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ISSUE 2

# THE EQUESTRIAN

**EUROPEAN COLOR**

**BREED SPOTLIGHT:  
THE KNABSTRUPPER**

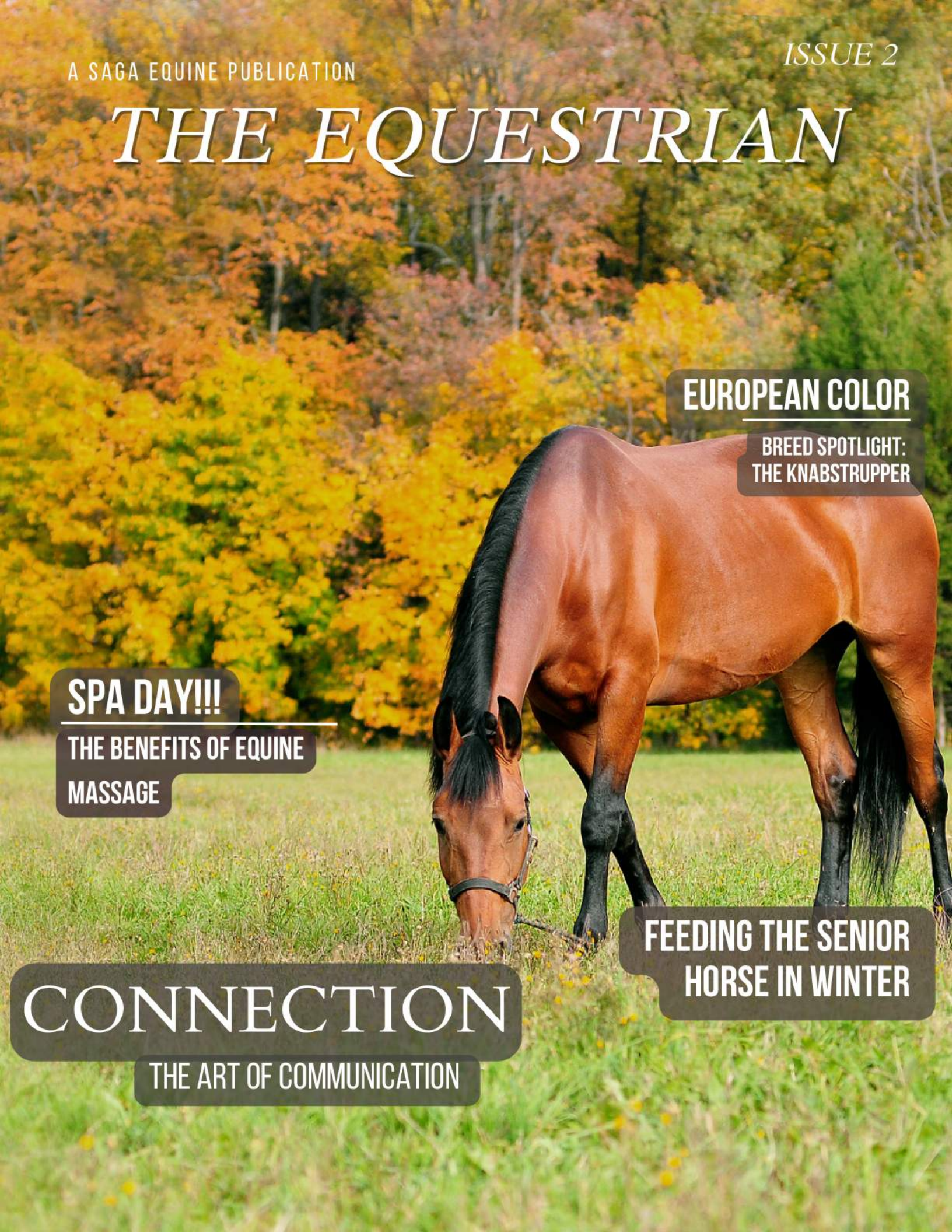
**SPA DAY!!!**

**THE BENEFITS OF EQUINE  
MASSAGE**

**CONNECTION**

**THE ART OF COMMUNICATION**

**FEEDING THE SENIOR  
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# EUROPEAN COLOR

## THE DYNAMIC KNABSTRUPPER

BY: LAURA LIPPERT


Take a journey with me to learn about the rare and beautiful Knabstrupper (pronounced 'nab-struper), Established in Denmark in 1812, this warmblood breed was distinguished by its beautifully spotted coat. Unfortunately, this breed was almost lost to the world. In the 1870's the breed had a limited gene pool and was almost lost to inbreeding and a fire in 1891 that killed 22 of the breed's premier stock. In 1971, breeder Frede Nielson imported 3 Appaloosa stallions to give new blood to the dying breed, thus preserving the breed for future generations. That same year the Danish Knabstrupper Association was established.

