



Horse Breather

Equine Breathing ezine March 2013 issue 61



www.equinebreathing.com

How to help a horse stop windsucking

Windsucking is a distressing behaviour. Owners report that afflicted horses tend to be under weight, sustain damage to teeth and become prone to colic among other problems. In addition there is the damage to stables and fences etc which is not insignificant.

Fortunately, owners also report good results with Equine Breathing. Some horses stop within days of starting Equine Breathing, but most take longer so it is important to install an Equine Breathing program that is effective and sustainable in the long term.

This article is a step by step guide for an effective EB program. Step one is for horse and owner that have no Equine Breathing experience so if you do have EB experience you can start at step 2 or 3

It's helpful but not essential, to record the intensity of the windsucking before you start. Ideally take a video and write down the frequency (times per minute), intensity (eg loudness), locations and percentage of time spent doing it etc. It's easy to forget how bad things were and this enables you to monitor progress.

Step 1 1N Confidence building

- Use the **free instructions** to start using '1N' Equine Breathing (see link >)
- Do 1N in a time and place when the horse is most relaxed
- Do at least 30 minutes a day for a week

Aims

- To enable you to judge for yourself the effect of Equine Breathing in order to have the confidence to continue with it.
- To provide a gentle start to improving your horse's breathing

Check Points

- Is the 1N being done effectively – is the horse enjoying and relaxing the sessions?
- Check out the 'View Demo' video on the 'How to do It' page (see link >) if your horse does not look relaxed like this then read Horse Breather issue no 7 "If your horse is slow to respond to 1N" on the articles page – at the link >) to get guidance on how to enable your horse to let go and relax.
- Avoid reprimanding your horse or physically preventing him/her from windsucking. It may work in the short term but is unlikely to continue to work longer term as the horse's breathing deteriorates and the compulsion grows stronger. It may help to consider that the horse probably finds it extremely difficult NOT to windsuck in his/her current state of breathing and health. If you have ever given in to cravings to binge drink alcohol, eat unhealthy food or smoke, even when you knew it was bad for you – you probably have some kind of empathy with your horse's compulsion. (And yes, if you were to improve your breathing you would suffer less from cravings!)



<http://www.equinebreathing.com/how-to-do-it.php>



<http://www.equinebreathing.com/horse-breather.php>

Step 2 Regular Equine Breathing program

- Start using a Breather, ideally an Equine Breather (the most powerful) but alternatively a Grazing Breather or AW
- Use the Breather regularly as much as possible up to the maximum healing rate and or your own logistic constraints.
- Ideally, change the horse's routine if necessary to reduce the effect of over breathing triggers. Eg avoid inactivity such as in stables, promote gentle exercise as in turn out
- Continue until all symptoms have disappeared AND THEN continue until the horse regains normal breathing.

Aims

- To improve the horse's breathing enough to gain a significant improvement in their physiology and health. This will result in them becoming less compulsive about windsucking.
- To continue to improve the horse's breathing until the windsucking has completely disappeared
- To continue to improve the horse's breathing until the breathing and the physiology have returned to normal (which will take longer)



Check Points

- Horses tend to stop windsucking in a Breather (especially the Equine Breather), so it might be tempting to use the Breather simply as a deterrent. But in fact a Breather works to improve the breathing which encourages healing so you must not use a Breather for longer than advised in the training DVD just in order to stop the windsucking. This is because there is a maximum rate of healing that any horse can achieve. If you try and push the rate of healing faster than this maximum, it will be uncomfortable for the horse and would anyway be counterproductive.
- The windsucking will only disappear completely once the horse has healed sufficiently and this point will vary from horse to horse. You can't push the horse to reach this point faster than the optimum healing rate, so you just have to be patient and continue to provide Equine Breathing at the optimum rate for your horse.
- In some cases the horse may stop windsucking altogether in this step but it is imperative that you do not stop the Equine Breathing program.

Step 3 (if necessary) Specific Intervention

- Put the horse in his/her favourite windsucking location or situation and if they windsuck do 1N until they fall asleep

Or

- Put the horse in his/her favourite windsucking location or situation whilst wearing a Breather (ideally an Equine but the Grazing or All Weather may work) and let them fall asleep.
- If the horse persists in windsucking then walk them for a couple of minutes in the Breather and then try again.

Aims

- To replace windsucking with pleasant feelings and positive behaviour.
- To create a new association between the former windsucking location or situation and new pleasant feelings of calm and relaxation; so that from now on that location or situation engenders good feelings and behaviour rather than windsucking (to change pathways in the brain).



chronic windsucker relaxing in an Equine Breather session



at the fence windsucking location but relaxing instead in Equine Breather



haynet windsucking situation but with 1N, falling asleep instead

Check Points

- This is best done once the horse's breathing and physiology have improved so they are not so desperate and after any clearings.
- If this is attempted too soon it may not work, so simply give up, continue with step 2, the regular Equine Breathing program and then try again at a later date.
- Intervention is done in addition to the regular Equine Breathing program
- This can be a profound exercise. Horses tend to go into a very deep relaxation and sleep. I feel that this is when pathways in the brain change resulting in the new beneficial behaviour instead of windsucking.
- There is a video of this in action on the site. The horse has just had an Equine Breather session and is offered the option of windsucking at his favourite location. He starts but is given some 1N and then falls deeply asleep instead.

windsucking video at

<http://www.equinebreathing.com/windsucking-video.php>

Honeymoon

It is quite common for a horse to stop windsucking after their first Equine Breathing session which of course delights the owner. But often the horse then starts windsucking again after a honeymoon period. It's important that the owner does not get discouraged as this is just part of the healing process. And in fact, closer inspection usually reveals that the windsucking is less intense than it was originally. It is particularly useful to have a record of the windsucking from before starting Equine Breathing for comparison.

Use of physical restraints

I would not advocate use of collars or electric fencing etc in the early stages of retraining the breathing with Equine Breathing, when the horse is still desperate. But some owners have found that they can be helpful at a later stage when the horse is no longer desperate and if the owner is not able to carry out step 3 for any reason.

Effect of stress

Any form of stress is likely to increase the breathing. In the early stages of retraining with Equine Breathing, the over breathing is near to the level that triggers windsucking so even if the horse has mostly stopped windsucking, stress can easily result in windsucking starting again. Actually the windsucking at this point becomes quite a good indicator of what stresses your horse. You may discover situations that you had not realised were stressful. Gradually as the over breathing reduces, it takes a more and more powerful stress stimulus to induce windsucking and as the breathing returns towards more normal levels, no stressful situation results in windsucking.

Each horse is different. Each has a different (and variable) rate of healing and a different breathing pattern trigger point for windsucking. So the pattern of recovering from windsucking is difficult to predict and often it is a question of just being patient.

Some cases can be stubborn and complicated (especially if you are not familiar with the holistic healing process) but I am always happy to help if I can so don't hesitate to email with any queries. And or join the Facebook Group for support and encouragement.

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Facebook Group:-
Horse windsucking / cribbing recovery