

▪ NATIONAL VELVET	2
▪ MENTALLY TOUGH OR TENDER?	3
▪ HORSE YAWN DURING BRIDLING?	5
▪ ELECTROLYTES IN WINTER?	6
▪ AUTOMATISM IN PERFORMANCE HORSES	6
▪ 20 QUESTIONS WITH ...	7
▪ FUN & GAMES	8

POSTED ON THEHORSE.COM BY CHRISTA LESTÉ-LASSERRE, MA

## Sending Signals

**From biomechanical to psychological influences, what effects do we have on our horses while riding?**

Just because humans have been riding horses for millennia doesn't mean horses are actually meant to be ridden. The horse's long back muscles and vertebrae were designed for galloping, not carrying weight. That can be a tough pill to swallow for equestrians. But it doesn't mean we shouldn't ride; it just means we need to be aware of the mechanics at work beneath us when we're riding and how we're affecting the horse.

**Sitting on a Horse's Back** This is about as basic as riding gets: weight applied to the musculature over and around the thoracic vertebrae. And while this wasn't the back's intended purpose, it's remarkably capable of the task—provided we're careful.

Hilary M. Clayton, BVMS, PhD, Dipl. ACVSMR, MRCVS, professor and Mary Anne McPhail Dressage Chair, Emerita at Michigan State University, says the amount of force we apply to a horse's back depends on how we ride and what gait we're riding. For example, peak forces at the trot are twice a rider's weight, and they increase to 2 ½ or three

times the rider's weight at the canter.

In addition, Clayton says novice riders are generally less synchronized with the horse than advanced riders and more likely to bump against the saddle. Some horses struggle with "the unpredictability of the novice rider's weight shifts," she says.

No matter the rider's experience, saddles with well-fitting trees can help distribute pressure more evenly. In several recent studies researchers have confirmed the benefits of pressure distribution thanks to saddle trees, making them a better option than some treeless saddles or riding bareback. It might seem more "natural" to ride without a saddle, says Clayton, but unless you're particularly light and fit (and skilled) enough to

distribute your own weight evenly across your seat and thigh muscles, your horse is probably better off with a well-fitting saddle between you and him.

A rider's weight also causes the horse to hollow his back, which can cause discomfort and even damage. Each spinous process projects upward from the vertebrae with space on either side. But when the back hollows under a rider's weight, the spinous processes come closer together. Adjacent processes might even touch or interfere with each other (impingement, called "kissing spines"), causing arthritis and sometimes fusing. Any weight on an equine back can cause

hollowing, but you can reduce these risks by not overloading the horse, riding with a soft, balanced seat, and staying "forward," or sitting closer to the front of the saddle, Clayton says.

**His Head and Neck** Rein tension is a focal point of study among certain equitation science groups, providing us with a plethora of useful information about how we're affecting our horses with our hands. Clayton says a good rider's regular "contact" tension in dressage riding is around 500 grams (one pound), and that nearly quadruples at peak tension when the horse bobs his head down with each trot step. While these peak amounts seem high, she doesn't find them concerning. They're just a mechanical result of the horse's head moving into the rider's contact.

But if the tensions increase, there's cause for concern. The rider could be pulling against the horse's mouth enough to cause pain or injury. This is especially the case with unstable riders who use the reins to balance, along with riders who try to "control" the horse through force. Tension can be equally detrimental in certain bitless bridles, she adds, because the elastic tissues of the mouth and tongue accept pressure better than the hard bones of the poll and nose that bitless bridles work against. Curb bits can also exert significant pressure on the poll and the chin, and a shank's lever effect multiplies these forces.

Our efforts to shape the neck to create a "round" look can either build strength or predispose a horse to injury, depending on our method, Clayton says. We should aim for a look that complements the neck's natural curves without exaggerating them. "There are two curves in the neck—one near the poll, which is concave on the underside, and one near the base, which is concave on the upper side," she says. "It's at these curves that



# Horse Books

~ BY RANTINGOFAHORSEMOM.  
BLOGSPOT.CA

**My daughter is obsessed with horses. What books might she like to read?**

My daughter devours horse books. We've got them all. So I thought I'd try to give you a list with a little something for every age. Most of the comments come directly from my 11 1/2 year old daughter since I haven't read most of these books. Many we originally found at the library. Others we stumbled upon through Amazon recommendations. At the end I've included my favorites for grown ups. Some of them you will love whether you are a horse person or not. These are just plain good books. And reading a good book about horses will help any non-horse obsessed parent relate to their horse obsessed child a little more. All titles are linked to Amazon.

Early Readers *Pony Pals* by Jeanne Betancourt - These were written awhile back. There are at least 20 books.