This rare breed consists of approximately 600 horses worldwide. They are known as a healthy breed with a typical life expectancy of 27.5 years and no known breed-specific health issues. They are a gentle, intelligent and athletic breed making them extremely trainable. The Knabstrupper's spotted coat made them a popular choice for circus horses in Europe. While their endurance and speed, made them the horse of choice as war mounts for the Danish officers. Unfortunately, their striking, spotted coat made them easy targets.

It is believed that The Knabstrupper, and its spotted cousin - the American Appaloosa, have ancestry that trace all the way back to prehistoric Spain. Cave paintings in early Spain depict the brilliantly spotted horses. Their spotted coats leaves them often mistaken for the American Appaloosa. Coat patterns and variations vary greatly, as they do with the Appaloosa and come in the classic leopard pattern (a white base coat with colorful spots all over), to blanket spotting, varnish spots, varnish roans and a lovely snowflake pattern. Ironically, their most distinguishing trait is not apparent in all Knabstruppers - some are solid colored too.



While these magnificent horses are striking to view, their wonderful temperament, willing attitude and gentle nature are what truly make these horses stand out. The Knabstrupper was originally bred to have a temperament suitable for a working horse. As the need for working horses slowed, the Knabstrupper began to excel as a family horse and later found its place in the competitive world as jumpers and dressage horses. While the size and confirmation can vary due to bloodlines, the average Knabstrupper stands at 15hh to 16hh with solid, strong legs, good feet, a short, strong back and a long elegant neck. The classic Knabstrupper is a more baroque-style horse with a broader, shorter body and full mane than that of the sport style Knabstrupper. The sport style horse boasts more of its warmblood qualities and is known for its athleticism, quality gaits and elegant movement, thus making them ideal as a sporthorse for disciplines like jumping and dressage, especially in Germany and Denmark. Lastly, is the pony-style Knabstrupper. Standing at 14.2hh and under, these gentle, little horses are perfect as a children's mount. As you can see the versatility and nature of the Knabstrupper make this a true rider-friendly warmblood.

Thanks for joining us in learning more about this beautiful breed. Hopefully, through education and increased awareness, this breed will be preserved for generations to enjoy. 







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# THEY'RE DISAPPEARING BEFORE OUR EYES!

## SENIOR HORSE WEIGHT MAINTENANCE

Any more, it's pretty common for horses to make it to 30 years old. As with any other species (humans included!), older horses need more care in some areas—and their diet is no exception. This is a topic I find myself discussing with clients on a regular basis, whether they are new to horses or have worked with them their entire lives.

So what are the cases I get called out on that turn into nutrition discussions? Generally, my appointment schedule says one of these two things:

### Losing weight, eating fine

These horses have no signs of being sick, but have been slowly losing condition over a period of time. This is the perfect example of the digestive tract becoming less and less able to pull the nutrients out of the food and absorb them into the bloodstream. They are literally still eating the same amount of hay, grass and grain, still as active as before, but wasting away little by little. Unfortunately, some of the protein, fat, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals in their food is coming out with the rest of the manure. Without trying, the horse is cutting calories every day.

### Diarrhea, owner already dewormed

These horses may not be losing weight, but the manure we often refer to as “grass poops” has magically appeared while they're on hay (although generally more brown than green), and disappeared while they are on grass! This is a different inefficiency in the guts, specifically related to how well the fiber in the hay is broken down. Horses are hindgut fermenters, meaning that the largest capacity part of the intestines is the large colon. Fiber is held in here for a longer period of time, and there is a large amount of bacteria in there that uses the time to break down the fiber into usable pieces. When the usable components of the feed are not absorbed, and/or the fiber is not broken down enough, it also prevents water from being absorbed by the body (thanks to osmotic pressure). Therefore, when the contents make it out the back end, the water content is much higher than usual. However, grass is much easier to break down than hay. Rather than being over-hydrated, like younger horses on grass, older horses are better able to absorb the water and nutrients from the grass in comparison to hay. They make up for (some of) the water and calories they lose with the hay when they eat grass instead.

So the moral of the story is that all older horses should be permanent pasture pets, right? If only! Unfortunately, they often do not absorb enough nutrients from grass alone. This is where senior feed makes an appearance in the story—but you probably guessed that already. The question is, what's so great about it?



