

# *THE COUNTRY COB*

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CONTENT . COMMUNITY . CONNECTION . COLLABORATION

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## The *Play* Issue



**WIN**

*A Back2Basics  
hamper & therapy  
treatment worth*

*R1200*



**A**s the year draws to a close and we reach a time where everyone is getting ready for holidays, it seems only fitting that the theme for this last issue of 2024 should be "Play". It is a good time to remember that investigating new ways of learning through play with your horse achieves more than coercion, strengthening the bond between you and your horse at the same time.

The contributions for this month have truly reached a new level with each expert article focusing on a holistic approach to the various facets of horse care. While the basics such as nutrition, hoof care, saddle fit and training are essential, our horses' wellbeing can also be augmented by the use of

essential oils and various herbs. By allowing them to choose the medicinal supplements they need, we can give them some agency.

This issues cover is the winning result of The Western Cape Equine Trust Race Horse to Riding Horse Competition - Congratulations Marlene Warner and Entitled (Lily) - Winning by popular vote!

For added value, be sure to visit page 8 and enter our competition to win a Back2Basics supplement hamper as well as a therapy session.

If you like what you read and you wish to receive The Country Cob newsletter you can easily subscribe at [www.horsetalksa.co.za](http://www.horsetalksa.co.za). If there is a topic of interest that you feel needs to be covered or you would like to contribute please email [info@horsetalksa.co.za](mailto:info@horsetalksa.co.za)

**Happy Reading and Happy Riding** 🐾

## *The Contributing Team*



**NUTRITION ELNA LATEGAN**  
As professional Natural Scientist Elna specialises in new equine product development & feed formulations. Through her experience and research she has come to observe the developmental, performance and maintenance needs that occur in young and mature horses.



**HEALTH ENGELA POTGIETER**  
is an equine barefoot specialist, has been trimming hooves for over a decade. Engela takes a holistic approach to hoof health and rehabilitation. She also has a background in horse and human bodywork, including many other modalities. Engela's work takes her all over the world, as do her ongoing studies.



**HOLISTIC NICOLE KRETZCHMER**  
Blessed with intuitive gifts, Nicole has always felt a deep calling toward healing. From early childhood to competitive dressage, horses have been her steadfast partners, inspiring her to create unique therapeutic aromatherapy blends, drawing on her intricate understanding of equine anatomy and wellness.



**HEALING DIANE BUDD**  
is a sought-after animal communicator and healer, serving to bridge the gap in understanding between animals and their human companions. She teaches workshops on animal communication, animal healing and zoopharmacology (herbal self selection) in Cape Town.

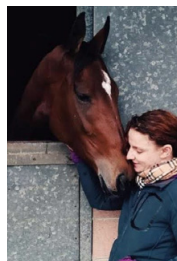
**COVER IMAGE** Supplied



**HORSEMANSHIP GARETH MARE**  
is a South African animal behaviourist and horseman. Gareth's work focusses on connection, relaxation and communication. He has built a solid reputation as an ethical and empathetic trainer and instructor. Gareth travels globally for clinics, private lessons and training of young or troubled horses.



**RIDER FITNESS LIZE HEYNS**  
brings over 20 year's of experience in equestrian sports and education. Founder of Honour Equestrian Academy, Lize is dedicated to fostering compassionate, skilled equestrians. Her innovative teaching philosophy emphasises real-world learning, inspiring students to excel as proficient and empathetic horsemen and women.



**EDUCATION 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.



**WELFARE LISA-MARIE LE COK**  
joined the Schleese team in 2017, after struggling with the saddle fit of her own horse. After seeing the immediate change, she realised that she had been given a gift to help others in the same way. She operates from Cape Town, and can often be seen riding down the beach, or competing in show jumping or eventing shows.

**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.

RACE HORSE TO RIDING HORSE  
PHOTO COMPETITION

WINNER  
ENTITLED



# Cover Story

In November 2022, I reached out to The Western Cape Equine Trust about a horse named Entitled (now called Lily). She wasn't advertised yet, but Brittany mentioned her to me and shared some photos. The moment I saw Lily's picture, I burst into tears—I just knew I had found my girl!

Meeting Entitled in person confirmed everything I felt, and now, almost exactly two years later, here we are! Lily is now 5 years old, and she has the most pure and beautiful soul. Her softness and gentleness captivated me from the start, and she quickly became my little (not so little) heart horse.

Lily is everything I could have ever dreamed of and more. I feel incredibly blessed to have her in my life and trust her with all my heart. Words can't fully express how much I love her, but my heart feels it every single day.

Love you so much, my Lily! You're still just as "entitled" now as you were then. Marlene Warner, Dream Chaser Equestrian



BLUE  
EYED  
GIRL



HYDE  
PARK

At the **Western Cape Equine Trust**, we specialize in retraining & rehoming off the track thoroughbreds, giving them a second chance to thrive. From careful schooling to thoughtful matching with new owners, our program ensures each horse finds a safe and loving home.

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# *The POWER of Play*

*TRAINERS AND RIDERS HAVE AN UNTAPPED OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE USE OF THE NATURAL PLAY BEHAVIOUR OF HORSES TO TRAIN THEM WITHOUT FORCE OR COERCION.*

**W**hen we use physical manipulation to get responses from a horse, we create tension and anxiety—the root cause of most undesirable behaviours in horses. Whether it's a low impulsion-horse being spurred, whipped or kicked for forward, or a forward horse being held back by reins, the pressure will cause anxiety. So, play is critical for developing a light responsive horse. A great deal of my work is focused on helping anxious horses to relax. Some horses might prioritise play over food, but no horse will place play above safety. A horse's prioritisation of needs are:

**A HORSE'S PRIORITISATION OF NEEDS IN ORDER ARE:**

- 1. Safety**
- 2. Comfort**
- 3. Food and only then**
- 4. Play**

Although relaxation comes before play, as adrenaline rises during play, it doesn't mean that we never engage a horse's play drive. When a horse is relaxed and has low impulsion (sometimes incorrectly labelled as 'lazy') the most effective way to build their 'forward and responsive' button, is to engage their play drive. By engaging a horse's play drive, we get to address impulsion, responsiveness and every aspect of learning through engagement of the horse's mind, rather than by using various degrees of force. How do we engage the play drive? It's critical that we have language in place.