Elementary School *Misty of Chincoteague* by Marguerite Henry - Marguerite Henry wrote many wonderful horse novels starting with this one which won the Newbery Award and was originally published in 1947.

Middle School (Elizabeth read many of these in 5th grade) *Heartland Series* by Lauren Brooke - There are 20 books in this series which Elizabeth says are more sad and realistic. The main character ages from 12 through high school during the series. Her family owns a horse rehab center so it's about caring for the horses.

**The complete article and listing can be found at <http://rantingsofahorsemom.blogspot.ca/2014/01/my-daughter-is-obsessed-with-horses.html>. ■**

POSTED BY HORSE AND HOUND

## National Velvet

**National Velvet was the cinematic embodiment of those dreams, a movie from the golden age of Hollywood that brings with it utterly unabashed optimism.**

It's also an exercise in make-believe, transforming California into a romanticised English countryside and Elizabeth Taylor's hat hair into immaculate curls. Yet whilst its production was classic Hollywood, National Velvet contains a sincerity that has kept the film timeless.

**The Story** For those unfamiliar, National Velvet is set in 1920s England and tells the story of Velvet Brown (Elizabeth Taylor), a 12-year-old girl who is obsessed with horses. Using all her savings, Velvet enters and wins a raffle for an unruly stallion she calls The Pie. Knowing Pie is destined for greater things, she enlists the help of mysterious traveller Mi Taylor (Mickey Rooney) to train for the greatest horse race in the world – the Grand National.

**Elizabeth Taylor** When Enid Bagnold's original novel began to be adapted for the screen, Elizabeth Taylor lobbied ferociously for the lead role. The actress had grown up around horses, having been given her first pony Betty at three years old. Her determination to get this part mirrored her own determination to become an equestrian. Taylor stated in her autobiography that the first time she sat on her pony, she was thrown unceremoniously into a patch of nettles. She didn't give up, and when the role of Velvet Brown came along, it looked like the perfect opportunity.

However, the producers believed Taylor to be too small. For months she ate huge breakfasts, did stretching exercises and supposedly grew three inches before gaining the part. The sacrifice was worth it. Taylor later named National Velvet as the 'most exciting film' of her career.

**The Horse** In the novel Velvet's horse is a small piebald horse, but for the movie the producers knew that they needed a true four-legged Hollywood star. Enter King Charles, a seven-year-old chestnut thoroughbred and grandson of the famous racehorse Man O' War. Trained as a show

jumper, he bonded with Elizabeth Taylor on set and was eventually bought for \$800 (£530) by MGM, to be given to the young starlet on her thirteenth birthday.

**The Stunts** She did much of her own riding on the film and it shows; no one who watches the film can forget the scene where Velvet gallops the Pie alongside a moving train to bid a joyous farewell to Mi on his way to London.

Nevertheless, not all the stunts were done by Taylor. Monty Roberts has claimed to have been a stunt double for the film in his early days, well before his involvement with natural H horsemanship.

**Why We Love It** One memorable scene that sums up the film takes place when Velvet's mother quietly tells her that she has won the raffle, and she looks out to see a huge procession of villagers bringing her the horse. Corny? Of

course! But there's nothing wrong with that occasionally, and it makes it a perfect film for a rainy Saturday when everything seems a little glum.

Like many young horse enthusiasts, Velvet is a girl consumed

by unlimited potentials. In some lovely scenes, her passions and firm principles are encouraged by her mother, who knows ambition from her own youth.

The fantastic Mickey Rooney should also be mentioned. His lengthy acting career already in full swing when National Velvet came along, he embodies the torment and concealed determination behind Mi. The actor went on to do another adaptation of a novel about horses, *The Black Stallion*.

National Velvet has been a screen favourite for horse lovers for many years, and with good reason. The riding scenes are stunning and the film understands, without ever patronising, the obsession with the equine world that is shared by so many people. If you've seen it, watch it again. If you haven't, find a copy. Now. ■





## National Velvet

**Was it a crucial part of your horsey childhood? Take a nostalgic look back at the film which launched Elizabeth Taylor's career.**

*Every child growing up with a love of horses has their own aspirations. Whether it's to win the Hickstead Derby, ride along the beach or even just to sit in the saddle for the first time, the world of horses can't help but inspire adventure. ■*

POSTED ON RIDINGOUTOFOURMIND.COM BY APRIL CLAY, REGISTERED PSYCHOLOGIST

# Mentally TOUGH or Tender Riders?

***It's bouncing back from an injury, recovering from a mistake in the show ring, or dealing with a disadvantage, they dig deep when the going gets tough and never look back. Here are five qualities of the mentally tough rider.***

## **1. You know and accept that sport and life are not fair**

As utterly unpleasant as it is, it's true. No, it's not fair that your horse suddenly went lame. Or, that your friend had the most wonderful horse drop in her lap when you have been looking for months. Unfortunately, when you resist, you let your focus rest on what you cannot control. Being tough means you know and accept that unfairness is part of your sport. When an injustice happens to you, give yourself a time limit to vent. Then, power up your focus into a new goal that will give you an advantage.

