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NEWSLETTER

Spring 2004

Welcome

Spring already! Just where has this year gone. Christmas will be upon us before we know it.

We've had a new edition to our paddock with the arrival of "Snow" (pictured opposite) a 3 year old ex-pacer. He's a lovely gentle boy who is settling in well to our mad house. Hopefully we'll have him out on the show circuit soon.

A special welcome to our two new contributors to our Newsletter – the first being Carlos Tabernaberry (see below) who will share some great training articles and secondly is Ian Wharton from the Academy of Equine Dentistry. We hope you enjoy reading their columns.

Introducing Carlos

We are very proud to announce our Sponsorship of Carlos Tabernaberry and Whispering Acres.

Many of you will already know Carlos through his involvement as a trainer and advisor to a very popular horse TV show. Carlos has been successfully using our NoBit Bridle at his training facility in Victoria for the past several months and we are very happy to have him as a part of our team as both Carlos and ourselves at NoBit Bridles share very similar objectives when it comes to the treatment of horses.

At Whispering Acres horses are started and trained the gentle way establishing co-operation rather than submission through coercion and force. This gentling method is used whether the horse is introduced to the saddle for the first time, or correcting an existing behavioural problem.



Having a better understanding of the horse's nature gives the rider the tools to see how horses perceive our world so we can understand each other better without resorting to violence. Therefore the Whispering Acres motto is "Help Ever, Hurt Never".

If you would like more information about Carlos or Whispering Acres call him on **0414 380 396** or visit

www.whisperingacres.com.au

Product News

Leather NoBit Bridle

It is finally ready!!! Made here in Australia from beautiful black English Bridle Leather it has been finished with brass buckles, has a padded browband (ribbon browbands will be available separately) and comes standard with rein adapters so you can attach your own reins. This is the bridle for those horses that appreciate the finer things in life.

The Leather NoBit Bridle unfortunately does not come under our 30 day money back guarantee due to the nature of the fabric so if you are unsure of whether the NoBit Bridle will be suitable for your horse we suggest you try one of our Apollo bridles first and then upgrade to Leather during the 30 day period. Of course you will still be able to exchange your leather bridle should you have selected the wrong size. Please contact us or visit our website for more details.



\$189.95 (includes postage & leather conditioner)

Equest Plus Worming Gel

The only wormer that kills the emerging parasite problem of encysted small strongyles in a single dose as well as all major gastrointestinal worms and bots. Small barrel, highly palatable gel (aniseed flavour) that rapidly liquefies on the horse's tongue preventing wastage.



\$17.95ea (includes postage - min purchase 2 tubes)

Sea Minerals Dermal Ointment/Spray

Fantastic anti-bacterial and anti-fungal ointment or spray ideal for treating superficial wounds, skin irritations and minimising scarring.

\$24.95 for ointment (includes postage)

Herb Corner

Spring is in the air and now's the time to keep watch for spring nasties such as colic, laminitis and founder. Take care with the new spring growth as all horses are vulnerable to these nasties. Perhaps your horse needs some of Country Park's new "Spring Blend" to help them through the seasonal change. Don't know much about herbal supplements? Don't despair, as the Spring Blend is already formulated and mixed – all you have to do is add a cup to the feed, it's as easy as that!

CP Spring Blend

Formulated to assist your horse to adjust to Spring changes. Containing fennel seeds, rosehip granules, hawthorn berries and Vitamin C along with other herbs to give the ultimate digestive tonic for eliminating excess body wastes and improve circulation. This blend also contains herbs with relaxation properties to assist the nervous, respiratory and hepatic system.

Rosehips

Did you know that rosehips have been used since ancient Egyptian times and that they were a favourite during the medieval period where they were used to make "syrup of roses" that will "strengthen the heart and taketh away the shaking and trembling thereof".

During World War II, British children would collect tons of rosehips which would be made into jams and sent to soldiers at the front to help provide them with Vitamin C.

Rosehips, the bulbous part of the dog rose flower that remains after the blooms have dropped, called the hips, is very high in Vitamin C and is one of the best sources for natural iron, calcium, biotin, pectin, phosphorus, tannin and Vitamins A B1, B2, C, E K and P, just to name a few.

The hips are dried and either granulated or simply cut in half to form rosehip shells. They have a pleasant, sweet and tangy taste and can be fed dry or made into a tea.

Health benefits associated with Rosehips include being a mild purgative to help gently move the bowel and an astringent to help reduce mucous and fluid in the body.