1. **Pre-processed fiber.** The stuff that isn't broken down well in the guts anymore is essentially “pre-chewed”, allowing for more complete absorption in the intestines.
2. **Different nutrient profiles.** If you compare the label of a senior feed to a performance feed, you'll notice that the percentages of the macronutrients aren't quite the same. This is because older horses are less likely to be building muscle, and are more prone to other issues. Carbohydrates are better balanced to prevent laminitis, treat insulin resistance and other metabolic issues. Calcium levels are lower to prevent the kidneys from having to work as hard. Fats are often in higher amounts to maintain nerve health, coat/skin health, and be a source of energy replacing the lower amounts of carbohydrates.

*continued on p. 8 - Senior Horses*





Senior Horses continued from p. 7

### 3. Easier to chew and swallow.

The older the horse, the less teeth available for chewing! Pellets/cubes/etc are easier to grab with their lips and chew to an appropriate size/consistency for swallowing. This makes less physical work for the guts when digesting and reduces the chance for choking. Disclaimer: Just because it is easier to chew, does NOT mean it should not be soaked in water to prevent choke!!

Senior horses do not need an exclusive diet of senior feed. The amount of senior feed often increases with age, but at first is a supplement to their normal forage. An additional way to get fiber when there is no pasture is pelleted/cubed hay (preferably mixed grass/alfalfa or straight grass, alfalfa alone has a high calcium content), for the same pre-processed reasons.

Just like how all the body systems work together to make the horse function, correct nutrition alone does not guarantee success in managing a senior horse. Don't forget to get their teeth checked regularly, continue to have the farrier out, maintain a deworming protocol, and get yearly exams by the vet. But catching the signs of a changing gut early can help keep you and your horse from having to build back all the body condition you've spent their life growing and maintaining! 🐾

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Monica Thielsen, DVM is a mixed animal practitioner at the Fredericktown Vet Clinic in Fredericktown, Ohio. Although she grew up in the city of Youngstown, Ohio, she immediately fell in love with large animal work once she started college majoring in Animal Sciences at The Ohio State University, and took that straight through vet school at OSU. Her favorite aspects of private practice are going out on farm calls and surgery of all types. She lives with her husband, raucous toddler, and two senior dogs, and when she is not working she can be found at the gym, volleyball court, softball field, or bowling alley.



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# "SPA DAYS" AREN'T JUST FOR PEOPLE

## THE BENEFITS OF EQUINE MASSAGE

BY: GREG AUCHARD

As any horse owner knows, our four-legged friends can be high maintenance at times. They want their cookies and their carrots. Heaven forbid, you don't put a quarter in the ponies mouth before you ride. Just try forgetting the treat before asking for a little training. But sometimes treating your equine pal to a massage after a workout can make them a little less reluctant to come out and play. Massage can have both physical and mental benefits? That's right, - your horse deserves and appreciates a spa day just as much as you do.

Let's talk about the physical benefits of massage. Massaging muscles in any mammal can help to improve circulation, reduce muscle tension, and increase range of motion. In larger animals massages can be even more effective and beneficial because of the sheer mass of musculature involved. Granted your horse has a supercharged circulatory and excretory system to deal with all of this power under the hood but a little help is never a bad thing. And let's be real, who among us hasn't felt a little stiff and creaky after a long day of standing around in a field, even if you're just repairing the fences the big muscle guys broke. Your horse is no exception. Plus, getting a massage from a skilled practitioner can be a relaxing and enjoyable experience for your horse - just like getting a good rubdown from your favorite masseuse.



Athletes know that recovery times are decreased with stretching and massage after exercise. Myofascial release is proven to return strained and stretched muscles to a more optimal range of motion and decrease post workout pain from lactic acid production and build up. Muscles, ligaments, and tendons are returned to optimal positions rather than causing tension and misalignment of the skeletal system where injuries and, over time, arthritic problems can arise. Why wouldn't you give your horse the benefits of relaxation and increased circulation and elimination of toxins that a massage can provide after every workout.

But it's not just about the physical benefits - equine massage can also have mental benefits for your horse. Think about it - horses are herd animals, and they thrive on social interaction and physical touch. I know you've watched your horse playing the; "You scratch my withers and I'll scratch yours" game with another horse in the pasture. Or you've noticed them shaking their skin to shoo flies. Horses have amazing senses. They respond to intentions and when they sense you're trying to help then they'll reciprocate. Getting a massage can be a way for your horse to feel connected and cared for, and can help to reduce his stress and anxiety, as well as yours. Wouldn't you rather have a partner than an adversary? Plus, let's face it, who doesn't enjoy a little pampering every now and then? Your horse works hard, and they deserve to be treated like the royalty they are.

