



## In Practice

### **If your horse is slow to respond to 1N....**

Most horses take to 1N very quickly and easily and then once they understand the benefits of 1N, really enjoy it. However some owners find it initially difficult to get their horses started. 1N involves (requires and encourages) relaxation and it can be difficult for some horses to allow themselves to relax.

Owners of these horses often believe 1N will be difficult before even starting, saying things like, "she doesn't like her nose being touched", or "he won't stand still for 10 minutes". Horses with leadership issues are more likely to find starting 1N difficult. This would include horses that invade the owner's personal space by standing on top of them or head butting, not staying at the shoulder when being led, walking ahead when you stop, and those that are inattentive or fidgety, looking at the horizon, and unable to focus on you and your requests, or that grab objects in the vicinity, such as bags.

By leadership issues I mean that a horse is uncertain whether the handler is the leader in horse terms and therefore feels the need, to a greater or lesser degree, to take charge. Taking charge involves controlling its own and its owner's movement. Having the breathing modified by having one nostril covered constitutes a significant control of movement. If a horse is used to being in control of movement this role reversal can be quite a major issue to deal with and the horse is then more interested in regaining control of movement than in registering the pleasant feelings engendered by 1N. They may throw their head around, try and walk off, or try and scrape your hand off.

Luckily most horses are more concerned to have a dependable leader (in horse terms) than to actually BE the leader and will soon accede to a new leader if they show strong positive leadership qualities. This means that they can then relax, knowing that their owner will take care of leadership responsibilities.

Exercises such as Kelly Marks foundation exercises (in Perfect Manners) are ideal for gently but clearly outlining the new leadership roles. Once a horse is confident that the new leader is competent s/he will feel secure because the leader takes responsibility for herd safety. The horse then feels safe to accept the leader's guidance on a new idea (1N) and to be able to go 'off duty', relax, and enjoy..

If you are an owner who feels that your horse may have initial difficulty with 1N, try doing your first 1N session after a ride or some exercise. Make sure the horse has got their breath back before starting 1N. Even more effective is to do some control of movement exercises using pressure and release. For example, using gentle pressure on the head collar lead rope ask for some downward movement of the head and release immediately that the horse responds. Reward the response with a rest of several seconds then ask again.

Using pressure and release you can move the horse forwards towards you, ask them to back up or turn to you or away from you. You can move the quarters away from you or move the shoulders away from you. Lead the horse and make changes of pace and direction until there is no use of the lead rope at all. You must remember to reward any response to your request for movement but then you can make one request after another. These exercises tell the horse plain and simply that you are the leader.

When your horse is calmly focused on you and responding well to your requests you can start doing 1N. Once you place your hand over the nostril be prepared to keep it there whatever happens. You may be flipped about if the horse nods but try not to use force on the lead rope. Follow the movement and just concentrate on not losing contact. The reason for this is that if your hand comes off, the carbon dioxide level will drop again and you want to restore the levels up to a point where the horse notices the pleasant relaxing sensation, as soon as possible. If you keep losing your position the horse will fail to see the point of the exercise and may even learn to try and avoid doing 1N instead. It can require some tenacity especially if the horse's nose starts running as it often does (removal of toxins by the nasal epithelial cells) and everything gets slippery!

If the horse is still not relaxed after 5 minutes of 1N on each side, walk the horse for a few minutes and do lots of control of movement exercises and then try again. Eventually the horse will realise what it is all about and will start to participate and

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enjoy the effects.

More details in the 1N training video and the Equine Breathing Starter Guide available at <http://www.equinebreathing.com/products.php>

## FAQ

### ***'Why has my horse's fitness improved through Equine Breathing?'***

Pauline from Liverpool is currently doing a Breather trial on her horse's sarcoids, which will be reported in a later issue. She wrote the following observation.

*".....The other thing - I'm sure you've already considered the potential for performance horses, but although I've never been remotely competitive, I've noticed a big reduction in her recovery times after hard work.*

*I should imagine that it would work wonders for endurance rider's mounts, or the vetting gate after a cross-country phase in eventing.*

*I always considered Sadie to be very fit - especially for her age, but now she seems super-fit!"*

Increased fitness is gained due to the increased carbon dioxide levels (obtained by Equine Breathing) increasing the amount of available oxygen to the cells of the body. This happens for two reasons.

1. The body obtains oxygen from air (in the lungs) by exchanging it for carbon dioxide on haemoglobin molecules in red blood cells. The more carbon dioxide is available on the haemoglobin, the more oxygen can be taken up.
2. Carbon dioxide acts to release oxygen from the haemoglobin (blood) to the tissues where it is needed to fuel the burning of fats and carbohydrates to produce energy, carbon dioxide and water. The higher the carbon dioxide level, the more oxygen is available to the tissues. This is called the Bohr effect.

The result of these effects is that a horse with higher carbon dioxide levels will remain in oxidative respiration for longer than one with lower levels. Once the horse goes into anaerobic respiration, lactic acid is produced rather than carbon dioxide and water, and only 10% of the energy. The longer a horse is in anaerobic respiration, the longer the recovery period.

Carbon dioxide also relaxes smooth muscles enabling blood vessels and airways to remain functioning at maximum capacity rather than constricting.

Horses that over breathe may be filling the alveoli (air sacs where gaseous exchange takes place in the lungs) to the maximum even at low levels of exercise. When exercise is increased there is no more capacity for the alveoli to expand. Regular Equine Breathing enables a horse to breathe much less volume of air so that when an extra gaseous exchange capacity is needed for more strenuous activity, extra capacity is available in the alveoli.

The contents of this ezine are not a substitute for veterinary advice. If the reader has any concerns they should seek independent professional advice from a vet