Rosehips are a natural diuretic, blood purifier and tonic that can be used to strengthen and invigorate the body to give a general feeling of wellbeing.

In horses Rosehips have been specifically used to improve the growth of hooves, assist in the rehabilitation of kidney and adrenal function and as a preventative for 'tying up'.

Country Park Animal Herbs has been recommending the use of Rosehips as part of the natural equine diet for a number of years and we have available both generally grown as well as organically grown Rosehips granules and shells. These can be fed either dry or made into a tea by steeping them in hot water and adding it to hard feed for easy assimilation.

Written by Helen Nicolaou
Freelance Writer



For more information on these and other herbs or to place an order please contact either Ruth Walsh on 07 5596 4387 or Carol Dawson on 02 6238 1135.

www.countrypark.com.au

Carlos' Whisperings

The Horses' Way

With so many techniques and methods being sold out there, there is no wonder there are so many confused riders and horses alike. I like to think of my training not as a method but rather as a philosophy that will make sense to the very nature of my horse, and those I educate and re-educate.

Confusion leads to misunderstanding, lack of trust and respect, and therefore poor or no training or both, and undesired behavioral problems are the end result. Just like you and I, your horse is an individual whose training program may have to be adjusted all the time, to suit his or her learning ability and speed. It is paramount that the handler adjusts his or her training approach to fit the individual horse, and not make the horse fit the program.

As a trainer (and remember you train your horse too every time you handle it for good or bad), I come across hundreds of horses that have been forced to fit the program or sequences and steps. While most of these horses may unwillingly adjust to the program due to the horse's forgiving nature, along comes your horse who by disposition or previous handling is not as forgiving (individuality), and in time is a grenade with a saddle waiting to go off. The safety pin is slowly coming off and without you recognising it, sooner than later, **BOOM....** This is when we say: "Never done that before!

Like anything we like out of our horses, we must become it ourselves. If you want a soft and supple horse, become soft and supple yourself. Suppleness to me starts in the rider's and horse's minds, then the suppleness and softness in the body will follow.

Feel, we talk about this without really understanding it, so feel for our horses will come when the handler or rider becomes a thinking one. This, I like to call Awareness before Feel. Know where your horse is at mentally and physically and you will know where his feet are also. When you are aware of this, you have taken care of feel, timing and balance but most important you have taken care of your horse's mind, body and spirit.

Awareness by becoming a thinking rider, will make you alert to your own and your horse's actions and reactions and you will be able to make positive training adjustments that suit you both. This is true Partnership. It's 50-50.

Most systems and techniques are 90-10. We are constantly giving 10% and expecting a true Partnership. It won't happen, but we might believe it did.

Pay attention to your horse and adjust your ways until you get it right for your horse, emphasising a stress free approach, and you will create positive results and avoid possible wrecks. Recognising when your horse is trying, whether on the ground or under saddle, is more valuable than how we get the end result.

Allow your horse to make mistakes along the way, you will make them too, and so have I along the way. For example, if you are requesting a leg yield or two-track recognise the shift of his hip moving laterally. (Awareness, Feel, and timing being the release). Don't get caught up in the end result, get caught up in the try. I have recently said on TV that it is more important to quit doing what you are doing at the right time, than waiting for the end result before you quit. This is how your individual horse will understand and learn anything you ask of him or her, in a learning stress-free frame of mind.

If you are watching the Olympics, it does not matter if the sprinter gets off the mark first, but it is important that he had a good start, which will determine how well he crosses the finish line. So don't expect the result without first having a good start. Apply this approach to all areas of your training and give it a try.



I am not saying my way is the way, because my way is simply the horse's way. I hope one day I can come across some of you through a clinic or show, and you can tell me what you and your horse thought, and we can put all these to work in different areas you may be trying to improve or perhaps achieve. I know your horse will be a willing partner and thank you for it. I guarantee it, but that is if you are willing to adjust your way, methods and techniques to simply his. He or she knows what you want, but put it in a way he or she will understand it.

Happy and successful training.

"Help Ever, Hurt Never"

Carlos Tabernaberi
Whispering Acres Horse Starting and Training

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Carola's Column

This issue Carola delves into a subject that affects many horse people. We hope that this may be of help to some of our readers in getting that foot back in the stirrup.

Scared of Getting Back On? Not a Bit!

