OF THE HORSE, VOLUME 2





**ABOVE:** In severe cases of primary sinusitis, a veterinarian may perform a lavage (flushing) of the sinuses. The horse is sedated and a small hose is drilled into the frontal sinus to remove the pus buildup. Purulent material, as shown, often drains out of the hole after it is drilled.

**RIGHT:** A fractured or diseased upper molar can sometimes cause secondary sinusitis. This photo shows the bottom view of an affected tooth, taken from below.



and caudal. The maxillary sinuses house the roots of the molars.

■ The remaining pairs of sinuses are called dorsal conchae, middle (ethmoidal) conchae, ventral conchae and sphenopalatine sinuses.

These sinuses communicate with each other via a complex network of passages. Each side of the sinuses is separated by the nasal cavity and the long nasal septum, except toward the back (dorsally) of the skull, where the frontal sinuses have their own septum. The frontal sinuses communicate with the maxillary sinuses through a silver-dollar-sized opening.

The exact function of the sinuses is unclear. They may have evolved to allow the horse to have a large enough head to fit his many teeth but not add the weight of solid bone. Membranes in the sinuses also are thought to produce some mucus

to help moisturize the nasal passages, which extend from the nostrils to the windpipe, and to protect the respiratory system from dust, dirt and microorganisms. They also may be holding chambers for mucus produced elsewhere in the respiratory system.

In a healthy horse, mucus flows through the sinuses, ending with the maxillary sinuses, where it then drains into the nasal passages through a nar-

row opening and out through the nostrils.

"Normal mucus should appear after exercise or after the horse has had its head down for a prolonged period of time," says Elizabeth J. Barrett, DVM, MS, DACVSLA, a veterinarian at the Hagyard Equine Medical Institute. "It should not be persistent and of a large volume. It should typically be clear in color and not malodorous."

Mucus containing pus or blood that may be accompanied by a foul odor is frequently the first sign of a problem in the sinuses. "Nasal discharge that needs to be investigated further persists for longer than a day or two, is purulent [contains pus] or bloody or smells bad," Dr. Barrett says.

### Diagnostic Tools: Finding the Source

If your horse has bloody or purulent mucus coming from his nose, a veterinarian first will try to find its source to determine why it's happening. She'll pass an endoscope, an optical instrument that allows a

vet to see inside the body, through the nasal passages. From there, she may be able to see discharge in the general area of the sinuses. "That is the hint that drainage is coming from the sinus," Dr. Barrett says.

A veterinarian then may move on to other diagnostics because the sinuses cannot be accessed with a scope. At this point, she may take radiographs or refer your horse to a clinic or equine hospital to have radiographs taken to check for a fracture or growth. However, if an infection has produced dense fluid, a veterinarian may have difficulty interpreting the X-rays. If she can't make a definitive diagnosis, she may opt for alternative diagnostics, such as computerized tomography, magnetic resonance imaging or a sinuscopy.

A veterinarian can use a CT and an MRI to better view and evaluate soft tissues and tumors because they provide more detailed imaging than X-rays. A CT is a combination of several X-rays that create a cross-sectional view of the inside of the body. An MRI also provides a cross-sectional image of the body, but it uses a magnetic field and radio waves. Some equine hospitals can perform a CT while the horse is standing, while others require a vet to give your horse general anesthesia and lay him down, also the procedure for an MRI.

If the veterinarian does not think a CT or an MRI provides enough information for a diagnosis, she may recommend a sinuscopy. During this procedure, she will make a small incision in your horse's skull and pass an endoscope directly into the sinuses to evaluate the color, size, shape and location of an infection (sinusitis) or growth.

These diagnostic tools will help your veterinarian pinpoint the cause of the abnormal discharge. Such discharge may be caused by sinusitis or a more serious sinus disease, such as a growth in the sinuses.

### Sinus Infection

Common in horses, sinusitis falls into two categories: primary and secondary.

**Primary sinusitis** is caused by bacterial infection, most commonly a *Streptococcus*, possibly from an upper-respiratory infection. The result is pus buildup and in-

flammation of the lining of the sinus, leading to bloody or pus-like discharge from the nostril that is on the same side as the affected sinus (unilateral). The discharge may have a malodorous smell as well.

After a physical examination of your horse, a veterinarian will pass an endoscope through his nose and may move on to radiographs or a CT. Once an infection is determined, it can be treated with antibiotics or, in more severe cases, a lavage (flushing) of the sinuses. After your horse is sedated, a small hole is made in the facial bones to access the sinuses for irrigation.

**Secondary sinusitis** is an infection caused by another source, such as a diseased or broken tooth or tooth root. Molar roots of the upper jaw are within the maxillary sinuses, says Kenneth E. Sullins, DVM, MS, DACVS, a professor of surgery at Midwestern University's College of Veterinary Medicine. If they become infected and erupt into the sinuses, secondary sinusitis will occur. The signs are the same as for primary sinusitis, but the associated smell is more likely to be worse.

"Sometimes it's just bad luck if they get a tooth infection, but it can also be caused by a fractured tooth or diastema [packed food] between teeth," adds Dr. Barrett.

An oral examination, endoscopy and radiographs will help to confirm secondary sinusitis. To treat it, a veterinarian will extract the bad tooth or push it out through the sinus. This type of sinusitis is fairly common but may be prevented with regular dental care and maintenance.

## Ethmoid Hematoma

Another reason for abnormal nasal discharge is an ethmoid hematoma, a benign tumor with a smooth exterior that is often mottled red, yellow or purple. It typically originates in the scroll-shaped bones at the back of the nasal passages called ethmoid turbinates. It also sometimes occurs in the maxillary sinuses. The cause is unknown.

If the soft, fragile, blood-filled ethmoid hematoma is in the ethmoid turbinates, a veterinarian can identify it with an endoscope. If it's in another part of the sinus, she will have to X-ray to see it and pos-

## Bone-Flap Surgery

Bone-flap procedures sound gruesome, and while they are messy, horses tolerate it well, says Kenneth E. Sullins, DVM, MS, DACVS, a professor of surgery at Midwestern University's College of Veterinary Medicine. The wound also heals nicely because of good blood supply in the head. "Horses are pretty tough. Give them some phenylbutazone and that same evening they'll have their head stuck in a hay bag."

However, sinus surgery can be risky and time is of the essence because the good blood supply that promotes healing can hinder surgery. During a standing procedure, the horse must remain quiet so the veterinarian can work quickly and accurately. If the horse repeatedly shakes or jerks his head, surgery with the horse lying down under general anesthesia may be necessary.

With standing sinus surgery, there is less blood loss because the horse's head is above his heart. When he is lying down under general anesthesia, there may be increased blood loss because the horse's head is lower. Some horses also panic and thrash when coming out of sedation, risking injury.

If bleeding becomes profuse or blocks visibility during surgery, the sinus can be packed with gauze to stop the bleeding. The flap may then be closed and another standing surgery performed a few days later to remove any remaining pieces.

"It's not usually the lesion itself that bleeds. What bleeds is normal mucosa and vessels when you rip them. You have to get out as quickly as you can without causing hemorrhage," Dr. Sullins says.

Even if there is no profuse bleeding and Dr. Sullins is able to complete a surgery, he usually will re-open a flap and re-evaluate in two or three days. "A huge component of sinus disease does not go away on the first surgery and the reason is you can't see with the bleeding. So unpack it, flush it out, put a scope in there and look at all the corners. My opinion is that's what makes [the treatment] work."

Dr. Sullins studied 91 cases of horses who underwent standing sinus flaps using this post-operative treatment protocol and published his findings with co-author Samantha K. Hart in the *Equine Veterinarian Journal* in 2011. In a paper titled "Evaluation of a novel post-operative treatment for sinonasal disease in the horse," they concluded this to be a "safe and effective means to thoroughly assess and treat sinonasal disease" that may help "reduce long-term complications and recurrence rates."

sibly move to a CT or an MRI.

Once confirmed, an ethmoid hematoma must be removed. If left untreated, it may continue to grow until it blocks the horse's nasal passages and interferes with his breathing. There are multiple treatment

options, depending upon the size and exact location of the mass.

To treat a very small ethmoid hematoma—under the size of a small grape—a veterinarian may perform endoscopy of the nasal passage and use an endoscopic



COURTESY, ELIZABETH J. BARRETT, DVM, MS, DACVSLA

**For medium to large masses, the best way to access the sinuses and ensure that all abnormal tissue has been removed is to perform a frontonasal bone flap, which can be done while the horse is sedated and standing or under general anesthesia.**





**Soft, fragile, blood-filled ethmoid hematomas can cause swelling over a horse's frontal and maxillary sinuses, as seen on this horse.**

multiple treatments are usually required.

There is a small risk of a negative, allergic-type response to formalin, where a sudden and severe inflammation occurs in the sinuses. For example, after an injection to treat my young horse's ethmoid hematoma, his breathing became labored, requiring a midnight emergency trip to the hospital. It also is possible that the mass will not respond adequately to this treatment.

An alternative to formalin injections for a mass no larger than the size of a grape is to vaporize it using a scope-guided laser through a sinuscopy incision. A veterinarian can perform this procedure while the horse is under standing sedation. Depending on the size of the mass, multiple treatments may be needed to completely obliterate it. However, the horse usually experiences very little discomfort and recovers quickly.

For medium to large masses, the best way to access the sinuses and ensure that all abnormal tissue has been removed is to perform a frontonasal bone flap. In this invasive surgery, a horse is sedated and standing or

needle to inject the mass with a solution of formaldehyde called formalin. This is an inexpensive, minimally invasive procedure performed under standing sedation at a clinic. However

under general anesthesia. A veterinarian will inject a local anesthetic under the skin where he will perform the bone flap surgery. Using a bone saw or an instrument similar to a chisel (an osteotome), the veterinarian will make a reverse D-shaped incision in the bone and then pry up and secure open a flap of bone. The surgical team will remove the mass through the opening and then push the flap back down and secure the skin with staples and cover it with a pressure bandage. (See the sidebar, "Bone-Flap Surgery," p. 35, for more information.)

Ethmoid hematomas have a tendency to recur if not completely removed, although the reason is not known. Follow-up endoscopies are recommended to

check for recurrence and the horse's owner should carefully observe nasal discharge for signs of blood.