A subtle cue for forward, stop, turn and change of gait is critical with a low-impulsion horse. If you try to make a low-impulsion horse do something through force they, more often than not, check out and become dull. Explaining how to build this language is beyond the scope of this article, but if you already have the language in place, here is a program to engage the play drive:

Have changes happen often, and unpredictably. Change direction, change gait and possibly throw in obstacles the horse has already been calmly introduced to. Dwell times between tasks should be kept shorter, but rests are critical. When it comes to riding, straight lines with rests at the destination are a great motivation for a horse to start to play "hunt the rest". This doesn't mean we will never work on circles, just that we only work on the circles once the horse is well and truly in a playful state.

There is another aspect to engaging a horse's play drive, and it has a fantastic impact on your horse's desire to work. Horses are naturally a nomadic species, ranging over large areas, and moving with ideal weather and access to food and water. This means the novelty centre of their brain is regularly engaged. They come across new objects, creatures and experiences on a daily basis. This is why relaxed horses display great curiosity. They are wired for new experiences. If we have interesting new things show up regularly, they will start every session with a healthy dose of curiosity. Having your horses waiting at the gate, when they see you arrive, with an expression that says: 'What are we doing today?' Feels even better than "What have you got for me?" I believe this is one of the reasons my personal horses seem to enjoy being ridden. If I set out a saddle in their 20-acre pasture they will line up to see who is getting ridden that day. This happens even though I don't use treats for my foundation training; there is something else in it for them. My suspicion is that "something else" is novelty. Of course, if that novelty was accompanied by pressure and anxiety, they would quickly stop lining up.

Where possible, provide your horse with the opportunity to play with herd mates in ample space. If your horse is relaxed bring that play into your interactions with them and change the way they see their time with you. It really shouldn't feel like they roll their eyes every time you show up at the yard with an equid sign language for "Oh great, now I have to work again". Horses need full range of movement for both their physical and emotional well-being. Full range of motion is walk, trot, canter and gallop in both directions. If the accommodations we have for our horses impede this range of motion we need to find ways to help them get that full range of motion. I would compare a horse kept in an area, too small

for a canter, to a human sitting at a desk all day. If you don't supplement your daily motion with some form of exercise your biomechanical health will suffer. Again, it's critical that the way we help them address this shortcoming doesn't add stress. Chasing a horse around in circles does not count as addressing their physical needs. You can't address physical fitness when you are damaging emotional fitness. Ideally, all horses would have access to ample space and herd mates to play with. This should be a top priority when seeking livery. A world-class arena, close to your workplace or home may feel like your highest priority, but even if you get to your horse 2 hours every day, they still have 22 hours without you or the arena.

Provided with enough room to move freely, all horses will regularly engage in various forms of play. The high-impulsion horses may open up the throttle for a sprint, while the low-impulsion horses engage in sparring, rearing and weaving with their 'opponents' for extended periods of time. Intrinsicly, low-impulsion horses are often the horses you see regularly engaging in play with herd mates. These horses may not be the quickest in the herd, so when predators are on the horizon in natural settings, they might be outrun by their high-impulsion herd mates. This means they will likely be left to fight off predators, rather than outrun them, but these skills need to be practised. Both humans and horses are more likely to be motivated to practise if that practise is framed as play.

Play is not the only social need that requires your horse have herd mates in their own paddock. A friend over the fence to play with may not be enough to meet their neurochemical needs if they are unable engage in mutual grooming for extended periods. Without this mutual grooming they will not release enough dopamine, oxytocin and serotonin, and their bodies will produce more adrenaline. This can present as anxiety or aggression, or more accurately defensiveness

Turnout with paddock mates is not a nice to have, it is an essential species appropriate requirement. I realise there are circumstances that may affect our ability to provide this need. In these cases, we need to seek compromised solutions while we try address those circumstances. All work and no play won't only make Jack a dull boy, but it can turn a horse bitter and even affect their soundness! 🐾

*“Where possible, provide your horse the opportunity to play with herd mates in ample space. If your horse is relaxed bring that play into your interactions with them and change the way they see their time with you.”*

# *What's the SCOOP?*

## *THE GOLDEN RULE OF FEEDING - Weight vs Volume*

*WHY IS FEEDING BY WEIGHT AND  
NOT VOLUME SO IMPORTANT FOR  
OPTIMAL HEALTH AND WHAT OTHER  
VARIABLES NEED TO BE CONSIDERED?*



**F**rom a scientific standpoint, horses are classified as non-ruminant herbivores, with digestive tracts designed to best utilise good quality forages. Wild horses grazed as their only source of nutrients. With domestication, we have modified horses' eating habits, yet their digestive tracts haven't changed. The horse's digestive tract was designed to trickle feed fibre all day.

Traditionally most horse owners have adopted the feeding practice of feeding their horses by using number of slices of hay and scoops of concentrated feeds or grains. With this practice we are assuming that all feed ingredients that appear similar in volume are the same weight. This is highly inaccurate and can lead to various easily avoidable health issues.

Over the years horse specialists have continued to recommend that horse owners feed their horses by weight and not by volume. This is because feeds have different densities and one can easily over feed digestible energy by using volume measures alone. Feeding by volume can lead to under feeding of hay, which results in skinny horses prone to stress, bad behaviour, ulcers and even colic. Often the horse owner will compensate by over feeding concentrated feeds and / or grains to keep the horses in good condition. This will lead to overloading the digestive system with starch instead of trickle feeding them hay according to the way their systems were designed.