*continued on pg. 10 - Spa*





**Spa continued from pg. 9**

Of course, there are a few things to keep in mind when it comes to equine massage. First and foremost, it's important to work with a qualified practitioner who has experience working with horses. You wouldn't want to trust just anyone with your horse's health and well-being, after all. Additionally, it's important to communicate with your practitioner about any areas of concern or sensitivity your horse may have. And finally, it's important to remember that while equine massage can be a great way to support your horse's health and happiness, it's not a substitute for veterinary care.

But don't worry that you don't know how to massage your horse. Even with all of those cautions there are still things that you as a mere horse owner can do to connect with your horse and to lessen the possibility of a bad experience. What feels good to you usually feels good to them. We all know that horses are like elephants... they never forget. So make their memories good ones and they'll make yours good in return. Your horse doesn't know your show schedule but they can surely tell when you're feeling stressed. Usually that's their first clue that you have a show ahead. A little light stretching and some gentle muscular stimulation won't hurt anybody and does a lot of good to release the memories your horse has of sharing your fears and insecurities during a training session. That last sentence could be the subject of an entire book.

Maybe later.

So there you have it, folks. Equine massage may sound like a luxury, but it can actually be a valuable tool for supporting your horse's health and well-being at least as much as supplements, possibly more so. And who knows - maybe if you're lucky, your horse will return the favor and give you a massage someday. (Just kidding - we all know horses have terrible hand-eye coordination.)

Enjoy the ride! 



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# How to Get Paid Playing with Horses

BY: GREG AUCHARD

So... you want to play with horses and get paid?

It can be done but it's a lot of hard work and effort. Most people grow up in the industry and don't know that there is even a life that doesn't involve shoveling manure, filling water troughs, cleaning tack, feeding, brushing, shoeing, and all of the millions of tiny chores that fill up the days of those people who work with our favorite partner... the horse. They've worn boots since birth. They think that work is fun. They are warped and strange individuals. They don't know how to be lazy because they've never been able to sit unless they are on the back of a horse.

If that describes you then you already know how to play with horses and get paid because you're a horse kid.

If it doesn't describe you, but hard work doesn't scare you, biting flies don't bother you, or getting stepped on by a one ton animal seems normal, then you might just be one of the mentally ill people that are horse crazy. So... you select few... listen up.


Experience is the key. The more horse people you know, the more horses you've ridden, the more time in the barn you've spent, and the more fence sittin' you've done just watching horses the better. Nothing replaces experience. That's why the greenhorns listen up when the old cowhand speaks. He has "horse sense".

You can go to school to learn about horses. They'll teach you fancy words for their feet like "distal phalanx" or for their nostrils like "nares". You'll read lots of books about breeds and their genetic traits. You'll learn about feeds and nutrients and water quality. You'll have tons of fun getting drug around by the young horses that can see a student coming a mile away. But at the end of the day, the thing that is gonna make the biggest difference in your career is experience.



Seek out other people who love horses. Listen to their stories. Go to all the horse shows you can. Talk to people. Make connections. Listen to their failures and their successes. Don't assume you know everything because you saw it on Tik Tok. There is a whole big world out there. Go out and immerse yourself in it and listen more than you speak, ask more than you tell, and you'll learn more than you ever dreamed you could.

Horses are awesome! Everyone should know how much joy hard work with a purpose can bring to one's soul.

So... welcome to the lunatic asylum. Welcome to the world of "The Equestrian". We know you'll be happy here. 

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Greg recently retired as a paramedic after 30 years of service. His experience as a farrier, biologist, horseman and blacksmith give him a unique perspective on all things equine.

## Homemade Horse Treats Recipe

### INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups Oatmeal (I used Quick Oats)
- 1/2 cup of flour
- 2 chopped or grated carrots
- 1 large apple (diced)
- 1/4 cup Molasses or 1/4 cup honey
- 1 cup apple sauce
- 1 TBSP Vegetable Oil or Coconut Oil



### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat your oven to 350 F.
2. Grease a cookie sheet to keep the treats from sticking OR line the cookie sheet with parchment paper instead of using grease if you prefer.
3. Finely chop or grate 2 large carrots into small pieces. A food processor works great for this if you have one.
4. Mix the oats and the flour together in a large bowl until they are combined well.
5. Now you can stir in the applesauce and molasses. Mix well.
6. Roll the treat mixture into small balls (or whatever size you want to give to your horses).
7. Place the uncooked treats onto the greased or lined baking pan and bake at 350 F for 15 minutes.
8. Let your horses enjoy as an occasional treat! 