## Cysts

A cyst is a mass in the sinus that Dr. Sullins describes as a "thin, mucosa-lined, bony 'balloon.'" Pink mucosa also covers the balloon, which contains yellow mucus. Like an ethmoid hematoma, a cyst's cause is unknown, however developmental problems have been suggested. A cyst is most likely to be found in the ventral conchae, frontal or maxillary sinuses.

If a cyst obstructs normal sinus drainage, pus will drain out of the nostril on the affected side. The discharge varies in terms of the presence of blood or odor. Cysts can exert a lot of pressure in the small spaces of a sinus and can cause painful facial swelling. If ignored, this may cause decreased blood flow to the facial bones, leading to necrosis (death of tissue cells) and recurrent infection. Cysts also can cause airway obstruction.

During an endoscopy, if a cyst is in the sinuses, it may be visible in the nasal passages, the nasal passages may appear narrow or they may be obstructed. Radiographs will reveal distortions of the sinuses or septum caused by the pressure of the cyst that may need to be repaired during surgery. As with an ethmoid hematoma, a veterinarian may choose to use a CT or an MRI or perform a sinuscopy during diagnostics.

## Blunt-Force Trauma

Abnormal nasal discharge and facial deformities do not always point to a sinus disease. A horse may suffer a fracture due to blunt-force trauma from swinging his head recklessly or getting kicked by another horse. Because the blood supply in the head is so good, a small fracture will usually heal very well on its own.

A veterinarian may do reconstruction if there is a depression or fragments of bone seen on an X-ray. The prognosis is usually promising. Kenneth E Sullins, DVM, MS, DACVS, a professor of surgery at Midwestern University's College of Veterinarian Medicine, describes a case where a foal had been kicked and his face caved in. During surgery, Dr. Sullins elevated the bones and re-inflated the sinuses. The foal healed extremely well and went on to become a halter horse.

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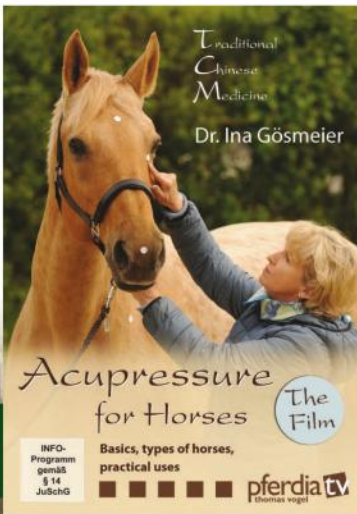
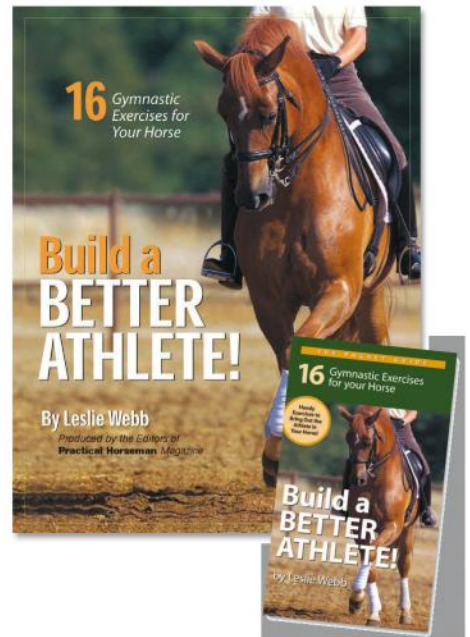
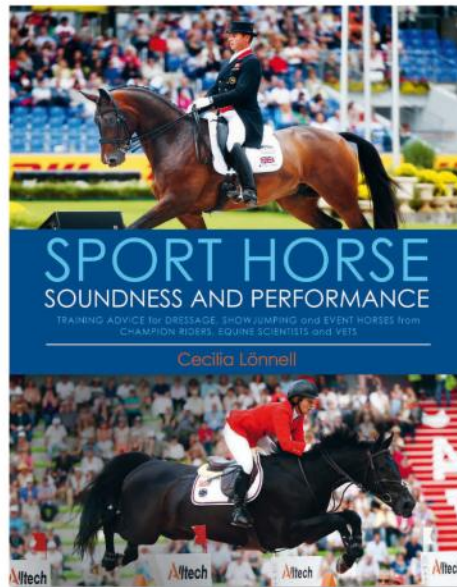
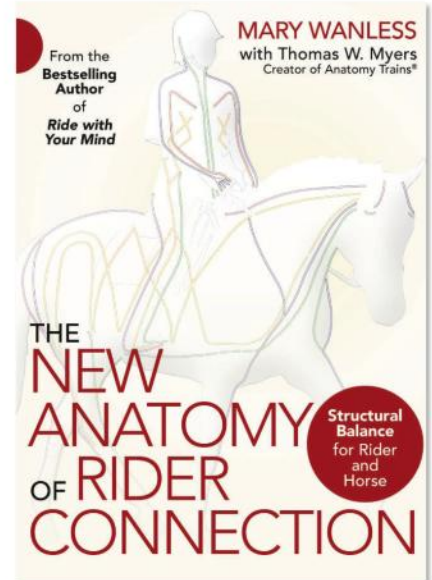
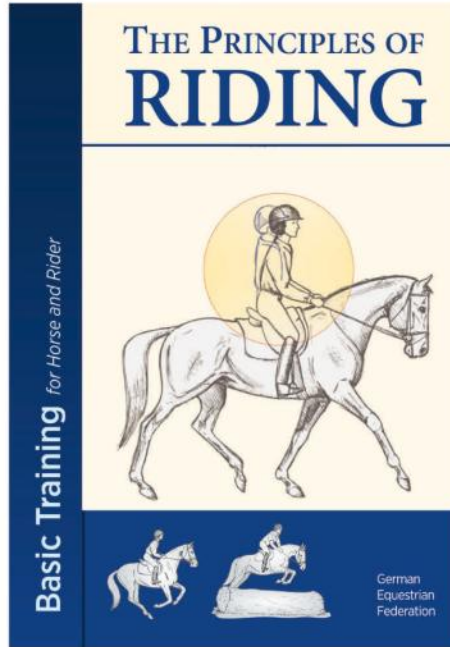
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## Emergency: Guttural Pouch Mycosis

While sinus disease is not usually considered an emergency, a nose bleed should never be underestimated. It could be the sign of a rare, life-threatening fungal infection called guttural pouch mycosis.

A horse has two large guttural pouches, one on each side of the head, located high in the skull beneath the ear. They cool blood during exercise, particularly regulating the temperature of blood



**Guttural pouch mycosis is a serious fungal infection of blood vessels within pouches of the horse's upper airway. This scope image shows an internal view of the mycosis.**

flow to the brain. The pouches are covered by a thin membrane, beneath which are important arterial veins and cranial nerves.

If a fungus has grown on an artery in a guttural pouch, it can cause fatal hemorrhaging due to arterial damage. If a horse has a nose bleed, a veterinarian usually first will check for a guttural pouch mycosis with an endoscope.

"It's important to differentiate," says Kenneth E. Sullins, DVM, MS, DACVS, a professor of surgery at Midwestern University's College of Veterinary Medicine. "With guttural pouch mycosis, the bleeding will be bright red and profuse. It's not something you'll mix up with an ethmoid hematoma. Mycosis is an emergency."



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**The author's event horse, Cor Bastille, shown competing at Preliminary level in 2007, had his first ethmoid hematoma removed as a 5-year-old. He recovered well and enjoyed years of competition, but after another ethmoid hematoma and adenocarcinoma were diagnosed at age 14, he was euthanized.**

A cyst must be surgically removed, but unlike an ethmoid hematoma, it is not likely to recur. A possible side effect is more frequent, though non-life-threatening, mucous discharge into the nasal passages because of the removal of the associated sinus lining during surgery.

### Neoplasia

In rare cases, a mass in the sinuses will be cancerous, called sinus neoplasia. The most common types of malignant tumors are squamous cell carcinoma, fibrosarcoma and adenocarcinoma.

The signs of sinus neoplasia are unilateral discharge containing mucus and pus, facial swelling and reduced airflow. It is possible that the discharge contains blood and is bilateral—coming out of both nostrils. In advanced cases, the horse may show neurological deficiencies.

A veterinarian will take a sample of the mass and perform a biopsy to confirm sinus neoplasia. While the mass can be surgically removed, the results are usually unrewarding and there are few alternative treatment options. Dr. Sullins explains that systemic chemotherapy is extremely expensive with a dire prognosis. Local chemotherapy, where the mass itself is treated, is possible but not usually a long-term solution in

the sinuses.

"The problem with a malignant tumor in the sinus is it is, by definition, invasive," Dr. Sullins says. "An ethmoid hematoma is not; it's just sitting on the surface. If a squamous cell or adenocarcinoma has gotten into the bone and lymph nodes, treating the site is not going to work."

On a personal note, my horse underwent a successful bone-flap surgery at age 5 to remove his first ethmoid hema-

toma. It had been lying on a flat surface of bone, so the entire mass was easily cleaned out. He recovered and competed in eventing for many years, eventually progressing to the Preliminary level.

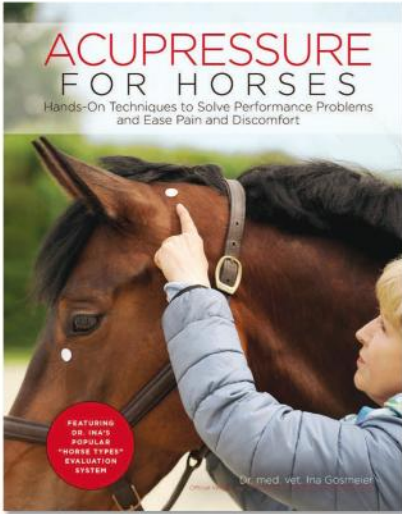
When he was 14, the telltale trickle of blood returned. Considering his history, a veterinarian immediately scoped him and found another ethmoid hematoma. It was located in a difficult area, high in the ethmoid turbinates. The mass was removed using a scope-guided laser and cleaned during a standing surgical procedure.

In a worst-case scenario, six months later my horse developed a separate adenocarcinoma that began to invade his brain. His health rapidly deteriorated and just as a biopsy confirmed the cancer, he started to display severe neurologic symptoms. Euthanasia was the only option.

