



# Horse Breather

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## 1 N Diary

'Lisa' only gets to see her horse at weekends. In order to avoid persecution, she had to move him a long distance, to a yard that is supportive of her natural and holistic approach which includes barefoot trimming. In March she emailed me to say that her horse, 'Primo' had problems and to ask if I thought doing Equine Breathing three days a week would be sufficient to help him recover. I didn't know the answer to this question so I was very pleased when Lisa said she would like to do a trial, and I am following the results with great interest.

Primo's main problem was lack of and erratic energy when being ridden. Lisa attributed this (possibly rather unfairly) to her riding. Primo is a heavy cob and Lisa said he lost fitness very quickly when not being ridden regularly. He was 'bargey', ignoring the handler making him difficult to handle. He would tank off when being led and was uncooperative whilst having his feet trimmed. For the last two years he has had a couple of very light nosebleeds in March or April usually after exercise.

Since 2000 Primo has had itchy legs in the late summer which is extremely distressing, drives him mad and he gets very scabby. Vets disagreed whether it was dermatitis or mud fever but none of the prescriptions worked and neither did a range of holistic treatments or total clipping of the feathers and washing daily (It cannot be said that Lisa hasn't tried!).

Primo was sometimes disrespectful of Lisa and she knew that there were leadership issues to be dealt with. She was understandably rather nervous of taking this on. When she did, Primo's behaviour dramatically improved except in a couple of areas where he made a bit of a stand for a week or so before accepting the new regime.

Lisa changed her own breathing (keeping her mouth shut) and found that this enabled her to keep calmer.

Lisa's results are reported in issue 20 of *'Horse Breather'* but here are some excerpts from her notes in the first 2 months, which might be of interest to other Horse Breathers.

24 March 06 – first session

"Primo tried a variety of ways to dislodge my hand, more so when I was covering his right nostril. He was more relaxed with his left nostril covered, but was still unsure so tried moving around and raising his head, but stood still in the end after an initial fidget. With his right nostril he was fidgety and dancing about for most of the 5 minutes and threw his head a lot. He twitched his neck and body twice with his right nostril covered.

25 March 06

He accepted it more with his left nostril today, there were a couple of brief (couple of seconds) moments of his nose being on the floor. When I was covering his right nostril he was still trying to dislodge my hand and tried walking over to items to try and dislodge it that way. On both nostrils he was moving his upper lip about to see if that would dislodge my hand. He was quite fidgety again with my hand on his right nostril, and he snorted once too.

26 March 06

During 1st session Primo snorted 3 times, and yawned about 6 times when I had finished. On right nostril he was fidgety and walked around a lot and snatched a mouthful of hay. I did the last 2 sets without a halter on and he stood well, moved about a bit but gently. He was very relaxed for the last session, and in this session he had his nose on the floor for about 4 seconds rather than down and straight back up.

In all sessions he was still quite alert and if he heard a car on the road or any noise he would put his head up and prick his eyes so he wasn't switched off. He also was regularly turning his head to touch his sides.

During the ride he was moving on well at the start and jogging at times, and for one of the trots I hardly had to ask him and he led and maintained the trot for at least 20 strides. However, after that he started lagging behind as usual.

31 March 06

Both times it was a fight to keep him from the hay, I would be "walked" along by Primo to the hay rack and have to be very firm to keep his head from the hay. There was some moving backwards during the sessions and some throwing his head about and walking round the shed with me trying to keep up.

1 April 06

During first session he was fighting to get at the hay, moved backwards and was fidgety. Second session – I got dragged to the water and he took a drink! Then he relaxed and had his nose to the floor for a few seconds, then closed his eyes. Right nostril he was relaxed, his eyes were closed or at the least soft, his neck was relaxed, but straight out forwards not lowered to the floor. There was licking and chewing. When I did the 3rd session he was dozing before I started it.

2 April 06

During the first session on left nostril, wanting to get to the hay, was moving about a lot but settled after about 3 minutes, right nostril he was relaxed and lowered his head, but not to the floor, he licked and chewed and had soft eyes and ears. He stayed relaxed when I had finished. 2nd session stood dozing for at least 10 minutes after I had finished, his neck was relaxed but not lowered.

7 April 06

I arrived at yard and they were all out in the field Primo saw me arrive, came into the shed to see me and hung out with me while I mucked it out. He let me do the 30 minutes 1 N in one session and looked dozy after it, so I went to get a curry comb as he's moulting like mad and I like to help get rid of loose hair. But I used it once and he walked away into the field, so looks like he knew what he wanted me for!

Primo tried some gentle headbutts at times, not a usual thing of his. He had his head low with nose on the floor for total 3 minutes in about 1 minute bursts. There was no fidgeting, he yawned 5 times and he did some very big chews (could hear them, was like he was actually eating). He licked at chewed at times and at various times throughout the breathing his head twitched and twisted slightly, like a small jerk, his ears would go right and his nose would go left, then straight back to holding head straight. It was a small movement but noticeable. He also had droopy bottom lip for a lot of it.

9 April 06

1st session he was licking and chewing, big chews, could hear the grinding noise as his teeth met, but wasn't deliberately grinding them. His head was low for right nostril, and for a lot of the time was at his knees. Left nostril he was slightly fidgety and had a yawn. The fidgets were just a step here and there, so I moved him back the number of steps he moved forward.

