

Eat Your Wheaties

Friday's final presentation emphasized Producing the Ultimate Performance from the Ultimate Equine Athlete. Sponsored by SUCCEED, Freedom Health's Lyndsey White joined British eventing legend Lucinda Green, and USEA's President Kevin Baumgardner, in a discussion about proper feeding and training habits for today's high performance horses.

Both speakers focused on digestive health and proper conditioning and how the two go hand-in-hand to have a healthy horse.

"In eventing today, a horse must be race fit to successfully compete at the highest levels," Green said. She estimated that with proper conditioning it should take between 12 and 14 weeks to fairly recondition a horse for a three-day event.

She also emphasized the importance of exercising a horse on a road-like surface, similar to Roads and Tracks in a classic three-day.

"Opposition Buzz, ridden by Nicola Wilson, does lots of conditioning going up and down river banks," Green said. "Karin Donckers trots her horse through water for some conditioning. You've just got to make use of what you've got. It's important to find a routine that works for you and your horse and to stick with it."



Your Horse's Health Inside and Out

Dr. David Marlin spoke on three separate occasions throughout the weekend covering topics from training for the classic-format event, to respiratory issues, to leg protection.

"The long-format has not been around much for the past few years in here, in Europe, and the rest of the world, and I'm one of the people that really misses it," Marlin said during his first presentation, *How to Train Effectively and Compete Successfully in the Classic Long-Format*.

He aptly described not "what" the long-format event is, but more "why" the long-format was. While most of the modern information we know about the long-format came from studies leading up to the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, one of the most useful tools to come from the long-format is the use of heart rate to monitor a horse's fitness and performance level.

"People often don't know to what extent different factors can affect how hard a horse is working," Marlin went on. He addressed how a horse's breed, age, weight, size, level of fitness, terrain, climate, and rider's weight, fitness, and experience level all effect how much stress is being placed on a horse during competition.

"Out in the wild horses run for 30 seconds at a time at gallop and sometimes go for days at a time without galloping at all," Marlin said. "They do short bursts of exercise. But we exercise them for hours each day for months on end. I'm not saying we shouldn't be riding horses and training and competing them, what I'm saying is that we need to be smart about training because the current rate of injury is unacceptable, and it's also unnecessary."

For his second act, Jim Chiapetta from Flair introduced Dr. Marlin's presentation on the equine respiratory system, *The Roars and Gurgles, Wheezes and Coughs. What the Respiratory System Does and Why it is Central to Eventing Performance*.



Quick Respiratory Facts from Dr. David Marlin:

- Cross-country is 90 percent aerobic.
- A horse uses two buckets of oxygen every second while galloping.
- The skin over the nostrils is sucked in every time the horse takes a breath and obstructs the nasal passage.
- Hyperflexion can also obstruct the airway.
- Horses take one breath every stride at the canter and gallop.
- A horse should not make any noise while breathing except for the occasional swallowing.
- Horses can't breathe while in the air over the jump. In other words, for a third of a show jumping round, they aren't breathing.
- On cross-country, the horse doesn't breathe while jumping or accelerating.
- In a fit horse, the lungs are the weakest part of the respiratory system.
- A respiratory system can't be changed no matter how fit you get your horse.
- An overtightened girth doesn't limit lung expansion, however it does limit the muscles that move the front legs forward and back. As a result, it shortens stride length, which shortens the time between breaths, and increases fatigue.
- Avoid galloping in the cold because it can inflame airways.
- Bleeding is the most common injury to the horse's respiratory system as a result of exercise.
- Bleeding happens every time your horse goes faster than a trot. This is why intense exercise in freezing temperature can cause serious respiratory injuries in horses.



ABOVE: One of the Chums of Talisman Farm shows off lovely suspension during her Beginner Novice Test A demonstration.

FACING PAGE COUNTER CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Lucinda Green spoke to a captivated audience about feeding and training habits for top-level competition horses; It seems no matter where the USEA Convention goes, the snow follows; Lucinda Green finds a four-star friend in the Chums mascot; Dr. David Marlin shed some light on some of the most mysterious health issues of many eventers.

New Dressage Tests for 2010

The 2010 USEF Eventing dressage tests, presented by the Chums of Talisman Farm was no typical lecture. Junior riders and their stick horses walked, trotted, and cantered their way around a dressage ring, constructed in the middle of a conference room as Sally O'Connor and Susan Graham White explained to spectators the ins and outs of the new tests.

They first introduced the major changes, which are coefficients for the walk and flying changes, all Intermediate tests will be performed in a large arena, and there will be an option to do the same with a Preliminary test.

Beginner Novice

O'Connor explained that the new entrance of the Beginner Novice A test is designed to help young horses and riders. She personally prefers test B and encouraged organizers to use it more often.

Novice and Training

No major changes to the Novice tests, however, at Training, there are now 15 meter canter circles which O'Connor and White explained, "were added because it's not fair to ask riders to do 10 meter circles in Preliminary without having ever done 15."

Preliminary

Shoulder-ins have been eliminated, but leg yielding and a "release of the rein" have been added. "It's a test to see if the horse is truly on the bit or not," O'Connor explained. "The head and neck should follow the reins but not a complete stretch down." A halt at entrance has also been added to prepare riders for the one-star test.

"The dressage committee is really trying to set the riders up for success," White said, "and they love having competitor input."

"We know the Advanced tests have become much more technical than in the olden days, but with the new cross-country courses that are asking so much with balance and turning questions, it is important that the riders develop their dressage skills to aid in their jumping," O'Connor said.

Download all of your 2010 dressage tests at the USEA Website:
<http://www.useventing.com/competitions.php?section=dressage>