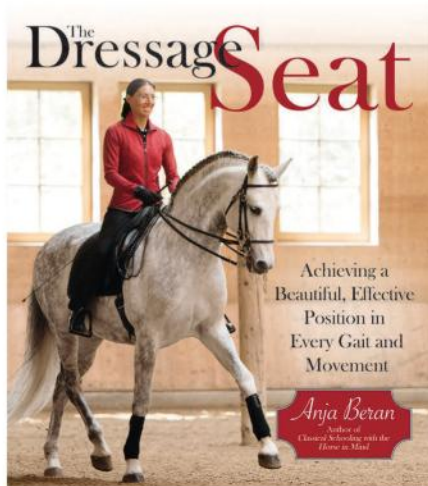
Because of the complexity of the equine sinuses, Dr. Barrett encourages owners to "seek a veterinarian with experience in this area. There are people out there that love dealing with sinuses. If there is an option to refer or travel, it is important to be willing to do that."

When it comes to sinus disease, awareness and efficiency may make all the difference. Do not ignore a bloody nose or nasal discharge containing pus or a foul smell. 🐾

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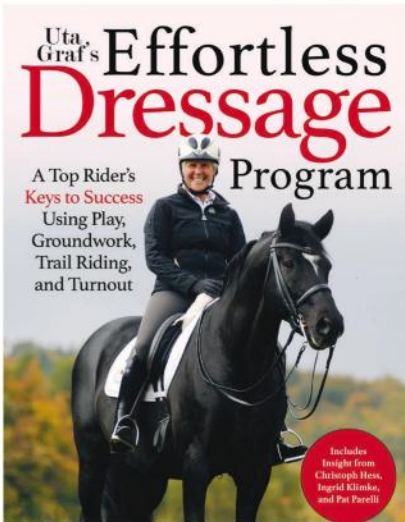


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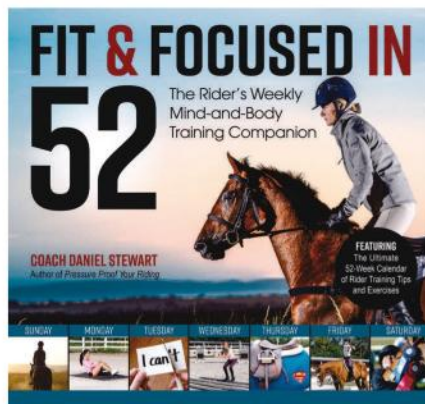


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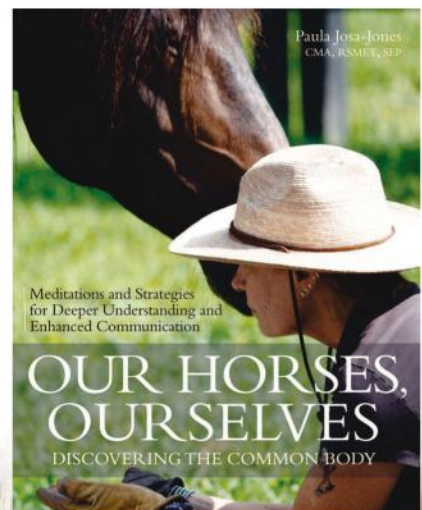
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Finding the sweet spot—the place where you and your horse are so in tune that you're in total sync—requires correct riding technique and also a deep understanding of your horse, says Peter Leone, here riding Capito Z at the 2017 Winter Equestrian Festival in Wellington, Florida.

© SPORTFOT

# FIND THE SWEET SPOT: TAKE YOUR RIDE TO A NEW LEVEL

An Olympian shares how to create that perfect ride by transcending correct riding technique and becoming one with your horse.

By Peter Leone

**H**ave you ever had a perfect ride, when every element fell magically into place—the distance to every jump came up just right, each dressage movement flowed effortlessly from the previous one to the next or every moment of a trail ride was pure bliss? And all the while, you and your horse were so in tune that you merely had to think what you wanted to do next and he did it? This is what we call the “sweet spot.”

People talk about finding the sweet spot—or being “in the zone”—all the time in other sports. In baseball, it’s that moment when a batter hits a pitch perfectly, sending the ball sailing into the outfield in the exact direction he intended. In soccer, it’s the goal-scoring kick. In golf, it’s the swing that drives the ball straight, true and far.

Sometimes the sweet spot is momentary—perhaps lasting just a split second, as in the case of the batter hitting a fast pitch. Many athletes find the sweet spot only now and then. An average golfer, for example, might hit that awesome “career drive” one out of 20 swings, whereas a professional stays in the sweet spot for six, 10 or 14 holes at a time. The best athletes can prolong the sweet spot over minutes, hours, days and even years. Think of pro basketball player Steph Curry of the Golden State Warriors, who stayed in the sweet spot for two entire seasons to earn the NBA’s Most Valuable Player award twice. Or think of McLain Ward and HH Azur in the 2017 Longines FEI World Cup™ Jumping Final, dominating all three phases of the competition. They never put a foot—or hoof—wrong.

In horseback riding, finding the sweet spot is twice as satisfying because there are two of you. It’s like spending a wonderful evening with one of your best friends. You know each other so well that you can finish each other’s sentences. You “get” the same jokes, love the same stories and are immensely comfortable together. There’s such a deep understanding between you that each of you feels like you know what the other is thinking.

This is the same happy place you experience when you find the sweet spot with a horse. He knows where you want to go and what you want to do without you having to tell him. He is an extension of you and you are an extension of him. You can sense his physical, mental and emotional states. You know if he’s comfortable or not, if he’s nervous or scared.

You’re in total sync. Instead of battling each other, you’re acting as one, riding against the clock or to outscore your last performance—or just to enjoy the best part of the day. It’s the most awesome feeling! And it’s why we do this sport.

Whether you’re riding in an equitation class, performing a dressage test, jumping a grand prix course, galloping cross country or trail riding at home, everyone is always striving to find the sweet spot. But there’s more to it than just getting all the mechanics right. Yes, you must have the correct position and need to know how to balance and move all of your body parts with the motion of the horse while still being able to coordinate them with one another to influence him. For whatever discipline you ride, you must understand the geometry and goals of every element of it—whether that’s riding an accurate track on a bending line, adjusting stride length or producing a perfectly shaped serpentine. To truly excel, your horsemanship must transcend correct riding technique. You need an understanding and sense of how to communicate with your horse at all times, whether you’re on his back or on the ground—loading him into a trailer, crossing a creek, jumping a course or asking him to



Top athletes can prolong being in the sweet spot: McLain Ward and HH Azur were in the zone during all three phases of the 2017 Longines FEI World Cup™ Jumping Final in Omaha to capture the title.

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**With more than 200 grand prix jumping wins to his credit, Aaron Vale, here riding Acolinar at the 2015 Devon Horse Show, has a remarkable natural talent for connecting to the horses he rides.**

stand quietly while a storm approaches.

Some riders are fortunate enough to be born with this instinct. Successful jumper riders like two-time Olympic gold medalist Beezie Madden, top show jumper Aaron Vale

and 2017 USHJA International Hunter Derby champ Victoria Colvin have a remarkable talent for connecting to the horses they ride, often establishing that connection in a surprisingly short amount of time. Their mounts always seem happy and willing when they're in the saddle. How do they do it? Aaron's website says it all: It's thinklikeahorse.com. And he does! He thinks like a horse.

## Own Your Education

Obviously, not everyone is born with this talent to seemingly read horses' minds. But that doesn't mean others can't develop similarly good instincts and communication skills. You just have to find them in yourself. Good-quality instruction can help, but teaching riders how to "feel" is

much harder than teaching the basic mechanics of riding. The best instructors can try to paint a picture of what it should feel like and give you tools and exercises to try to connect with that feeling. But what works for one student may be different from what works for another.

Ultimately, you have to take ownership of your education. The first step is to figure out your individual learning style: Do you learn best by listening? By watching?

✦ "Ultimately, you have to take ownership of your education. The first step is to figure out your individual learning style: Do you learn best by listening? By watching? By doing? You can supplement your regular instruction by recognizing and tapping into these strengths."

By doing? You can supplement your regular instruction by recognizing and tapping into these strengths.

For example, if you're a visual learner, pay close attention to any good imagery you encounter. To work toward an "educated seat"—a seat that sticks to the saddle like a fly on fly tape, blending into the horse's back while also influencing his

muscles to affect his performance—when you sit the trot, you may find it easier to pretend that you're easing into a tub of hot bath water. This will help you sink into the saddle while you focus on relaxing your midsection from your rib cage to your hips, imagining that it's made of Jell-O or marshmallows. Once you feel yourself moving in the rhythm of the gait, you can then stretch your upper body tall and use your weight in a positive manner to influence your horse.

I personally draw on a combination of learning methods to continually improve my performance. While I'm on course, I try to produce the canter, rhythm, balance, takeoff spots, etc. that my experience and instincts tell me are ideal for helping that particular horse go clear. As I ride, I make mental notes of how each of those variables feels. Later that evening, I review the video of the round to verify that what I see is what I felt. Sometimes it's not. For example, my tendency has always been to give horses too much room in front of fences, so I often have to remind myself to get deeper to the jumps. Sometimes I feel like I'm succeeding only to see later in the video that I wasn't quite close enough.

In addition to those key pieces, I incorporate feedback from other professional riders and trainers whose observations I

trust and value. If someone like George Morris or my brother Mark says I could have given a horse more support off the ground or ridden him straighter, I factor that into my evaluation. Then I wrap all this information together into a new plan and execute it—over and over again. The *doing* is what gets you to perfection.

Which particular aspects of the ride you

pay the most attention to depend on what your goal is. Even though we all want to end up in the same happy place, the exact ingredients that go into finding the sweet spot vary from discipline to discipline and day to day. If you're entering the ring for a Junior Jumper classic, your goal will be different than it was when you schooled on the flat at home four weeks ago.

The process is also different on different horses. You won't find the sweet spot with a hot Thoroughbred in the same way you would with a more mellow warm-blood. Every ride is a unique collection of balancing acts: between being strong and soft, working and relaxed, disciplined and generous, predictable and spontaneous, and so on. In the end, the one goal that all riders share is of earning the horse's trust and forming a strong bond with him.