No matter if you are just coming back to horseback riding after a long break, or trying to re-gather your confidence to climb onto your horse again after a riding accident, you may have to deal with some sort of "nerves".

Whichever it is, one thing is for sure: The older we get and the more experiences we have had, the "wiser" we become (even if some readers may want to challenge this statement). What becomes clear: The more mature (!) we become, the more fear of pain we develop. In the years that follow the youthful invincibility, we all of a sudden start contemplating about possible consequences of injury.

That is a natural thing and good. However, it seems this acquired "wisdom" can sometimes become overwhelmingly strong and may even sabotage your desire to ride entirely. It certainly can contribute to the "confidence factor", especially if you have had time to think about the given dangers when dealing with horses, e.g. after a break from the sport or after an incident.

If you want to re-discover your old self without losing your wisdom-based sense of caution, you need to consciously make some decisions and condition yourself. If you don't, you may never again be able to really enjoy the magic of horses and riding them, because you are in a constant state of negative expectation... And we all know.... What you expect is what you get...

Let's analyse what it is that confident riders of all ages have and/or should have. Here are 12 of the most important attributes which are common but also necessary to a stress-free, rewarding relationship off and especially ON the horse:

1. *A fit, toned flexible body*
2. *Capability (knowledge of "how to ride a horse")*
3. *Ability to be in tune with the horse, emotionally and physically*
4. *Pressure free attitude*
5. *Safe environment*
6. *Positive expectations*
7. *A reliable mount*
8. *Positive experiences*
9. *A good, supportive and encouraging instructor*
10. *Comfortable clothing and appropriate gear (incl. safety items)*
11. *Time*
12. *Supportive partner/family/friends*

If one or more of these "necessities for confidence" have been lost by the rider for what ever reason, he or she will experience that paralysing little niggly fear when climbing "on board" a horse. Recognising which of these attributes has been lost and counter acting them before you have a negative experience that confirms your fears, will help to build up your confidence and make you a better rider – or the rider you used to be:

Now you already know where you could improve your confidence a little bit more. Nobody needs to tell you. It is up to you to do something about it. Let us see how and what can be done:

1. "A fit, toned flexible body"

This is the most obvious confidence builder: A fit, toned and flexible body is one of the most important requirements for horseback riding. After all, it is a sport. One, where you have to balance on an amazingly powerful, athletic bundle of muscles. If you don't have a certain degree of fitness already, your body will not enjoy the experience. Neither will your mind. Do get fit BEFORE you get on a horse!

If you are serious and you really "want to get back into it", then do yourself (and the horse) the favour to become "body and motion aware". Visit some Yoga, Pilates or Gymnastic classes. Learn about and improve balance, relaxation, body awareness and core-strength. Loose a few kilos. Live healthier and become in control of your physical body. Once you have achieved this, you will be able to control your emotional self better as well.

Yes, once your body is fitter, riding will help you to become a stronger person - not only on a physical level. In other words: Become as athletic as your horse already is – so you can keep up.

2. "Capability (knowledge of "how to ride a horse")"

If you are new to equestrian sports, make sure you know at least a little about horses before you book in for your first lesson. There is plenty of good literature available. It is important to know that riding is a physical activity and that there are certain ways that enable you to communicate your wishes to a horse (and what kind of reactions you should and could expect). Learning about body language, aids, gear and how it works - and learning about the nature of horses, and their behaviour and their learning capability is very important.

After all, you are not about to mount a motorbike – but a living, feeling creature with very strong instincts and a mind of its own.

Reading books and magazines and watching (in lessons or competitions) and talking to good riders, or watching equestrian videos will also give you an idea what to expect. The knowledge of theory is always the basis for correct practical application.

3. "Ability to be in tune with the horse, emotionally and physically"

This is also an important point. The moment you recognize that the animal you are sitting on is a living, thinking creature, will help you to anticipate certain physical reactions that can suddenly occur in response to an emotional or instinct trigger (a shy, for example).

This ability to "tune in" will allow you to "read" your horse and become a more tactful and feeling rider. You will show empathy and respect but also "leadership and support" when it's needed. This is a skill which needs constant development and will eventually lead to a rider's skills called "timing the aids", and "half-halting" which will re-balance and prepare your horse so it succeeds in executing your wishes through mutual understanding.

If you are a sensitive person and have respect for other living creatures, this skill will come naturally to you. If you mix it with the necessary equestrian knowledge, you will be able to read and react to your horse in a much more sophisticated way than riders who merely try to boss their horses around, expecting them to be robot-like creatures and therefore creating more angst and undesirable reactions.

