

THE COUNTRY COB

CONTENT . COMMUNITY . CONNECTION . COLLABORATION

The Inspire Issue

WIN
RITES skin care to the value of R1200





July is here, half way through 2024, with grey winter skies and rain on the way - we are well in to winter. The theme for this issue is "Inspire", which by definition means to excite, encourage, or breathe life into. Just looking at the contributors for this issue I want to say thank you - I am not only inspired, I am in awe at the quality and value of the information in this issue that has been so thoughtfully written and generously shared.

When planning this issue I asked well-known photographer Bridget Ford if she could suggest a worthy role model for the cover. Her immediate response was Thandeka Jewison, who Bridget referred to as, "A rider who shows a great love and passion for the sport as well as for her horses". She continued to say, "Thandeka is always kind and courteous and is a great example of sportsmanship and horsemanship". A true inspiration to young riders for all the right reasons!

Further on in this issue and in need of special mention, Clarissa Groesbeek shares her ground-breaking story with her horse Necker Island.

A touching story of her journey to heal her horse and the profound impact that it had on her life - I am in awe of her determination and grit and I am beyond grateful that she has shared her very powerful message. More stories like this need to be shared. There are many that are untold that connect us to our horse teachers on a profound and deep level.

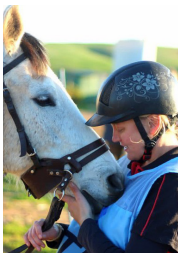
The vast amount of knowledge that has been infused into this issue by chosen professionals across health, nutrition, training and welfare is testament to the ongoing commitment to ethical and responsible horsemanship. As we breathe life into valuable lessons from the masters of old and encourage new thought and critical thinking.

On top of all this content the reader value in this issue is next level! Check out our competition page where you can win a RITES skincare pack to the value of R1200.

If you like what you read and you wish to receive The Country Cob on a quarterly basis you can easily subscribe at www.horsetalksa.co.za If there is a topic of interest that you feel needs to be covered and you would like to contribute please email info@horsetalksa.co.za

Happy Reading and Happy Riding 🐾

The Contributing Team



THERAPY MARIKE KOTZE
A certified Equine Assisted Psychotherapy Specialist. Marike has also completed an Equine Behaviour course through the Ethology Academy. She hopes to share the beauty of the horse-human connection with everyone who has the desire to improve their lives.



REAL STORY CLARISSA GROESBEEK
With a BSc (Hon) in Bioinformatics from WITS Clarissa is a woman on a mission who knows her own mind. Fiercely protective of her special heart horse Island, Clarissa is a champion for animal welfare and an advocate for fair rule changes in equestrian sport.



HEALTH CAERA O' SHAUGHNESSY
Caera is a horse owner and equine advocate. Healing from the "inside, out" is her passion and her focus in equines. She is a compulsive researcher and with her knowledge of nutrition and holistic health sciences she believes in a natural approach to restoring balance, well being and harmony.

COVER IMAGE courtesy of Bridget ford, Thandeka Jewison riding Dageraad Unwa



INTEGRATIVE TRAINING TRACY CIOLLI
A teacher in training with Phillippe Karl's Ecole de Légèreté, Tracy is always looking for more skills and knowledge to incorporate into her training. Her teaching focusses on two-way communication, emotion and physical balance. Her approach is humble, open minded and structured.



NUTRITION MICHAELA BOWLES
Michaela Bowles heads Equilibrate Nutrition for the Balanced Horse who manufacture effective and affordable nutritional supplements. A certified nutritionist and consultant, former tertiary educator with a BHS background and 5 decades of practical horse experience.



CONTRIBUTOR KIM WILLIAMS
Kim began riding professionally in the UK after school at 16 years old. She worked as an assistant trainer for St John Gray before moving to Cape Town. She currently assists and rides for Greg Ennion Stables. Kim also freelances as an FEI accredited coach in the discipline of Eventing.

Disclaimer: Please note that any opinions expressed by writers and contributors are theirs alone, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The Country Cob or HorsetalkSA.



RIDE & SHINE

THANDEKA JEWISON TALKS ABOUT GROWING AND LEARNING ON HER RIDING JOURNEY AND HOW IT HAS CHANGED HER LIFE

The Country Cob is very much based on progressive horsemanship, with the philosophy that the horse comes before the sport- a simple statement that still gets a varied response.

What are your thoughts on this statement?

I absolutely agree with this statement for many reasons. First riding is not just a rider. There is also a horse. The sport involves a partnership between the rider and her horse. The horse is not an inanimate object that can be 'forced' to do what you want it to do. You can only be successful if you have trust and a good relationship with

your horse. I know that if I look after my horse, he will look after me.

What is your background with horses?

I have been horse riding for 11 years now, and every time I go to the stables, I fall in love with my horse over and over. I used to love going on little pony rides when we went on holiday to the Drakensberg. My mom used to ride and so she signed my sister and I up for lessons as soon as we were old enough. In Joburg, I used to have one lesson a week with my mom and sister. When we moved to Cape Town, my sister and I started having private lessons. During lockdown my Instructor gave me the opportunity to lease her amazing horse called Blue Gown Girl. I rode Blue for about 2 years until she had to retire. Blue is my heart horse. I had done some competing before, but with Blue I really started to ride competitively. I especially developed a love for Eventing. Blue and I came third in the 95cm Eventing at SA Youth Champs in 2023. In October last year, Blue had to retire due to injury.