## **2. You are a planner**

What are you planning for? It's hard to be tough if you don't know where you are going. A tough rider has goals mapped out that are challenging and possible. But that's not all. They have

these larger goals broken down into daily training goals and habits. When you can "check things off" you know you can feel good about yourself. After all, you are not out to ride for or impress anyone else but yourself. So at the end of the day, what you want is to be square with yourself.

## **3. You've got warrior thinking**

The resilient rider focuses their thoughts on what they can control: on their task.

They are cued into what needs to be done. This doesn't mean the tough riders don't need to give themselves encouragement now and again. But it's done in a slightly different way. It brings into awareness what is already known. So instead of "I am the greatest!" it might

be a self-assured "you've got this, you have done this before," or "don't forget how prepared you are, you know what to do." Warrior thinking focuses on what you have inside to get the job done well.

## **4. You practice getting comfortable with being uncomfortable**

This is what the toughest men on earth, the Navy SEALs, live by. If you avoid

hard training days by shutting down or giving up, you are missing a great opportunity. No one ever got stronger by not stretching him or herself. Think about when you strengthen a muscle—you stress it, and then rest it and the result is growth. You need to do the same with your mental muscle. Think of every "bad" day as an opportunity to work through and get stronger. Instead of thinking, "Oh no, I don't want this," try, "Interesting, how can I work my way out of this?" Start thinking of yourself as the kind of rider who loves puzzles, and loves to problem solve.

## **5. You are an expert mistake maker**

The real truth about mistakes is that they will inevitably happen. Sometimes you will need their assistance to further your learning. Sometimes you will want to, and need to, let go of them as fast as smelly garbage. Observe one of the most resilient athletes you admire, and watch the way they handle their errors (yes, they do make them). Watch the way they handle frustration, disappointment and yes, losing. Through your observations, you will likely pick up on this: the comeback kid type doesn't judge. They don't get themselves tangled up in good and bad. They stay focused on pulling out whatever information they need to keep moving forward. They stay on task. ■



# Really?

**HORSE & HOUND ~ BY AMANDA VLIETSTRA.** *Oh no, you didn't! Some horsey things we know we shouldn't do, but do anyway.*

**Mucking out in work clothes** It's Monday morning and you're running late, so instead of rushing to the yard then coming home for a quick shower and change, you decide to get ready now and go straight from the yard to work. All you have to do then is change your shoes — win! And it is, so long as you don't mind your colleagues spending the whole day sniffing and saying, 'What's that smell?'

**Leading in unsuitable shoes** In your own yard, not going near your horse in a pair of, say, Converse, is one of those rules that tends to fall by the wayside, particularly on hot, sunny days where you're just bringing him in from the field for a quick feed and don't fancy pulling on a pair of sweaty boots. This does mean that, at some point, you'll be stood on by a half-ton beast while wearing a pair of Crocs. It really hurts. Don't say we didn't warn you.

**Leading too many horses at once** This is a tricky one. We all know that leading multiple horses by yourself may result in our limbs being torn off like something out of a Greek myth, should said horses all take off in opposite directions. But on the other hand, many horses experience severe anxiety — OK, totally lose the plot — if left in the field on their own. This basically means that although we know we shouldn't lead two horses or more at once, we do it anyway. And hope for the best.

**Worrying about our horses being horses** Being humans, we have a tendency to, well, humanise everything. In summer, we worry about our horses being too hot; in winter, too cold. We worry if we're turning them out enough, or too much, and if they're wearing enough rugs, or too many. We worry about how they're interacting with their field mates, and if they're enjoying their ridden work. It's silly, really, because deep down we all know that so long as our horses get enough food, water and leisure time, that's pretty much all their dreams come true. Sure, they have other needs in terms of regular visits from the farrier and the vet, but they certainly don't worry about any of that stuff. ■

[SENDING SIGNALS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1]

the neck is designed to have most of its movements. What we want to avoid is exaggerating those two curvatures by pulling the poll back and pulling the chin in. Instead, we want to raise the base of the neck and the ribcage and reach forward over the topline of the neck, then allow the poll to relax and the head to hang vertically."

If we succeed in doing that, we develop the topline muscles that give the horse better gymnastic ability and strength under saddle. But if we do it the wrong way, degenerative arthritis in the cervical (neck) spine can eventually develop. "Neck position when we're riding and what we do with a horse's neck when we're on his back affects the likelihood of developing arthritic changes," she says.