# WHAT IS THE BIG DEAL ABOUT COLLAGEN?

BY: ELORA LUKE

## What is Collagen?

Collagen is the most abundant protein found in the body. It is the building block of muscles, bones and connective tissues (ligaments, tendons, etc.) Collagen is also found in digestive tract, organs, hair, skin, hooves and more!

There are many different types of collagen found in the body. We are going to discuss the most well-known and their importance in the body.

**Type I** - This is the most prevalent form of collagen found in the body and helps provide structure for the skin, bones and connective tissues,

**Type II** - Located in elastic cartilage, this is responsible for joint support.

**Type III** - This collagen supports the muscles, arteries and organs

**Type IV** - Located in your skin's layers, this helps our skin to stay firm and flexible.

**Type V** - This effects the eyes, some layers of skin and the placenta



As you can see, collagen is important for many functions and processes within the body. It is also very interesting to think that your own collagen make up is nearly identical to that in your horse, dog or cat. Collagen consists of 3 components: Collagen, Hyaluronic Acid (HA) and Chondroitin Sulfate (CS). These 3 components are arranged in a very specific matrix and give collagen its ability to provide structure and support, yet be elastic and supple.

## So What Exactly Does Collagen Do?

Collagen production is an important part of your horse's body (and your body too). The primary purpose of collagen is to provide support, strength and structure to vital parts of the body. Collagen is what controls the elasticity in the skin, hooves, coat, mane and tail. It also helps in replacing dead skin cells and with the development of new cells - an essential part of wound healing. Due to it's role in the eyes, collagen is necessary for good eye sight. Finally, collagen helps equine athletes by improving muscles recovery and reducing soreness & inflammation.

## Collagen and Aging

Just like people, horses lose flexibility, become stiff, and their coat, hooves, mane and tail become less resilient than in their younger years. This is considered a normal part of aging, but it can cause other issues to arise. Horses naturally have a decline in collagen levels as they age. Some horses will lost joint mobility and become arthritic. This is especially true in the elbow, shoulder, stifle and hock.

*continued on pg. 14 - Collagen*






**Collagen - continued from pg. 13**

### **So What Do We Do As The Horses Begins Losing Collagen?**

As with any living being, we cannot stop the aging process. Unfortunately, with aging comes some challenges - loss of muscle, collagen, teeth, strength and stamina to name a few. This can all seem a bit overwhelming and leave the rider feeling as though it may be time to retire their horse. This may not necessarily be true. While some normal aging process cannot be stopped or slowed, there is still something that you can do. You can become an advocate for your horse's overall health. Just as working the horse too early can cause problems, not exercising the horse in his senior years can also cause more harm than good. It is equally as important to provide adequate nutrition for your horse at the various stages of life. As horses enter their senior years, their dietary needs also change. It is important to understand those changes and provide the appropriate nutrients for your horse to maintain his overall condition. The appropriate diet and exercise program will provide the right support for the muscular system and supporting connective tissues that are needed to carry him through. While this is not a cure-all for the aging process, it will definitely keep your horse looking and feeling his best.

There are other situations that cause a breakdown in collagen besides aging. Over-training or over-taxing the body continually is one of the quickest ways to cause the body to breakdown more quickly. This can be prevented by providing lots of variation in training. For instance, you may be schooling lateral movements or collection one day and the next you work the horse more forward and in a longer and lower frame. This allows the horse to utilize different muscle groups and stress different parts of the body. It also allows areas of the body to rest and re-cooperate before being stressed again. Prolonged periods of excessive stress will cause premature breakdowns in muscles, connective tissues and collagen. You do want to challenge the horse so that he can progress in his training. But, the rider must be extremely careful not to push the horse too far beyond his capabilities.

As you can see, collagen plays a vital role in the longevity of our horse as an athlete. It provides support for his muscular systems, the connective tissue, bones, skin, coat, organs and more. This is something that all riders should be aware of and take into consideration when outlining a training program. With proper attention and a well-devised plan, the rider can help preserve the horse's natural systems and create a happy, healthy horse for years to come. 



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# CONNECTION

## THE ART OF COMMUNICATION

BY: SARAH AUCHARD

Dressage riders hear the term “connection” all the time, but what does it really mean. In this article, we will look at the technical definition and then expand upon the concept of connection and how it relates to the communication between horse and rider.

Connection can be a somewhat ambiguous term that leaves the rider scratching their head and wondering if they have indeed achieved it. Per the USDF Glossary of Judging Terms, connection is the “state in which there is no blockage, break, or slack in the circuit that joins horse and rider into a single, harmonious, elastic unit. A prerequisite for throughness.” Connection is in essence a part of contact where the rider is able to receive, in their hand, the energy that travels through the horse’s body created by the hindquarter and recycle it back to the hindquarter in a continuous cycle. But again, this is a vague explanation that leaves so much to interpretation. Why is that?