That was one of the saddest moments of my life. I rode some other horses for a few months and then I was so lucky to be offered another amazing horse called Dageraad Unwa. He had been off work for 2 years and we have been working together slowly to get fit and build our partnership. We were top of the 90cm Showjumping classes and now have just started Showjumping at 1m. We are also starting our Eventing journey together. That had a bit of a rocky start as we had a bad fall but we are back on track and hoping to do Adult Champs later this year.

How have you progressed in the sport?

With a lot of hard work and dedication - everyone needs to start somewhere. I have had to sacrifice a lot to do the sport I enjoy the most. It has taken a long time to build up my strength and I have to keep working all the time to get better. I learned, I fell, I got up, I fell again. I have been injured, my horses have been injured. We've missed out and have had to take some steps back to build up to where we were. It can be disappointing and it can be scary to get back in the saddle when you fall, but it's all part of the process.

What are your short - and long-term goals?

My short-term goal right now is to get to know and understand my new horse better and to work together as a team in our competitions as we work our way up the ranks. My long-term goal is to event and showjump in an open team, getting my provincial and hopefully national colours.

What are you focused on improving the most, at the moment?

My main focus right now is gaining my confidence back around the cross-country track after a very traumatic accident. I misjudged our approach to a bank and Unwa didn't realise he was going down a drop. As he landed his back legs gave way and he fell. He rolled on me and I had to be taken to the emergency room where I spent a night in ICU. They thought I had fractured my ribs but luckily not. I did however tear my AC ligament in my shoulder and I had to take a month off riding. Unwa recovered very quickly - thank goodness! I am still in recovery - I feel quite nervous when I am practicing cross country jumps as I am worried about falling again. I guess the trauma is still there but I don't plan on quitting!

What do you love and dislike about the sport?

I love this sport because it teaches you so many life lessons! Such as problem solving, team work, adjusting yourself to different problems. The biggest lesson that competitive riding has taught me is to stay committed even when times are hard. I show my commitment to my horses by spending that extra time with them after the shows end, even when I am exhausted. My

“You can only be successful if you have a good relationship with your horse. I know that if I look after my horse, he will look after me.”

horse is my partner. I love having a bond with my horse. One thing I don't like about the sport is that it is not very accommodating to riders of colour or those from disadvantaged backgrounds. It really is an elite, rich man's sport and some rules and mindsets need to change to make it more inclusive. As a rider of colour, having long braided Afro hair has been a challenge because I can't put it in a bun for Dressage. So I don't like the mindset of what is acceptable and what isn't that you see in the sport sometimes. But there are some really supportive and forward thinking people who I know are trying to help.

What would your advice be to a young equestrian in this sport?

Do the things that you enjoy and commit fully even when things are tough. Work with your horse and love your horse. Like the statement at the beginning of this interview says, the horse comes before the sport. Don't blame your horse for all the mistakes. There will be lots of bad days inbetween the good days. Keep going. Specifically for young black equestrians, I would say we need to be braver about speaking out and getting some of the rules changed. We must support each other. This doesn't have to be only an individual sport. We must work as a team with other riders and horses.

Describe your relationship with your horses?

I've been very, very privileged to have ridden some amazing horses. I have been privileged to ride a lot of riding school horses that have taught me so much. Dageraad Unwa (also known as Mr Oppies) has been just a blessing and a dream come true. Even though I have had him for just 6 months I think we have created a strong bond and connection that can only be experienced through hard work, love, trust of partnership, and commitment. Unwa is there for me, and I am there for him. I think he knows that, even when times are tough. He is always looking for carrots or other treats, and possibly gets far too many!

If you could snap your fingers and change one thing about the horse industry, what would that change be?

To make it more affordable and accessible to a wider range of people. I would love to see more black riders in the sport. 🐾

WIN

a Rites skincare
pack worth R1200

TO ENTER

Name the products
included in the Rites
acne buster pack.



Send an email with
your answer to
info@horsetalksa.co.za

This acne buster pack includes G.I.Gel,
Wipe Out, Smart Hydrator, Disappearing
Act, Vitality Champion and a crossbody bag!

Entries close 02 August 2024



Many of the questions that a buyer should be asking when looking to purchase an ex racehorse, are not so much about the potential horse but, rather about themselves. If a buyer can answer yes to the following questions, only then should they feel fully confident and ready to proceed on their journey to selecting a suitable equine partner.

Firstly, are you able to financially support a horse throughout its life regardless of its purchase price? Of course, there is a huge difference between purchasing a horse for 10,000 Rand and buying a horse for 100,000 Rand but essentially, once that purchase is made, the running costs remain the same. The reality is that the risks of additional costs throughout the horse's life are far better referred to as inevitabilities, rather than as possibilities.

Secondly, are you a competent and experienced enough person to undertake reschooling a racehorse for a second career? This question is not necessarily answered by the views that others give you but does require brutal, honest self-assessment. That is not to say that a lesser experienced horse person cannot form a lasting partnership with a reschooled racehorse, providing they have the guidance and knowledge of somebody who does possess the experience required to equip the horse on his journey forward.