Put yourself in your horse's hooves. Of course, the ability to "tune into your horse physically" will progressively improve the more you ride and the more your (fairly fit....., see 1.) body becomes. Riding is like dancing. You must stay in emotional and physical balance with your partner (or you step on each others toes...).

4. "Pressure free attitude"

This is about motives and behaviour: Why do you want to ride horses? In general your motive MUST be selfless and of mutual benefit to you and your horse. If you are driven by performance pressure, competitive ambitions, are trying to live up to someone else's expectations, or feel obligated because of.... what ever..., you are on the wrong track.

Your attitude must be "pure" and honest and ultimately originating in the desire to spend time with a wonderful, powerful, but also generous and forgiving creature (who can – and has the right to - be difficult at times, as well.....). More specifically you must leave your worries and distracting thoughts at home. Be "with" the horse every moment and live every moment with it 100% (see also point 3).

5. "Safe environment"

If you have confidence issues, you would not choose to deliberately mount a horse in a potential hazardous environment. If you are not sure what could be "potentially hazardous", make sure you are in knowledgeable company before you climb on board.

Ideally, an enclosed area, like an arena or an adequately sized round yard is a good start. It is a good idea, to look for a reputable riding school, where safety practises are well established and the environment is set up to minimise risks to horses and riders.

Knowing that this side has been taken care of FOR you and your horse, helps you concentrate on your horse and your body balancing on the horse(see previous points).

6. "Positive expectations"

This again can be linked to point 4 and the attitude that you bring along onto the horse. Your expectation must be mutually beneficial to your horse and yourself. If you merely "use" your horse as a medium or see "riding" as something to gain something for yourself, then you are on the wrong track. Your riding experience should and will become a positive experience for both, you and your horse if you expect nothing else.

If you remember to try and please your horse by being in balance and by being clear in your requests, you set him/her up to succeed as well (see all points above).

7. "A reliable mount"

I have not put this point as the most important one, because it isn't. But, for your first few lessons (returning to riding after a break, an injury or as a beginner), a reliable horse is most important. Reliability as in balance, gait and character – and

in working on the lunge. Because this is what you should do: Have lunge lessons....to regain the feel for the movement and your balance on a moving horse.

Once you have achieved balance and trust in your body's ability to absorb the movement and stay "one" with the horse in all paces (just having to concentrate on you and the horse) then you have made a big step forward to sit on something less steady. A good lunge horse is worth its weight in gold. Find a riding school or a trainer that has one. If you own a horse and just need a confidence builder to ride it again....re-read the above. Find a reliable mount for a few lunge lessons.

8. "Positive experiences"

In order to gain or re-gain confidence you must be able to refer to something positive in the past. Remember how it felt when before you had either a sudden or slow confidence loss. Remember how it felt to be comfortable in body and mind and seek same or similar experiences. Even if they are small successes.

Baby steps become big leaps if you tie them together. Take your time. If you have a positive experience make sure, you share it with your horse! Riding is an activity practised by TWO individuals together.

9. "A good, supportive and encouraging instructor"

Here I could write a whole book..... Make sure you go and watch a few lessons first before you engage someone. Not all personalities or styles will work for everyone. Some people need a bit of pushing, others crumble under what they perceive as pressure. A good instructor should be able to adapt to his students and read their requirements and learning styles. Not many instructors can.

There are good and bad, accredited and non-accredited, freelancers and clowns or a combination of both – Make sure you find one who is sympathetic to his/her students, the horses and NEVER makes riders fight with their horses.

After the lesson, both rider and horses should be content, relaxed and should leave the arena with a sense of achievement..... and not in a lather.

If you feel you could benefit from instruction particularly geared to the building of "self control, visualisation practises etc, you may seek a speciality teacher with a sports psychology degree.

10. "Comfortable clothing and appropriate gear (incl. safety items)"

This, I guess, is self-explanatory: If you have undies that creep where they shouldn't be, you feel uncomfortable..... Investing in a sports-bra may also be a good idea. Be comfortable and appropriately dressed when you get on a horse. Make sure your shoes are appropriate for riding and you wear a safety helmet. If you are not sure, visit your local tack shop or speak to an instructor.