I was reminded of this in 2012 while developing an Irish horse named Lincourt Gino. He had a very good head on his shoulders, but was also really sensitive. I started him in the 1.30-meter classes in January and debuted him at the grand prix level in May. As we got to know each other, I realized how important it was to build up his confidence in the warm-up before a big class. I learned that allowing him to loosen up with a nice big gallop—rather than pressuring him to do lots of collection and transitions—and then gently putting him together prepared him to perform his best. Relaxation, suppleness, rhythm and confidence were the key ingredients for him.

By August, I was reliably tapping into this formula and he was responding like an ATM: always finishing in the money. We ended the season by winning the inaugural American Gold Cup at Old Salem Farm, besting three horses who had either competed in the Olympics or have since done so.

## Listen to Your Horse

Another key factor for finding the sweet spot is learning how to listen to your horse. Many people get in the saddle and immediately start dictating: "Do this! Do that! Go here! Go there!" Try hearing what your horse has to say. How does he feel physi-

cally? How is he mentally and emotionally? What seems easy to him and what seems hard? Is he comfortable or uncomfortable?

To take this listening exercise to the

next level, periodically change your schooling environment. Horses thrive on routine, but exposing them to different surroundings now and then and observing

## Reviving Tradition

In some ways, you could say that grand prix jumper Peter Leone's career has come full circle. He began riding at the age of 5 and went on to earn Best Child Rider awards at every major East Coast horse show. At the age of 18, he won the FEI World Cup™ Grand Prix at the National Horse Show at New York's Madison Square Garden and then competed in the ASPCA Maclay National Championship the next morning. He started riding for the U.S. Equestrian Team as a 19-year-old, scoring double clears in Nations Cup competitions at major shows like Dublin, Rotterdam and Washington, D.C. He earned a team silver in the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games. Showing an ability to ride Jumping Derby courses from the beginning, Peter won the intimidating International Jumping Derby in Newport, Rhode Island, at the age of 20.

The middle of three brothers who rode as Team Leone, Peter polished his riding skills under the tutelage of such greats as Bertalan DeNémethy, Frank Chapot, George Morris and Michael Matz. He remembers that jumper courses during those years taught riders to be brave and determined. "You had to dig in, roll up your sleeves and get the job done," he says. "You had to be part football player and part ballet dancer. These days, you don't see the 360-degree complete rider. You see less of the football player."

To help rectify this situation, Peter has narrowed his coaching and training focus to just upper-level jumpers. He recently moved his business, Lionshare Farm, to 200-acre Sunnyfield Farm in Bedford, New York. In the '60s and '70s, Sunnyfield was a popular show venue, attracting top riders like Bill Steinkraus.

To help riders build more grit, he has revived the invitational jumper competition he hosted in the '90s at his former base in Greenwich, Connecticut. The inaugural Bedford Cup, held in October, was a two-round team competition culminating in a jump-off for individual placings. Peter designed the course on the grass field, incorporating a variety of questions, such as a snake jump, straw-bale jump, water jump, canoe jump and double liverpools. "Parts of the course you had to ride with conviction; other parts you had to ride like a fine artist. You had to be a complete rider."

The first team to win the Bedford Cup included Olympic gold medalist Rodrigo Pessoa and his wife, Alexa, who also topped the individual placings. Peter plans to build natural obstacles over the winter to make next year's competition even more "derby-esque."

Meanwhile, after having to euthanize his talented homebred Wayfarer due to colic in October and temporarily sidelining his young grand prix jumper, Capito Z, due to injury, he's on the lookout for new prospects.



**Alexa Pessoa piloted Juliette over a canoe jump and was part of the winning team at Peter Leone's inaugural Bedford Cup, held at his farm in New York in October.**

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how they respond can often be beneficial. For example, if you typically school in an arena, try to find a nice open field to ride in one day. After warming up, gently ask your horse to lengthen his stride at the trot. Then gently ask him to collect it. Follow that up with a small leg-yield in one direction and then the other. How does he respond? How is his reaction different from his normal behavior in the ring?

This new knowledge will help to strengthen your bond with him. It should also come in handy in future competitions. When you enter the ring, check in with how he feels. Before you pick up the canter, take a nice deep breath. Your horse will probably do the same! And he'll be more relaxed and supple as a result, which will make the rest of your performance that much better. This is how you turn the mechanical process of executing a course (or dressage test or whatever discipline you pursue) into an art form. Instead of feeling as if you're rigidly going through an instruction manual, you'll breathe and feel and follow your instincts.

Listening to your horse is another important balancing act, though. If you let him do all the talking, he may take over the ride. Try to think of him as a child or a pet who needs tender guidance and instruction. Listen to his concerns, but then try to address them with constructive exercises—flatwork, gymnastics, etc.—to educate and develop his performance.

## Ride in the Moment

One of the most important lessons to learn about the sweet spot is that it's a moving target. It changes from day to day, week to week and year to year. Horses are just like us: They have different moods and different physical states. The horse you're on today won't be the same horse he was yesterday. I learned this with my Olympic partner Crown Royal Legato. At our shows before the Olympics, I typically competed him in an open warm-up jumper class on Friday in preparation for the grand prix on Sunday. He often performed really well in the Friday class, so I would get on him on Sunday and try to revisit that same state and karma. But

that often didn't work because he didn't feel the same way on Sunday that he'd felt Friday. So the ride I tried to give him was too soft or too strong or otherwise not suited to how he was feeling.

I had another horse who required completely different warm-ups depending on how he was feeling on any given day. He might jump with the power of King Kong one day and then feel nervous and insecure just three days later. On those days, instead of going straight to a 1.20- or 1.30-meter oxer, I'd start with a smaller vertical with bigger ground lines and would jump as many as 10 to 14 fences altogether, making



© ARND BRONKHORST

**Peter learned with his 1996 Olympic team-silver-medal partner, Legato, to ride the horse that's underneath you on that day.**

the oxers slightly smaller and narrower than usual. Then I'd finish the warm-up with a bigger vertical instead of an oxer.

On other days, the same horse might show up high as a kite. So I'd canter four laps around the ring in either direction to take the edge off, acting as a "human turn-out" or "human longe line" for the horse. If he was still too fresh, I'd make a few more laps before getting to work.

The very same horse sometimes arrived at the ring almost lackadaisical. On those days, I kept his warm-up short and sweet to conserve his energy, maybe only jumping a total of four or five fences before going into the ring.

That's how I learned the value of riding the horse that's underneath you *today*. Be

in the moment. Don't get hung up on how your horse felt yesterday or two days ago.

If you're a typical rider with a busy schedule full of work, school and/or family responsibilities, you may find riding in the moment challenging at times. On some days, your body and mind are going a million miles an hour all day at work. Your stress levels keep cranking upward as you fight traffic to get to the barn. So you're still all worked up as you saddle your horse and start your ride. It's no surprise then when the ride doesn't go to plan. Horses pick up on all that tension. To give your ride a chance to succeed, it's really important to take a minute—or 10 minutes—when you arrive at the barn to slow down, catch your breath and get to a calm place emotionally before interacting with your horse.

As your abilities to ride in the moment and connect with your horse gradually improve, you'll discover that you can find the sweet spot more quickly. Over time, you'll be able to extend that feeling for longer periods. How frequently you find the sweet spot at competitions is a great way to gauge your progress and know when it's time to move up a level. Many riders get caught up wanting to compete at higher and higher levels, often before they're ready. To avoid making that mistake, ask yourself how often you find the sweet spot. If you consistently find it ride after ride—not for just two-thirds of the ride, but for the entire ride—and show after show, you're ready to move up. If not, give yourself more time to progress.

For example, to succeed in any given jumping round, there are probably more than 30 things that need to happen correctly. There are different kinds of jumps placed in different ways and a number of related distances. When you're in the sweet spot, you'll meet the "out" jumps of those distances as accurately as you meet the "in" jumps. You'll leave the ring knowing that the entire course was smooth and flowing—and no major, glaring errors occurred. Once that happens for multiple courses in a row, you know you're ready to move up a level. If it's not happening, don't worry, you'll get there when you're ready. 🍀

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# GROUNDNDED EXPECTATIONS



## About Nicholas Fyffe

Australian Grand Prix rider **Nicholas Fyffe** began his career competing in international three-day events. After deciding to focus on dressage, he worked intensively with top trainers in Germany. Since then, he has ridden six horses to the Grand Prix level, including the P.R.E. stallion Fiero HGF with whom he won the 2016 Adequan/USDF P.R.E. All Breeds Grand Prix award. Representing his native country, he has ridden on four Nations Cup teams in Wellington, Florida, and rode on the gold-medal-winning

team at the 2007 Tri Nations Cup in Johannesburg, South Africa. Nicholas is based year-round in Wellington, where he and his husband, David Marcus, run a training and sales operation, Marcus Fyffe Dressage. He is a popular clinician known especially for his talent for developing young horses, having qualified many mounts for the World Young Horse Championships.





A better relationship with your horse on the ground translates into success in the saddle.

**By Nicholas Fyffe ■ Photos by Susan J. Stickle**

**H**ow does your relationship with your horse on the ground compare to the one you have when you're in the saddle? The connection between these two is much stronger than many people realize. When we're riding, we expect our horses to focus on us at all times and respond promptly to our aids. Especially in dressage, we emphasize submission and obedience while also striving for a harmonious partnership with the rider always leading the "dance." But what we ask of our horses in the saddle makes a lot more sense to them if we have these same expectations and goals on the ground. They

**Every moment you spend with your horse is an opportunity to strengthen your bond with him. Establishing mutual respect and clear channels of communication will pay off in a happy, productive partnership, whether you're leading him peacefully to the arena, practicing difficult skills in hand or asking him to perform his best under saddle.**

learn that there's one set of rules in every interaction they have with us. As a result, we create a stronger understanding and bond with them.

The most successful upper-level dressage horses have this fundamental continuity between their ground training and their under-saddle training. The best demonstration of

that is the in-hand work you see top trainers using to refine Grand Prix movements like the piaffe. But you don't have to be a world-class rider to benefit from this concept. Among other reasons, we should all do it for safety's sake. Let's face it: horses are enormous and can cause serious harm to us purely unintentionally. By improving their obedience and respect for our personal space on the ground, we can greatly reduce our chances of getting hurt.

As you'll see in the three skills I discuss in this article, there are many other rewards that riders of all levels can reap by aligning their expectations on the ground and in the saddle. Besides the big-picture goals I described above, you can also target many smaller, more nuanced details, like teaching your horse to respond to subtle leg aids or to relax into a bigger walk stride. Most importantly, when you eliminate the confusion caused by giving different signals on the ground and in the saddle—something that most people don't realize they're even doing—you'll find your horse becomes happier and more relaxed.