Thirdly, do you have a facility with an experienced stable manager and staff who are able to accommodate an OTTB, and understand that the horse may need to be kept in conditions closer to that of a racing yard initially, making the transition to a lifestyle with more freedom gradually and, in a way that will not negatively affect the horses

Racing to REALITY

*WHILST THE RETIRED RACEHORSE
MAY BE AN EASILY ACCESSIBLE AND
ECONOMIC OPTION WHEN LOOKING
TO PURCHASE, THEY ARE TO BE
CONSIDERED WITH DUE DILIGENCE
- FAIRLY AND RESPECTFULLY.*

mental and physical wellbeing? Emphasis needs to be placed on the fact that the horse will feel safe and secure in a stabled environment, is not used to large spaces and herd situations and, will retain residual fitness for anywhere up to 3 months after it leaves training. Dietary changes, will be massive, and need to be undertaken very carefully and slowly to prevent gastric distress. Ideally, a strict daily routine including proper exercise is key.

So, you've answered a hard yes to the above questions, now for the horse! Long gone are the days where we could walk into a racing yard and be given a horse. Racing has learned the hard way and now goes to extreme lengths to protect the horses that leave the industry. The use of rehoming centres that are industry approved are now the route trainers are leaning to, when they have horses that have reached the end of their racing careers. For the protection of these horses, new owners outside of racing, and for the industry as a whole, this would also be the recommended route for a potential buyer to take. Two questions that are the most crucial when horse hunting are.

CAN YOU RIDE THE HORSE?

By this, I don't just mean, is the vendor willing to let you try the horse, although it would be a massive red flag if that were not the case, but is this a horse you are able to get on and ride today, the way you would want to ride it at home tomorrow? If you wish to be able to mount, dismount, walk, trot and canter on both reins, turn and stop on your new horse, you need to be able to do just that before you make a decision as to whether this is the right horse for you. It would also be a red flag for the horse to already be presented to you tacked up or having been lunged or ridden prior to your viewing appointment, or if it were to be ridden in anything other than a simple snaffle bridle, English saddle and a running

“The use of rehoming centres that are industry approved are now the route trainers are leaning to, when they have horses that have reached the end of their racing careers”

martingale. To see the horse caught, handled on the ground and tacked up so you can observe his behaviour would be ideal.

IS THE HORSE OPEN TO VET?

A potential horse needs to be of sound mind and be in good physical shape. A full veterinary examination is highly recommended when purchasing any horse, and an OTTB is no different. A "vetting" is not the black and white, pass or fail affair that it has been in previous years, but a risk assessment whereby a horse will be deemed a low, moderate or high risk depending on its intended use for the future, based on its general health and preexisting conditions, if any. This allows far more horses to go on to have a variety of second careers.

SOME HELPFUL FACTS FOR ANYONE INTERESTED IN SOURCING AN OTTB

Not only is a horse's racing history easily assessable to the public, but so are the race reports detailing jockey comments, issues in running, veterinary inspections and findings and specimen analysis.

Racehorses rarely use anything more than a loose ring single jointed snaffle and cavesson noseband for the duration of their careers. They work daily in running martingales (which regulate rein pressure should a rider not be able to keep their hands low), and race with just an Irish martingale. All work riders rely heavily on their neckstrap, so as not to interfere with the horse's mouth. The neckstrap serves several purposes. Seat belt, brakes, balance and confidence.

A horse's veterinary history

cannot be released to you by their veterinary surgeon without written consent from the owner who was responsible for the horse at the time of treatment. This information remains the sole property of that owner, unless they instruct the vet otherwise. A veterinary surgeon is bound by a confidentiality agreement to their clients in exactly the same way a human doctor is.

A thoroughbred can never be a "weight carrier". A horse's weight class is determined by the measurement of "bone", the circumference of the cannon bone directly below the knee. A middleweight hunter type that would be comfortable carrying 85kg, could be expected to have a bone measurement of 9 inches. Thoroughbreds generally won't have this much bone. It is also helpful to remember that a racehorse will not have carried tack weighing more than 5kg, with a combined tack and rider weight of over 65kg at any point during its working life, and has performed his most strenuous exercise with the rider's weight not on the horses back and positioned closer to the shoulders than the loins.

A racehorse will never have been mounted from the ground or from a mounting block. He will have been mounted either by vaulting or by leg up, always with a ground person holding the nearside rein until the rider is secure.

Acquiring a new partner who already has a wealth of his own experience can be daunting. But if you are ready and equipped for the challenge, the partnership and rewards can be astonishing. 🐾



The Western Cape Equine Trust is a REHOMING PROGRAM that focuses specifically on the safe and secure future of Thoroughbred racehorses once they are retired from their racing career.

HORSES AVAILABLE

Are you looking for your next partner?

The Western Cape Equine Trust has a range of beautiful OTTB's available for rehoming ranging from the ages of 3-7yo.



Can't adopt? We accept volunteers! Can't volunteer? Then please donate.



Just a little bit?

EVERYONE KNOWS HIM AS THE HORSE WITHOUT A BRIDLE, BUT FEW KNOW OF THE JOURNEY WE HAVE BEEN ON AND WHAT IT TOOK US TO GET TO WHERE WE ARE TODAY.



After sadly having to retire my junior horse from competition due to a paddock injury I still desperately wanted to chase my dream of jumping in the opens classes. A second horse wasn't on the cards for me, but I saw an advert for Necker Island, a 9yo thoroughbred gelding on Facebook and something just said to me, "that's the one." I messaged the owner and asked if the horse was still for sale, seeing as it had been over a year since the ad was originally listed. I was told not really but I could try him if I so wished. So off I went without telling anyone. I remember trotting around and thinking that a camel probably had better paces, but the first cross pole was magic. The rest of him... not so magic. He had an explosive buck, was pigeon toed, had bone chips, was a head-shaker, and was on the verge of being put to sleep because of various behavioral issues. My instructor at the time made me a deal that we could take him if he passed a vetting; thinking that there was no way he ever would. Well, he did, and so I took him. I thought he'd be quirky but fairly producible, given that I had worked with problem horses before. Turns out that I was unknowingly and incomprehensibly wrong!

