

WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE:



HELP FOR HEADSHAKERS

Photo © 1st Class Images

Two years ago **Lorraine Hocking** thought she had lost her horse **Delilah**, but thanks to **Equine Breathing** they are back out hacking, competing and enjoying life together

I bought Delilah in January 2010. We were looking for an all-rounder and she was exactly as described in the advert. The first six months with her was wonderful with lots of hacking, jumping, cross country schooling and our first dressage competition. Then in the late July early August of 2010 we had to move yard suddenly and within a week our beautiful horse was unrideable.

I knew what the symptoms were and the vet confirmed that is was

headshaking. I had all the usual back and teeth checks done. The vet prescribed steroids which we started mid August. I did my research and could see from other people's experiences that steroids didn't work, so we came off them as soon as we could. The vet then prescribed cyproheptadine and tegretol but I sent them back as my research told me they were also unlikely to work. We started on a course of Chinese herbal medicine which seemed to

Within a month I was able to use a bridle and since then we haven't looked back

help her a little, but she was still unrideable.

As summer turned to autumn there was still no improvement. Then suddenly, on 1st November, the symptoms completely disappeared. We started exercise again and all seemed well. The winter went by and we were having a lovely time but on 11 March 2011 we went for a hack and the headshaking was back with a vengeance.

I took her to the dentist and had her teeth rasped, but saw no improvement in her symptoms. A homeopathic vet prescribed homeopathy and acupuncture. The first acupuncture session worked well and symptoms completely disappeared for about 36 hours but then came back. The homeopathic tablets didn't work. Delilah also had three chiropractic treatments within a few weeks, but this made no difference to the headshaking.

In August 2011 we decided to move yard again and I called a different vet for another opinion, but she also confirmed idiopathic headshaking and suggested I give euthanasia consideration due to the severity of her symptoms. I continued with the Chinese herbal medicine and also had a course of cranial osteopathy but the headshaking was now constant.

During the winter of 2012 a friend suggested an equine breathing technique called 1N which she had heard about at a

seminar. She showed me how to cover one nostril and almost immediately I could see Delilah relax.

I continued this over the winter months and noticed a difference in Delilah's demeanour. While working Delilah at liberty she would go to the side of the school and stand with her nose pressed against the wall. Was she trying 1N for herself? Eventually the evidence was overwhelming and in April 2012 I purchased an Equine Breather.

Within 48 hours I could see a difference, within the first week I was able to gently lunge Delilah in a rope halter with no symptoms. Within two weeks I had saddled her up and was riding in walk with the rope halter. Within a month I was able to use a bridle and since then we haven't looked back. At the end of Autumn 2012 we were going out on two hour hacks and I was able to put her in the trailer and go to training events. We even started jumping again!

I have had to be diligent with my regime. I try to use the Equine Breather three to four times a week for about 30-45 minutes per session. I usually put it on Delilah while I am grooming and tacking up. When she is in her stable she wears the All Weather Breather on a breakable headcollar. I use a fly mask and fly rug when she is in the field and when hacking in the summer I use a Cashel riding fly mask which works well if there are lots of flies.

It is now August 2013 and Delilah's recovery continues. We have been competing for about six months and she has been placed in both dressage and show jumping competitions. We did our first unaffiliated one day event at Rabson Manor a couple of weeks ago and are planning to start eventing in September.

Two years ago I could have lost all hope of ever riding my



Lorraine and Delilah wearing her Breather before a competition

lovely horse again, I am so glad I persevered. I now have my amazing horse back thanks to Equine Breathing.

I would love to think that other horses who headshake will benefit from us sharing our story, I would encourage owners of headshakers to get in touch with Equine Breathing and try it, they won't regret it.



Note from Clare at Equine Breathing

Now is a good time to start Equine Breathing, especially if your horse has no symptoms over the winter. It will give the horse time to improve so that by next spring he is more likely to cope with over-breathing triggers such as pollen, sun and warmth and to avoid symptoms. The simple technique of 1N is easy to do using the free instructions at www.equinebreathing.com