Well, this ambiguity often is a result of the variation from horse to horse. Connection is not a concrete feeling or a specific amount of pressure that the rider should feel in their hand. Every horse, like every rider, is a unique individual. While some horses may be light as a feather, others may require a bit more “pressure” in the hand to be completely connected. Connection also changes as the horse develops in their training. I know, that is not much help, right?



Let’s think about this from another perspective. Connection is not about the pressure that the rider feels in their hand. It is more about creating energy in the horse that allows them to move freely forward. This energy begins in the hindquarter and is developed by the rider’s seat and leg. As the horse propels himself forward, the energy created by the hindquarter is carried over the horse’s back and topline to the horse’s mouth. When the horse is forward and carrying himself correctly “on the bit,” this energy is felt in the rider’s hand by way of the reins - but only if the rider can effectively maintain the contact. That is to say, that the rider does not allow any slack or droop in the reins, which is easier said than done - especially when riding a young or inexperienced horse. Additionally, the connection will change depending on what movement the horse is performing or even the amount of bend in the horse’s body. For instance, if the horse is traveling on the circle line, the rider should feel more pressure/connection in the outside hand than the inside. Yet, the inside rein must maintain enough connection to help aid in the bending around the inside leg and not allow the horse to become counterbent.

Wow, that is about as clear as mud. Now, you can understand why it is so difficult to explain what connection feels like - let alone what it should look like.

As you think about connection, it is important for the rider to develop a strong sense of feel in their seat, their legs and their hands. Their rider should become acutely aware of how much weight is on each sitting bone, how much pressure each leg places on the horse and how the horse feels in the rider’s hand.

*continued on p. 18 - Connection*



# EQUINE LIQUID BIOCELL

Collagen is the building block of almost everything in your horse: muscles, bones, and connective tissues.

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## Here are just a few of many testimonials!

**Pancake** is a 2-year-old stud colt. He was in his first year of training towards a bright career in Reining. But early on he tore a suspensory ligament. He was put on 90 days stall rest. He was examined after the 90 days rest and had not healed. The vet added two intensive therapies and Liquid Biocell Equine. After 2 months on a loading dose, Pancake is 100% cleared to go back to work 65 days early! He was about to miss half of his first year of training, but we got him back under the saddle sound and shiny! Vet said no other horse has healed this fast!

**Cassie** is a Pro Hunter Jumper. She smacked her eye on her stall before a show. It was super swollen. We took her to the Vet and there was no damage to the eye itself. They wanted to give her Banamine (which normally I would do) BUT, she had to be FEI in a few days. So that's a NO GO! They said to cold press it to try to relieve swelling and let her have some time. We tried and it didn't work because she wouldn't let us near her face with a cold towel. It was time to get creative so we decided to give her 10ml of BioCell orally with a syringe. I was hoping the chondroitin sulfate would take the inflammation out. The results after a few hours were incredible!!!

**Khloe** is a 9-year-old 1/2 Saddlebred & 1/2 Anglo-Arabian Mare ... For years she itched her tail, and it caused breakage and uncomfortable raw patches. She also had bumpy, uneven hoof grow out. Within 30 days of taking 30ml daily of Equine Liquid BioCell there was an obvious visual change in both her tail and hooves. Smooth, strong hooves and no more itching!

**Brave** is a 2-year-old Gelding Colt that got kicked in the chest. The wound healed nicely; however, his coat didn't grow back in that area for over 2 months. With a tennis ball sized black patch of skin, we decide to top dress 20ml of Equine Liquid BioCell onto his grain daily. After only 12 days it was completely grown in! You couldn't even tell that he had no hair there less than 2 weeks prior!

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# Building Suppleness with the Mini Loops

Mini Loops are an excellent way to develop the horse's suppleness and attentiveness to the rider. Throughout this exercise, the rider must pay close attention what they are feeling beneath them. While the horse becomes much more attentive, relaxed and supple.

## DESCRIPTION

Begin this exercise in the walk or trot at C. Travel through the corner to H and begin a 1/2 10-meter volte to the left. Upon reaching the centerline, change the horse's bend to the right and complete a 1/2 10-meter volte to the right.

Once on the rail, continue to R where you will begin perform a 1/2 10-meter volte to the right and complete with a 1/2 10-meter volte to the left.

