



# NEWSLETTER

## April 2018

### From the Chair.....

Hi All

At long last it would seem that the rain may stop, forecast is good for the rest of the month. Here's hoping, I don't think I have ever known it to be so wet, the fields are so muddy, the holes in my winter paddocks are about a foot deep & full of water. Will take a lot of sorting out! So many events have been cancelled due to the ground conditions. Let's hope the forecast is right. Keep an eye on the grass it is growing fast & is very lush, laminitis is a real worry at the moment.

So at long last I have started getting out & about with Coco, it's difficult to believe that I was told she was finished last November. I am looking forward to doing a few more competitions during the summer. Camp should be fun again this year.

Here's to a lovely dry, sunny, successful summer for all of you.

Enjoy your riding.

***Jane & Coco***

VHPRC Open Show  
and Veteran Championships  
28<sup>th</sup> September 2018  
@ Leyland Court

If you can help, or know someone who can, please get in touch  
Contact: anyone on the Committee!!! 😊

**We hold our meetings on the first Wednesday of the month**

**Food available in the pub**

**The Griffin**

**107 London Rd, Warmley, Bristol BS30 5JN**

### Open Your Eyes....

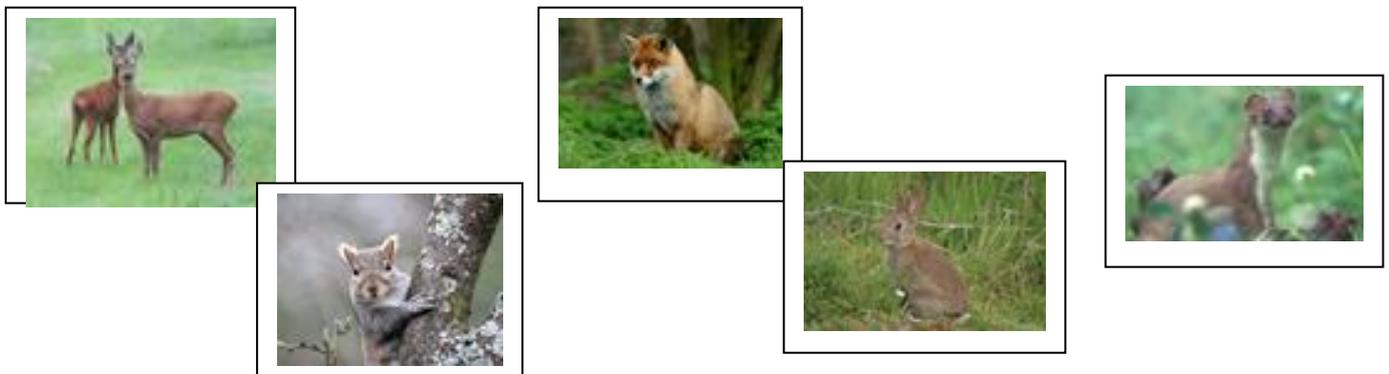
So Spring (such as it is) is nearly here. Whilst spending more time around the yard partly due to the lighter evenings, I often marvel at the wealth of wildlife we are privileged to share, but wonder how many actually notice what's around them. Swallows return to our yard every year, and I have watched more than one clutch hatch, fledge and fly last year, having to duck as they practised their flying and trying to move everything out of the droppings paths! Hopefully they will soon return, but will be in for a slight shock perhaps! But we are lucky to have a fabulous range of birds: buzzards nest in the woods, as do green woodpeckers, little owls, barn owls and jays. Around the buildings pied wagtails strut and nest, alongside robins, goldfinches, long tailed tits, blue tits, great tits and huge numbers of sparrows, crows, magpies and jackdaws, not all welcome of course where there are nestlings.