The exact weight of the feed given per day will depend on the quality and amount of the roughage your horse consumes. Good doers need hay with a lower digestible energy to avoid getting too fat. Horse owners spend many hours making sure the concentrated feed they are feeding contains low sugar contents but are only feeding 1kg of concentrated feed. If your horse is eating 10 kg of hay per day, the quality and type of hay is critical in your calculations to achieving a healthy horse.

### **COMPARING HAY: SLICES VS WEIGHT**

The comparison of volume and weight principle also applies to feeding hay. The feeding value of hay bales will vary in weight, hay type, number of slices, hay maturity and cutting.

Comparing different roughage products illustrates how easy feeding by volume can lead to over or under feeding hay. Hay bales also differ in weight and should be taken into consideration when planning how many slices to feed daily.

### **EXAMPLES**

Straw bale (12 – 15kg)  
Grass hay (15 to 20kg)  
Lucerne bales (20 – 25 kg)

To ensure that your horses are receiving the appropriate amount of hay, you would have to check the bale weight and average number of slices per bale for each hay load. Feeding by scoops or slices will only work as long as you know the weight for the volume of feed that is being fed. Nutritional value of

hay bales can also vary a lot. For example: teff hay may vary in weight and nutritional value between teff grown in dry areas which rely solely on rainfall vs. teff hay grown under pivot with added fertiliser.

### **COMPARING WATER ABSORPTION**

One of the greatest challenges of feeding our horses during seasonal changes is preventing colic. All horse owners pay great attention to providing enough water during hot weather in summer months, but we don't pay enough attention to water intake during the cold months. Water intake is critical to ensure a healthy digestive system. Different products such as Pellets, Chaf and Cubix all have different water absorption capabilities, which can be added to your horse's meal time to ensure extra water intake depending on their specific needs.

### **A FEW PRACTICAL TIPS TO ENSURE A HEALTHY DIGESTIVE SYSTEM**

- Trickle feed good quality hay fibre and enough water
- Feed a minimum of 1,5 - 2% of body weight (kg) of roughage per day. Eg: A 500kg horse needs a minimum of 8 to 10 kg of roughage.
- It is equally, if not more important to weigh roughage than it is to weigh ration. A full hay net containing teff may look like enough roughage but in actual fact may weigh very little
- Add good quality fibre to each concentrated meal - this forces your horse to chew more, which increases saliva production. This, in turn, helps to buffer the

pH in the stomach preventing ulcers from developing.

### **FEEDING GREEN PASTURES CAN BE TRICKY**

When grazing on green pastures, it is important to consider that green grass contains up to 85% water. Your horse needs to consume enough grass to ensure enough daily fibre intake. If 1kg of green grass only contains 150g dry matter and 850ml water consider the amount of grass your horse must consume to ensure adequate fibre intake.

It is important to understand that most grass pastures and hay bales are planted specifically to maximise growth rates in commercial animal species such as cattle and sheep. Consuming too much of such high energy-dense feeds, although they are nutritious, can also be a health hazard to some horses. In the spring, warmer temperatures and cooler nights produce a lot of new growth, which can lead to very high easily digestible carbohydrates (sugars and starch) which in some horses, will cause insulin to rise. It is these high levels of insulin that can contribute towards laminitis in horses with metabolic conditions.

Horses' digestive systems were designed to eat continuously, but feeding by volume alone can easily lead to over or under feeding. Over feeding can lead to obese horses with related health issues such as equine metabolic syndrome (EMS), insulin resistance, pituitary pars intermedia dysfunction (PPID), laminitis, etc, while underestimating the weight of roughage will lead to horses losing condition. It is important to take into account not only the weight of roughage, but also how energy dense it is. Each horse is unique and some require a qualified horse nutritionist to balance their daily diets to ensure they stay healthy. 🐾

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*“We are assuming that all feed ingredients that appear similar in volume are the same weight. This is highly inaccurate and can lead to various and easily avoidable health issues.”*

# WIN!

AN ETT TREATMENT OR SALT THERAPY SESSION  
AND A BACK2BASICS HAMPER VALUED AT R1200



## ANSWER TO WIN!

Which common household condiment is largely deficient in horse's diets?

**CLUE:** It is an electrolyte and can have a profound effect on hydration, energy level and muscle movement.



SEND AN EMAIL WITH  
YOUR ANSWER TO

[INFO@HORSETALKSA.CO.ZA](mailto:INFO@HORSETALKSA.CO.ZA)

Entries close  
15 JANUARY 2024







# HERBS for Horses

*HORSES WILL NATURALLY SELF-SELECT PLANTS AND HERBS TO MAINTAIN THEIR HEALTH. IN A DOMESTIC ENVIRONMENT, WE CAN OFFER A SPECIFIC SELECTION FOR THEIR NEEDS.*

**O**ur animals no longer have access to the large amount of vegetation that they had 100 years ago and the variety of herbs and plants in their grazing has thus become restricted, limiting their ability to self source what can assist them to self heal naturally.

The way in which we keep our domestic animals these days, has meant a drastic change in their diets. One way to improve the management and better the health of our companion animals as well as livestock is to introduce a variety of plants into their paddocks or in the garden.

The observations of animals healing themselves with natural remedies has been documented right back to Medieval Europe, and even China. If you watch large animals grazing they are continually on the move, eating as they go. Some of these plants and herbs have been named after the animals that have been spotted selecting them. Some examples are dog grass (*Agropyron repens*) or couch grass, catnip, hares lettuce, spek boom (which pigs love) and horny goat weed.

Studies have found that the receptors in the brain change when we or our animals get ill or need a mineral or vitamin to supplement our bodies or correct an imbalance. I am not referring to craving for chocolate and attributing that to need anti-oxidants or magnesium. We have confused our bodies by adding additives like sugar and milk.

I have often spotted livestock, in particular sheep, grazing on wormwood. At one farm I visited the sheep took a daily walk from a camp where they had slept to the bottom camp where there was grazing. In the middle of this path, on a fence, was a very old wormwood bush. It had been grazed

to such an extent that it crept over the top of the fence and now formed a well-trimmed canopy for sheep to graze upon at certain times of the year. Wormwood is often selected for worms and parasites so the sheep would self-medicate in springtime or when necessary. If you have ever tasted wormwood it is the most bitter tasting plant. It definitely cannot be considered food or a primary compound such as grasses and lucerne (which are nice and sweet) but rather a secondary compound which is bitter and therefore medicinal.