It was only after taking Island home that it became clear how badly he had been abused. He was dangerously explosive on the ground and under saddle. He bucked me off from a standstill more times than I can count, ran me into the arena fence, reared and flipped over, took out grooms and service providers, and charged and concussed me more than once. My instructor of 10 years through fears for my safety and that I was wasting time eventually gave me an ultimatum; put the horse down or he would not continue to teach me. Despite being presented at the time with what some would say was the voice of reason, I discovered an unknown yet undeniable resolve and I chose Island.

At the time that Island came into my life was also subsequently a low point for me. I had experienced some serious abuse and found no help in the relevant authorities or with counseling. I was broken and angry, and had developed poor coping mechanisms in the form of self-harm. The first time I met Island, I opened the door to a very shut down horse; drooping ears and completely glazed over eyes. As I approached him, he went

straight for my arms and proceeded to inspect them. He then lifted his head and looked at me as if to say, "me too". He was the first soul to really see me in a very long time. He saw all the trauma and the pain, and in turn I could see his. Over the next few years there was a lot of fighting; we fought each other, we fought our own demons, I fought everyone who told me that the horse was too dangerous, too broken, or that I wasn't good enough as a rider. He injured me and broke my confidence, and I felt like I had nothing left. Every morning though, I woke up and thought to myself that if this horse is fighting today then so am I. I can't remember when exactly it happened but one day we shifted. Through my own healing and his, I realized that he was my mirror - he reflected all my insecurities and trauma back at me. I realized that if I ever wanted to ride him well, I was going to have to be brave, to find a way to put my baggage down and let it go. So we stumbled down the messy road of healing together, both learning to let go and live in the now.

Through all of what we were going through together, Island had physical issues too. His body was in a poor state as a result of all the abuse he had endured, and I had him seen to by vets, physiotherapists, chiropractors, saddle fitters, etc.

I rehabbed his body as much as I could despite being told I was being pedantic and the horse was "just not cut out for the sport". His headshaking however, proved to be the biggest challenge. He did not respond to any conventional treatment, veterinary treatment, or nose nets or ear bonnets. He was eventually diagnosed with trigeminal-mediated headshaking, caused by nerve damage to his poll. The idea to change his bit came one day while I was sitting in my car trying to decide if I should put the horse down or keep trying, even though it felt like there was nothing I hadn't already tried. I wished I could just take the whole bridle off and for a moment I thought am I really considering riding the most difficult horse I've ever come across without a bridle? Once I had made the decision to try, the Indian war bridle came to mind. This is traditionally a loop of rawhide rope attached to a piece of cotton rope and two metal rings. Regular reins are attached to the rings. You slip the top of the rawhide loop into the horse's mouth just as you would a normal bit and it is secured under the horse's head by a chin strap.

I fashioned his first "war bridle" out of nylon cord and a sealtex latex bit bandage and decided to give it a go as a last resort. Thankfully, he loved it. I then had a leather mockup made as a short-

"He has helped me show the world that there is no such thing as an impossible horse, only those who are brave enough to communicate."



term experiment to see if he'd like the idea I had for him and to give me more steering than the conventional war bridle. Once we were both happy, I had the final version made in the USA out of medical grade biothane (a coated polyester webbing). It is important to note that leather copies will eventually snap and pose a safety risk to both horse and rider. Bridle-less bits should always be sourced through reputable bitting companies with appropriate experience in bridle-less bits. The bit I had made has a very thin steel core that prevents snapping, and also allows the back strap to change the shape of the bit to create different pressure distributions between the lips, tongue, and bars. I had to teach him to hold the bit while working, and he is able to drop it when he is done. In addition to being comfortable for him due to his medical condition, the bit also gave him a voice. As a rider it can be intimidating to allow our horses the opportunity to say no, but ultimately knowing that he would always be heard is what allowed us to really click and become a partnership.

Within a year of making these changes and building our relationship we had progressed to jumping into the 1m20 classes. In 2020 Island

unfortunately underwent numerous botched sinus operations and had a very grim prognosis. He was left with 2 necrotic holes in his skull and an antibiotic resistant infection. It took over 3 months of daily bandaging to get the holes to close, and a further 7 months of using my own scientific and medical background to treat the antibiotic resistant infection. Finally, towards the end of 2021, I made a breakthrough and managed to save him. After he started to recover we slowly began to build up strength and fitness and set back out onto the circuit in 2022, where we jumped back up into the 1m20 classes.

As I look back on this intense personal healing, learning and growth stage in my life I can say that Island has taught me as many life lessons as he has about horses and horsemanship. He has taught me to really listen to the horses. He has helped me show the world that there is no such thing as an impossible horse, only those who are brave enough to communicate. They challenge us to listen, to be honest with ourselves, to know where our knowledge ends and where the learning must begin. They challenge us to rise to the occasion and to be better; better people and better horsemen and women. 🍷

A little BIT better

BITFITTING



Our Service:

- Bitfitting & Bit Sales ✓
- Duration: 1 - 1.5h ✓
- On ground assessment ✓
- Riding in current bit ✓
- Bit trial of new bits ✓

📞 078 296 2686
 📧 @equisite.sa
 📍 Cape Town, South Africa



www.equi-site.net
www.bitboxequestrian.co.za





AS WE LEARN ABOUT THE INTRICACIES OF LIFE AT BOTH A MACRO AND MICRO LEVEL WE SEE THAT THERE IS A CONNECTEDNESS TO IT ALL, WHERE PHYSICAL WELLNESS IS THE MANIFESTATION OF INNER AND OUTER HARMONY.