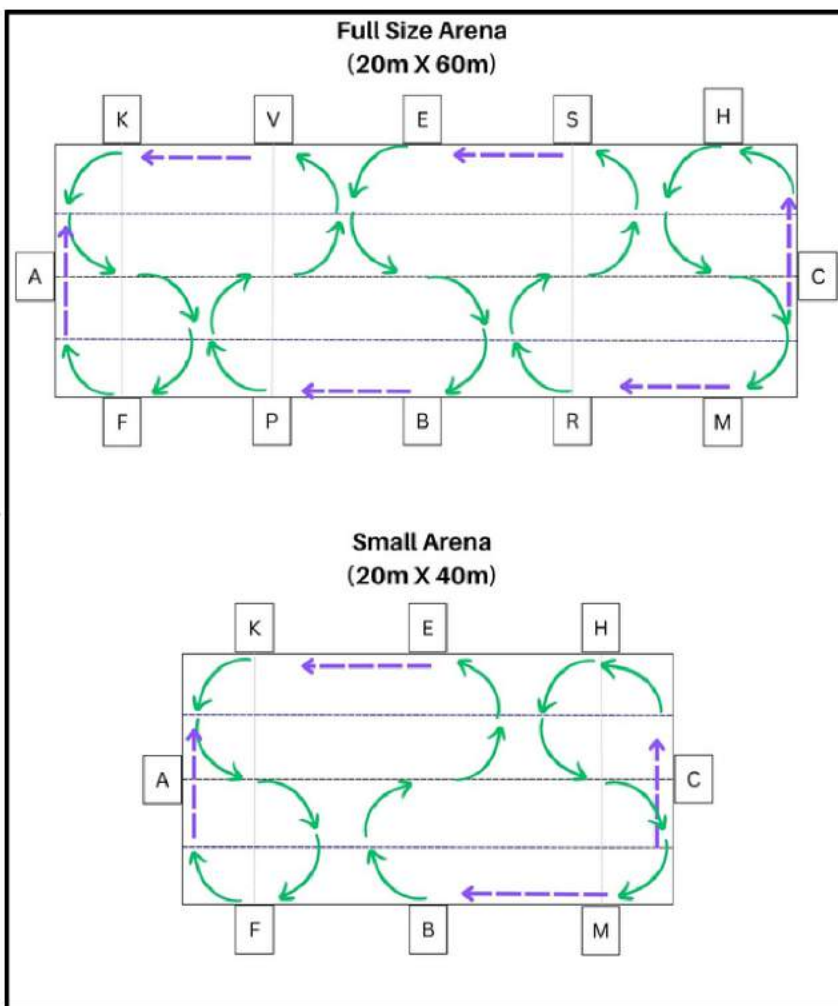
Continue the 1/2 10-meter volte to centerline with a corresponding 1/2 10-meter volte in the opposite direction to return to the rail at each set of letters down the long side. When you reach the end of the ring, travel around the end of the ring and begin again on the opposite long side or track straight down the long side to determine the effectiveness of the exercise.

## VARIATIONS

- Add lengthenings to the next set of letters on the long side and perform the 1/2 10-meter volte sequence in a working or collected gait.
- Add a transition to walk or trot along the rail
- Perform changes of gait as you travel along the centerline for a stride or 2 (perfect for introducing the simple change or canter-trot-canter)

## COMMON MISTAKES

- The horse bulges through the outside shoulder or drifts from the line of travel
- The horse becomes crooked or falls in off the rail, especially in the turns
- The horse rushes through the change of direction.
- The rider does not support the horse adequately enough on the outside aids.
- The rider forgets to change the bend or allows the horse to fall in on the 1/2 10-meter voltes.
- The rider does not use enough half halts for the horse to maintain his balance.
- The rider does not adequately prepare the horse for the change of direction.
- The rider does not use enough half halts to keep the horse fluid in his rhythm and balanced through the turns.



## BENEFITS

- The rider becomes more aware of what the horse is doing beneath them.
- The rider becomes more effective in coordinating the aids.
- The rider creates a more consistent connection.
- The rider learns to turn the horse from the seat and outside aids.
- The horse becomes better balanced and straight.
- The horse learns to turn from the seat and outside aids.
- The horse becomes more relaxed and rhythmical in his gaits.
- The horse becomes more supple and fluid.
- The horse increases the carrying capacity of the hindquarter.
- The horse engages the hindquarter and develops more impulsion.
- The horse becomes more attentive to the rider's aids.