I compare this relationship to a marriage. So long as one partner lacks understanding, neither will be happy. You must have a discussion and come to an agreement. Once you know where each other stands, you regain harmony. The relationship is always better after such discussions, even when they're difficult.

To build this relationship, you need to recognize the importance of consistency.



# Leading



To practice leading Guacamole, a 7-year-old Lusitano gelding owned by Kyle McIver, I position myself next to his shoulder, holding my whip in my left hand, and march briskly forward. He follows suit, producing a nice forward walk. Notice how straight he is through his body and relaxed he is over his topline. His pleasant expression and the loop in the reins prove that we're totally in sync.



The moment I sense that he's losing momentum, I reach the whip around behind my body—without looking back—to touch him on his side.

It's easy to *think* that you're applying all the same expectations on the ground that you do in the saddle, while in reality you might be cutting corners because you're in a hurry to get to the ring or you're distracted by anything other than your horse in that moment. Even if you have exceptional self-discipline in the ring, if you evaluate your behavior on the ground honestly, you might realize that your standards are lower there. Ask yourself, "Do I make it clear that my horse must never step into my personal space? Does he stand patiently? Do I treat him like a partner with respect, rather than indulge him like I would a pet? Do I expect and do these things every single time I handle him?"

To both show and command respect, you don't have to dominate your horse—but you do need to be as consistent with your body language, aids and expectations as you are in the saddle. Just as you expect him to go forward every time you close your legs on his sides, you should expect him to obey each command on the ground promptly and obediently. That means you might have to pay more attention and be more self-disciplined than you're used to. You must be prepared to reinforce your standards at any time, just as you do in the saddle. This holds true for everyone who handles your horse. We educate all of our staff

## TIP

What we ask of our horses in the saddle makes more sense to them if we have these same expectations and goals on the ground. They learn that there's one set of rules in every interaction they have with us.

to operate at the same high standard. We have both stallions and mares in our barn, so the need for boundaries is somewhat heightened. However, our expectations are the same for every horse we work with. The barn runs smoothly as a result.

I believe that if you don't address issues on the ground, they will eventually show up in some way in your under-saddle work. To be consistent, you must make it clear to your horse that there's always a consequence to his actions. You have a right to address every transgression, but you also have a responsibility to acknowledge and reward every positive development, even if it's tedious to do so.

For example, every time your horse intrudes on your personal space—leans or pushes against you—immediately push back until he steps away. Press on his neck or shoulder with your knuckles or elbow or with the handle end of a whip. Repeat this correction until you get the response you want, even if that means shoving him rather firmly. When he does finally respond, reward him by leaving him alone. Then be prepared to correct him again the moment he invades your space. As with training under saddle, repetition is key. Keep it really simple: Make it undesirable for him to invade your space and leave him alone when he respects it.

The following three skills are great for testing your consistency on the ground and for improving your relationship with your horse if you suspect it's not up to snuff.

## Leading

A good relationship starts the moment you lead your horse out of the stall or paddock. I often see riders walking 6 feet in front



**3**  
Next, we practice trotting. If Guacamole pushes his head and neck a little into my space, I raise my hand and move it in front of my body, toward his eye, with my open palm facing him. This reminds him to straighten again and be more attentive to my body language.



**4**  
To reinforce this lesson, I continue holding my hand up near his face while pressing gently on the reins, asking him to return to the walk. You can tell by the calm expression on his face that he understands exactly what I want.



**5**  
Next, I test his obedience by asking him to make a 360-degree turn to the right. I continue giving the visual cue with my left hand, while at the same time directing him to the right with the reins.



**6**  
As we complete the full circle, you can see that Guacamole is still following my body language and respecting my space perfectly.

of their horses, allowing them to dawdle behind in a manner that doesn't at all resemble the kind of walk a judge wants to see in a dressage ring. Those same riders then ask their horses to produce big forward walks when they're under saddle. That's an unfair expectation.

I expect my horses to march alongside me wherever I lead them. I want their shoulders to be parallel to mine and their pace to match mine, no matter what speed I go. When I stop, they stop. When I back up, they back up. When I turn, they turn. They are ever aware of my body language and respectful of my personal space. There is slack in the lead line at all times, except when I'm

using it to cue them. Any pressure on the line means something.

Horses don't learn this overnight. It takes daily practice. The good news: Hand-walking is a great way to warm up your horse, both mentally and physically, before your ride. Studies show that walking horses for 20 minutes prior to work significantly decreases the likelihood of soft-tissue damage. You can do some of this walking once you're mounted, but a good five or 10 minutes in hand helps to achieve this benefit. It also sets the tone for the day.

At first, you may need to carry a dressage whip, especially if your horse is on the lazy side.

1. Lead him to a safe, firm surface outside the barn where



# Mounting



After lining Guacamole up next to the mounting block, I check to see that he's standing comfortably balanced on all four legs, then glance at his facial expression to be sure that he's focused on me and not distracted by anything else around him. I continue monitoring him as I put my foot in the stirrup and prepare to mount.



Once I'm in the saddle, I make it clear that I'm in no rush to move out. Instead, I adjust my rein length, check my stirrup leathers and center my position in the saddle.



I praise him for his patience ...

## TIP

When hand-walking, practice more turns to the right than to the left. This reinforces the idea that your horse must move away from you whenever you ask him to. This instills a respect for your personal space.

there's plenty of room to walk and trot.

2. Position yourself so that your legs are parallel to his front legs and carry the whip in your left hand.

3. Then march forward! (If your horse has a big stride, be ready to sweat a little!)

4. If he lags behind, reach the whip around behind you—without looking back—to tap him on his side in about the same area where you'd use your leg if you were riding. If he breaks into a trot, that's fine. Praise him for responding correctly and then ask him to walk at your speed.

Ideally, you want to produce the same beautiful forward walk we look for in the show ring, with his body straight, relaxed and aligned with his head and neck. The goal should be to get him close to overtracking (stepping his hind feet in front of the hoofprints of his front feet), if not actually overtracking.

5. When you're happy with this walk, mix it up a little to test your horse's responses. Apply pressure on the lead line to ask him to halt. The moment he does, relax the pressure.

6. Next, press backward on the line to ask him to step backward a few steps.

7. Walk forward again, then ask for a few steps of trot, come back to the walk, and so on. All this time, remain facing forward with your shoulders parallel to his. Are you getting perfect responses every time? How soon after asking?

## Yielding to Pressure in the Cross-ties

Take advantage of another training opportunity while grooming and tacking your horse up in the cross-ties.

1. Now and then, gently press your knuckles, shoulder or whip handle against his rib cage—in about the same place where you'd give a leg aid—to ask him to take a step sideways away from you.

2. If he doesn't move right away, increase the pressure until you get a response.

3. As soon as he moves, release the pressure.

Improving this skill and the response time will contribute to your lateral work under saddle. The cue you give him to move sideways is similar to the leg aid you'd give to ask for a leg-yield. Just as you expect him to grow more responsive over time to your leg-yield aids, so too should he become more aware of and obedient to these requests in the grooming stall.

## Mounting

This final skill is one that surprisingly few riders take seriously. Oftentimes when I see riders mount, their horses walk off before they



... and then walk off, happy to know that we're starting our ride relaxed and in tune with one another.

even have their right foot in the stirrup. Then they get upset when their horses don't halt well in their dressage tests, which significantly impacts their scores because there are at least two halts in every test above the Introductory Level. This is a perfect example of not having consistent rules and expectations. And, once again, there's a safety factor involved. It can be dangerous for your horse to walk off before you're safely settled and balanced in the saddle.

1. If you struggle with this problem, first accept some responsibility for it. By allowing the behavior to continue for months—or even years—you've taught your horse that it's acceptable. Understand that you're the one now changing the rules of the game. It wouldn't be fair to suddenly punish him.

2. Instead, try to be sympathetic as you gradually introduce the new rule that he must stand patiently until given the cue—and one cue only—to walk: your leg aid. He shouldn't try to guess what you want based on the rest of your body language. For example, he shouldn't interpret you picking up the reins—or

relaxing them—as a cue to move on. As with all your other aids, if you use your leg aid consistently and reinforce it whenever necessary, he will stop taking the initiative to move forward on his own. This, in turn, will improve the quality of your halts in the rest of your training.

▶▶ **TIP**

Your horse must stand patiently until given the cue to walk: the leg aid.

3. In the beginning, if this is too challenging, ask your horse to stand still just long enough for you to place your feet properly in the stirrups, adjust your rein length and sit tall in the saddle. If he steps away as you're mounting or after you're in the saddle, but before you're ready, ask him to halt again. Then pat and praise him, dismount, return to the mounting block and repeat the process. Don't be in a rush to get on with your ride. This is important! If you're really consistent, he'll eventually learn that the easiest way out of this repetitive cycle is to simply stand still until you ask him otherwise.

**Acceptance of contact:** One important aspect of this lesson is your horse's acceptance of the contact. Ideally, you should be able to feel a light contact throughout every halt while you maintain a neutral position: sitting squarely with your legs hanging naturally from your hips, your arms hanging naturally from your shoulders, without doing anything otherwise with your position, weight or aids. If he reacts in any way when you pick up the reins—for example, by stepping backward—then he's not truly accepting the contact yet.

To tackle this problem, practice micro-halts: Ride at the walk for several moments, then ask your horse to halt for just a second. As he does so, keep a gentle feel of his mouth while staying neutral in your body. Then close your legs to ask him to walk on again without changing the contact in any way. With repetition, he'll learn that the halt is a safe place and that he doesn't need to do anything in response to steady, light pressure on the reins. This understanding is critical to performing good halts in the show ring, as he must not react in any way when you remove your hand from the rein to salute and then take back the contact.

As this practice progresses, you'll find that the new mounting rule sets the tone for your entire ride, starting you off with a sense of control and harmony. No longer will your horse begin a session thinking he can choose his own adventure.

