

Using Equine Breathing (Clare Hobsley, BSc MSc, UK)

What is Equine Breathing

Equine Breathing is a new natural and holistic technique that enables people to help their horses recover from chronic ailments such as sweet itch or hay fever; and behavioural problems such as separation anxiety.

Equine Breathing promotes relaxation and healing. SHPs have found that it makes trimming easier and that it promotes hoof growth. Equine Breathing also enhances stamina and performance. Equine Breathing is not a therapy or treatment, it is simply a way of retraining the horse to regain NORMAL breathing. It is easy to do (even

kids can do it), horses enjoy it and it costs nothing to learn the most gentle technique of 1N using the free instructions on www.equinebreathing.com.

There are two reasons why Equine Breathing is so necessary and so successful in helping horses recover good health and performance:

1. Over breathing has a direct, damaging and wide ranging effect on the physiology and therefore the health of the horse;
2. MOST horses over breathe - they do not have normal breathing.



Strasser trimmed for 3 years



After 6 weeks of Equine Breathing

But my horse is kept naturally – surely s/he knows how to breathe normally?

Surprisingly, even horses that are kept naturally, chronically over breathe (though probably less than conventionally kept horses) and do not regain normal breathing on their own. There are several reasons for this as I will now explain.

Over breathing results when stress causes an increase in adrenaline production. Adrenaline also initiates feelings of anxiety and restlessness. These are essential responses in terms of evolution, providing the horse with maximum muscle power and motivation to run away from predators. These days stress is unlikely to result from predation and therefore unlikely to be coupled with a restorative burst of intense activity (flight), but stressful events such as weaning, backing, moving to new accommodation, loss of herd mates, accidents and so on still occur. And horses, like people tend to copy the breathing pattern of the individual that has the worst (ie the most increased) breathing. So even if your horse is not affected by physiological stress caused by shoeing, stabling, rugging, painful tack etc, they probably have had stressful events in their life or at least are in contact with a horse that has. When over breathing has been initiated there is a tendency for it to be perpetuated because the Medulla oblongata in the brain, which controls breathing, becomes recalibrated to maintain bigger and bigger breathes, rather than reducing the breathing back down to normal. In addition, when the body over breathes, it changes the physiology in a harmful way that would be fatal if the body did not institute compensatory mechanisms. These mechanisms enable the body to continue to function whilst chronically over breathing although they have unwelcome side effects, but they are slow to turn off, so if the horse tries to reduce its breathing the compensatory mechanisms push it to increase breathing again to restore balance.

How do I know if my horse over breathes?

If a horse has any chronic ailment or discomfort, or behavioural problem then they will be over breathing. If the horse doesn't yet have major problems there are numerous signs to look for. The most common is that the nostril is round and open at rest and moves or flares on breathing. In normal breathing the nostril is narrow and slit like and does not move in breathing. Other clues that the horse is over breathing include; difficulty concentrating, poor attention, poor response to communications (aids etc), separation anxiety, agitation, aggression, barging, hyper sensitivity to stimuli such as sudden noises or new objects, dislikes being groomed, snorts more than just occasionally and when aroused eg before feeding or being ridden, excessive yawning, urinates when being ridden, over weight, crest development, digestive problems, difficulty maintaining condition, difficulty recovering from illness or injury (even insignificant cuts etc), lethargy, poor fitness, poor recovery from exertion, hormonal imbalance, drinks a lot, exaggerated immune response eg to insect bites, runny eyes and heavy or noisy breathing.



The enlarged over breathing nostril of a naturally kept horse

Why is over breathing a bad thing?

Over breathing is bad because it lowers the level of carbon dioxide in the body. The body needs carbon dioxide at a level nearly 200 times higher than is in air, so is continually losing it from the lungs. Far from being just a waste gas, carbon dioxide is crucial to life with an essential role in five key areas of physiology. Carbon dioxide is essential to enable the body to use oxygen, it enables smooth muscle to relax, it maintains body fluids at the correct acid/alkaline (pH) balance, it's required for proper functioning of the nerve cells and is involved in almost all biochemical pathways in the body. Therefore a low level of carbon dioxide caused by over breathing results in:

- reduced oxygen availability
- reduced circulation due to constriction of blood vessels
- mal functioning of nerve cells resulting in hypersensitivity, irritability and poor concentration
- mal functioning of systems like the immune and hormones systems
- adrenaline driven anxiety, tension and restlessness

How to do Equine Breathing

Equine Breathing is essentially a DIY technique. You don't need any equipment to see how Equine Breathing works with your horse - just your hands and some time. Almost anyone can do 1N the most gentle method - there are free instructions on www.equinebreathing.com

For those who want the benefits of 1N but don't have time to do 1N, Breathers provide a more powerful effect. The easiest to use is the All Weather Breather. It can be left on for 12 hours a day which is useful in cases of sweet itch or hay fever. The All Weather can be left on for the period when symptoms are worst ie dawn and dusk for sweet itch and day time for hay fever. The mild continuous effect of the All Weather is good for horses that have respiratory problems.

The Grazing Breather is a more powerful breather which can also be left on for 12 hours a day at times when symptoms are worst, so is useful for hay fever, photosensitivity, travel stress, separation anxiety etc but it can't be used in wet conditions. The most powerful Breather, the Equine Breather, is good for people who only see their horse once a day, as it is used in a designated breathing session of up to 90 minutes a day. The horse sleeps for the session so can be brought into a dry place if the weather is wet. The effect of the session lasts to some extent for the rest of the day. Curyhan for example, recovered from severe hay fever, head shaking and nose rubbing, in two weeks using an Equine Breather.

Equine Breathing to help rehabilitation and trimming

Bringing the physiology back to normal, optimal functioning is likely to improve the horse's ability to recover normal structure and function in the feet so it makes sense to use Equine Breathing in a daily management regime. But if you are trimming other people's horses and they are not doing regular Equine Breathing, it is still helpful to use it during the trimming session. SHPs report that it helps horses to lift up their feet for the trim, as well as promoting calm relaxation. Horses that had been impossible to trim, could be trimmed when Equine Breathing was used. The owner can do 1N on the horse while you are trimming or alternatively, the best Breather to use is a Grazing Breather, as it is more powerful than the All Weather. The Equine Breather is even stronger but can't be used on horses that have not done any Equine Breathing. If you have just one medium size Grazing Breather, it can be effective on almost any size of horse due to its loose design. It takes less than a minute to put on and makes trimming easier and more relaxing and it helps the horse.



The relaxing effect of the Grazing Breather helps with trimming.

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www.equinebreathing.com