The way to offer herbs to you horses, is to let them choose - take them to the actual plant or pick a leaf and offer it to them. If you have a lot of horses, you can set out a buffet in different buckets and see what each horse selects. Continue offering the

same herb for the next few days until the horse completely ignores it and shows no further interest in that particular plant. It is advisable to offer these after a meal so that the horse isn't responding purely out of hunger.

A livery yard I visited several years ago had a nearby herb garden above the stables. The horses must have smelt the variety of herbs available without being able to access them. When it was quiet, I took several of them round this herb garden and let them self-select what they needed, taking care not to make it too obvious or let them over graze. Each horse had quite a different palate which gave me a very good idea as to what was happening in their bodies and how they were healing themselves through self selection. 🐾

## **MUST HAVE HERBS FOR YOUR STABLE YARD**



### **PEPPERMINT**

Plant next to a tap or water trough as it loves water.

#### **PHYSICAL USES**

- > Digestion.
- > Peppermint's antispasmodic properties can help reduce gas and bloating, and soothes the digestive tract. It can also help with colic as it settles the stomach.
- > Reduces inflammation in muscles.
- > Eating or smelling the peppermint can help alleviate burns and itchy skin conditions. Its menthol properties cools and soothe hot and inflamed skin.

#### **EMOTIONAL USES**

- > Helps a lack of concentration and boredom.

### **ROSE GERANIUM**

As you will smell when you crush a leaf it smells like a rose. This plant is not always consumed but rather inhaled and that is where it has a remarkable effect on the mind.

#### **PHYSICAL USES**

- > Balances hormones.

#### **EMOTIONAL USES**

- > Relaxant – assists with anxiety and depression.



### **FENNEL**

Most of us know this as a culinary herb without realising that we can also give it to our animals.

#### **PHYSICAL USES**

- > Aids in digestion.
- > Anti-spasmodic and soothes the stomach lining.
- > Balances female hormones
- > Can bring in lactation or take it away - use with caution.



### **VIOLET**

Not commonly used in South Africa but is widely used in the East for its medicinal qualities.

#### **PHYSICAL USES**

- > Cools inflammation.
- > A decongestant for sinus and allergies (hayfevers).

#### **EMOTIONAL USES**

- > Wounds of the heart, emotional trauma like loss / grief.









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# *Equine* **ESSENTIALS**

*ESSENTIAL OILS ARE AN ANCIENT REMEDY THAT HAVE BEEN USED FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, RECENTLY BEING BROUGHT BACK TO THE MODERN WORLD.*

**S**cientific studies on the use of essential oils to treat various equine health issues have shown clear evidence of their health enhancing and supportive properties. Such issues range from nutrition and gut health, to olfactory stimulation and those that benefit from the anti-fungal/bacterial/microbial properties of essential oils. The use of essential oils dates back some 3000 years, originating in the far and middle East, where oils were used medicinally and in natural perfumery. The general public's interests in the beneficial and immune boosting uses of essential oils was reignited during the COVID pandemic.

Essential oils can be applied in different ways. Traditional aromatherapy dictates that the horse simply smells a pure, undiluted essential oil offered directly from the bottle. A diluted blend of essential oils can also be applied topically to the body. In the case of the horse, pouring a set amount of pre-diluted blended essential oils down the spine; from withers to tail is another way. Essential oil blends can also be directly massaged onto the horse's body but must be substantially diluted with correct

carrier oil to avoid overtaxing the liver and nervous systems.

There is a lot to be said about looking at not only the individual ingredient component, but the combined components of your whole blend. An intriguing discovery in my work is the consideration that the properties of a plant do not come from a single compound, but rather from the collective synergy of all the substances within it. By blending the unique frequencies of the different oils, and their components, it forms an elixir with seemingly powerful pharmacological possibilities.

To give an example and explain this better, our Deep Fascia Release blend, contains Lemongrass, Lavandin (a hybrid species) and Rose Geranium. Each of these oils has specific well know properties. Lavandin stimulates calmness, Rose Geranium stimulates lymphatic drainage, and Lemongrass is uplifting. Each of these oils have anti-spasmodic and purifying abilities with vasodilatory properties. When combined, they amplify every component present, the strongest aspect being the ability for these oils to target muscle, connective tissue and

fascia specifically, making it the most powerful, natural muscle relaxant available. The individual oils would have a lesser effect if administered on their own or with other incompatible oils. This means, this blend has the highest frequency components to target and release spasms and misalignments in muscle, connective tissue and fascia whilst detoxing these tissues at the same time. It is important to note that the oils are blended in a unique and very specific way that enhances their aroma, in carrier oil and in very specific ratios that contribute to enhancing their collective frequencies.

Having been introduced to the transformative properties of essential oils in my energy healing work with sport horses, the very unique blends requested by horses revealed evidence that these botanical and herbal essences, if used correctly, can affect powerful transformational changes in the body. One case study showed a very deep myofascial spasm between the sacroiliac joint and the groin on a sport horse. Despite the best therapies, this spasm could not be released through ordinary modalities. This misalignment resulted in

the horse severely napping during exercise, along with substantial pain in the body, as he often threw his riders. After an energy release session and 3 consecutive essential oil treatments that his body asked for, this deep, long-standing misalignment and spasm was released. The horse's posture changed completely, his feet realigned as they were pulled inward, he was able to carry himself in balance and his personality changed completely. He became a happier horse; more responsive to humans, where before he seemed shy and tense. He also felt much more comfortable in his body and became a delightful, easily rideable horse.