"Gear", of course should be well fitted to horse and rider and must never EVER be used (intentionally or unintentionally) to inflict pain. It must be useful in the communication and interaction of both, assisting the rider to become the least "burden" to the horse by achieving balance, security (good saddle) and an effective methods to indicate direction and tempo reductions (good bridle).

A metal bit in the horse's mouth is not necessary to communicate rein aids.

11. "Time"

If you try too hard and want it yesterday, you are again on the wrong track. Nothing to do with horses is achieved quickly. "Good things take time". Learning to ride, training horses, building confidence. Take "baby steps" and build them up. When you look back one day, you will see the giant step that you have made, together with a horse that you love.

12. "Supportive partner/family/friends"

As in everything we do, other human beings and the emotional back-up and encouragement they can provide are super important to have if you want to achieve something. Also, you need somebody with whom you can share your achievements and progress. Surround yourself with the right people.

Confidence is something that comes from a feeling of "security".

In horse riding, this security originates in a healthy Body, Mind and Spirit, combined with a feeling of gratitude, privilege, skill and positive expectation shared with another being.

Until next edition, Happy riding!

Carola Adolf,
SHP

For more information about anything in this article or Natural Hoof Care for your horse please contact Carola at camilu@nex.net.au or visit her website

www.equinebarefootcare.org

From the Horse's Mouth

This issue we welcome Ian Wharton as one of our regular contributors. Ian is a Master Equine Dentist (which is the highest level of achievement in the dentistry field). Ian is also the Head Schoolmaster at the Academy of Equine Dentistry Australia. Perhaps some of you remember meeting him at Equitana.

Overview of Equine Dentistry

This will be the first in a series of articles that will go part of the way to help owners and trainers understand better how Equine teeth function and the impact they have (apart from the general condition and welfare aspect) on the horse's overall performance.

Horses have what are called HYPSONDONT teeth. This means that the teeth will grow from a tooth bud or embryo to a finite length and as is the case of the permanent teeth it will be this length that will have to last the life of the horse. Human teeth basically erupt through the gum to a position and then remain static. Horses teeth differ in that they are continually wearing away from grinding forage and therefore need to be constantly erupting through the gum to replace the worn away tooth.

The catch is there is only this "finite" length so this will determine the life of the horse. That is, once the entire tooth has erupted it will then fall out. Without the ability to grind its food, the horse will die.

With this continual eruption comes the real possibility of dominant teeth and hyper erupting teeth where there is no opposition to a particular tooth or teeth.

The horses' **environment** has changed dramatically over the 70 million years of evolution. Eohippus was the original horse and was about the size of a fox, lived in soft marshy conditions and the dentition was similar to human as it consumed soft vegetation. The horses we now have are actually adapted to a semi-arid desert environment that has much harder vegetation and the teeth have evolved to suit this. Domestication of the horse has dramatically changed the environment for horses. We no longer see horses that:

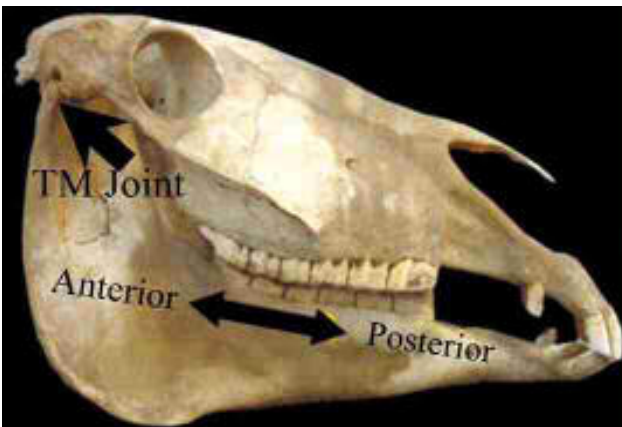
- Are able to travel great distances in the search of fodder, which would keep the feet trimmed (fenced in)
- Eat fodder that they would in a semi-arid environment (fed softer processed feeds)
- Not fed at ground level but mostly out of a feeder up off the ground (this leads to a whole host of dental abnormalities)

A proper understanding of the form and function of the equine head and dental physiology is necessary for all Equine Dentists so they will know how to properly make any dental adjustments. To be able to achieve this they must understand what is a *NATURAL MOUTH*. This is the mouth of the horse that is totally in its natural environment. This *NATURAL MOUTH* has certain characteristics which consist of the following:

- **An Anisognathic mouth**, which is where the upper molars sit slightly wider than the lower molars. This allows the lower molars to grind forage with the upper molars, but only on one side at a time.