Provided by:






### Connection - continued from pg. 15

When the horse is truly connected, the rider should feel the horse's back lift upward into their seat bones - it would appear as if the rider were a buoy riding an ocean wave. The seat bones drive the horse forward into the bridle. The legs help connect the horse by creating bend and energy within the horse. This bend increases the amount of connection in the outside rein because the outside arc of the horse's body becomes longer. (Hence, the statement "Inside Leg to Outside Rein" that we always hear). The reins are merely a telegraph line that informs that rider of how much energy has been created and where that energy originates. With that information, the rider is able to recycle that energy through continued or modified seat and leg aids.

As you can see, connection is not simply the amount of pressure that the rider feels in their hands. It is more about the dance that the horse and rider perform through invisible lines of communication at every point of contact between them. The rider's seat and legs mold and shape the horse and his energy, while the reins act as a telegraph line to communicate the horse's response to the aids that are given. The reins also serve as a line of communication from the rider back to the horse in the form of reinforcing and refining aids - i.e. - providing support in the half halt. If you think about holding hands with your spouse or a child, you will have a better understanding of what connection feels like in the hands. It should never be harsh or abrupt, but rather soothing and comforting to the horse. It provides a "safe place" where the horse can join in conversation with his rider.

Connection is so much more than just holding the reins so that there is a straight line from the bit to the rider's elbow. It is about how the horse receives and responds to the rider's aids and how the rider "feels" the horse's response to those aids. In essence, it is the art of non-verbal communication between the horse and rider. The aids will be nearly imperceptible to the viewer and the horse will appear to read the rider's mind. When the horse and rider are truly connected, they will appear as harmonious dance partners in complete synchronicity. 



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

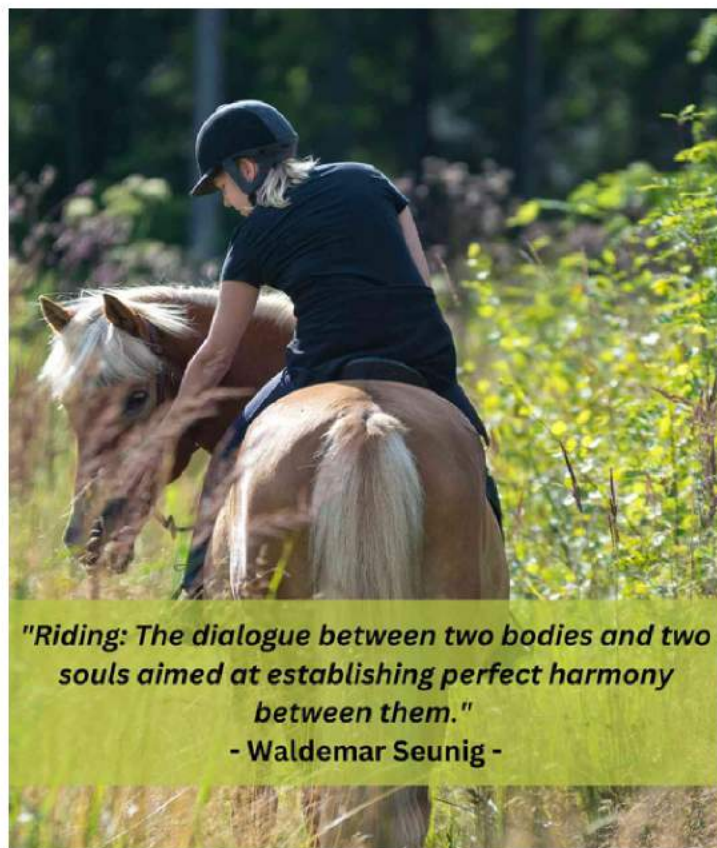


Sarah is a USDF Bronze medalist, owner of Dressage Academy and SAGA Equine. Sarah's primary focus is simplifying the complexities of riding, biomechanics and training to help riders achieve their goals with their horses. For over 20 years, she has dedicated her time to working with riders of all levels to create positive relationships with their equine partners and over-come riding anxiety.

In 2007, she launched [www.Dressage-Academy.com](http://www.Dressage-Academy.com) - an educational site that allows riders to immerse themselves in the sport of Dressage. Through this site, Sarah has helped thousands of riders world-wide to train their horses up the levels through webinars, online training sessions, articles, videos, Q&A sessions and courses. Together with her husband, 2 daughters, 8 horses, several barn cats and loyal dog, Tippy, their Ohio-based facility, SAGA Equine, promotes longevity through the classical development of the horse and rider.

#### Learn more about

SAGA Equine at [www.SagaEquine.com](http://www.SagaEquine.com) &  
Dressage Academy at [www.Dressage-Academy.com](http://www.Dressage-Academy.com)







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