These three skills will help to strengthen your relationship with your horse on the ground and bridge that connection to your relationship under saddle. Beware of underestimating how difficult they can be to achieve. The concepts may sound simple, but their application is not. You'll need to be very disciplined and systematic to truly master them. Remember, dressage is not just about riding; it's a way of life for these horses. The deep bond you form with your partner must go beyond the ring and carry over into everything you do together. 🐾

▶▶ **TIP**

Don't force him to stand still for too long initially, especially if he's a nervous type. Keep it brief—but not rushed—then gradually build up over time to a point where you can trust him to stand quietly for several moments.



# Groom Your Horse in Three Minutes

**Q** On the weekdays, I don't have a lot of time to groom my horse before and after I ride. I try to make up for that with more thorough grooming sessions on the weekends. When my time is really tight, is it more important for me to groom my horse before or after the ride? Which body parts are a must-groom and which can I skip?

**EMMA FORD**

**A** Obviously, if you're riding in a lesson, clinic or show, cutting corners isn't acceptable. But if you board at a low-key facility or keep your horse at home where nobody will be offended by your less-than-pristine turnout, it's fine to streamline your pre-ride grooming session down to just a few minutes.

Regardless of how much time you have, there are a few things you must never skip. The first is a thorough visual examination: an all-body scan for nicks, cuts, lost/loosened shoes or anything else unusual. Take a minute or two to do this as you're haltering your horse to bring him in from the pasture or out of his stall.

After you tie or cross-tie him, always pick his feet, being sure to remove any rocks and double-checking the status of his shoes. Take advantage of this moment to inspect his legs more closely. Before lifting each leg, slide your hand down it, feeling for bumps, cuts, heat or swelling.

Perform this inspection *every* time you ride. The earlier you catch injuries and other issues, no matter how minor they are, the better chance you have at resolving them quickly and preventing them from developing into major problems later on.

Your next task is to groom any areas on the body that will come into contact with the tack—saddle and saddle pad, bridle, martingale, etc.—and boots or bandages. Any dirt caught underneath tack or boots/bandages can irritate the skin and cause sores. So pay special attention to the poll where the crownpiece rests, the face area where the noseband sits, the sides of the neck the reins touch, the withers where the martingale goes, the girth area—especially right behind the elbows—and the lower legs where the boots or bandages go. When you groom the saddle area, keep in mind that the saddle and pad might slip a few inches in either direction during the ride, so groom those extra regions, too.

To get those areas clean in a hurry, follow these three steps:

1. Loosen dirt, dried-on mud and dead hair with the curry of your—and your horse's—choice. Every horse's preference is different. More sensitive horses prefer softer curries; others like firmer ones. My favorite is the HandsOn® Glove, which has a variety of different scrubbing nodules on the fingers and palms. It's really good for getting into skin folds—like in the elbow area and other tricky spots such as the hollows over the eye sockets. You can apply as much pressure as your horse likes. Plus, the gloves come in pairs, so you can curry with both hands at the same time!

2. Remove all the loosened dirt and hair with a dandy, or "flick," brush. Find one with relatively long bristles that's soft enough to use on the face.

3. Finally, dampen a cloth with witch hazel and wipe all of these areas clean. This will remove the last bits of dirt and dust.

With a little practice, you can complete this process in just three minutes. If you have another minute, finger-comb the mane and tail and pick out any shavings or debris. Spray the tail with a detangler, but save brushing it until after your ride. That will give the detangler time to dry so there's less risk of pulling out tail hairs.

On hot days, if you plan to hose off your horse after exercise and won't have time to wait until he's dry to groom him,

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To give your horse a quick once-over before a ride, groom any areas on the body that will come into contact with the tack with a curry and then use the dandy brush to remove the loosened dirt and hair.



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concentrate any extra minutes you have on your pre-ride grooming. Otherwise, I'd prioritize the post-ride grooming over the pre-ride. Exercise stimulates blood circulation and opens the pores in your horse's skin, making your grooming more effective. Especially in the winter, sweat tends to dry out clipped coats. A good post-ride curry will help to bring out the natural oils and combat that dryness.

I can't overemphasize the benefits of currying with *lots* of elbow grease. It promotes skin health—and many horses enjoy the massage. If you use enough pressure and keep an eye on your horse's reactions, it's also an excellent way to identify sore spots that you might not have noticed otherwise.

During your post-ride grooming session, don't forget the most commonly missed places that tend to accumulate sweat and dirt: behind the elbows, between the back legs and on the backs of

the pasterns. Neglecting these areas can lead to dryness, irritation or even, in the case of the pasterns during mud season, infections like scratches.

Another pet peeve of mine is leaving a sweat mark on the saddle area. If you don't have time to wait for the hair to dry before grooming it smooth, rub it with a towel dampened with a little bit of witch hazel or rubbing alcohol. (If your horse has sensitive skin, choose the witch hazel over the alcohol.) That will help the sweat evaporate quickly so you can groom the area effectively.

These shortcuts will help you keep your horse healthy without sacrificing riding time. We all have busy lives. When you're pushed for time, if you have to choose between riding or grooming, I fully support your choice to ride! 🐾

**Emma Ford** grew up in North Devon, England, riding in the Pony Club and in

the hunt field with her father, who was a Master of Foxhounds. She jumped in Great Britain's famous Horse of the Year Show in 1991 before graduating from the University of Wales and moving to the United States to groom professionally for four-star eventer Adrienne Lorio for seven years. In 2005, Emma accepted a new position managing Olympian Phillip Dutton's True Prospect Farm in West Grove, Pennsylvania. Since then, she has groomed at multiple Olympics, World Equestrian Games and Pan American Games. She was named the U.S. Eventing Association's Professional Groom of the Year in 2007 and was awarded the Professional Riders Organization Liz Cochran Memorial Groom's Award in 2012. Emma and Cat Hill co-authored the book *World-Class Grooming for Horses*—available at [www.EquineNetworkStore.com](http://www.EquineNetworkStore.com)—and teach in-depth grooming and horse-care clinics around the country. For more information, go to [www.worldclassgrooming.com](http://www.worldclassgrooming.com).

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# 6 Things to Do in JANUARY

❑ **WATCH** accomplished competitors and trainers work with up-and-coming U.S. dressage riders during Robert Dover Horsemastership Clinic Week, Jan. 2–5, in Wellington, FL. Participants will receive mounted instruction and lessons in all facets of horse care from a variety of experts; [www.usef.org](http://www.usef.org).

❑ **LEARN** from the best at the 12th annual George H. Morris Horsemastership Training Session, Jan. 5–7, at the Adequan® Global Dressage Festival in Wellington, FL. Top clinicians, including McLain Ward and Anne Kursinski, will guide promising riders through intensive mounted work and daily sessions in all areas of horsemanship. The clinic aims to identify

and develop emerging talent for the U.S. Equestrian Team. Free to auditors; [www.usef.org](http://www.usef.org).

❑ **ENJOY** a full season of spectating as a host of skilled riders and horses compete during the Winter Equestrian Festival, Jan. 10–April 1, at the Palm Beach International Equestrian Center in Wellington, FL; [www.equestrian-sport.com](http://www.equestrian-sport.com).

❑ **BASK** in some warm weather while experiencing the competitive atmosphere of two popular show series: the HITS Coachella Desert Circuit, Jan. 16–March 18, in Thermal, CA, and the HITS Ocala Winter Circuit, Jan. 16–March 25, in Ocala, FL. Highlights include USEF Premier-rated hunters, five- and six-star jumpers,

the AIG \$1 Million Grand Prix (March 18, Thermal) and the Great American \$1 Million Grand Prix (March 25, Ocala); [www.hitsshows.com](http://www.hitsshows.com).

❑ **HEAD TO** Lexington, KY, Jan. 17–20 for the annual meeting of the U.S. Equestrian Federation, the national governing body for equestrian sports. On the agenda: committee meetings, strategic-planning sessions, forums and the annual Pegasus and Horse of the Year Awards; [www.usef.org](http://www.usef.org).

❑ **ATTEND** the U.S. Pony Club Equine Symposium and Convention, Jan. 24–28, in Louisville, KY. Highlights include a trade fair, leadership meetings, a research fair and awards presentation; [www.ponyclub.org](http://www.ponyclub.org).

## News BITS

### USEF Appoints Duvander

Following an extensive search by the U.S. Equestrian Federation, **Erik Duvander** was named performance director for eventing

in mid-October. The former Olympic and World Championship rider, who competed for Sweden, has more than 30 years of experience in strategic planning and program development at the high-performance level. Duvander's first challenge in his new post will be to prepare the U.S. Eventing Team for September's 2018 FEI World Equestrian Games in Tryon, North Carolina, and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Among the highlights of his career, Duvander served as high-performance coach of the New Zealand Eventing Team, which finished fourth at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro and earned a team bronze medal at the 2010 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games™ in Lexington, Kentucky. He also

has worked with individual international-caliber eventers as well as the equestrian teams of Japan and Sweden.

"It is a great privilege and responsibility to be chosen as the U.S. eventing performance director, a role that I believe holds the highest regard within our sport,"

Duvander said. He replaces David O'Connor, who stepped away from the position last spring to focus on advancing safety and global risk management in the sport.

Members of a search group appointed by the U.S. Equestrian Eventing Sport Committee recommended Duvander for his new position. The group included representatives of the committee as well as the Eventing High-Performance Working Group, the U.S. Olympic Committee, two eventing athletes, USEF Director of Sport Will Connell and USEF Managing Director of Eventing Joanie Morris.



**Erik Duvander**

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# Winner's CIRCLE

## O'Hanlon Makes History

No Canadian had ever won the Dutta Corp. Fair Hill International CCI\*\*\* in Elkton, Maryland, until **Selena O'Hanlon** rode to victory on John and Judy Rumble's Foxwood High in mid-October. The

pair led after dressage, but added 1.6 time penalties to their score in cross country and moved down to second. Then overnight leaders **Colleen Rutledge** and Covert Rights dropped three rails in show jumping, opening the way for O'Hanlon to regain the lead with a clear round and three time penalties for a final score of 44.

"It feels exhilarating," O'Hanlon said of her historic performance. "I am super excited for this horse at this level. It was

a personal best all the way through. I couldn't have asked for more from him."

In second place was **William Coleman** (USA) and Tight Lines, the Conair Syndicate's 10-year-old French Thoroughbred gelding, who moved up the leaderboard from 13th in dressage to finish on a final score of 46.3.

