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**Equestrian
Edition**



Talking Horses

The newsletter with news, views and practical advice

from the editor

We trust that you all had a safe and restful festive season and a great start to 2006. The discussion on headshaking in the last issue prompted many readers to ring to thank us for the hint on the nose flap – it worked for many horses! We also had a number of emails about the “fly” worry theory with regard to headshaking that has been postulated in the USA with apparent success using a herbal preparation – there are no scientific studies to back it up at present – but if it works for a problem horse – anything’s worth a try!

In this issue, we outline the relationship between conformation and soundness – which types of “weak” or “poor” conformation lead to particular long term lameness or unsoundness conditions. Offset cannon bones for instance, are the most common conformational fault in the front limbs and invariably lead to ‘high’ splints if young horses are worked on hard or deep surfaces.

Selecting a horse for long term training, such as a dressage horse for higher level competition, should also take into account, in this case, the conformation and strength of the hocks – the first joint likely to break down due to the stress on the hind limb resulting from ‘collection’ and impulsion, then it’s the front fetlocks that are the next joints under stress!

We also discuss building condition (fat) or topline (muscle) in show and competition horses – there are a lot of feeds that claim to build “topline”, but often simply put on the “podge” and no muscle!

And, as usual, we include lots of handy hints, seasonal reminders and interesting facts.

We met many of you at Equitana – it was nice to meet and discuss horsey problems!

All the best for 2006 – the drought still lingers on in some areas but with a good season in hay producing areas elsewhere, the prices of hay and grain are being trimmed back.

Regards **John Kohnke**

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THIS ISSUE

Feature Article

➤ **Conformation and Soundness** – a definitive guide

Also a brief on

➤ **Building ‘Topline’** – a combo of feeding and exercise

➤ **Research Round-Up**

➤ **Plus Regular Features**

HANDY HINT

1

Support the ‘Good Leg’. When a horse suffers a painful injury to a limb, such as a pedal or sesamoid bone fracture, a ‘bowed’ tendon, or even a kick from another horse, that results in it shifting weight to the adjacent “good” leg, ensure that the “good leg” is supported to carry the extra weight. Studies have shown that 9 minutes of unrelenting weight bearing by the “good leg” can result in ‘founder’ with pedal bone collapse due to blood flow changes. Raising the heel on the “good limb” by 5% - bandaging on a heel wedge and a ‘figure 8’ elastic bandage to support the fetlock, can help to significantly reduce the risk of severe and permanent damage to the “good leg”, whilst the ‘bad’ one is being treated. Consult your vet for advice.

HANDY HINT

Pre-cooling during the Hot Weather. If you are working or competing a horse under hot conditions, pre-cooling by hosing the body over once and spraying cold water under the belly for 2-3 minutes will remove accumulated heat before exercise. The horse will be dried off by the airflow as it works, further cooling it which when combined with the ‘pre-cooling’ belly hosing, will give an extra 10-15 minutes or more, before it starts to feel ‘hot and bothered’ when exercising.