Riding, generally his usual self, but jogging at start of ride. Trotting, 80% of the trots he maintained trot without me nagging, but was not an energetic trot. Had a faster walk than usual at times, but did still lag at times.

Primo is usually quite a sweaty horse with work, even in summer coat he can sweat during quite a short ride. It was a windy day, but no sweat on Primo. My friend agreed that usually even with the wind he would have sweated at least a bit, and mentioned that her horse had slight sweat - Primo had none.

14 April 06

1st set Primo had a relaxed neck, it was straight not low, but relaxed, soft eyes and ears forwards. He was taking deep breaths. 2nd set right nostril 1 snort and head to floor for couple of seconds, eyes were shut for a short while. 3rd set, mainly relaxed with easy eyes and ears. He had a floppy lower lip throughout.

He was hot and sweaty, presume from sun as it had been a hot day, no signs of them having been running about. He didn't try and eat the grass while I was doing the breathing. He did turn round at one point and I let him as there was a fox in the field causing a big reaction in one of the other horses. Primo just wanted to see what it was. He leant over forwards or sideways a couple of times, as if preparing to step in a direction, but didn't actually move or take a step.

15 April 06

1st set stood with relaxed neck, took the odd step, had soft eyes and alert ears. 2nd set, as before, and he fidgeted a bit near the end and then went back to dozing, he had his head at his knees for a few seconds and was taking deep breaths at times, and closed his eyes for a few seconds.

He tried to get grass a few times each set. He dozed at times and had a floppy lower lip. When I had finished and let him go I noticed his undercarriage was down! 3rd set, he didn't try and get to the grass. He chilled out into the breathing fast and had soft eyes and ears and his neck was relaxed but not low. His eyelids lowered a bit but didn't close properly. He had a floppy lower lip and took some very deep breaths – I really felt the suction on the in breaths.

21 April 06

Primo moved a bit at first and tried to get to the grass a couple of times throughout, but he wasn't really pulling for it and I didn't have to be too firm to get his head away from the grass. Licked and chewed occasionally, and had a couple of small head twitches at various times. Couple of big yawns. He was generally relaxed throughout, but got alert with raised neck and forward ears when the tractor in the next field came close. At the end of each 5 minutes he would have his head down and very relaxed, and he dozed for most of the last 10 minutes.

22 April 06

Primo was lying down when we arrived so I waited for him to get up (after lying down with him for a while). He dozed off during the first session, he did a few foot shuffles during the first set with left nostril, and took a few small backward steps.

23 April 06

When I arrived at the field Primo had a nosebleed in his left nostril, the usual sort, very thin light trickle of blood. We did trace it to not very far in the nose, so looks like a capillary bleed. There was not enough blood to drip, and it was very thin and watery. This is the usual time of year for him to get these minor bleeds. 1st set, right nostril he dozed immediately. Left nostril he did a big sigh/snort, licked and chewed, shuffling feet but not his body, then he dozed and relaxed.

He stood and dozed while being groomed too. Riding, he maintained the trots over a longer distance than usual, but it was a slow, lazy trot. He was lagging a bit in walk too, but had moments of moving on well. He got a bit excited at our last canter too, we had a few and he and Solo were good, however the last one along a track Solo did his bucking/bronking bit at the start and Primo decided it looked fun and decided to copy! Then stopped his canter so he could do it again when asked to canter again! Cheeky so and so!

Bucking in canter is a sign that he feels good and is having fun, he usually precedes it with a cheeky squeal. He was sweating but it was a warm but windy day, and Solo sweated too, and Primo was not any more sweaty than Solo, he usually has a lot more sweat than the others.

28 April

Primo was dozing when I arrived. He stood and dozed for the full 30 minutes, and I didn't have a halter with me so wasn't holding him. He didn't try for grass. He had soft eyes, ears and neck (but it wasn't dropped) all the time. My breathing changed to be in time with Primo's for a short time and I realised I was holding my stomach muscles, or had tension there or something. Primo did a whole body twitch along with a kind of hiccupy type noise.

29 April 06

The whole herd was dozing when I arrived and Primo kept dozing for most of the first session, again I didn't have his halter with me so he was loose. 1st set 1 body twitch and a mini snort/hiccupy noise, small lick and chew. Generally dozing with soft eyes and ears and neck. 2nd set the 2 newest horses came into his space near the end so he kept charging them so I got dragged a bit at times! He then went to eat and wasn't interested in any more breathing. 3rd set (after ride) he tried dislodging my hand a lot on both sides by throwing his head about and trying to drag me to the other horses and get at grass. Dozed then tried to drag me again.

30 April 06

He was mainly dozing throughout again, and not doing much else.

Saturday (28th), riding was great, he marched on in walk so I didn't need to put my leg on, he was never last let alone trailing behind. When I initially asked for a trot he maintained it but without great speed, but as I was doing sitting trot it was a nice pace and rhythm for that. As we got nearer the field he put himself into a fast going somewhere trot and zoomed ahead of the other 2 and really took the trot on with no prompting from me, and at one point cantered on the road when one of the others caught him up by cantering a verge. When we got on a verge for a canter he was in front and enjoying himself to the extent that he put in 3 bucks. He does this out of exuberance and fun.

Sunday, on the return part he did some really good trot work interspersed with short periods of slack trot, however a couple of times he really took the trot on without prompting, really good speed and rhythm and it felt great! **Really great!**

Till next time  
breathe easy  
Clare