



# Horse Breather

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## Reducing travelling stress

A Grazing Breather was used as part of a successful program to alleviate signs of stress (neighing, diarrhoea, sweating and excessive snorting) during travelling.

Dan had become particularly attached to his field mates during a long period of rehabilitation when he was not getting out much. On Dan's first trip in the horsebox on 18 June he was upset about leaving his friends. Although remaining good to handle he neighed 41 times on the 15 minute journey ie about 3 times a minute. He produced a large amount of runny poops and was dripping with sweat on his return. So a simple program to help him regain confidence was carried out.

The next day the routine was exactly the same. Dan wore his Grazing Breather until he was in a calm and peaceful state and still wearing it was then taken on exactly the same run as the day before. Dan would doubtless recognise the characteristic turns and inclines of the journey and hopefully come to realise that the short journey would end with him being back with his friends.

This time he only neighed 21 times and was a bit less sweaty (though still dripping). After the journey Dan continued to wear his Grazing Breather and had a lovely relaxing doze which was a great way to end the experience.

Four days later the same routine resulted in only 12 neighs and less sweat. The next week it was only 8 neighs and he had hardly sweated at all but he was still snorting excessively ie every few minutes. From then on he no longer sweated up and the neighs reduced further to 2 after a couple more weeks but he was still snorting. On the 30 July trip he did not neigh at all and only did a few snorts and was clearly hardly disturbed by the outing at all – the signs of stress had disappeared.

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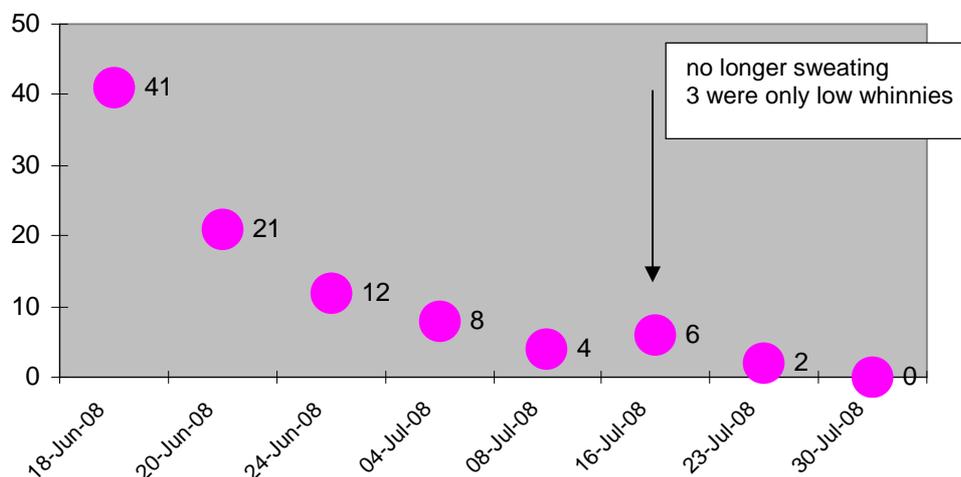
*Reducing travelling stress*

*Itchy nostrils*



Dan (left) is happy to travel with a friend – he just doesn't like leaving them behind

### Number of neighs per journey



So there were two elements contributing to the success of the training, the repetition of the recognised journey and the calming effect of the Grazing Breather.

When horses start to get upset more adrenaline is produced which increases the amount of air breathed and also generates feelings of anxiety. This can become a vicious cycle.

In addition, according to my capnometer measurements, neighing and snorting also increase the over breathing and can further contribute to the horse getting himself in a right old tizz.

By restricting the increase in breathing the Breather helps to counteract this vicious cycle although, clearly, if a horse really wants to get adrenalised then very little can stop them as many of us have experienced. In most situations however, the Breather can at least help prevent a distressing escalation of anxiety.

Once Dan was back with his mates the stressor (loss of his mates) disappeared and then the Breather was able to help reduce his breathing back towards normal levels and turn off adrenaline production allowing his body to go into a calm and relaxed (anabolic) state as soon as possible.

Obviously a Breather can be used in a similar training program to help a horse deal calmly with any potentially stressful situation.

## **Itchy nostrils**

It is common for horses to get itchy nostrils when they do Equine Breathing. This is due to tickling in tissues of the airways and nostrils that have been chronically compromised by lack of circulation, as they experience an increase in oxygen and nutrients due to improved circulation. Similarly, people often experience tickling in nose or throat when they start reducing their breathing.

It can be a bit of nuisance for owners using 1N because the horse fidgets and it's difficult to keep the hand in place over the nostril. Horses using a Breather may rub vigorously to alleviate the itching and may damage the Breather. Putting your finger inside the Breather to find and scratch the itchy place may help. Alternatively Rescue Remedy lightly applied to the affected area seems to help in some cases.

Gradually as the horse becomes accustomed to the improved circulation the itching dies down.

I am always interested to hear your views and experience so do email.

Till next time  
breathe easy  
Clare

[clare@equinebreathing.com](mailto:clare@equinebreathing.com)