## St. Jacques Shines in Fall Finals

**Taylor St. Jacques** added two equitation championships to her ever-growing list of achievements in October. Leading from the start, she and her veteran mount

Charisma won the Dover Saddlery/USEF Hunter Seat Medal Final at the Pennsylvania National Horse Show in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Oct. 15. "I thought that from the moment Charisma came out of his stall today he had his absolute A-game on," St. Jacques said. "He was ready to go out there and put his best foot forward, and that he did—plus more. He was absolutely incredible today. I could not have asked him to be any better."



Taylor St. Jacques and Di Samorano

Two weeks after her win in Pennsylvania, St. Jacques rode her own Di Samorano to victory in the Washington International Horse Show Equitation Final in Washington, D.C.

## Goetzmann Earns Maclay Championship

Demonstrating skill and poise in the saddle, **Madison Goetzmann**, riding Elizabeth Benson's San Remo VDL, won the ASPCA Maclay National Championship, held in early November during the CP National Horse Show in Lexington, Kentucky. A field of 177 riders competed in the first round. Twenty-five returned the following day



Madison Goetzmann and San Remo VDL

for a flat phase and a final round over fences. Goetzmann, trained by Stacia Madden at Beacon Hill Show Stables, impressed judges Ralph Caristo and Bernie Traurig to earn the title. **Jordyn Rose Freedman**, coached by 1983 Maclay winner Linda Kossick Langmeier, placed second aboard her own horse, Finnick.

"Honestly, I tear up just thinking about it," Goetzmann commented. "My trainer also won this final [in 1987], which makes it a really special win. It's just incredible. It was a dream of mine to win."

Earlier in the day, Goetzmann placed second with Prestigious in the Under 25 National Jumper Championship behind **Jennifer Gates** and Alex.



# Longines FEI World Cup™ North American League News

## Kocher Clinches First Win

**Andrew Kocher** (USA) put himself and the 16-year-old Selle Francias gelding **Navalo de Poheton** to the test and came out on top at the Longines FEI World Cup™ Jumping Del Mar, staged in mid-October at California's Del Mar Horse Park. Last to go in the eight-horse jump-off, Kocher took three inside turns—two of which no other rider had attempted—and crossed the finish line with a time of 37.45, just ahead of **Eric Navet** (FRA) and **Catypso**, who finished second in 37.56.



**Andrew Kocher and Navalo de Poheton**

"I looked up at the board and thought I was going to be second," Kocher said. "I would have been very happy to be second. Believe me, I would have been thrilled. But it was me this time! I was first! So it was fun today."

## Mändli Triumphs in D.C.

In a thrilling 11-horse jump-off, Swiss rider **Beat Mändli** and his mount **Dsarie** earned the blue ribbon in the Longines FEI World Cup™ Jumping Washington, held in late October during the Washington International Horse Show, an annual event in the heart of the nation's capital.



**Beat Mändli and Dsarie**

Mändli's time of 32.07 was just enough to take the top spot over **McLain Ward** (USA)—ranked No. 2 in the world—aboard **HH Callas**. Less than three-tenths of a second separated the two riders.

"I have had her for four years now and I really think she's a superstar," said Mändli of the Dutch Warmblood owned by Grand Road Partners. "She can go very far—also doing some championships, I hope. She's only 9 years old and there's nothing she can't do. I'm very happy to have her."

## Lapierre Wins Twice in Canada

Canada's **Isabelle Lapierre** rode **Cescha M** to victory in late October at the Longines FEI World Cup™ Jumping Calgary, held at Stampede Park in the Canadian province of Alberta. Lapierre also won the season opener of the North American League in Bromont, making her the first rider to win multiple competitions in the series.



**Isabelle Lapierre and Cescha M**

No rider in the three-horse jump-off in Calgary was able to produce a clear round. With four faults and the fastest time of 50.16, Lapierre clinched the win over second-place finisher **Laura Jane-Tidball** (CAN) and **Concetto Son**.

"I think it goes so fast in the jump-off," Lapierre said. "You make a plan, but you just take what happens. I wasn't sure when I jumped the last jump if I won it or not because it took a long time to show it on the board."

## Lynch Tops Leaderboard

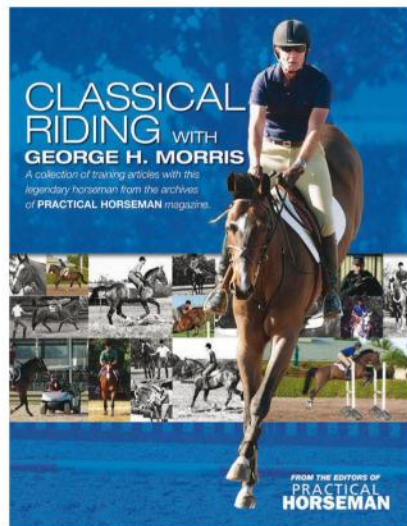
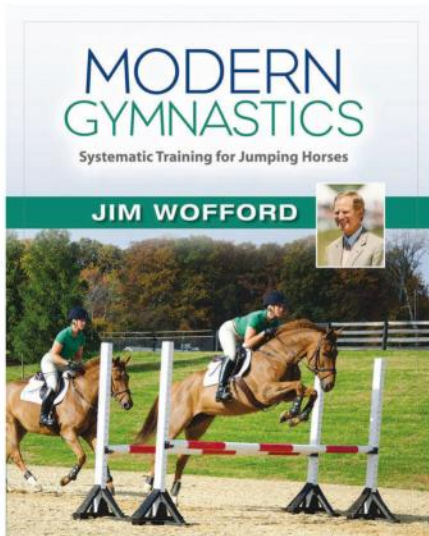
Ireland's **Denis Lynch** and **RMF Echo** rocketed into first place after a speedy jump-off round in the Longines FEI World Cup™ Jumping Lexington, held in early November during the CP National Horse Show in Lexington, Kentucky. Lynch and the 13-year-old Belgian Warmblood gelding owned by Monica and Frank McCourt finished on a time of 36.16, just ahead of **Lauren Tisbo** (USA) and **Coriandolo di Ribano** at 36.52. Fresh off his win of the Longines FEI World Cup™ Jumping Washington (D.C.), **Beat Mändli** (SUI) was unable to hold on to his early lead in Lexington, finishing third on **Dsarie** on 37.80.



**Denis Lynch and RMF Echo**

"I went as quickly as I could," Lynch said. "Echo is a naturally very, very quick horse. He's been unlucky a few times this year when he's been beaten at the post. I think there were three or four grands prix where he finished second. I think he really deserved it tonight."

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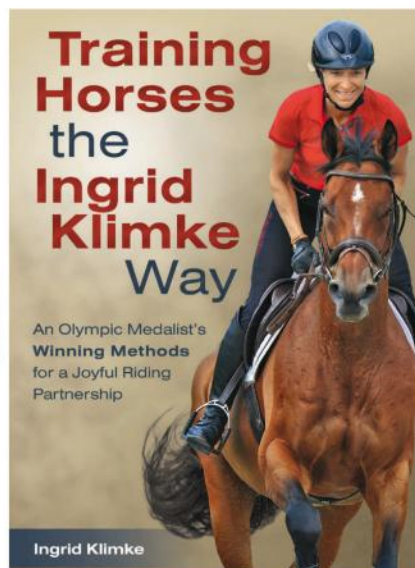
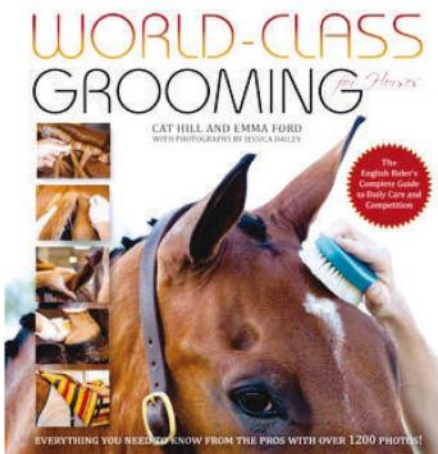
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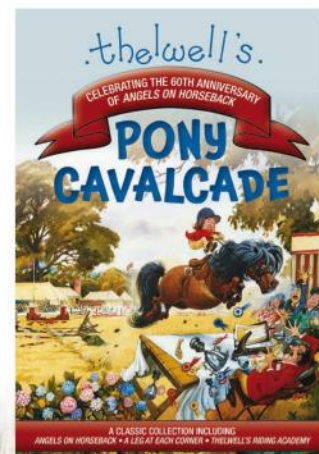
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## First Foal Born from Frozen, Immature Egg

**T**est-tube foals born from frozen embryos are no longer the latest news in equine reproduction. Not since a team at Ghent University in Belgium—led by professor Ann Van Soom, Nerea Ortiz Escribano, PhD, and Katrien Smits, DVM, PhD—welcomed VICSI, the world’s first foal born from a frozen, immature oocyte (egg).

“Previously, foals have been born from frozen oocytes,” Dr. Smits says. “But those were partially matured in the mare. So, it is the combination of freezing an immature oocyte and total in vitro production of the equine embryo after warming of the oocyte which is novel.”



COURTESY, KATRIEN SMITS, DVM, PHD

**A colt named VICSI, born in May 2017, made international headlines as the world’s first foal who was created from a frozen, immature oocyte.**

Specifically, the Belgian team used two techniques, which also were combined to form the colt’s name. One was vitrification, a method of cryopreservation (freezing) that rapidly cools the oocyte in such a way that ice crystals, which can damage the oocyte, aren’t formed. Instead, the oocyte freezes into a glass-like structure.

Second, the researchers used intracytoplasmic sperm injection to directly insert sperm into the mare’s egg. This technique increases the probability of fertilization—even when the sperm is lower quality or in limited supply.

For the study, the researchers collected immature eggs, vitrified them and stored them in liquid nitrogen for one week. The eggs were then rapidly warmed and matured for nine days in

an incubator. They were then fertilized by ICSI and cultured in the incubator for another nine days.

“Out of 179 vitrified oocytes, five embryos developed,” says Dr. Smits. “They were all transferred to recipient mares, resulting in two pregnancies. A first pregnancy was lost around 20 days. The other resulted in the birth of the foal.”

Despite the successful birth, the research team acknowledges that the technique isn’t yet ready for practical mainstream use. “With vitrified oocytes, the chance to get a foal is more than 10 times lower than with fresh oocytes,” says Dr. Smits. “Therefore, more research is needed to optimize the results prior to application.”