With Precious Pony Naturals aromatherapy blends, the oils effect positive changes in the body of the horse, and the blends have shown to be more than the sum of their parts. The owner of one horse treated with Nerve Support aromatherapy blend for nervousness, reported back that the aromatherapy had lessened his headshaking. The relief of these symptoms was totally unexpected and a delightful anecdotal demonstration of the possibilities essential oils present to equine health. 🐾

*“By blending the unique frequencies of the different oils, and their components, it forms an elixir with seemingly powerful pharmacological possibilities.”*

**WORKING CORRECTLY WITH ESSENTIAL OILS IS COMPLEX - THE INCORRECT USE CAN HAVE ADVERSE EFFECTS, THEREFORE IT IS IMPORTANT TO CONSULT WITH AN AROMATHERAPIST. IF YOU CHOOSE TO ADMINISTER YOUR OWN ESSENTIAL OILS, HERE ARE A FEW POINTERS:**

➤ NEVER apply raw, undiluted essential oils to skin, they are exceptionally strong and can cause painful blistering, burning and even allergic reactions. They must always be diluted with a carrier oil in the ratio of not more than 5% essential oil to carrier oil (0.5mls essential oil to 10mls carrier oil).

➤ Like humans, some animals are hypersensitive to essential oils and can have an allergic reaction. ALWAYS do a 24hr patch test on a small piece of soft skin before using any aromatherapy oils.

➤ If your horse shies away or shows aversion to specific oils do not continue with the aromatherapy treatment. Using oils incorrectly could be detrimental to your horses health.

➤ Some essential oils are not good for horses when topically applied. The following oils are not suitable: black pepper oil, carrot seed oil, cypress oil, galbanum oil, ginger oil, helichrysum oil, nutmeg oil, and valerian oil.

➤ Aromatherapy oils are not suitable to be used on the nose of a horse as the constant exposure to the aroma can cause inhalation toxicity.

➤ Never administer an aromatherapy session in the morning and leave the horse out during the day. The oils down the spine can cause sunburn. Only administer in the afternoon when the horses come in, as it will be sufficiently absorbed overnight.

➤ Like with body work sessions, ideally try not work your horse for a day or two after an aromatherapy session. You want to give them time to fully process the healing and allow the body to re-balance.

### **5 TOP ESSENTIAL OILS FOR HORSES**

- 1 - Arnica Montana (infused in Sweet Almond oil)**
- 2 - Ylang Ylang**
- 3 - Hyssop**
- 4 - Roman Chamomile**
- 5 - Neroli**



# THERAPUETIC EQUINE AROMATHERAPY PRODUCTS

ONLINE STORE

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## AROMATHERAPY

### Deep Fascia Release & Nerve Support



10ml  
R165 ea

←  
Our best selling aromatherapy treatments for good reason. The two work well together in releasing physical tension, spasms and nervous tension.

→  
These are lovely to have in your grooming kit for when horses are dealing with a virus or need a liver detox. Powerful chemical-free options for equine care.

### Immune Activator & Liver Support



10ml  
R165 ea

## DAILY CARE

### Fly & Tick Balm



225ml  
R380

←  
Our natural, non-toxic repellent keeps the essential oils active up to 2 to 3 days because of the beeswax. Calming and soothing too.

→  
A powerful healing elixir, this thrush remedy doesn't only kill bad bacteria, it supports good bacteria and soft tissues in the frog. Excellent for laminitic issues and daily hoof care.

### Thrush Defence



100ml  
R310

\*EXTENSIVE RECENT RESEARCH OF CHEMICAL COMPONENTS REVEALED THAT ALL PRODUCTS ARE FEI COMPLIANT

\*As per search on FEI's online prohibited substances database <https://prohibitedsubstancesdatabase.feicleansport.org/>



# Let's PLAY ball

*THE FRANKLIN METHOD OFFERS A UNIQUE APPROACH TO RIDING THROUGH BOTH MENTAL IMAGERY AND THE USE OF FRANKLIN BALLS, WHICH ARE INVALUABLE TOOLS FOR BUILDING AWARENESS ON AND OFF THE HORSE.*

**I**n the equestrian world, riders often hear that to be good, one must ride with feel and give clear aids. But to be truly exceptional, a rider must go beyond that, cultivating an ability to visualise what they want from their horse. Riding with intention, not expectation, can dramatically improve your connection, effectiveness, and overall communication.

## **RIDING WITH INTENTION**

“Ride with intention, not expectation” speaks to the mindset and approach a rider should have when working with their horse. Riding with intention means being clear, present, and purposeful about what you want to communicate, focusing on the quality and clarity of each aid you give. It is about setting a clear plan and riding moment-by-moment, making adjustments, based on how the horse responds. Rather than assuming that the horse will react in a certain way, you focus on creating the right conditions and communicating as effectively as possible. This brings a flexible, focused mindset to each ride, fostering a more harmonious connection with the

horse by being open and attentive to its needs and responses. It encourages the rider to work *with* the horse, rather than just directing at the horse. This attitude allows for mutual understanding and growth, building trust and acceptance over time.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE FRANKLIN METHOD**

The Franklin Method is a somatic approach, traditionally used in dance and athletic fields, to enhance movement efficiency and body awareness. By incorporating imagery and the use of Franklin balls, this method helps riders to develop an improved body feel and mind-body connection. For equestrians, this means learning to ride in a way that communicates intentions with subtle, controlled movements rather than force, and developing clearer aids that the horse can more easily respond to.

## **IMAGERY IN RIDING: ENHANCING MIND-BODY CONNECTION**

Imagery, or mental visualisation, is a powerful tool in equestrian training. The goal is to create vivid pictures in the mind that encourage the body to

*“The Franklin Method is a somatic approach, traditionally used in dance and athletic fields, to enhance movement efficiency and body awareness. By incorporating imagery and the use of Franklin balls, this method helps riders to develop an improved body feel and mind-body connection.”*

mirror these images, leading to improved alignment, balance, and coordination. For instance, a common imagery exercise is to imagine the pelvis as a bowl of water, gently tilting it to prevent spilling. This encourages the rider to sit more deeply and improve their pelvic alignment, which directly influences the horse’s balance and comfort. Visualisation goes beyond form; it involves intention. Before you ask for a transition, imagine it. Visualise the balance, rhythm, and feel of a perfect canter before you ask your horse to transition from trot to canter. This focused intention channels a refined, harmonious signal to the horse, and when paired with feel, it enables a smoother, clearer aid. The rider should approach each request with clarity and purpose rather than simply hoping the horse will perform.