The intricate relationship between the gut microbiome, our inner world, and equine skin health are connected and linked by the way of the Gut-Skin-Axis. Beyond genetics and grooming practices, an emerging area of research focuses on the profound influence of the equine gut microbiome on these external features.

THE MICROBIOME: ITS INFLUENCE ON SKIN AND COAT HEALTH

The health of a horse's skin and coat reflects the intricate balance of internal processes, including the composition of the equine gut microbiome. The gut microbiota, a complex ecosystem of microorganisms inhabiting the gastrointestinal tract, plays a crucial role in maintaining overall health in horses. Recent research has increasingly highlighted its profound influence on skin and coat conditions as well as performance and behaviour. Understanding this relationship is essential for optimizing equine wellness and performance.

A DYNAMIC ECOSYSTEM

The equine gut microbiome comprises a diverse array of bacteria, archaea, fungi, and viruses. These

microorganisms form a symbiotic relationship with the host, influencing digestion, immune function, and nutrient absorption. The composition of the gut microbiome is influenced by various factors, including diet, stress levels, environment, and medical interventions such as antibiotics.

Research indicates that a balanced microbiota is essential for overall health in horses. Disruptions in microbial diversity can lead to digestive disorders, intestinal acidosis, metabolic imbalances, and compromised immune function. Moreover, alterations in the gut microbiota have been linked to dermatological issues, including skin allergies, eczema, and poor coat condition.

LINKING GUT HEALTH TO SKIN AND COAT CONDITIONS

The connection between gut health and skin condition stems from the concept of the gut-skin axis, a bidirectional communication pathway between the gastrointestinal tract and the skin. This axis is mediated by immune factors, microbial metabolites, and neural signaling mechanisms. The gut-skin axis, involves several mechanisms that illustrate the profound influence of gut microbes on external features:

“The health of a horse’s skin and coat reflects the intricate balance of internal processes, including the composition of the equine gut microbiome.”

1 - IMMUNE MODULATION

The gut microbiome plays a pivotal role in regulating the immune system, influencing both local and systemic immune responses. Dysbiosis, or imbalance in gut microbiota, can lead to increased inflammation and immune-mediated skin disorders in horses. Conversely, a diverse and balanced microbiome supports immune tolerance and reduces the likelihood of hypersensitivity reactions that manifest as skin allergies or dermatitis. Disruptions in gut microbial balance may contribute to conditions such as metabolic syndrome or insulin resistance, which can adversely affect skin health and coat appearance.

2 - NUTRIENT ABSORPTION AND METABOLISM

Microbial communities in the gut contribute significantly to nutrient metabolism and absorption. Short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs), produced through fermentation of dietary fiber in the hindgut by gut bacteria, serve as energy sources for intestinal cells and contribute to skin health by modulating inflammation and supporting epithelial barrier function. Members of the bacteria community play a crucial role in synthesizing essential vitamins and nutrients, including vitamin K and Biotin. Biotin, and essential B complex vitamin is required for the health of the skin and its connective tissue and it is involved in various metabolic processes. Biotin is well known for its benefits in promoting hoof growth and strength. It plays a role in keratin production, which is essential for hoof, horn and hair growth. Biotin deficiency can lead to brittle hooves and poor coat quality, making its adequate production and absorption crucial for equine health.

3 - SHORT-CHAIN FATTY ACIDS (SCFAS)

Certain bacteria in the gut ferment dietary fibers to produce short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs) These play multiple roles in the body, including serving as an energy source for intestinal cells and influencing immune function. Moreover, SCFAs contribute to skin health by promoting the integrity of the skin

barrier and modulating inflammation. A healthy gut microbiome that produces adequate SCFAs helps maintain a resilient skin barrier, preventing moisture loss and protecting against environmental stressors that could affect coat quality.

4 - STRESS

Furthermore, stressors such as travel, competition, limited forage and changes in routine can disrupt gut microbiota balance, leading to temporary or chronic skin issues.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR CARETAKERS

Dietary Management - Emphasize high-fibre, low-starch diets supplemented with probiotics or prebiotics to promote microbial diversity and SCFA production.

Stress Reduction - Minimize stressors and implement gradual changes in routine to support gut health and reduce the horses risk of digestive and skin disorders.

Antibiotics and Medications - The use of antibiotics or certain medications can disrupt the balance of gut microbes, leading to dysbiosis and potential skin and coat issues.

Environment - Environmental factors such as stable cleanliness, turnout conditions, and exposure to pathogens also play a role in shaping the equine gut microbiome.

Regular Monitoring - Observe changes in skin and coat condition as indicators of overall health.

The equine gut microbiome plays a pivotal role in maintaining skin and coat health by influencing immune function, nutrient metabolism, and inflammatory responses. Recognizing this intricate relationship offers new avenues for promoting wellness in horses. While significant strides have been made in understanding the equine gut microbiome’s impact on skin and coat health, further research is needed to understand the gut-skin-axis and its implications in wellbeing. The journey towards healthier skin and coats in horses begins within their gut - a vibrant ecosystem where microbial balance shapes their overall wellbeing. 🐾

CASE STUDIES AND CLINICAL EVIDENCE

Recent studies have provided compelling evidence supporting the link between a healthy gut and healthy skin condition. For example, research has demonstrated improvements in skin allergies and coat condition following dietary modifications aimed at restoring gut balance where there has been an introduction of live yeast that supports fibrolytic bacteria and keeping the hindgut fermentation process in tact. The use of certain probiotics and prebiotics to enhance microbial diversity have shown promising results in reducing inflammation and supporting skin barrier function.