**Asymmetry** We're left-handed or right-handed and very rarely ambidextrous. This kind of natural laterality means we're going to have asymmetrical effects on our mounts. Clayton says this can cause riders to sit unevenly in the saddle, putting more pressure on one side of the back—and the reins—than the other. Many of us are also riding with old or new injuries that cause further asymmetry, which the horse's own asymmetry and laterality can confound.

Katrina Merkies, PhD, associate professor and equine program coordinator at the University of Guelph, in Ontario, Canada, recently observed that rider asymmetry worsens as a horse's speed or movement increases (goes from walk to trot, for instance). She and her team also noted specific riding differences according to "handedness" in a study of 25 horse-rider teams. Left-handed riders, she says, generally have better seat position than right-handed riders, who lean more forward and carry their legs farther forward.

**Those Extra Pounds** As human obesity becomes more of a problem (the same goes with horses, though they're not doing the riding here!), we're starting to see more weight in the saddle. Those extra pounds translate to exaggerated levels of pressure and asymmetrical movement that can be quite uncomfortable for the horse. Excess weight can also affect a horse's gait, as a group of Japanese researchers recently discovered.

When loaded with up to the equivalent of 29% of their body weight (i.e., 220 pounds on a 750-pound horse), Japanese

study horses showed a significant lack of gait symmetry when evaluated using an accelerometer, says Akihiro Matsuura, PhD, lecturer in the Department of Animal Science at the Kitasato University School of Veterinary Medicine, in Aomori. So in their light riding horse breed, the researchers recommend a maximum loading weight (including equipment) of 29%. Some stockier breeds might be able to carry more weight, Matsuura says, and gait analyses with different breeds could lead to more specific recommendations.

**Our Nerves** Then there are the perhaps-less-calculable rider effects. Consider the familiar "Don't let the horse know you're nervous, or it'll make him nervous!" phrase, which has been projected across many a lesson arena. Science doesn't confirm its truth, however. Researchers have shown that our nerves actually have little direct effect on our horses.

Direct is the key word here. Merries says our nervousness can change the way we ride. "Do our horses appear to act up because they're nervous and anxious when we are?" she says. "Or is it, rather, because when we're nervous, our muscles get tenser and our aids become completely different from what the horse is used to? To me that makes more logical sense."

Think about it: You're at the biggest show of the season, and that's when your horse knocks down six poles or lopes with his head in the air like a yearling. "Horses are absolute masters at subtle cues," Merries says. And while that doesn't necessarily mean they're picking up on our emotions, per se, they're likely indirectly picking up on the differences in the way we ride when we're nervous.

Mareike Becker-Birck, PhD, former researcher at the Graf Lehndorff Institute for Equine Science, in Neustadt, Germany, confirmed this theory with her study of classical dressage horses in Saumur, France.

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]

Cortisol (stress hormone) readings of riders and their mounts revealed that the horses had no more parasympathetic (nervous and hormonal) stress reactions during public performances than they did during training, even though their riders did.

Merkies did find an interesting dynamic between horses and people who were afraid of them. In her study, each draft-type gelding left alone in a round pen with a blindfolded human fearful of horses actually had a slower heart rate than those left with a human who wasn't fearful. "Maybe it's a herd instinct, and they sense that someone else is doing the worrying so they don't have to?" she says. "We just don't know yet."

**Our Moods** Aside from nervousness, how about our other emotions? If we're in a great mood when we get to the barn, does that make our horses happier? Or if we're grumpy after a bad day at work or school, does that turn our horses' moods sour, too?

Paolo Baragli, DVM, PhD, researcher in the Department of Physiological Sciences at the University of Pisa, in Italy, carried out a study of one horse and one immobile human in a room together for several minutes. Their vital

signs indicated a "possible emotional connection between horse and human," he says. Essentially, cardiac fluctuations (heart rate and heart rate variability) began to synchronize between the two species.

This was an exciting finding, for sure, but with such a small study number, more research is necessary to confirm its significance. In the meantime, Merkies says that while she doesn't want to discredit a possible emotional link, she believes horses are more likely to respond to subtle cues resulting from our mood swings than our actual moods. "If you show up at the barn angry, and you rough the horse around and yell and kick, then the horse is going to quickly learn to associate your grumpiness with getting roughed up and yelled at and kicked," she says.

**A Bonded Pair** Anthropomorphic (attributing human characteristics to horses) and emotional links aside, horses and humans can still build a very strong bond. Merkies says this bond is based mostly on correctly applied learning theory—the science of how horses learn. When we've trained them in a way that's consistent and clear and gives the horse a sense of being able to control his environment by

knowing how to respond to cues, we can develop a strong lifelong relationship with that horse.