And it isn't just birds- just in my paddock alone I will spot yarrow, self heal, trefoil, lady's bedstraw, cinquefoils, and at times small delicate (unidentified) orchids. Let alone daisies, plantains, dead nettles, clovers and thistles, all of which provide food for the wildlife, and for the ponies. We also have a wide variety of moths and butterflies, although these seem to be becoming a rarer sight these days. I remember a time when the fields seemed alive with fluttering wings- however last year I saw an abundance of Speckled Woods and Meadow Browns, as well as Commas, Orange Tips, Peacocks and Brimstones, even the odd Red Admiral or Marbled White.



Finally we are lucky to spot small mammals such as squirrels and rabbits, and larger ones such as foxes and roe deer- but just occasionally there slinks a weasel or stoat. Not seen a badger yet, though others have!



We also have the odd snake unfortunately!! I remember Roisin being bitten by one years ago ☹️



What do you see around when you go to your yard?

## Reaching for a para-Olympic goal

Last year our club had a visit and a talk from Beth Hobbs and Sally Anne Haigh. Sally Anne had a riding accident which left her paralysed from the waist down. After over a year of hospital and physiotherapy this amazing lady desperately wanted to get back in the saddle.

With the help of Beth and her horse super Flynn the dream is now becoming a reality.

At our meeting they said they would be grateful for any help with getting Sally riding again and Tess Bryer and I volunteered. I had recently given up work so now had some free time and so helping on a Monday afternoon has become a regular thing.

Firstly on Sally Anne's arrival we get the hoist ready. This is fixed to the rear of Beth's lorry and has to be assembled and battery connected. Then a tacked up Flynn is brought down to the lorry park. The hoist is then placed under Sally Anne's thighs and as it is highered it grips her under the arms and pulls her about 10ft up in the air. Flynn is then walked under her and she is lowered onto the saddle. Once we have guided her into position we release the hoist from her thighs and it is swung out of the way. We then position her feet in the stirrups which is difficult as her ankles are stiff and her feet have dropped.

One of us either side holding lead ropes attached to the bit and Sally Anne's friend Jane and Beth at her legs we go to the school. At the school there is a step down and Beth tells Sally Anne to grab the strap on the saddle and lean back as we go down the step.

Once in the school we walk around and keep the lead ropes loose and keep quiet as we want Flynn to listen to Sally Anne's commands not us. With the money the club donated Sally Anne had some whips made which curl around her legs with which she guides Flynn instead of legs. To stop and start Flynn Sally Anne has to use her core muscles and voice. He has no encouragement from us.

After a while Sally Anne's feet are removed from the stirrups and the stirrups crossed over the saddle. When she feels confident enough we remove the lead ropes but still walk by the side, although we are slowly getting farther away. The schooling is in walk at the moment but she hopes to progress to trotting and enter a RDA dressage test for experience.

We walk around for about 45 minutes and always finish on a good note. Flynn is amazing getting used to having different sort of commands. Not much seems to faze him.

Lesson over we clip the lead ropes back on and exit the school Sally Anne leaning back as we negotiate the step. Back to the lorry park Flynn is walked into position and the hoist swung over him and Sally Anne. Once in position Sally Anne is lifted up in the air and Flynn walked away to be untacked.

There are ups and downs to the riding some days great others no so and the occasional fall has dented her confidence a little, but this gutsy lady is very determined. She has sessions at RDA and lots of physiotherapy. She has also had her disablement grading for para riding so knows her goal.

It is a pleasure to be part of the team I am so glad the club asked them to do a talk and I enjoy my Monday afternoons helping this inspirational lady.

## *Rowena Moulding*



## Keep the Spring in your Horse's Step

After a fantastic day in the relatively warm sunshine at the March day of the VHPRC Dressage Series it would be easy to think that Spring had finally sprung! It's always an exciting time of year for Equestrians, drier (hopefully!) days, longer evenings and cleaner ponies mean we can all get out and spend more time in the saddle.