EFFIVET

HYPOCHLOROUS ACID

CLEANS // SOOTHES // PROTECTS
PREVENTS INFECTIONS



NON-IRRITATING



ALCOHOL FREE

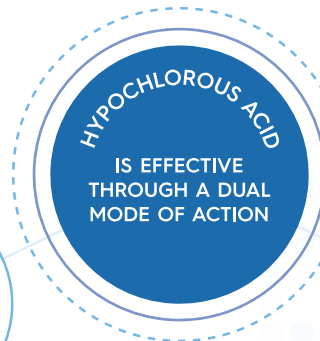


pH NEUTRAL

SKIN & WOUND CLEANER

0,034 % Hypochlorous Acid (340 - 360 ppm)*

Moistens, cleans and debrides wounds without harming healthy tissue. Provides relief against scratching.



Penetration of cell walls by reacting with enzymes

Disruption of cell function by inhibiting RNA and DNA synthesis



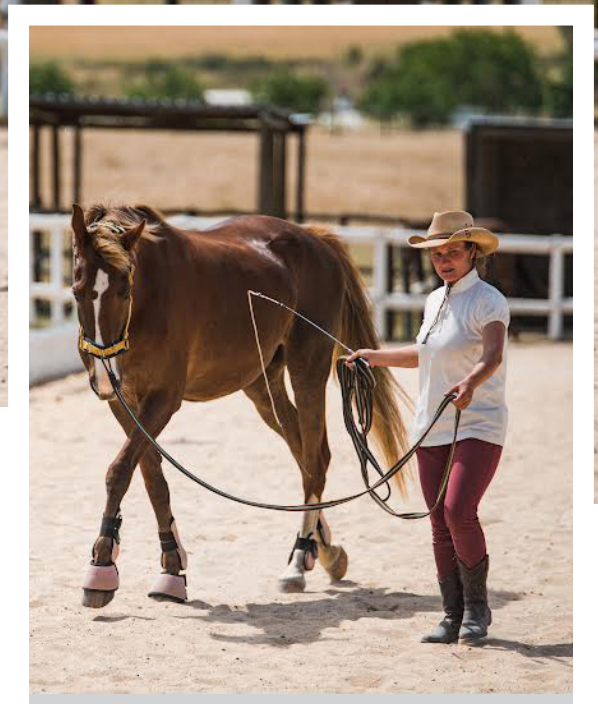
OPHTHALMIC EYE CLEANER

0,024 % Hypochlorous Acid (240 - 260 ppm)*

For the management of ocular and periocular conditions.



SAFE & EFFECTIVE
DERMATOLOGICALLY TESTED



foundation **BUILDING**

GROUNDWORK IS AN EXCELLENT INDICATOR OF WHERE YOUR HORSE IS HAVING TROUBLE AND PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO HELP THEM IN A SUPPORTIVE WAY.

Groundwork is necessary for young horses, but it is also valuable for any horses work programme. Groundwork helps establish a solid foundation and prepares a horse for riding. It also provides an early indication of potential problems you may encounter under saddle. All ridden problems show on the ground and are more effectively fixed in this space.

When assessing a horse I like to see that it is feeling ok about standing in its own space. This is equally important for the human - if you can't stand still for a few minutes without tension or thinking about or wanting to do something else, the horse is likely to bring your awareness to this by being unable

to stand either. It is important to really be present with the horse and for your mind not to become busy or feel like you are forcing yourself to wait. If the horse can't stand still in their own space, don't force it - remember the aim is not simply for the horse to stand still tolerantly because you told it to, but for the horse to feel ok about it. Horses are different - some may initially need more clarity, others may need to be allowed to move a little with more focus on softness and helping them feel safe, others may need help with balance. This is not a "don't allow the horse to move your feet" exercise, rather you move as necessary to best help the horse while aiming to maintain the space or distance between you and the horse. Similarly, don't force square halts. There is a reason the

horse doesn't choose to stand square and this provides you with valuable information on how you can help the horse. Rearranging the legs teaches the horse to disconnect the legs from the body. Notice where there is imbalance or tension that makes the horse prefer the not square position. Start to notice leaning on shoulders and which particular shoulder. Aim to help the horse gradually approach a more square position with more equal weight distribution, originating from better balance in the body and not from telling the horse where to put its feet. A young horse will initially balance more on the forehand and should gradually be encouraged to shift its weight back.

Once the horse is feeling safe and comfortable standing in its own space without interference, I like to be able to move around the horse and pause in various positions so that I can help the horse feel comfortable no matter where I am. This should also then be taken into walk work. Is the horse happy for me to walk alongside him in various positions? Notice if a particular position creates tension, hurrying, stickiness or attempts to move you out of position. Once a horse is feeling safe enough that kicking is not a significant risk, matching steps with the hind legs is a valuable exercise - not only for connection, but this also helps you develop your mind, body connection to how your pelvis and hips move with the horse at ridden walk. Another thing you will notice is whether your horse can release tension while walking or if this only happens once you come into a halt and give the horse a break. Only once you have the above groundwork in place before introducing requests/aids, will you be free from unintentionally create tension in the horse. Once established you can implement your aids or cues you wish to use for communication with your horse. It is important that before you start that you understand what and how you want to ask, how the horse is likely to interpret what you are asking and whether the horse is capable of doing what you are going to ask.

