



# Horse Breather

Equine Breathing ezine    November 09    issue 45



[www.equinebreathing.com](http://www.equinebreathing.com)

## Safety and helping spooky horses

Riding a spooky horse can be nerve wracking and even dangerous especially if the ride involves negotiating traffic. Many riders have had incidents where the horse's fear response has resulted either in an accident or a close call. This can sap a rider's confidence, setting up a negative cycle which makes it harder to deal with the horse's fear.

Equine Breathing, especially in conjunction with Control of Movement exercises can have a dramatic calming effect that gives the rider a powerful tool to instil confidence and turn the negative cycle into a positive one.

Over breathing increases adrenaline production. This in turn gives rise to the flight or fight or 'catabolic state' which is characterised by feelings of restlessness, anxiety and excitability. These are very essential for a prey animal when it has to flee for its life but not so helpful in today's environment if the horse sees every new object as a potential predator.

In horses that over breathe, adrenaline levels **remain** high rather than being short lived bursts, so even mild stimuli can excite the flight response ie a spook.

Equine Breathing helps to reduce the amount of air breathed in and this helps to turn down or shut off adrenaline production. The horse then goes into a state of calmness, which is the 'anabolic' or healing state. Sometimes the transition to this state is almost instant and very clear cut with the horse going from an excitable adrenalised state to being deeply relaxed, in seconds.

Once the horse has become accustomed to the pleasant state engendered by Equine Breathing it is often very easy to regain this calm anabolic state even during times of stress or excitability by simply starting Equine Breathing.

First, you can start an Equine Breathing program in which ever form is most suitable for your requirements. This may be using the most gentle (and free!) technique of 1N, or if you require a more efficient and powerful effect, then using one of the Breathers. Which ever method is used, the ideal is to do some Equine Breathing on a daily basis.

This is accompanied by Control of Movement exercises (COMs) which clearly inform the horse that the handler is the leader and takes full responsibility for safety etc so that the horse feels safe enough to go 'off duty', to let go, relax, and enjoy the Breathing session.

Then you can use 1N in the circumstances when the horse gets scared and spooked by stimuli such as vehicles, other animals, loud noises, water etc, to bring their adrenaline down and train them to be calm and confident instead.

See the Equine Breathing Starter Guide for more on Control of Movement exercises

Ideally, a horse that is spooked by traffic etc can be shown scary objects at home in relative safety.



Bring the horse as close as is safe / comfortable and start doing 1N.

When the horse has calmed down start doing COMs and gradually move closer to the object with periods of relaxation in 1N in between.

This can of course be done using a Breather as well.



Spend some time doing Equine Breathing right next to the object until the horse's adrenaline levels are completely down and they feel calm and relaxed.

When you are out riding and meet a scary object, slip off and quickly start 1N and follow the same procedure. If the vehicle is passing you, just keep doing 1N while it passes.

Another approach is to take the horse to a busy road where there is a safe place for you both to 'observe' the traffic while you practise 1N. Do this until the horse is calm and oblivious to the traffic and then spend a few minutes enjoying the serene state.

For a more powerful effect you can do 'walk breathing' ie walk while you are doing 1N. Only try this once your horse is fully happy and familiar with 1N at rest. Positioned by your horse's head, put your inside arm under their head and cover the opposite nostril and start walking. Do 5 minutes then swop sides.

This is more powerful Equine Breathing than stationary 1N and you may therefore get snorting, coughing, or sneezing etc. The more stationary 1N you have done before trying this, the less intense this response is likely to be.

If you get into the habit of always jumping off and doing Equine Breathing and COMs as soon as the horse's adrenaline goes up, whatever the circumstances, the horse will become accustomed to staying in a more calm state, focusing attention on you when scary things happen.

You will then be able to enjoy your rides more fully and with greater safety and without having to hop on and off repeatedly.



For more see  
***Horse Breather***  
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The contents of this ezine are not a substitute for veterinary advice. If the reader has any concerns they should seek independent professional advice from a vet.