We must keep in mind that the slower pace of Winter will have taken its toll on our horses though. Their fitness may not be at the level it was so do be careful not to do too much too soon. It is easy to get caught up in the longer days and go for those longer, harder rides. Like us, when a horse's workload increases their muscles fatigue at a faster rate, this is when the horse becomes more susceptible to injury. When a muscle becomes fatigued it will not work as efficiently and other muscles will compensate, this then causes those muscles to fatigue as they are working more, you can see where this is going! A common example of this is in the Longissimus Dorsi, the muscle along the back which we sit on. This muscle helps to transmit the energy from the hindquarters to the forehand and works for lateral flexion along the horse's back. When the Longissimus Dorsi becomes fatigued it can affect the horse's gaits, they will lose impulsion and may hollow through their back, this will then begin to have an impact on the horse's Gluteal muscles causing further lack of impulsion and prevent the hind limb protracting correctly. This is the beginning of a Stress Point cycle, which can have an impact throughout the whole of the horse's body.

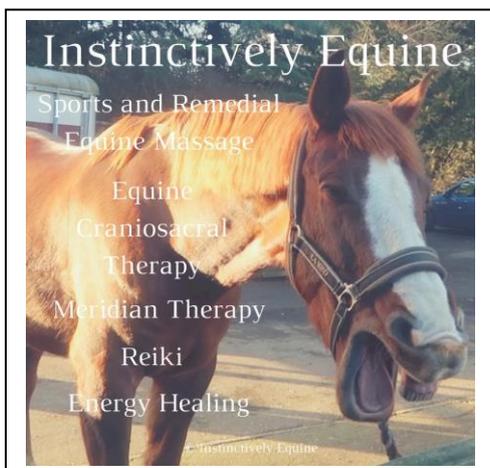
There are a few things you can do to help reduce the risk of fatigue and injury:

- Ensure a sufficient warm up and cool down, warmer muscles have more elasticity so can stretch and work efficiently; the cool down will also help to remove the build-up of lactic acid.
- Increase your horse's workload slowly, interval training is really useful, take note of how quickly your horse returns to his resting respiratory and heart rate to see how he is improving.
- Allow your horse to have rest during exercise, plenty of time to walk and stretch between more intense work.
- Book an appointment with Instinctively Equine for a check up, make sure everything is well so you can kick on with your training.

So, go out and enjoy the warmth, embrace the sunshine and let's not start complaining about the flies just yet!

I look forward to seeing you all soon.

Alice Cuff



Hopefully Alice will be coming back to speak to us again, but if you wish to have her visit, give her a ring ☺  
Call 07515 438745

<http://www.instinctequine.weebly.com>

A member suggested we have a page or two dedicated to **'Cobs That Can'** ..... here are some of the pieces sent in so far.

Bought from Bridgewater Fair 2.5 years ago, Picalo was the most psychologically damaged pony I've ever known. With no fight left in him, or any interest in life, it was around a year before he started to run or even play in the field. He wouldn't accept food or treats, and would often sit down or run through wooden fences out of fear. A horrific driving accident had left him petrified of every and anything, and he was so headshy I was unable to put a headcollar on him. Sarah Hussey (Naturally Healing) helped us massively with his head shy, poll issues and with trust, and I have a lot to thank her for. In October I backed him, and he's been fantastic. He will always try and confront his fears, no matter how scared he is. I'm still building his bridle on bit by bit, and working on many issues, but where there's a will there's a way. He has had a 1st and 2nd in the recent walk and trot tests in the VHPRC Series, and as always, VHPRC members have been hugely friendly and supportive. Look forward to the next one...

Claire Victoria Phipps



Hi, it has been my first season ever doing dressage with Ollie who is 9. We managed to get a 4th place weekend just gone. Had him on part loan for a year then 3 years full loan and now he's mine. Only been happy hackers and small amount of schooling.

Emily Davies



This is Clyde 16 yrs old. We are very happy and he proves cobs definitely can. We compete in all areas and he is the horse of a lifetime. Always a smile on his face. Jumping XC he is a kid in a toy shop, leaping with excitement and loving life. We do novice dressage now. We have owned him for two years now and he's certainly come alive in that time. I have a son with a disability so he looks after him when Harrison rides and when I get on he switches over for me adapting for his rider. I love him to bits. We are in the qualifiers this year for dressage and showing. Harrison is doing the inhand and me the ridden.

