



In Practice

Using your legs

Yes, you guessed it – **don't** use your legs if you want to help recover your horse's normal breathing! I know, I know..... I can hear the tuts of irritation and imagine eyes raised to heaven all across cyberspace. But please give me a couple of minutes to explain.

Do you use your legs more often than just when asking for a transition? If you have answered no, check this out next time you ride. Many riders use their legs almost continuously and some are completely unaware of this.

The leg is in contact with the horse's ribs and part of the diaphragm which overlie the lungs. When you kick or squeeze with your legs it is like being prodded in your diaphragm and you can imagine that would cause you to take a sharp in or out breath. You may be able to hear this in your horse or if you are sensitive you may be able to feel it through your seat and legs. Leg use also disrupts the breathing pattern. In other words it encourages increased breathing.

If you **are** using your legs continuously why is this necessary? The most likely answer is that without continual leg aids your horse will slow down, lose activity and possibly stop altogether. But why is the horse so inactive? My view is that they don't feel well because they are over breathing. I don't think there is such a thing as a lazy horse, only poorly ones. If the horse is helped to heal using Equine Breathing, they will feel well and need no encouragement to move freely and will do so on their own volition.

I am suggesting that if you are using Equine Breathing to recover your horse, it would be worth trying riding without using the legs. If you have done an Equine Breathing session before riding, sitting as quietly as possible will enable the horse to maintain their reduced breathing better during the ride. This will increase the healing effect of the session.

If your horse goes into total slug mode, then there is a reason for it – that is how they feel. And that is how they feel even if they move faster because you 'get at' them. But by sitting still you can assess how your horse feels.

For some people it can be almost frightening or frustrating to the point of being unbearable to sit on a horse that is ambling very slowly. But if you view it as a way of monitoring your horse's progress rather than how quickly you can get from point A to point B (and do you really **have** to get to point B?), it might even become quite interesting. You might notice that the slow amble actually has a quality that is superior to the enforced march that your legs were able to achieve. And at the end of the day, this is only a short term measure until your horse feels well enough in themselves to move at a more lively pace. You can tell yourself that you will be able to use your legs again when your horse is better..... but then of course you won't need to.

This article was inspired by Karen who emailed to ask why her horse consistently coughed when being ridden, but not when being lunged either before or after riding. I think that use of the legs might be one of the contributing factors. Karen has now started doing 1N before riding and after some coughs to start with (see FAQ below), Amazon is now cough free and gives lovely soft, relaxed work. When Karen tried **not** doing 1N, Amazon coughed for the whole ride and her work was strained.

FAQ

'Why does my horse snort/yawn/cough during or after Equine Breathing?'

The lack of carbon dioxide resulting from chronic over breathing would be fatal to the body if it did not respond by turning on emergency compensatory measures. Carbon dioxide is the body's main buffer regulating acid/alkaline balance (pH) in the narrow range required for living tissue. This function starts to fail as carbon dioxide levels drop and the resulting increase in alkalinity would kill cells and the whole organism. However the kidneys are able to compensate by excreting buffer bases (alkaline) to maintain safe pH levels.

Contents

In Practice

Using your legs

FAQs

'Why does my horse **snort/yawn/cough** during or after Equine Breathing?'

In short

Nicola Bebb writes...

When you reduce the breathing using Equine Breathing carbon dioxide levels build back up. This happens faster than the kidneys can respond so the body now feels in danger of becoming too acidic. The quickest way to regain the correct pH is to blow off all the newly acquired carbon dioxide in a snort, yawn, sneeze, cough, neigh or sigh!

Fortunately not all the carbon dioxide is lost and with repeated sessions, carbon dioxide levels are gradually raised, making the compensatory measures less pronounced. It's a normal training process with incremental and variable improvements. Generally as your horse's carbon dioxide levels increase the snorting etc will decrease.

Another effect of Equine Breathing is to cause the cells lining the nasal passages to eliminate toxins and the nose may stream. This may also encourage snorting or sneezing etc.

So although the snorting is undoing some of the work of the Equine Breathing session, at least you know that you have been effective in raising carbon dioxide levels.

People also blow off carbon dioxide after reduced breathing. They may cough, sneeze or yawn, but often talk, laugh or just open their mouths.

In short

Holistic Equine Consultant Nicola Bebb writes;
I have used equine breathing with some client's horses (I need to order a Breather from you) with great results, particularly a mare that is on long term box rest and was getting extremely upset!

The mare had been on box rest for few weeks before I saw her, she was used to living out and wasn't coping at all with confinement. It was also unfortunate that she was stabled very close to some stallions which she tried to get to when they were bought past her box. In general she was extremely hyper and very unsettled and sometimes too dangerous for the owner to be in the box with her. I went and saw this lady and worked with her using a host of techniques. One was Equine Breathing, despite initial objections the horse really enjoyed the breathing technique and was beautifully calm and relaxed afterwards. The owner has continued with all the exercises that we explored on the day including Equine Breathing and the mare although still on box rest several months later is significantly calmer and easier to deal with. The owner has also remarked that she has found that the exercises including Equine Breathing have really improved the bond between them.

*Nicola Bebb
Holistic Equine Consultant*

*Email: NicolaBebb@ntlworld.com
www.bachflowerremedies.net
www.holsticequine.co.uk
(coming soon)*

That's it for this month. I hope you find **Horse Breather** interesting. I would love to hear your views so do send an email to clare@equinebreathing.com

till next month
breathe easy!
Clare

You've received this because you were interested in Equine Breathing and supplied your email address. If that is no longer the case, I apologise for the intrusion; please reply to this email putting **unsubscribe** in the subject box and I will remove your address from the '**Horse Breather**' emailing list.

If this issue of 'Horse Breather' has been **forwarded to you by a friend**, I hope you find it interesting. If you would like to **subscribe**, its free! Just email clare@equinebreathing.com giving your name and email address