**DEVELOPING AWARENESS AND BALANCE WITH FRANKLIN BALLS**

Franklin balls are soft, air-filled balls that riders can use on or off the horse to increase sensory awareness, balance, and body alignment. They come in different sizes and densities, making them adaptable for various exercises. Placed under the seat, feet, or even hands, Franklin balls provide gentle feedback, helping riders become more aware of their body alignment, weight distribution, and tension points. In practice, using Franklin balls under the seat while riding highlights any excessive pressure or imbalance in the rider’s pelvis, encouraging a more even weight distribution. Riders who struggle with tension in the hands, a

common issue in developing steady contact, can benefit from placing smaller Franklin balls between their fingers to reinforce soft, elastic rein contact. By using the balls regularly, riders cultivate greater control and body awareness, which are fundamental in giving clearer aids to the horse.

Franklin balls are beneficial for both on and off-the-horse exercises. Using them under the feet during stretches or core exercises engages the stabiliser muscles, improving core strength and balance, which translates directly into better riding posture. Standing on the balls encourages riders to activate their inner thigh muscles and engage the core, both essential in achieving a secure, independent seat. When first using Franklin balls it is strongly advised to seek guidance from a qualified Franklin ball coach. Without proper instruction, there is a risk of using the balls incorrectly, which could result in strain or injury.

**TIPS FOR INSTRUCTORS**

- 1. Start with simple imagery**  
Introduce basic mental images that are easy to visualise and immediately beneficial, such as “Imagine your seat bones sinking into the saddle as though you’re sitting on sand.” This helps students to develop a feel for correct posture without overwhelming them with technical jargon.
- 2. Encourage intentional riding**  
Before asking for a movement, have students close their eyes, breathe deeply, and visualise what they want to accomplish. This could be imagining the flow

of a soft, round canter before transitioning, which promotes focused intention and creates clearer communication.

**3. Introduce Franklin balls gradually**

Start by using Franklin balls for brief sessions, such as placing them under the rider’s arms for just a few minutes. Observe how the rider responds and address any shifts in posture or balance. Over time, you can incorporate different ball placements to target specific rider faults.

**4. Reinforce with feedback**

Provide feedback based on what the rider is feeling, rather than just on visual cues. For example: “Do you feel how your left shoulder is tighter than your right shoulder? Can you feel how it causes you to pull more with the left rein creating an uneven contact?”. This helps the rider become more attuned to their body’s interaction with the horse.

By integrating imagery and ball exercises with the Franklin Method, riders of all levels can transform how they communicate with their horse. They learn to ride with genuine intention, creating a fluid partnership where each movement is guided by clarity and feel. Riders gain access to a higher level of awareness and finesse that can be the key to becoming a truly great rider. 🐾





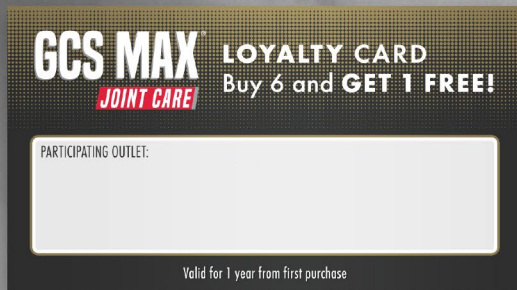
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# *The working life, A LIFES WORK*

*TO ASK “WHAT IS THE USEFUL WORKING LIFE OF A RIDING HORSE?”, IS AKIN TO ASKING, “HOW LONG IS A PIECE OF STRING?” IT ALL DEPENDS.*



**J**ust as with any living creature, any number of factors can make or break the longevity of a healthy equine working lifespan.

As responsible horse owners and riders, it is imperative that we not only do our best to become knowledgeable in areas of training and equine husbandry, but also that we affiliate ourselves with equine professionals who are invested in our animal to guide and advise us. They can provide the specialised services required to maintain our horse's correct development and health, both mentally and physically, to help us take as many of these factors into consideration and mitigate risks.

Developing a horse for high-level competition is very different from developing a general pleasure horse but the end goal is the same - we want our horses to be happy, healthy, efficient and effective in all aspects of their working life.

## **SOME FACTORS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT ARE**

- > Conformation
- > Temperament
- > Breed
- > Age
- > Discipline
- > Genetic predisposition,
- > Previous use (if applicable)
- > Nutrition
- > The possibility of a prior lack of care.

## THE YOUNG HORSE

Starting the young horse and breaking in the young horse are two different things. Starting the young horse can begin long before ridden work and involves every facet of unriden training, from in-hand obedience, loading into a horse box, tying up, standing for the farrier or dentist, exposure to different surroundings, long reining and lunging and acceptance of a bit, bridle and saddle. Such training should consider the mental maturity of the young horse.

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Horses mature physically at different rates. This depends on various aspects, including breed. For example, a Thoroughbred will generally complete growth plate closure in less time than an Arab. A general rule is, that the closer the bone is to the ground, the faster it reaches maturity, although full skeletal maturity will likely only occur at six years old, even though the limbs from the knee and hock downward will have matured by two and a half years of age. Soft tissue structures in the equine lower limb such as the digital flexor tendons and common digital extensor tendons will only reach full maturity in later life and exercise at two to three years of age during their growth will result in optimal strength in a mature horse. This is why it is important for a young horse to have adequate space to exercise themselves as juveniles, during the starting process and prior to commencement of the breaking in process which, usually, would be at three years of age in a riding horse.

## RIDDEN TRAINING

Following the German training scale progressively during a young horse's training will allow for a correctly developed horse moving into maturity.