Amanda Lomax



**And there are more!!!!!!**

It will be three years this summer that I have had my amazing cob!! Having had Red for the previous 5 years it was a big change of ride for me.

Red was an Arab / Tb and very exuberant and flashy, with Josie being a very steady energy saving mare. But funny enough as lots of you know I came off Red nil in 5 years and Josie 3 times in first few weeks lol!! Twice in a show jumping rally and once in a cross-country session at Stockland Lovell. We constantly giggle about this myself, Charlotte Alford, Teresa Green, and Gill Hutchings.

I do think that in my head buying a nice safe cob gave me the false impression that I could go straight back to my younger days and jump again, unfortunately my brain and body didn't quite cope, and poor Josie must have thought what in the hell is going on. So, I sensibly slowed down and started again with just flat work and dressage. I have had so much success with my beautiful cob and I have had lots of placings and several wins at dressage venues and also in the show ring!!

I adore my girl and although we didn't start well, we are a perfect match now and we will continue to build our confidence together, my aim this summer is to do as many fun rides as possible and popping a few logs on the way.

Deb Vickery



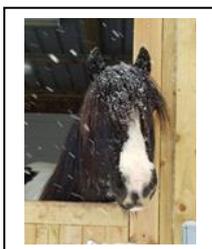
**Trooper – My traditional Gypsy Cob**

So I always thought I would probably have one more horse after Bertha, but I envisaged more an older schoolmaster dressage horse as I think my jumping days are over. So how did I end up with a young strong traditional coloured cob – I'm still not sure how that happened. My massage lady says we were meant to find each other and maybe she is right. I am not experienced in bringing on a young horse and there have been many moments that have left me feeling 'can I do this'. Anyhow he is still with me and is very much part of my family now.

Good points	Bad points
He is very bold out hacking and not a lot bothers him.	He can be very strong when being lead and I often lose him.
He loves people, horses and life in general.	He hates being on his own and if he can't see another horse will try and come over the stable door.
Under saddle he tries very hard.	Canter is still very much a work in progress.
For a coloured horse he stays quite clean!	It takes a lot of hard work to get him clean for shows.
At only 14hh he is easy to get off (very useful as you get older).	Loading is starting to be a bit of an issue (see first point above).
He doesn't cost a lot in rugs or shoeing (he is barefoot and normally rug less).	
He lives on fresh air.	

So I guess the good outweighs the bad and we will get there eventually. See below for some photos of our journey so far. I think he is quite photogenic.

Linda Knight



more to come next time in 'Cobs that Can'!!

## DIARY DATES

May (9th) - Vicky Milne - Bandaging your horse  
June - Wendy Poore and Straightness Training  
VHPRC Camp 2018 - Friday 8th - Sunday 10th June 2018  
July - Heather Seems - Equine Trainer and Alexander  
Technique  
Aug - Gill from the RDA  
Sept - TBC  
Oct - David Hall from the Farrier's Council  
Nov - TBC  
Dec - Christmas Quiz and Nibbles

### Dressage Riders, Show Jumpers, Eventers

If you would be interested in competing for the club at area competitions, please contact Laura Hayden, Team Co-ordinator.

New items and styles of Club Merchandise can be bought at our monthly club meetings- list is at....  
<http://www.vhprc.co.uk/?q=merchandise>

## QUALIFIER SHOW DATES:

22nd Apr - Roman Lodge Show  
22nd Apr - Tumpy Green  
30th Mar - SWPA  
13th May - SWPA  
13th May - DJL Show  
19th May - Wanborough Show  
20th May - Mark Show  
3rd June - SWPA  
10th June - Syston Pony Club  
8th July - SWPA  
15th July - Avon Vale Hunt Show  
4th Aug - Eastington  
26th Aug - Tumpy Green

### 2019 Qualifiers

15th Sept - Foxham Show  
22nd Sept - Fairfield Farm Show

If you hear of a show that would hold qualifiers at no cost to them, please contact Kathy Hooper

