



HELPING HORSES THROUGH ANXIETY, CAREER CHANGES—AND QUARANTINE

Lockdown sucks. Lockdown with 26-superfit Hunters and Jumpers who suddenly can only be hand-walked? That can be a potential powder keg of peril for horses and handlers. This blog article shares stories about helping horses through anxiety, career changes—and quarantine.

Helping horses through anxiety, career changes—and quarantine

When the Equine herpesvirus-1 (EHV-1) outbreak at Desert International Horse Park brought the Desert Circuit to a screeching halt, Erin Duffy Show Stables in Los Angeles, California, had 26 horses facing a lengthy quarantine. They went from five to six days a week of work with turnout to no work and zero turnout due to fear of airborne germs. “Just hand-walking in plastic suits,” says manager Lisa Cahn Jope.

Three things got her team through nearly two months of quarantine:

- Absolute dedication to the horses in their care
- A boatload of Clorox
- A ton of StressLess

Developed by veterinarians, the all-natural formula promotes a calm mind, focus, and mood balance for happier, more trainable horses. Trainers across disciplines and breeds have recommended the herb, lactose, and preservative-free solution for many years. The recent quarantines were only the latest testing grounds for its soothing power.

Equine anxiety is even more contagious than EHV-1. Twenty-six horses stuck in their stalls with pent-up energy could “quickly escalate into a very bad situation,” says Jope. “They start kicking their stalls, looking for something to do. They could absolutely get anxious. It would have been very difficult to walk them.”

Jope’s crew worked in plastic rain suits, gloves, and booties to keep horses and people safe. They switched their entire plastic outfit between each horse. They continuously scrubbed their facility with Clorox. And they put every single horse on StressLess.

“They were quiet and nice through the whole situation,” says Jope. “They were easy to handle for the most part, though there are always one or two renegades.”

After nearly two months and countless miles of hand-walking, when the quarantine was finally lifted, the barn threw a party. But they didn’t stop StressLess. Bringing all those Hunters and Jumpers back into work might have been an explosive situation. Instead, says Jope, “we went through a lot more StressLess.”

THE #1 ALL NATURAL CALMING HORSE SUPPLEMENT

Even without a quarantine, eventing trainer Rick Wallace keeps all the horses at his Reddick, Florida facility on StressLess for training. “It works differently for different types of horses,” he says. “For the hot, high-anxiety horse, it helps relieve some of the energy. It lets them take a deep breath and take a step toward relaxation. For the spooky horse, it gives them more focus. They can look at something and kind of go, ‘well, that’s really not something I need to spook at.’” Wallace’s Trakehner stallion, Ultimate SeQret, a “calm horse that anyone can ride,” gets StressLess as “a performance enhancer for focus, to get more out of every ride,” says Wallace. The supplement, made in the United States, does not make horses drowsy or impair motor function.

Off-the-track thoroughbred Ultimate Prediction has proven to be “one of the most delicate horses, mind-wise, I’ve ever worked with,” says Wallace. “If he’s not on StressLess, you really, really have to be careful with him.” There’s so much opportunity for people to use the product in training, he says: “With it, you can make a horse more willing, put him the zone, where he might be able to learn a bit instead of just ricocheting around from spook to spook.”

For racehorses ricocheting off the track, veteran thoroughbred re-trainer and rehabilitator Stacey Emory swears by StressLess. Often when the thoroughbreds arrive at her Camalou Farms in Williston, Florida, they’re “practically vibrating,” she says. “At the track, they’re fed rocket fuel and go out and work an hour or two a day. It’s not optimal,” says Emory, an equine vet tech who has worked with thousands of racehorses over 25 years.

When they arrive, she starts them on a regime of StressLess. “They often come with some issues, stomach issues, a little nervousness, anxiety,” she says. “StressLess helps them settle and take that first deep breath. The stuff works.” It prevents the anxiety from spiraling out of control. If not, “first the mind goes, then the gut goes, then the attitude goes, and you can have multiple problems at once.”

Emory recommends the supplement for horses on stall rest as a solution that won’t cause additional problems like side effects and is easy to administer, as “not everyone is comfortable sticking a needle in their horse’s neck every day,” she says.

It’s been a game-changer for her OTTB, Ozzy, who was gelded a year after coming to Camalou because he kept bolting while being led and running back to the mare field. After he was gelded, the 17.3 horse was fine—until they accidentally ran out of StressLess. “He started bolting again,” says Emory, who says after going back on the supplement, Ozzy relocated his manners.

Emory said the formula could be key for thoroughbreds in particular. “They are the best breed on the planet and will try and try and try for you—they have more heart than any animal on earth,” she says. Sometimes, however, that blood can get in the way. “This product,” she says, “can help.”

It certainly helped Mojito. The 16.1 Dutch gray gelding is “magnificent,” says Jope of Erin Duffy Show Stables. “He’s the epitome of what a hunter should look like—a big gray unicorn.”

However, the unicorn was “just a little bit of a punk sometimes.”

At shows, he would jump six beautiful jumps in a row; then decide to throw in a few bucks for good measure. “Or, he would come around a corner, see the gate and just take his rider right out the exit,” she says of Mo, who competes in amateur and professional hunter divisions. “It was really frustrating because either he’d been winning or he’d be doing something silly and blow the class.”

Jope began feeding Mo StressLess, and the difference has been “night and day,” she says. “He simply does not do any of that silly stuff anymore. He does so much better with everything. The product gives horses a chance to think about what they’re doing and not just react. It slows the brain down just enough so you can get through to them. He comes out the same horse every day, and you know what kind of horse you will have under you.”

Mo’s barn mate, Joey, is a 16.1-hand Irish gelding, “black, with lots of white, and beautifully built,” says Jope. “The kind of horse that when you’re walking across the showgrounds, you get stopped by people who say, ‘My god, that’s a gorgeous animal.’” Unfortunately, Joey was tough to get to the ring because he was suspicious and truly scared. “Sometimes, he’d see a jump he didn’t like and just stop cantering. The only strategy that seemed to reduce Joey’s anxiety at shows: Stuffing half a banana in his mouth as he walked through the in-gate. Chewing the banana would take just enough of his mental energy to keep him from his anxious behavior—until he ran out of bananas.

StressLess helped Joey turn a huge corner—without needing bunches of bananas kept ringside, says Jope. “He’s winning like crazy,” she says. He just comes out, marches right on, and does his job. “His behavior changed like it can when horses hit that magic age, usually eight,” says Jope. “Except for Joey, it was 16—with StressLess.”

StressLess® for Horses is an all-natural equine supplement that helps promote calmness and focus in horses experiencing stress related to training, showing, racing, or travel.

StressLess® for Horses is non-herbal and all-natural.

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