**1 - Rhythm** meaning the horse shows true gaits in a steady and consistent rhythm.

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## **2 - Suppleness and Relaxation**

is required both laterally and longitudinally, whilst relaxed, happy and maintaining rhythm.

## **3 - Contact and connection**

This entails acceptance of the aids with a light and soft response to the rider's requests, whilst maintaining rhythm, suppleness and relaxation.

**4 - Impulsion**, whereby the horse has the power and thrust from his hind quarters to complete movements, whilst maintaining rhythm, suppleness, relaxation, contact and connection.

**5 - Straightness**, requires that the horse's forehand is in line with its hindquarters, whether on a straight or curved track.

**6 - Collection** Once developed, a horse can begin to collect, which requires a weight transfer to the hindquarters. This, along with a rounded back, frees the forehand for optimal performance of athletic movements.

## THE MATURE HORSE

As horses age, the cardiovascular system, respiratory system and their muscles will not react the same way to training as in a younger horse. Body systems do not work as efficiently, and wear and tear on the joints can start to become apparent. These will all affect the ability for the horse to maintain fitness. Too little work will result in an unprepared horse. Both an underworked and an overworked horse will increase the likelihood of injury. There must be a balance of fitness management, nutrition and rest to keep the horse in optimum health.

Signs that your older horse is not coping with his current exercise program can include:

- > Weight loss
- > Reduced muscle development
- > Stiffness
- > Pulling faces when being saddled
- > Fatigue
- > Deterioration in condition
- > Arthritic changes - symptoms include: shortened stride, reluctance to move forward, reduced flexibility and suppleness, stumbling and unlevelness. Whilst it is advisable to provide your horse with a joint supplement upon embarking on ridden work, in the instance of any of the above symptoms, seeking veterinary advice is recommended.

## THE VETERAN HORSE

Long periods of rest in older horses can result in a large loss of muscle tone and cardiovascular fitness which can be virtually impossible to regain. Regular turnout is imperative, as is ensuring the horse has a flexible exercise and fitness plan that can be executed on good going at all times. Maintaining the training and fitness of a horse as it ages does present its own individual challenges. If the horse's physical capabilities can be balanced with nutritional support and suitable exercise with consistent monitoring, they can continue to be active, happy, healthy and fulfilled. Ensuring their strengths are promoted, that they do not wither through lack of use, the senior horse can remain in very good shape and flourish into its golden years. 🐾



# HOOF IT

*A HORSE'S HOOF EXPRESSES WHAT IS OCCURRING BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE HORSE'S BODY, MAKING "HORSE CARE" AND "HOOF CARE" LARGELY SYNONYMOUS.*

**W**hen we take a holistic approach to hoof care, we create the circumstances which allow for a horse to grow or produce the healthiest, strongest and most functional hoof possible. This holistic approach consists of five pillars:

- > Trimming (literal or simulated miles of wear)
- > Diet/nutrition
- > Teeth
- > Body (bodywork, training, movement, posture)
- > Environment/hoof hygiene

## **TRIMMING**

In the wild, a horse would move 40–70 km a day, over varying

terrain, wearing and shaping their hooves naturally. This constant movement stimulates and maintains the internal soft tissue of the hoof, which also promotes healthy blood flow throughout the horse's limbs.

In essence, a horse has five "hearts". A well-maintained and healthy hoof acts as a pump for blood throughout the horse's limbs, making sure the heart is not overtaxed. This pumping action also ensures that oxygen and other nutrients reach the hooves, preventing conditions such as thrush. The hoof care provider's role is to simulate these kilometres of wear in domestic horses who do not have the opportunity to travel

the distances necessary to keep their hooves in optimal health. We never want to wait until a hoof looks ugly or until it becomes uncomfortable for the horse to stand on, before we get it trimmed. The aim is to stay ahead of the curve with frequent trimming every three to four weeks, ensuring constant progress and that pathologies are healed faster.

## **DIET**

Your horse's hooves will indicate if something is not quite right with their nutrition. Once evidence of a bad diet shows up in a horse's hooves, it is highly likely that the rest of the horse's system has been under strain for a while already. A diet lacking in the correct nutrients or with the incorrect mineral balance will likely lead to weak hooves because of the inability to produce strong hoof walls and thick soles. An obese horse or a diet high in non-structural carbs and sugars will likely lead to flat, sensitive soles and signs of laminitis. In both under- and over-nourished horses, hooves will be more likely to flare, crack, develop thrush and white line disease – and existing hoof issues will be harder to fix.

It is important to understand that each horse is an individual when it comes to diet and nutrition. Making use of an equine nutritionist will ensure your horse's dietary and nutritional bases are covered, according to your horse's individual needs.

## **TEETH**

The condition of a horse's teeth will affect various aspects of their health, including: their posture, how they move their bodies, and how well they can chew and process their food. If the teeth are not balanced, the head carriage and, by extension, the rest of the body, limbs and hooves will not be balanced either. If you have tried everything to fix an issue but nothing has worked, perhaps have the teeth checked.

**BODY**

A horse's posture and training develops the quality of a horse's movement, and this affects their hooves. We all know that poor posture in daily life (think slouching at a desk, or using your back instead of bending your knees when picking up a heavy object) can cause tightness, stiffness, pain, compensations, and even injuries. These later affect the way we stand and walk, and how we place and weight our feet. Similarly, if there is an imbalance or weakness in the horse's body, there will be an imbalance in their movement and how they use and wear their hooves.

By careful training, posture exercises and bodywork, many injuries can be rehabilitated, movement patterns and postural habits changed, and in turn, balance can be restored to the feet. Issues such as sidebone,

ringbone and arthritis in the lower limbs and feet can be made more comfortable by correcting posture, movement and the hooves themselves. As with all the holistic horse/hoof care pillars, prevention is better than cure and rehabilitation.