Please keep checking the website for up-to-date news regarding speakers and rallies – [www.vhprc.co.uk](http://www.vhprc.co.uk)  
Any articles/ photos to Ros at [rossteward@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:rossteward@hotmail.co.uk)

## Excess rider weight can cause lameness (from Horse & Hound via Gill Hutchings)

Riders who are too heavy for their horses can cause temporary lameness, a landmark study has shown. Results from a pilot research project into the effects of rider weight, announced on 8 March at the National Equine Forum, show that **a high rider to horse weight ratio can cause lameness and discomfort.**

The unsoundness was temporary, and all horses finished last September's study moving at least as well as they were at the start, but it showed that **a rider who is above the appropriate weight can have a negative impact on a horse's performance.**

Dr Sue Dyson, head of clinical orthopaedics at the Animal Health Trust who led the study, said: "While all the horses finished the study moving as well as when they started, the results showed a substantial temporary effect of rider weight as a proportion of horse weight. **The results do not mean that heavy riders should not ride, but suggest that if they do they should ride a horse of appropriate size and fitness, with a saddle that is correctly fitted for both horse and rider.**

"We must remember that this is a pilot study: further work is required to determine if horse fitness, adaptation to heavier weights and more ideal saddle fit will increase the weight an individual horse can carry. This should help us further in our quest to develop guidelines for optimum rider: horse bodyweight ratios."

The study involved six horses, each ridden in their usual tack by four riders of different weights. Gait, horse behaviour, heart and respiratory rates and alterations in back dimensions were among the factors assessed for each test.

**All the sessions involving the heavy and very heavy riders were abandoned, all but one owing to the horses' temporary lameness.** The other was halted because the horse showed 10 of 24 behavioural markers previously identified by Dr Dyson as likely to express pain or discomfort.

An ethogram developed by Dr Dyson to assess behavioural markers was applied, and **the scores that may reflect pain were "significantly higher" in the horses when ridden by the heavy and very heavy riders.**

**The issues of rider height and saddle fit were also raised;** the heavy rider in the study was of similar weight to one horse's owner but was nearly a foot taller. The test rider sat towards the back of the horse's usual saddle, overloading the cantle and making it harder for him to be balanced.

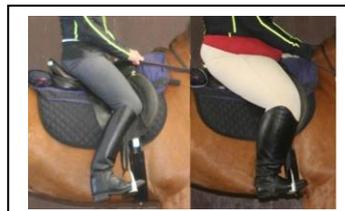
World Horse Welfare chief executive Roly Owers said: "**These pilot results are certainly not surprising but are very significant** in adding vital evidence to inform an appropriate rider: horse weight ratio. It is common sense that rider weight impacts equine welfare, however many might not fully understand or recognise this.

"What is desperately needed is basic guidance to help riders identify a horse or pony that is right for them and **this research is a vital step in that direction.**"

*A controversial topic...*

*It would be interesting to hear our members views!*

*Email me at [rossteward@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:rossteward@hotmail.co.uk)*



## Laminitis in horses: recognising the signs (from Horse & Hound via Gill)

Contrary to myth, laminitis occurs all year-round and not just in the spring. It is an emergency that needs prompt action so find out how to recognise it and what to do if your horse is showing signs.

**Laminitis in horses** is a very serious and potentially agonising condition. Every case should be dealt with promptly and the condition should never be underestimated.

Laminitis can occur in two forms:

**Acute laminitis** is the early stage of the disease when the animal is uncomfortable and showing signs of lameness, but major damage has not yet happened within the hoof. The chances of recovery are maximised if treatment is started early.

**Chronic laminitis** is when the pedal bone sinks or rotates within the hoof (pictured top), leading to permanent damage. These cases are not necessarily such an emergency as the acute attacks, as damage to the foot has already occurred, but a vet should be contacted if the horse or pony is in pain.