When introducing requests or aids, you should ensure that the horse is comfortable with the aid (that your aid, whether it be hand /voice/ whip/ rope does not in itself create tension) and that you take the time to make sure that the horse understands the aid. Breath work and visualization are valuable aids, usually overlooked or forgotten but often superior to any other. However, is also important to realize that, unless you are going to

“If you can't stand still for a few minutes without tension... or wanting to do something else, the horse is likely to bring your awareness to this by being unable to stand either. It is really important to be present”

rely solely on these aids in all work, you also need to take the time in your groundwork to establish the other aids you want to use too.

Once you have setup your aids to establish communication, you can begin to work on helping the horse move in a better balance for carrying a rider. Starting with simple movements such as walk, halt and backup up transitions, as well as being able to yield the shoulders, ribcage and hind. This can then be taken into movement on figures such as squares, half circles and circles. Focus on developing fundamental principles such as relaxation, balance and impulsion in your groundwork. I find the squares most useful as they incorporate and clearly separate straight and bend/turn, rather than asking the horse to bend and turn continuously. Groundwork should also include inhand work using your bridle (bit or bitless) or neckrope to clearly explain what your aids through them will mean and noticing any tension created. Groundwork done correctly provides a solid foundation in preparation for lunging and riding without a need for any gadgets.

In using groundwork as a foundation for riding, it is helpful to keep in mind that a lot of the initial groundwork teaches a horse to move away from pressure. Most horses, by nature, will usually first try flight to regain a sense of safety. Pushing into pressure is not the first instinct. Resistance and or pushing into the pressure is the next option where in the horse's assessment flight is no longer an option (whether it be because it is attached by the head to a human that won't let it run away or has a fence preventing it from leaving). If you only teach a horse to move away from pressure, how should the horse understand taking contact or lifting its back to carry you? It will also hamper true connection. 🐾

USEFUL RESOURCES

The French Classical in hand work of Philippe Karl is a valuable bridge to building true contact and it can be modified to work with bitless or bridleless riding. A good understanding of and ability to apply the principles of the Masterson Method to the in hand work is also very helpful. Groundwork is not only the beginning, but useful at any stage of training as it helps us notice any problems we may miss under saddle.



The horse HELPERS

HORSES ARE PLAYING AN EVER-INCREASING ROLE IN HELPING HUMANS WITH MENTAL HEALTH AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT. EQUINE ASSISTED LEARNING (EAL) IS ONE OF THESE HEALING MODALITIES.

Horses are fundamentally still wild and their essential nature as prey animals means they find safety within their herd, and consequently they must always be aware of the rest of the herd. Through body language, the herd forms a cohesive group where each individual can find safety. We can employ this sensitivity to subtle, non-verbal cues to learn about ourselves, our behavioural patterns and how these can help or hinder us in life.

WHAT IS EAL?

EAL is an experiential, interactive methodology where participants work together with an equine professional and a horse to learn more about themselves. The primary process through which people navigate life, is by learning. The experiential learning theory was developed by David A Kolb

and describes the process through which people learn by doing. This is the premise on which EAL is based. EAL teaches clients new skills to solve problems. By creating challenging situations in the arena, people can see their own reactions and behavioural patterns in real time. Because horses can mirror what is happening during the process, clients can see for themselves how their behaviour and decisions affect their approach to problem solving. It also gives them the opportunity to find solutions, immediately put into practice an alternative response and test its effects. It puts the client in a position to find their own solutions and therefore increases their internal locus of control.

HOW CAN HORSES HELP CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

Research has shown specific benefits where working in a natural environment, children with ADHD fared better in complex executive tasks. Where animals were introduced in a classroom setting, it has had positive effects in reducing aggressive behaviour. Children have a natural affinity towards animals and research has long shown that companion animals play a special role in the emotional development of children, particularly the development of self-esteem, autonomy and empathy for others. Working with horses in particular showed a greater increase in self-esteem scores than therapy delivered without the presence of horses. The human-equine partnership shows promise of unique

“Children have a natural affinity towards animals and research has long shown that companion animals play a special role in the emotional development of children...”

therapeutic aspects which are not found in the relationships people have with either other companion animals or their therapists. Horses are excellent therapy animals as it requires a variety of skills to work around them. These skills include, but are not limited to: patience, trust, compassion and awareness. The extra challenge of working with a large, potentially dangerous animal confers skills on the human half of the equation such as self-esteem, mastery and depression relief.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF EAL?

As adults, we know that learning and becoming who we are, is a never-ending process. We wish we had learnt these things earlier and had been able to apply them for longer.

EAL HAS BEEN SHOWN TO HELP WITH:

- Emotional awareness
- Improvement of social skills
- Impulse control
- Building confidence
- Increasing trust and empathy
- Enhancing problem-solving skills
- Developing communication skills
- Effects of substance abuse / dependency
- Effects of eating disorders
- Depression relief
- Grief support

- Behavioural problems
- Parenting problems
- Relationship building

WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM EQUINE ASSISTED LEARNING?

Because there is no horse riding involved, this modality can be beneficial to anyone who has reasonable mobility. EAL can be effective with individuals of all ages including youth, and even families and groups. It focuses on deep learning and can be used to improve life skills, teamwork and self-knowledge in people of all ages. Working with a horse can potentially present a less threatening environment specifically to children and youth allowing them to open up and be more receptive to input.