**ENVIRONMENT/  
HYGIENE**

Stabled horses are far more likely to develop thrush, seedy toe/ white line disease, flat soles and weak digital cushions due to the lack of movement and often the state of hygiene in stables. Stables must be cleaned and dried thoroughly each day. In wet times of the year, wet grass paddocks, or with horses who are stabled, hooves need to be cleaned and disinfected twice a day. Gentle substances that will not damage the natural protective waxy layer of the hoof, such as a spray made of apple cider vinegar and tea tree

oil, or a hoof clay, can be applied to treat or prevent thrush. We want to help the horse produce a tough, rubbery hoof that can withstand all terrains – not a hard hoof capsule that interferes with the hoof mechanism that is so important to the entire horse.

Hooves adapt to the type of terrain they spend most of their time on. If your horse spends most of their day on a soft grassy field, their hooves may not be quite ready to tackle a rocky outcrop. Using hoof boots or rubber glue-on shoes can offer protection and comfort while still allowing you to get your kilometres in. These are also perfect for horses who are transitioning to go barefoot.

Follow these principles as guiding principles and you will be well on your way to helping your horse develop the healthiest possible hooves. 🐾



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*WITH THE EVER-INCREASING WAYS TO MEASURE THE EFFECTS WE HAVE ON OUR HORSES' PERFORMANCE, THE EXTENT OF THE DAMAGE THAT IS CAUSED BY RIDING IN A BADLY FITTING SADDLE IS BECOMING MORE EVIDENT.*

# *When the saddle DOES NOT fit*

**A**s technology evolves, what we know about horses has changed. We can now measure anything, from heart rate and respiration, to stride length and cadence, to (a)symmetry and straightness. All of this makes it very plain to see how a correctly fitted saddle can make all the difference to your horse's performance. On the flip side of this, it also becomes very apparent how a badly fitting saddle can destroy your horse's ridden career (think kissing spine and high suspensory tears).

As George Morris says, "Every second, you're either schooling or un-schooling your horse. There's no in-between." We can think about this in terms of the horse building muscle. Every time we ride them, we are strengthening the horse's muscles; albeit different muscles depending on what we are doing. Can you really expect your horse's back to remain exactly the same for any length of time if you're building and exercising these muscles? For this reason alone, it is vital to have your saddle checked at least twice a year.

There are so many factors that will have an effect on the shape of your horse's back such as flocking that can settle, a change in routine or feed, even an injury to recover from that will have an impact. It is unrealistic to think that a rigid saddle won't do damage without continual adjustment to match the changing shape of the horse. Sometimes, the saddle is just wrong for the horse but quite often, we can adjust the same saddle to avoid areas that cause a negative response, by placing it in the correct area of the back that will offer the most support.

One of the biggest issues we see with saddles at the moment, is length. We are breeding horses with shorter backs to make them more "sporty", but forgetting that this means there is less space for a rider to sit on. A saddle that is too long can cause a whole host of problems with a bucking horse being the quickest one to notice. Bucking is often a pain response and not a behavioural problem. The saddle can only be supported by the rib cage. Behind the ribs, we have the lumbar vertebrae, these are very fragile and so easy to break. So, instead of letting you break his bones, a horse will buck to relieve the pressure. Another way to relieve the pressure here, is to move the saddle forward. Often, riders use a back riser pad because they feel the saddle dropping down behind, when it has actually moved forward and up onto the shoulder. Blocking the shoulder is not ideal either! We cannot expect the horse to move forward freely if we are sitting right on top of his shoulders, making him more likely to stumble and trip. Imagine the extra effort needed in jumping, to clear the jump when the horse cannot lift his shoulders to get the front legs tucked in properly. The saddle should sit behind the shoulder, with the tree angle matching the angle of the shoulder blade. If the angles do not match, the tree points will end up digging into the soft cartilage at the tip of the scapula. Most saddles have metal tree points - metal is much harder than cartilage and will chip it away. Once damaged, cartilage will not mend or grow back. We are then left with jagged edges that can bruise or tear the muscles and fascia (connective tissue that stabilises and separates muscles and other internal organs) around it.

Another common problem, is when the saddle is bridging or hollow. This means that the saddle causes uneven pressure along the horse's back. If the saddle is hollow, the horse can't lift his back properly and come "through". This will result in tremendous tension in the back and forces that will bring the vertebrae ever closer together, developing into kissing spines. While certain horses can be rehabilitated and go on to compete and be ridden happily for years, for others this diagnosis will mean the end of the

*“One of the biggest issues we see with saddles at the moment, is length. We are breeding horses with shorter backs to make them more “sporty”, but forgetting that this means there is less space for a rider to sit on”*

line. My wish is to avoid it in the first place, but I think that a kissing spine diagnosis is a wakeup call that something needs to change.

The ideal is for the horse to lift from the sternum and come up into his shoulders to lighten the forehand. Incredibly, horses will try so hard for us, despite the immense pressure points caused by the saddle. An ill-fitting saddle will distribute weight through two points in front and two points behind, squeezing on the very nerves needed for the energy to flow and these beautiful creatures to move gracefully. If the horse is unable to lift his back and make the topline longer than the underline, he will have to contort his neck to make it look like he is off the forehand, and more often than not, break at the cervical vertebrae. This unnatural posture puts huge pressure on the joints, a sure road to early arthritis, and pulls the ligaments and tendons to breaking point. Without being able to tuck his pelvis, the horse's hind end will trail behind and cause the canter to be disunited. In jumping, this makes it far easier to drop a hind foot in the air and knock poles.

These are only some of the issues we can see, and injuries can be caused by many other factors. You can set your horse up for success and help him to be the optimum partner for your chosen activity by ensuring the best possible saddle fit.

In his book, "Suffering in Silence", Jochen Schleese speaks of the 'circle of influence' around the horse, and how each slice (rider, trainer, veterinarian, body workers, nutrition and supplements, farrier, the horse's age and condition, and last but not least, tack including bits, bridles, saddles, and pads) will affect the shape of the horse, and the fit of his saddle. This means that all the different parts of the whole, need to work together to achieve ongoing soundness for horse and rider. 🐾

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