- **Anterior/Posterior movement** of the Mandible(jaw) in relation to the Skull. This APM is only ever so small but is necessary for the Temporo Mandibular joint to function without pressure on it. The TM joint is where the mandible hinges in the skull. When the horse has its head down the mandible moves anteriorly (forward), and it is in this position that evolution has made the dentistry to align and function as perfectly as is possible. When the head comes up the mandible then moves posteriorly (rearward) and this causes the teeth (molars and incisors) to be misaligned. This misalignment and the ever erupting teeth will cause uneven wear patterns to develop, and therefore an unnatural mouth and dysfunction. Anterior/Posterior movement is essential & a must for the horse to be able to correctly & comfortably work "round" and on the bridle.



- **Lateral Excursion of the Mandible**. This is the side-to-side movement of the mandible which will allow the molars to grind and function properly but it is also extremely important when understanding how this allows flexion of the horses head and neck. Without the ability to flex, a horse will compensate through the spinal column and this will have a detrimental affect on performance. Again this is a must for the horse to be able to turn when asked without evasion.



- **Natural Occlusion of the Incisors**. Horses are one of the few Mammals that have this aspect of dentition. What this means is that the front or biting teeth, which are known as the incisors have a very real effect on how the molars function and vice a versa. If the Incisors are too long, or have a malocclusion, this will cause the molars not to be able to come together and grind properly. This will cause not only a mastication problem but also a performance problem as the mouth becomes unbalanced and TM joint dysfunction sets in causing pain.

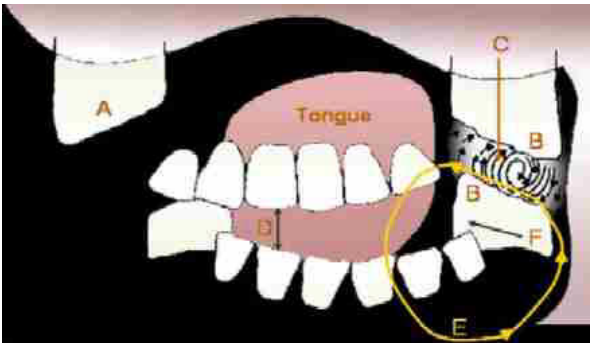


Normal Incisors



Abnormal Incisors

- **The Chewing cycle** of the horse can only involve one pair of molar arcades at a time due to the Anisognathic mouth, so this then means grinding will occur on either the Near side or Off side at any one time. For proper and efficient mastication to be possible there needs to be full lateral excursion and anterior-posterior movement of the mandible.



With all this in mind and the ever-erupting teeth it is not hard to understand how easily dental malocclusions can occur.

Next time we will look at the Natural Vs Unnatural mouth and the associated problems this has.

For more information about anything in this article or for more information about the Equine Dental Academy of Australia please contact Ian Wharton at equident@ozemail.com.au or visit the Academy website:

www.equinedentistry.com.au

Reader's Story

Unfortunately we didn't have enough space this edition to include our Reader's Story due to all our great contributions. But we hope you have enjoyed our bumper issue. If you would like to have your story included in the next edition please email us your details and photos.

Competition Winner

During August we ran a competition through our website to find the face of our new Leather NoBit Bridle. We were on the lookout for a horse with that special "look at me" presence and who loved having his or her photo taken.

We received lots of great entries from horse owners in SE QLD and let me tell you it was an extremely tough decision trying to decide on just one horse. Thank you to everyone who sent in an entry.

In the end though we chose "Cookie". A beautiful white thoroughbred. He is owned by Kristen and they compete regularly in dressage. Cookie and Kristen have won for themselves one of our new Leather NoBit Bridles, a Rydair saddle pad of their choice and a poster size photo from our professional photo shoot. Keep your eyes open for them in all the horse magazines and check out our website to see some photos from the shoot.



Equine Health Clinic

Following on from the success of our last workshop with Victoria Ferguson and Jean Koek we have decided to open our house up again, this time for a one-day Catherine Bird Clinic.

Catherine will teach us more about herbs, essences, tissue salts and aromatherapy to help keep our horses healthy and happy.

The Clinic will be held on Sunday 21st November at our property near Waterford (SE QLD) at a cost of \$95pp (includes morning & afternoon teas and lunch). A full set of clinic notes to take home will also be provided.

If you are interested in attending send through an email or give us a call and we will send you out a registration form.

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