Scandinavian researchers even go so far as to call it a "co-being" relationship. "As riders get to know their horses, they attune to them—they learn both mental and somatic (physical) ways of acting versus their partner," says Anita Maurstad, PhD, professor and researcher in the Department of Cultural Sciences in the Tromsø University Museum, in Norway. "Horses, too, attune to their humans; thus, co-being is a good analytical concept for speaking about these aspects of the relationship."

It's also based on a sense of familiarity, says Merkies. "Young horses at their first shows are often so overwhelmed with all the unfamiliar sights and sounds and smells, and it's clear that they depend on me, their rider, as the one source of familiarity," she says.

**Take-Home Message** A horse's back isn't purpose-built for riding, but awareness and attention to our influences—and applying the most recent scientific equitation research—can go a long way in helping ensure soundness, welfare, and longevity under saddle. ■

THEHORSE.COM BY ROBIN FOSTER, PHD, CAAB, IAABC-CERTIFIED HORSE BEHAVIOR CONSULTANT

## Does Horse Yawn During Bridling?

**Horses often yawn when they are drowsy, hungry, or stressed. Pain is one source of stress, but anything that increases arousal—including physical discomfort, fear, excitement, or mental challenge—can induce yawning. Physiologically, yawning is a response linked to increased**



**cortisol levels, elevated body temperature (called the "brain cooling" theory of yawning), or gastrointestinal discomfort.**

Yawning is an involuntary reflex, so it's unlikely that your horse is yawning on purpose. To avoid being bridled—which might also mean to avoid being ridden—a horse will typically learn to move its head out of reach or press its mouth closed.

Physical discomfort or emotional stress are the most likely reasons that your horse is yawning. It might be in anticipation being bridled or ridden; however, what happens before he yawns—such as being groomed, saddled, or girthed—is probably a more important clue. This is because animals tend to yawn after the stressor is taken away (for example, many horses yawn at the end of a strenuous work or when the bit is removed). You can test this by changing the order of your routine and bridling first, to see if and when your horse still yawns.

To resolve the yawning problem, look beyond the mouth for sources of physical discomfort, such as a sore back or girth sensitivity. If your horse is emotionally stressed while tacking up, slow down and use counter conditioning with food and wither scratches to promote relaxation. Whether a horse should eat before exercise is a multi-layered question, but providing your horse with a small meal can reduce gastrointestinal discomfort and also help create a more positive overall experience.

Yawning is a normal behavior, but consult a veterinarian if it is frequent or recurrent to rule out abnormal causes, such as gastrointestinal disease or insufficient recumbent sleep. ■

# Understanding Automatism in Performance Horses

? for You

## DOES MY HORSE NEED ELECTROLYTES IN WINTER?

By Dr. Wendy Pearson, PhD (Dr. of veterinary toxicology)

**Q: Since it's cold out and my horse doesn't sweat much when I ride him, should I still give him electrolytes?**

The main reason to give electrolytes at any time of year is to keep the horse hydrated. Dehydration can occur for a number of reasons, not just because of sweating during exercise and hot ambient temperatures. As the cold weather settles in, many horses will drastically cut back on the amount of water they drink. This is one of the main reasons why there is a spike in incidence of impactions and gas colics at this time of year. One of the best ways to encourage drinking is to increase the amount of electrolytes in the horse's diet.

Electrolytes are charged molecules that function to hold water in the body. When you provide electrolytes in the feed, they are absorbed into the blood and create an osmotic gradient that pulls water from the gut into the blood. When there is insufficient water in the gut, the electrolytes in the blood drive the thirst response and cause the horse to seek out water. Electrolytes are as essential in winter's cold as they are in summer's heat. They are an inexpensive and effective protection against cold weather dehydration.

Used with permission from [www.horseherbs.com](http://www.horseherbs.com).

Dr. Pearson received her PhD from the Department of Biomedical Sciences at the Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph, with a specialization in efficacy and safety of nutraceutical products in horses with arthritis. ■

**At a regional show jumping event, a young rider and her pretty dapple gray enter the course and head for the first fence. Clear. Second fence, clear. Third, an oxer, clear. Then the fourth, a water jump, and whoops! The rider's down. But what about that lovely dapple gray? Does he stop and wait for his slightly disoriented human? Not this guy. He just keeps going on without her, to the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth ... in whatever order seems right to him.**

Why do some horses do this? Or why do racehorses keep running a race (sometimes winning it) even after they've left their jockey 800 meters back?

One simple word, say a French equine behaviorist: automatism. Automatism is the curious brain function that makes us perform actions without even realizing it. It's automatism that makes us instinctively apply an aid to our horses just at the thought of turning or stopping. And it's automatism that makes these sport horses keep doing what they've been trained to do, even if they're no longer getting the aids or rewards to do them.