### Recognising laminitis in horses

In severe cases, animals will be unable to move. They may be panting, sweating and leaning back on their heels, trying to take their weight off their feet. In the worst cases, they will lie down and be unable to stand — this can be confused with colic.

This is obviously urgent and you should contact your vet immediately. In milder cases the signs are more subtle, but they include:

- Hooves that feel hot and feet that are painful with pressure to the sole
- A tendency for the horse to stand with its legs stretched forward, while leaning backward, to ease his weight off his feet
- Mild cases will constantly shift their weight from foot to foot as they try to find the least painful way of weight-bearing
- The pain of laminitis means that the horse's pulse and respiratory rate rise

Frequently, a prominent pulse is obvious where the horse's digital artery runs over the fetlock. In a severe case, this digital pulse (which is where the blood flows into the foot) will be pounding on all four feet.

Mild, chronic laminitis can be confused with other sorts of lameness. Look out for the following:

- A pony that 'feels his feet' and so may be intermittently lame, especially on rough ground
- Foot soreness or lameness after shoeing
- Odd shaped feet — indicated by rings in the hoof wall that are wider at the heel than at the toe. Dropped soles, with wider than normal white lines, and flat feet are also common
- Recurrent hoof infections, due to the weak horn growth
- Visible red bruising within the hoof, particularly obvious when the farrier trims the horse's feet

### If you suspect laminitis

**First, contact the vet.** Severe cases of laminitis in horses will need painkillers and other treatment urgently — this may include frog supports, medication to control blood pressure, and treating any underlying illness that may be causing the laminitis — while mild, chronic cases will require planned action involving both vet and farrier. If laminitis is suspected, never force the horse to walk or exercise.

It is possible to tape frog supports onto the feet to help relieve pressure on the laminae. There are now several types of tape-on support available, from purpose-designed pads or rubber wedges to homemade bandage supports.

If your horse or pony appears to be reluctant to move due to laminitis while out at grass, it may help to fit frog supports before slowly bringing them in or travelling them home, ideally in a low-loading trailer.

All laminitis cases should be box-rested, ideally on non-edible bedding. A very deep bed (40-50cm) of dust-free shavings is best. This can act as support for the feet nearly as effectively as — and more simply than — frog supports. Allow affected horses to lie down and rest their feet.

**Total box rest is important.** This should continue for at least 30 days, during which the diet needs to be adjusted to ensure that the horse's weight is controlled. It is crucial that any overweight laminitic loses weight, but this must be a gradual process. Consult your vet or equine nutritionist for advice.

*Having had 3 ponies recently with laminitis I know how scary it can be...one severe attack was brought on by trimming, which has never been a problem before... fortunately all are now recovering.*



And finally, another article from Gill which is thought provoking.....perhaps something to consider if restricting hay intake?



©Leslie Potter

Which should be fed first – hay or grain? If you're feeding correctly, this issue is truly a moot point because the horse should have access to forage (hay and/or pasture) 24/7 with no gaps. Therefore, when fed concentrates, the horse's digestive tract should already have hay flowing through it.

If fed starchy cereal grains (oats, corn, barley, etc.) on an empty stomach, the horse will produce even more acid (potentially leading to ulcers) and it will be leave the stomach quickly. When this happens, there is a risk that it will not be fully digested in the small intestine (especially if large amounts are fed), and end up in the hindgut where starch can be fermented by the bacterial population. This can lead to endotoxin-related laminitis.

If hay is present in the stomach first, it creates a physical barrier for the grain to move out of the stomach as quickly. Since starch does not get digested in the stomach, the grain is simply mixed and churned into a semi-liquid mass, which enters the small intestine where it can be digested down to glucose. If there is hay present, fiber mixes with the starch and the whole mass enters the small intestine. Fiber is not digested until it reaches the hind gut, but its presence slows down the digestion of starch, and obstructs the absorption of glucose into the bloodstream, leading to a less dramatic rise in insulin.

One thing to note - there is more water involved when hay is present (from increased drinking and saliva production). This is a good thing since digestion within the small intestine cannot take place without water.