

Written by by Lyndsey Gruber of Athletux
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Eventer augments riding with plenty of additional exercise and the same care for her own body that her horses receive.

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While most people would call riding eight to 10 horses a day plenty of exercise, Auburn Excell Brady of Excell Equestrian in San Juan Capistrano doesn't just do her cardio on the back of a horse. Eventing may be the equestrian version of a triathlon, but Auburn considers it important to incorporate the human version into her fitness routine. She spends time in the pool several days a week and calls a good swim "low-impact but a total body workout." She also enjoys spin classes for a cardio fix. Exercise outside of the saddle is incredibly important to her success in the saddle, and the Excell Equestrian team goes on group work-out sessions whenever possible.



They also take healthy eating seriously at Excell. Auburn says she sticks to a "simple diet, with lots and lots of protein and fruits and veggies." Living in San Juan Capistrano has many perks and one of them is the sushi scene, which Auburn and her barn family are a big fan of. "We go eat sushi as a group at least once a week, lots of protein and healthier than a cheeseburger."

Riding as much as Auburn does can be exhausting physically, and she believes her diet helps her hop from one horse to the next. "I drink a lot of water, and avoid sugar as much as possible. I'm lucky that I don't have a serious sweet tooth: My biggest weakness isn't a piece of cake but a good cheeseburger." Avoiding temptation can be challenging, so instead of cutting those "bad" foods out completely, Auburn has found ways to incorporate them sparingly and in a way that doesn't drag down her energy or make her feel guilty afterward. "Now I just get my burgers protein style," which allows for what feels like a cheat meal without all the extra time in the gym to combat it.

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The lifestyle of an upper level eventing rider is tough on the body, which is why Auburn is a big believer in making sure she treats her body just as well as she treats her competition horses. “If I’m sore I get bodywork done. I have an acupuncturist I go see, as well as a chiropractor. If I’m exhausted from riding a ton, and my body hurts on top of that, it’s hard to find the motivation to get in the pool, or on the bike. So I make sure my body is able to perform all the tasks I ask it to.”

Her Horses

Auburn’s horses all are on a similar care and nutrition plan, specialized as needed with the keyword being “simple.”

“I don’t give the horses a ton of supplements: I try to keep everything as streamlined as possible. They all get a mix of timothy and alfalfa, though I tend to lean more on the timothy because the alfalfa can be a little too much for the Thoroughbreds sometimes.” Everyone in the barn eats Triple Crown Complete and Auburn loves using Platinum Performance. Other than that, “When it’s really hot they’ll get electrolytes and if one has weak feet we’ll put them on a hoof supplement. Other than that, just a good complete feed and good hay.”

Auburn’s horses enjoy a fitness routine as diverse as her personal routine. The horses get six days of work a week, all focused on creating well-rounded, fit competitors. “We might jump twice a week, one day focused more on cavaletti or gymnastics, and then we’ll do dressage three days a week, and then they’ll have a day of conditioning, trotting the hills or going for a gallop session. The goal is to get them into all three phases at least once a week, with a day off to either hack out or just go out in a turn-out on their own.”

Auburn’s horses also enjoy preventative care that keeps them feeling their best after tough work-outs. “If a horse jumps or has a particularly rough conditioning ride we have a freezer full of ice boots. I’ve stepped away from poulticing their legs after having some trouble with scratches and other fungus, but now we use a liniment gel and then wrap the horses for night. We don’t use poultice on the legs, but I still like to pack their hooves with it after icing them.”

Auburn takes fitness and nutrition for herself and her horses very seriously, like any top athlete would. The whole team at Excell Equestrian is focused on maintaining happy, healthy horses

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and strong riders.