But the eventual results could be worthwhile. The vitrification of imma-



Despite the successful birth, the research team acknowledges that the technique isn’t yet ready for practical mainstream use.

ture oocytes would allow genetic material to be transported to laboratories that otherwise wouldn’t have easy access to it. It could even give breeders more flexibility since they could postpone the decision on choosing a stallion, for example, until more information is available on the results in sports competitions, says Dr. Smits. “Finally, vitrification of immature oocytes can also provide the opportunity to conserve female genetics for gene-banking of endangered breeds or species.”

### Infection Prevention vs. Antibiotic Overuse in Castration Surgery

When stallions are gelded, it’s not uncommon for the veterinarian to administer antibiotics before and after the surgery to prevent potential infection. But in a time of growing concern over antibiotic resistance linked to overuse of antibiotic drugs, the practice has become

controversial. There is little solid proof that this “antibiotic prophylaxis” (prevention) works and, if so, what protocol is the best, says Konstantin Haucke, a veterinarian working in a private equine clinic in Germany.

Dr. Haucke collaborated with researchers at the Freie Universitat Berlin to evaluate the effectiveness of two different protocols of preventive antibiotics administered over a 10-day postoperative period. The study included 47 client-owned stallions of a variety of horse and pony breeds, with an average age of 2 years. All were castrated under general anesthesia and randomly allocated to one of two test groups.

One group received a single dose of penicillin G sodium, administered intravenously 30 to 60 minutes before the initial incision. The other group received a three-day course of procaine penicillin G, administered intramuscularly, with the first dose given one to two hours before the initial incision and the two subsequent injections given at 24 and 48 hours after castration.

The researchers measured several indicators of healing or potential infection:

- Bacterial swabs of the incision site were taken on Days 0 (the day of the surgery) and 3.

- Serum amyloid A (SAA)—a type of protein whose levels in the blood increase dramatically in response to inflammation—was measured on the day of the surgery and three days after.

- Fibrinogen—a protein that assists with blood clotting—was measured at the same intervals.

Body temperature, wound swelling and drainage were all recorded daily over a 10-day period.

On Day 8, horses in the single-dose group showed significantly higher levels of SAA and fibrinogen, more drainage from the wound, more swelling and higher temperatures than the three-dose group. In addition, the *Streptococcus* bacteria was found more frequently among the one-dose group.

While all of the complications re-



The University of Pennsylvania's New Bolton Center is the first veterinary hospital to own and use a Toshiba Aplio i800, a machine that utilizes innovative ultrasound technology.

solved within the 10-day study period, the researchers concluded that administering three applications of penicillin postoperatively may lower inflammatory reactions compared to giving a single dose. However, they caution that further research is needed to evaluate the long-term outcome as well as the potential of this method to develop antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

## Ultrasound Imaging Makes Strides

Ultrasound is a diagnostic technology that uses sound waves to create images of soft tissues—such as ligaments, tendons, muscles and internal organs—that radiographs (X-rays) can't capture.

Now, ultrasound diagnostics have taken a stride forward in the horse world, with the Toshiba Aplio i800 machine. The University of Pennsylvania's New Bolton Center is the first veterinary hospital to own the equipment, which creates images with higher resolution and more detail than has ever before

been possible.

In one of the machine's early trials, it was able to detect a tear only millimeters long in a horse's joint capsule. With it, veterinarians will be able to examine blood flow in tiny blood vessels that wouldn't be visible using traditional ultrasound technology.

“We're entering a whole new generation of image clarity and detail,” says Virginia Reef, DVM, chief of New Bolton's section of imaging. “With this kind of resolution, we are more likely to come up with more specific diagnoses for our patients. We can see deeper into the abdomen than ever before. It may even be more sensitive to the stage of tendon injury and repair.”

Along with its diagnostic capabilities, which include 3D ultrasound, the new machine has the potential to be a useful teaching tool and should also have applications in research.

“Human hospitals don't even have this yet,” notes Dr. Reef. “This is truly the latest technology on the market.”



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The **Original Correct Connect™** training system combines reins and gloves to help riders develop a consistent contact with the horse's mouth. The reins' hook-and-loop fasteners for the lower fingers and upper palm encourage proper contact while notches

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# advertisers' index

## ASSOCIATIONS

Equine Land Conservation Resource ..... <a href="http://www.elcr.org">www.elcr.org</a> .....	62
United States Hunter Jumper Association ..... <a href="http://www.ushja.org">www.ushja.org</a> .....	45

## BARNs, STALLS, & FOOTING

Clearspan Fabric Structures ..... <a href="http://www.clearspan.com">www.clearspan.com</a> .....	5
---	---

## HEALTH CARE

Adequan (Luitpold) ..... <a href="http://www.adequan.com">www.adequan.com</a> .....	21
Hudson Aquatic Systems ..... <a href="http://www.hudsonaquatic.com">www.hudsonaquatic.com</a> .....	6
Laser Sheen (Farnam) ..... <a href="http://www.farnam.com">www.farnam.com</a> .....	C3
Osphos (Dechra) ..... <a href="http://www.oshpos.com">www.oshpos.com</a> .....	19
Platinum Performance GI ..... <a href="http://www.platinumperformance.com">www.platinumperformance.com</a> .....	C2
Smartpak <a href="http://www.smartpak.com/jointhealthawareness">www.smartpak.com/jointhealthawareness</a> .....	9
WeightGainWise (Kentucky Performance Products) ..... <a href="http://www.kppvet.com">www.kppvet.com</a> .....	15

## PUBLICATIONS, VIDEOS, AUDIO & WEBSITES

Dressage Training Online ..... <a href="http://www.dressagetrainingonline.com">www.dressagetrainingonline.com</a> .....	2
--	---

Equine Network Store ..... <a href="http://equinenetworkstore.com">equinenetworkstore.com</a> ....	14,17,37,39,6,59
Equine.com ..... <a href="http://www.equine.com">www.equine.com</a> .....	16
Equisearch.com ..... <a href="http://www.equisearch.com">www.equisearch.com</a> .....	4
A Home For Every Horse ..... <a href="http://www.ahomeforeveryhorse.com">www.ahomeforeveryhorse.com</a> .....	7
Hope In The Saddle ..... <a href="http://www.hopeinthesaddle.com">www.hopeinthesaddle.com</a> .....	53

## TACK & EQUIPMENT

Back On Track ..... <a href="http://www.backontrackproducts.com">www.backontrackproducts.com</a> .....	13
Carr & Day & Martin ..... <a href="http://www.carrdaymartin.com">www.carrdaymartin.com</a> .....	1

## TRANSPORTATION

US Rider ..... <a href="http://www.usrider.org">www.usrider.org</a> .....	C3
---	----

## TRAVEL

Equestrian Tours ..... <a href="http://www.equestours.org">www.equestours.org</a> .....	54
--	----

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# To Heaven and Back

By Allison Sandifer

Sitting outside the show stable at the American Eventing Championships in Tryon, North Carolina, last summer, I had a moment of clarity. I was with my chestnut gelding, Baron, who wasn't supposed to be there. In fact, he wasn't supposed to be alive. But there I was waiting for my cross-country ride time with my sweet little horse who previously had no hope of

living past his 7th birthday. Now 10, Baron is making my dreams become a reality.

Baron is an off-the-racetrack Thoroughbred I found through the nonprofit organization CANTER in 2010 at the Penn National Racetrack and brought home to North Carolina. At the time, I was looking forward to the challenges of a 3-year-old, and boy did they come. Most of our rides included gallops even when I thought we were just going for a hack. Tiny fences felt massive when we jumped over them,

and Baron investigated water obstacles with the intensity of a biologist. When he was 5 and started to settle into his work, I thought we had turned the corner. We were having consistently successful rides. The last thing I expected was news of cancer and a six-month to two-year life span.

Baron had developed a bony mass on his lower jaw early in 2013. It grew rapidly to the size of a fist and he couldn't tolerate the pressure of a noseband. Several months of tests and bone biopsies finally became conclusive in the late spring, and he was diagnosed with myeloma—a malignant tumor of the bone marrow. Surrounded by supportive family and friends and armed with a quart of ice cream and a bottle of wine, I eventually was able to allow my denial to fade to acceptance, and I retired sweet Baron to live out his next few months with lots of love and peppermints. I cried as I watched his coat fade and his tail hair fall out. My heart broke as he withdrew from the touch of my hand on his side. He shifted from being a boundless ball of energy to becoming reserved and dispirited. The only consistency was his desire to be first to dinner; he wasn't going to let his wounded jaw and bandaged head keep him from a

meal. His hunger convinced me he still wanted to live. I didn't feel right putting him down—it just wasn't his time yet.

I visited him often and celebrated a full year of life with extra peppermints and assumed his brighter appearance was a mirage. I started riding other horses and eventually purchased a young Connemara-cross named Flynn with the idea that he would help ease the pain of eventually losing Baron.

Months went by—and Baron's health flourished. I couldn't believe my terminally ill horse was actually sick. I consulted with veterinarians around the country willing to help with his unusual case. After months of tests, he was declared "as healthy as a horse" without a clear idea of what happened to the cancer.

Sadly, I had formed a new bond with Flynn but I couldn't afford to keep them both. So with my overwhelming joy of having Baron back from the dead, I also had to say goodbye to Flynn. Another quart of ice cream and a few bottles of wine later, I sent him off to a lovely new home and turned to Baron, who was elated to be my one-and-only again.

Baron's only handicap is a bony mass on his lower mandible, but he is comfortable wearing a Micklem bridle or figure-eight noseband. I began riding him again in the fall of 2015, two years after his initial "retirement." He was enthusiastic in his work, and within seven months we qualified to compete at the 2016 American Eventing Championships and that season we finished third in the Novice division at the Area II Championships. We returned to the AEC last summer where we finished ninth in a very competitive Novice Adult Amateur division.

Baron and I just completed our first Training level combined test on our dressage score. As I entered the ring for the competition, I couldn't help but smile when Baron's Jockey Club name, Uptoheavnbakagain, was announced. Sometimes I wonder if the name was a prophecy—that my little red boy wasn't ready for heaven and he came back to me. 🐾



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Allison Sandifer and Baron last fall

I cried as I watched his coat fade and his tail hair fall out. My heart broke as he withdrew from the touch of my hand on his side. He shifted from being a boundless ball of energy to being reserved and dispirited.



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