



Newly launched educational endeavor helps professionals master & keep pace with a rapidly evolving field of cutting-edge horse care.

by Kim F. Miller

Three well-known figures in horse health and owner education have realized a dream three years in development with the launch this month of the Academy of Animal Sport Science.

The Academy's founders are Carrie Schlachter, VMD, of Circle Oak Equine Sports Medicine & Rehabilitation; Debranne Patillo, founder of Equinology; and Dr. Nicole Rombach, an equine sport therapist and co-founder of the International Equine Body Workers Association. Their collective field and clinical experience allows the directors to fill what Nicole describes as a "gap in knowledge" regarding the equine musculoskeletal system and ever evolving thought and methods for caring for equine athletes.

Debranne's expertise is soft tissue, Nicole's is the brain/body connection and Dr. Carrie brings the full spectrum of thinking and treatments related to sporthorse rehabilitation, performance and well-being.

The Academy's "flagship" endeavor is the Animal Sports Therapy and Rehabilitation Certification program for licensed practitioners. That includes veterinarians, vet technicians, osteopaths, chiropractors and other licensed equine and canine care providers. The field of equine sports therapy and rehabilitation is a rapidly evolving, Carrie points out. Students from any where in the world will study theory, applications and use hands-on techniques through the ASTR's four modules, created with the help of leading specialists in the veterinary industry.

The first two modules are delivered online, starting with an extensive equine anatomy review and evaluation. Terminology, vocabulary, palpation of the surface anatomy and muscle location are the crux of this course, which includes a 172-page online textbook. This module is mandatory for all ASTR enrollees except veterinarians, for whom it is optional.

The second module consists of 48 hours of lectures, with study guides and self quizzes at the end of each. The parameters of animal rehabilitation and related regulatory issues and the steps to building a comprehensive program for various conditions in the horse, are among many key topics covered. Comparisons of equine, canine and human anatomy are another, along with an understanding of emerging modalities in equine rehab. Acupuncture and wound management bracket this module's table of contents.



Module 3 is a nine-day residential session taught by specialists and packed with opportunities for hands-on work. Included are 12 hours of case assessments, manual therapies and applied therapeutics. The introduction to various soft tissue mobilization techniques and bodywork includes myofascial release, range of motion exercises, activation, spinal mobilization, the Equiband System, ground/applied exercise and other tactile and proprioceptive stimulus techniques. Students will also be introduced to electrical therapies including shockwave, TENS, EMS, FES, therapeutic ultrasound, vibration plate and other rehabilitation/conditioning options which may include cold spas, and the underwater treadmill or swimming.

The residential program will be offered twice a year in California, then in Europe, Australia and

elsewhere as warranted by course participation in various parts of the world.

The fourth and final module is comprised of case studies, an internship and a final exam. In this segment, students submit two full case studies, complete an internship with an AASS-approved equine rehabilitation veterinarian or rehabilitation center for three days and provide a narrative report of their experience.

The final step is an online examination, an essay and a video or interactive practical exam. The certification that results from successful completion has obvious benefits for the licensed care professionals who earn it.

For the horse-owning public, “It’s a great way to distinguish what kind of training those caring for their horse have,” says Nicole. In a time with so many horse care options, having an ASTR-certified professional’s guidance will be especially helpful, Carrie concurs: “For horse owners, it’s like a minefield of advertising claims. That is the difficult part for them. I field 1-2 questions per week on new equipment.”

Carrie, Nicole and Debranne rolled out the program officially during the American Association of Equine Practitioners convention in San Francisco in early December. “We received a great response from vets and RVTs (registered veterinarian technicians) at the convention,” says Carrie. “There’s good excitement around the program.”

For more information, visit www.academyofanimalsportscience.com.