

## In Practice

### Curyghan's recovery from hay fever and a lot more

Julia had wanted a horse for her entire life and had finally been able to make her dream come true. She bought Curyghan in March 2004 but by April he started to show signs of hay fever and became difficult to handle and ride. When I met him in June he was snorting continuously, head shaking and rubbing his nose on the ground. He had runny eyes, was excessively worried by the flies and could only last about 10 minutes grazing before retreating to the concrete standing. The symptoms had been even worse on previous days. Julia had tried various treatments which had not helped.

Julia was also worried about his behaviour. He had become unnaturally attached to his field mate. When his friend was away he galloping wildly up and down for 45 minutes at a time. It was difficult to have him in the yard on his own as he became terrified, neighing, sweating and hyperventilating, and desperate to return to the herd.

Julia attempted to bring him into the yard for us to start, but he refused to be lead away from the others. Julia despite her frustration remained gentle with him and despite her inexperience managed eventually to succeed.

We noted Curyghan's various other problems. He was covered with more than 50 poorly healing minor injuries from scratches and so on, suggesting that his skin was in poor condition. He was itchy and had rubbed bald patches on his tail, chest and throat. He had a chronic abscess on his cheek which had been treated with antibiotics for a total of 3 weeks, but which had flared up again. His feet were broken and crumbly and he tended to lose a shoe a week. It was difficult to pick up his feet, he couldn't bear his ears to be touched and tried to escape when fly spray was administered. He had a bowed tendon with scarring of the skin. He was tense and difficult to handle, seemingly oblivious to us with all his attention focused on his field mates.

I must admit that I thought that whoever had sold him to Julia had seen her coming. So far the dream of having her own horse was not a happy one. Julia embarked on a trial of the Equine Breather to see if it might help Curyghan.

Curyghan had a poor breathing pattern, but so too did Julia. She sighed frequently. I explained that if she could break this habit, she would improve her breathing significantly and this would help Curyghan improve his. I also suggested she stop talking to him and use the body language of control of movement instead.

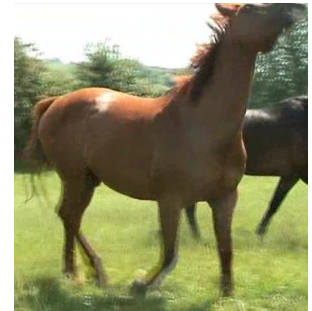
Julia took to the control of movement exercises and rapidly became proficient. Curyghan took to the Equine Breather and was soon transformed, becoming calm and amenable. After a few days Julia complained that she felt Curyghan wasn't completely focussed on her so we had a look at her handling regime.

Though now communicating clearly with the pressure and release, Julia who is naturally gentle and was still tending to be rather tentative when handling Curyghan. When putting on a headcollar she looked as if she thought she might hurt or even break him. I felt Curyghan might be feeling that if Julia had to be so careful with him maybe he was not very robust! In other words that it was not helping him to feel confident. I never usually pat a horse (preferring to stroke as it seems more soothing) but because Curyghan trusted me I was able to demonstrate this by patting him suddenly and boisterously on his forehead. Curyghan didn't mind at all, in fact he thought it was rather nice! I hoped this would encourage Julia to realise that treating him firmly would help him rather than damage him.

Julia worked hard on her own breathing – she stopped sighing and talked much less to Curyghan. She said that she felt better in herself and that remaining silent enabled her to focus more clearly on her communication with Curyghan.

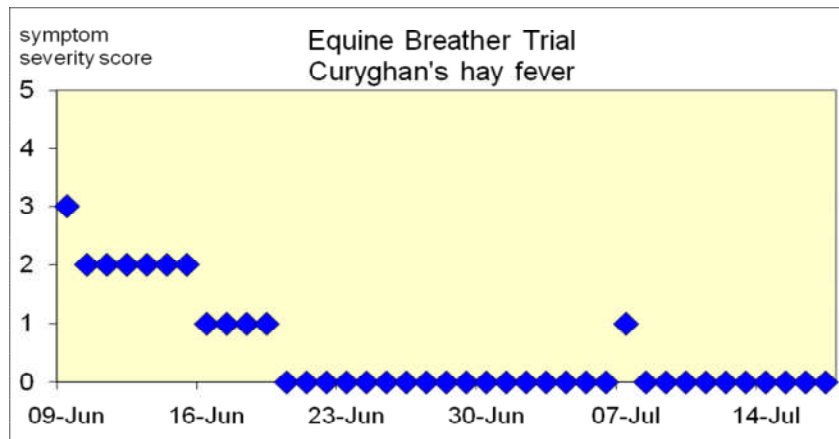
Curyghan was now able to stand quietly in the yard without worrying where the other horses were, even when they walked off. He was able to walk to and look over the far gate, away from the horses – a real break through.

Julia defined a set of scores for the hay fever symptoms from 5 at their worst to zero – no symptoms. She used the Equine Breather daily and assessed, scored and recorded his symptoms for the 2 month trial. He had been a 5 on previous



*Headshaking – one of Curyghan's long list of symptoms*

days but on the first day of the trial scored 3. His scores went steadily down.



After 2 weeks, in mid June (the height of the hay fever season), all his hay fever symptoms had disappeared. He remained symptom free for the rest of the summer except for some mild head shaking on one very hot day with high fly activity. At the end of the trial Julia gave the following report.

#### *Symptoms*

*Feet are much better and no longer crumbling. He no longer desperately scratches his face, neck, mane and tail. He occasionally scratches his face but it is very gentle now. Hypersensitivity to touch has disappeared. Separation anxiety is gone apart from exceptional circumstances for example when the Vet removed one of the other horses. But it was relieved with 1N breathing. Skin heals normally now and chronic abscess is gone. No snorting, nose rubbing or head shaking since mid June.*

#### *Equine Breather*

*I like it! It has changed Curyghan completely from a very stressed, unhappy animal to a much calmer, trusting horse. He's now happy spending time on his own or with me, separate to the other horses."*



*Chilling in the Equine Breather*

Julia told me that he was now amenable to being fly sprayed, to having his feet picked up and had even discovered that it was enjoyable to have one's ears massaged.

A year later in June 2005 Julia reported that he had almost no hay fever symptoms this year apart from some very mild head shaking on only two occasions. She now turns him out with no fly mask as he is not unduly bothered by the flies. His feet were beautiful - he is now barefoot and correctly trimmed. The bowed tendon was fully recovered. He does Equine Breathing a couple of times a week.

We stood and watched Curyghan grazing. The other horses were snorting but Curyghan was grazing contentedly with no snorting or any other symptoms. It was a joy to see. He was relaxed and attentive to handle. His character now shines through and he is a much loved and much loving horse.

## FAQ

### ***'Can I do Equine Breathing with my pregnant mare?'***

Sadly the short answer to this must be "No" at the moment. Although gentle 1N Equine Breathing is likely to be beneficial to pregnant mares, its effects have not yet been studied under supervised conditions so I must advise owners not to use even 1N during pregnancy.

Pregnant women are able to do gentle reduced breathing through pregnancy and are able therefore to gain the benefits of increased carbon dioxide for themselves and their babies.

It would be great to do gentle Equine Breathing on pregnant mares under careful veterinary supervision. If anyone with potentially pregnant mares and especially those with severe symptoms such as hay fever, wind sucking, sweet itch or behavioural problems, is interested in being involved with case studies I would love to hear from you.