While EAL can be particularly beneficial to children and youth, it could also be of value to adults who seek to understand themselves better. EAL can be especially beneficial to improve skills like communication, teamwork, critical thinking and flexibility. These are important life skills to develop so that children grow up to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of life. Being a parent is not easy. Just as soon as you think you have the





lay of the land, a new volcano erupts, creating a brand-new mountain around which you now must navigate. Imagine watching your normally timid child standing next to a big horse with a wide grin on her face as she confidently asks it to lift a foot. Dream of your surly teenager smile while whispering something into a horse’s listening ear. Envision a place where your awkward youth can grow and learn and experiment without any judgement.

An example of how an exercise in the arena can be used as a metaphor for life could be a girl struggling to make the horse go over an obstacle. She has labelled it “loneliness”. She is insistent that the horse should step over, but she is struggling to make it happen. After the fourth attempt, the horse pushes the pole with its nose so it falls on the floor, and easily steps over it. The horse looks at the girl as if to say: “There you go, why are you making it so hard for yourself?”

These scenarios are not make-believe. This is what is possible when you take one arena, one horse or more, mix in a bit of a challenge and stir with an equine specialist. In the end, all we want is for our children to have enough confidence, assertiveness and emotional awareness so that they develop into healthy, empathic adults who can develop and maintain healthy relationships. EAL is a profound tool to help us equip them. 🐾



Flutterby
Equine Experiences

-  Marike Kotzé
-  061 516 1736
-  flutterbyequine@gmail.com
-  flutterbyequine.wordpress.com

Come and find yourself through the power of the horse





Old SALT

Salt is the most underestimated and crucial of electrolytes in the equine diet. It is comprised of sodium, the most abundant electrolyte in blood serum and chloride, the second. **Sodium (Na)** is essential for nerve and muscle function and is involved in the regulation of fluids in the body. Sodium also plays a role in the control of both blood pressure and volume. **Chloride (Cl)** helps to regulate the amount of fluid and types of nutrients going in and out of the body's cells. Chloride stimulates the action of nerve and muscle cells and facilitates the flow of oxygen and carbon dioxide within cells. It also maintains pH levels and stimulates stomach acid needed for digestion. Hence the importance of adequate salt intake in the prevention of colic.

SODIUM DEFICIENCY

Sodium deficiency appears to be associated with aversive psychological states. Examples include sodium depletion that may produce long-lasting changes in the brain's neural circuitry that codes the desire to seek out salt. This need may become powerful enough to cause 'Salt gluttony,' i.e. salt intake that is far in excess of the physiological need. We all have known or have heard of such horses, who may consume a salt block in a matter of days!

Interestingly the biopsychology for salt hunger and sodium deficiency may also be associated with deprivation during gestation. A possible example of epigenetic influence on offspring. The effects of sodium deficiency also includes anhedonia. This is the inability to feel pleasure. This is a common symptom of depression, impaired cognition, and fatigue. Severe symptoms of salt deficiency can

“Salt loading prior to exercise...should be included in feed 2 to 3 hours before performance”

include muscle spasms or exertional cramps, reduced energy, confusion, and in sever cases seizures, coma and even death. Horses that may be susceptible include foals suffering diahorrea. Foals' kidneys do not have the ability to concentrate their urine so together with the fluid loss via diahorrea can be catastrophic. Others that may be at risk are older horses whose kidney function may be impaired, horses working in extreme conditions of heat and endurance horses. Additionally if a horse becomes dehydrated due to excessive work and heat the thirst response is lost. At this point intravenous administration of fluids will be needed.

HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

Conversely very similar symptoms are associated with excessive salt intake. Too much salt can cause your horse to feel tired or lethargic, and they may not be interested in food or water. Further symptoms are muscle twitching, tremors and seizures. This is unlikely in normal circumstances as salt intake is usually self-limiting. Losses of salt are mainly via sweating. A horse working in hot conditions may lose 100g of salt per day. Other losses are via urine respiration and the excretion of faeces.

RECOMMENDED DAILY ALLOWANCE

Horses not in work 5 to 10g per day
(1 to 2 level tablespoons)

Horses in work 20g (4 level tablespoons) per day,
divided between meals.

While the supplementation of salt by grazing stock may be unnecessary, it is good management practice to provide a salt or mineral block. Manufactured complete feeds may contain adequate amounts for maintenance but are not sufficient for exercising, performance or working horses. Direct supplementation of salt in feed is the recommended route rather than blocks, as horses may not consume adequate amounts to meet their needs.

Salt loading prior to exercise allows uptake of water and ions by muscles and soft tissues to reduce body fluid losses and to maintain sweat rates. This has the potential to improve cellular function and thermoregulation during exercise. Salt should be included in feed 2 to 3 hours before performance. And...in all situations enable access to ample clean drinking water. 🐾

*Find your SPACE
in our next issue*

ADVERTISING RATES

Quarter page advert

R600

horizontal: 75mm X 210mm

vertical: 149mm X 105mm

Half page advert

R850

horizontal: 149mm X 210mm

or vertical : 297mm X 105mm

Full page advert

R1200

297mm X 210mm

*(3mm bleed on all adverts)

In house design service available

FOR ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES
PLEASE E-MAIL INFO@HORSETALKSA.CO.ZA

Half page vertical

Quarter page vertical

Half page horizontal

Quarter page horizontal