"Knowing that this kind of automatic mechanism exists in the equine species is important because it helps us understand why certain horses will anticipate the demands of their riders or continue an athletic activity even without a rider," said Lea Lansade, PhD, of the French Horse and Riding Institute and the National Institute for Agricultural Research's behavior science department, in Tours. Lansade presented a series of studies on automatism in horses during the 2015 French Ethology Day held April 9 in Saumur.

But automatism doesn't last forever, Lansade said. Horses are subject to two phenomena related to automatism: contingency and extinction. Contingency is what

the horse considers to be the likelihood that he'll get a reward for doing an action, compared to getting a reward without doing it. And extinction happens when the horse finally accepts that there's never going to be another reward, so there's no point in doing the action when the cue is given. The horse stops—extinguishes—the response to the aid.

To test these phenomena, Lansade and her colleagues carried out studies in which horses were trained a simple task with positive reinforcement (a food reward) and then later offered a food reward

whether they performed the task or not. In some of the studies the opposite occurred: The horses were not given any more rewards. The researchers compared the horses' different reactions to see

what factors appeared to influence these reactions.

"Our studies have shown that individual horses will vary in their development of automatisms and also their contingency and extinction," Lansade said. "But most of all, we see that the more emotional the horse is (according to the Lansade personality

test), the more quickly he develops automatisms in training and the longer they last."

That could explain why advanced riders often prefer more emotional ("high-strung") horses for sports, even if they might be more difficult to ride, Lansade said.

Unfortunately, that benefit comes with a disadvantage, she added: Highly emotional horses are also more likely to develop a different kind of "automatism"—stereotypies. "We see more crib-biters in this kind of personality," she said. ■





# Horse Sees

**THE HORSE'S TOP VIDEOS OF 2015. POSTED ON THEHORSE.COM presented by the Bay Area Equestrian Network.**

Find out how your horse sees the world. Sharon Spier, DVM, PhD, Dipl. ACVIM, takes a look at what a horse sees in a collected frame, equine night vision, how blind spots affect the approach to jumps, and more. ■

<http://www.thehorse.com/videos/30552/how-your-horse-sees>

WITH ... SYDNEY YOUNG

## 20 Questions

*about your life with Arabian horses*

**1** What is your current involvement with Arabian horses?

*I currently own two beautiful Arabian horses, and show one of them in ATR Hunter Pleasure. Outside the show ring, I am the past Region 17 Youth Director, currently the AHYA Treasurer, Canadian Nationals Youth Committee Chair, Region 17 Youth Coordinator, and the Regional Youth Team Tournament Secretary.*

**2** How many years have you been around horses?

*I have been around Arabian horses for 14 years.*

**3** They say, "the Arabian horse finds you". How did the Arabian horse find you?

*I started riding for fun when I was 6 years old, down the road from my house with Diane Comeau who was 12 at the time. I am very fortunate to have had my first horse experience with an Arabian.*

**4** Who is or has been your favorite horse companion?

*I couldn't pick a favourite out of my horses. They have all been blessings to my life in their own unique ways. The two horses I currently own would be the top two. I have had my mare City Dance for 9 years and Texas for one year. They are both equally special to me, and each for their own completely different reasons.*

**5** Who has been your (horse) mentor?

*I grew up in the horse world with Michelle Hansen as my trainer and mentor. Inside and out of the show ring she has taught me nearly everything I know about horses and the arabian horse world.*

**6** What is your favorite horse book?

*My favorite horse book would be the ENTIRE pony pals series. I read every single one. All 44 of them.*

**7** What is your favorite horse movie?

*My favourite horse movie is Secretariat. I cry tears of happiness every time I watch him cross the finish line.*

**8** What are some 'Arabian horse activities' in which you participate?



*As Youth Director, I have been fortunate to attend three board meetings a year. One in Denver, one at the AHA Conven-*

*tion and one at Youth Nationals. At the Region 17 Championship Show I arrange lots of activities every year which I and all the other youth have fun participating in. This year there was a Dunk Tank, Trainer Egg and Spoon Class, Silent Auction Fundraiser, Tie Dye Pizza Party, and lots of fun in the evenings at the stalls. I also participate in AHA's TAIL tours that happen at our national shows. These tours are for the public to learn more about who we are and what we do. As the Canadian National Youth Committee Chair I also plan and organize activities at Canadian Nationals similar to those at the regional show. Outside volunteering I have shown in every discipline except english and park.*

**9** What would be your most memorable experience or moment with an Arabian horse?

*My most memorable experience with the arabian horse would have to be the last time I rode my horse City Dance in the show ring. City and I spent a good four years butting heads and not getting along in the show ring. It was a long journey to reach common ground with that horse. And that day, I rode the horse of my dreams down the chute into the national ring for the last time. I entered the ring with tears streaming down my face and a smile that made my jaw cramp. I saw all my friends in the stands cheering with tears running down their cheeks as well. It was a big class, but those 10 minutes felt like City and I were the only*

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 10]

# Editor Message

At **DISCOVER ARABIAN HORSES.COM** we are always excited to bring you this vital line of communication.

The newsletter is published in November, January, March, May, July, and September and will continue to be sent to you by e-mail blasts. It will also be posted on the DAH website with a link on Facebook and Twitter.

The newsletter will cover many topics:

- We will sometimes feature, *The Arabian Horse in History*, where the generally ignored role of specific horses in history will be presented.
- Will also have a spotlight section where we present information on a specific Arabian horse owner, trainer, barn, program, or event in our industry. What a great opportunity to get to know our fellow horsemen and horse lovers.
- "Activities" puzzles, games for the young and the older ... just play.
- Check out our articles, stories and classified ads.
- A source of information and education.
- 20 Questions ... about your life with Arabian Horse ... with.
- excite prospective newcomers to the Arabian horses ... it is totally engaging!
- The team is more than willing to work with other horse associations regardless of breed type or discipline to assist them in getting their message out.

Tell us what you would like to see added or if you would like to be added to our e-mail listing, please e-mail:

**info@discoverarabianhorses.com** ■

# Tack Cubes

Each of the cubes contains words that relate to a saddle or bridle. To find them, you need to rearrange the letters in each vertical column. For example, the letters in the far left column of the first cube (*nhro*) can be rearranged to spell the word *horn*. ■

1	n	t	r	o
	h	a	n	f
	r	s	i	k
	o	e	e	r

2	a	h	t	r	n
	b	k	r	i	i
	l	n	g	s	h
	s	a	h	t	c
	o	s	i	k	c

3	n	n	m	l	e	i
	c	d	e	p	p	l
	t	f	m	h	e	g
	e	e	p	e	k	i
	a	r	l	m	r	n
	l	e	o	a	e	n

4	f	k	i	h	w	u	o
	s	n	r	e	e	s	b
	a	l	p	e	t	b	o
	l	b	s	l	n	c	r
	f	t	r	t	i	l	n
	e	e	t	r	o	k	d
	n	a	u	a	d	e	i

ANSWER: 1. horn, seat, rein, fork 2. bosal, shank, girth, skirt, cinch 3. cantle, fender, pommel, pelham, keeper, lining 4. snaffle, blanket, stirrup, leather, tiedown, buckles, bridle.

# Chill Out

It's natural to be a bit nervous before you and your pony perform in a show. Would you like to chill out so you can do your best at the show? Here's how: Unscramble the letter groups below to make real words. Write them on the lines. Then read the unscrambled words to find a pony riddle and the answer. Laugh! Chill! ■

OHW CUHM OLUDSH OYU WONK FREEBO  
UYO ANC ECHAT ROYU NYPO SCKTRI?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

OREM HANT EHT NOPY.

\_\_\_\_\_

ANSWER: HOW MUCH SHOULD YOU KNOW BEFORE YOU CAN TEACH YOUR PONY TRICKS? MORE THAN THE PONY.

# A Sense of Touch

## AMAZING FACTS ABOUT A HORSE'S SENSE OF TOUCH

More sensitive than a human fingertip and able to react to pressure too light for people to feel, a horse's sense of touch is simply amazing. ■



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=14&v=\\_hWj5Rhhf28](https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=14&v=_hWj5Rhhf28)

BY THE EDITORS OF EQUUS MAGAZINE

## Post-Colic Care for Horses

**The care you provide your horse after colic can be crucial to his recovery. Follow these suggestions to get your horse back on his feet following a bout of equine colic.**

Knowing how to recognize and manage equine colic is a critical skill for owners, but colic aftercare is just as important to the horse's well-being. If a horse in your care does develop a colic, ask your veterinarian for a detailed post-colic care regime to follow during his recovery. More than likely, it will include the following suggestions:

- Watch the droppings. Even after the horse looks comfortable, keep a close eye on the state of his manure. Any change from normal consistency, color or content should be noted; extreme changes, or those that last more than a day after the colic,

warrant a call to your veterinarian. Although the horse may not show colic signs, the abnormal manure indicates that his digestive system is still out of sorts.



- Forget the grain. Withhold all grain for at least a day, or until his stools look normal. Then return him to his regular feed, starting with just a fraction of his normal grain ration. Grad-

ually increase his grain back toward normal, while observing him closely for trouble signs.

- Provide plenty of forage. You can allow a mildly colicky horse to graze as soon as he feels up to it. Grass is easy to digest and palatable. You may also allow him unlimited access to hay if his droppings remain normal.
- Turn him out. The movement and selective grazing of continual turnout get a horse's gut moving faster than stall rest. Check on the field-kept horse often to be sure you don't miss signs of returning pain.
- Maintain a continuous supply of clean water. Have palatable water available to the recuperating horse at all times. Full hydration is necessary for normal gut function. ■

## Barn Brain-Teaser ... Give it a Try

You have nine horses (numbered from 1 through 9) with riders that are taking part in a parade. After the coordinator makes a request for the participants to get ready to start the parade, he notices that the horses are lined up out of order.

What is the least number of horses he will have to ask to move so that the lineup is in numerical order? (He can ask any horse to come out of the parade and move into any gap in the lineup, asking the others to shuffle up if necessary.)

The order of the horses is: 9, 8, 2, 7, 3, 4, 6, 1, 5. ■

ANSWER: Reading from left to right, we notice that horses 2, 3, 4 and 5 are already in the correct order. So, we only need to ask the other five (5) horses to move in order for them to appear in order from 1->9.

To find the solution of these puzzles or to check out more games and activities, check out the Discover Arabian Horses website "For Kids" section at [www.discoverarabianhorses.com](http://www.discoverarabianhorses.com) ■

[20 QUESTIONS CONTINUED  
FROM PAGE 7]

ones in the ring. I was a dysfunctional crying mess on her back so City took it upon herself to preform in that class all on her own. We came out with a top 10 and a 5th place finish. I'll never forget the feeling of that last victory lap and all the support from my cheering show family in the stands.

**10** What has been your greatest achievement with your Arabian horse(s) so far?

*My greatest achievement with my Arabian horse so far would have to be winning reserve national champion with Texxas this year in my last JTR Hunter class.*

**11** Which horse do you consider to be your "dream" horse, either past or present?

*My dream horse would be City Dance+/. We didn't win many championships, but the partnership I have with that horse is one a girl could only dream of. She is my rock.*

**12** Horses are amazing teachers. What has your horse taught you that has helped you become a better person?

*Patience. Persistence. Perseverance. Working with horses has taught me that absolutely nothing is achieved for free. They taught me to work hard, set goals and chase them. They taught me to believe in myself, never get discouraged and pursue my wildest dreams. In 2010 I decided that I wanted to take my little crabby chestnut mare to Scottsdale. My mom and my trainer both had their concerns, and we set out to look for a new horse so I could go to Scottsdale. My absolute undying love for my horse kept my heart set on taking HER and nobody else. After a few months of hard training, we*

*were on the way to Arizona, and a week later we were decorated in every class we entered. My horses have also taught me that everything I do has an affect on my life. They kept me out of trouble as I got older, because I knew I had a few four-legged family members that counted on me being a good person with a bright future. I truly own everything to my horses.*

**13** What is the best thing about working and playing with your Arabian horse?



*The best thing about working with the arabian horse is they are everything but conventional. They are always thinking and plotting and analysing everything around them. They have their own unique way of doing everything and most days all you can do is laugh at the horse that has shimmied his way out of a four strap winter blanket. They keep my world interesting.*

**14** What would you say to a person considering buying a horse to encourage them to purchase an Arabian?

*An Arabian will be your teammate, teacher and friend, in and out of the*

*show ring. They will challenge you to be the best, and support you when you may not have the energy. They will teach you to be the best rider you can be, and make you work every second of it. Outside the show ring, they make a great companion on the trails and they are willing to learn any new tricks you may teach them. Truly the most versatile breed.*

**15** What is your advice to someone, "brand new," considering becoming involved with horses?

*My advice to anyone considering getting involved with horses is to reach out to the community for any information or help you might need. There's lots of resources to get a hold of people around you involved with the breed, and I know for sure nobody would be annoyed by questions!*

**16** Is there a favorite reference book you'd like to share?

*I don't think I have a favourite reference book, although growing up I read my AHA Equitation Manual more then my math textbook.*

**17** What is the one thing you'd like to do that you haven't done yet?

*I would like to compete at US Nationals. That is my next big goal!*

**18** What about "kids" and an Arabian horse?

*I can only speak from experience, but growing up with an arabian horse was the most challenging yet rewarding experience. My horse tested my skills and limits in every way, and gave me the world when I finally "got it right". I could never cut corners or my horse would sure let me know. Owning an arabian horse as a kid definitely made me into the best rider I could be.*

**19** Why do you think you get such a "rush" being around or riding your Arabian horse(s)?

*You absolutely never know what to expect. It's not consistent like riding a bike. You have 1000lb of attitude beneath you, and the thrill comes from figuring out each day how you are going to finesse the horse's energy. Its almost more mentally challenging then physically.*

**20** What are your words to live by?  
*"Just be" meaning just live in the moment, be who you are, don't regret the past and don't worry about the future. Be exactly who you want to be, and live how you want to live. ■*

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