



Free horse health webinars help cut through the clutter and information overload.

by Kim F Miller

MacKinnon Products president and equestrian Julie Garella-Williams began sponsoring several Continuing Education programs for veterinarians a few years ago. It involved a shift of marketing budget that was partly motivated by being “over fake news in the horse care jungle complex,” she reflects. It also fit with her personal passion for information regarding all facets of horse health. MacKinnon sponsored the CE programs for American Association of Equine Practitioners nationally and regionally, and its president and CEO sat in on the presentations.

When COVID-19 shut down the show circuit and other aspects of the equestrian world earlier this year, Julie’s CE experiences seeded an idea for making constructive use of horse owners’ extra time.

“I’m not the kind of person that can sit still,” she explains. “Everybody was so down in the mouth. There were no shows and nobody knew what was going to happen. So I said, ‘What can we do? Let’s do something educational.’”

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Julie's professional and personal interest in equine health has led to many positive relationships with veterinarians. The first she pitched the idea to was James Orsini, MS, DVM, of the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine's New Bolton Center. They had worked together on an ice boot for laminitis cases and discussed a webinar on that debilitating hoof disease.

Thus was born the For The Love Of The Horse series of live, free, interactive, educational webinars presented by leading veterinarians, researchers and scholars. The first presentation "Laminitis: Understanding the Disease and Best Practices in Prevention," was offered live in the spring and is now one of 10 and counting recorded presentations available for on-demand, free viewing. Participants in the live webinars can interact with the presenter through a chat function.



For The Love Of The Horse has a growing list of business partners, but the content is expressly "not sponsored" by any company. The goal is completely objective information, Julie explains. "We are trying to take complex subject matter and, working with true experts, distill it for horse owners. I'm very passionate about this and I feel that if owners really understand how things work, then they can make the right, informed decisions about their horse's health."

Well-known California veterinarian Phoebe Smith, DVM, of Riviera Equine Internal Medicine and Consulting, is the featured speaker on the next live webinar on Sunday, Nov. 8 at 4pm PST.

The topic is the complex subject of Metabolic & Cushing Syndrome: Understanding Symptoms, Treatment & Prevention.

California photographer and media consultant Alden Corrigan was among the first to help promote the talks, through the Competitive Equestrian. Pro Equine Grooms, Phelps Media, the

American Quarter Horse Association and other outlets also jumped on board, spreading the word via email and social media. As of early October, over 6,000 horse owners in 38 states and 40 countries had viewed the presentations, either live or on demand, Julie reports. Forty-eight percent had watched more than one episode.

Judging from the nature of questions posed throughout the series, Julie surmises that participants run the gamut from high-level competitors to the roughly 70% of horse owners who don't compete at high levels. The common denominator is they all want the straight scoop on their horses' health.

Hot Topics

An Oct. 4 talk on cardio and respiratory health featured Cristobal Navas de Solis, LV, MS PhD, from the New Bolton Center. The veterinarian shared his expertise and his own and current research on various aspects of cardio and respiratory health in performance horses. He discussed the concept of "VO2 max," which is the maximum rate of oxygen consumption used in incremental levels of exercise. He explained that it is mostly used with elite level human endurance athletes and is beginning to have potential for applications with horses.

The talk moved into the physiology of how air moves from the horse's nostril, down the upper airway's trachea, and into the lungs, where oxygen is transferred into the blood stream. Obstacles on the long journey include conformational obstructions in the narrow airway passage into the trachea, lung disease and inflammation triggered when environmental irritants get past the body's natural defense mechanisms. The latter sets the stage for conditions on the Equine Asthma Spectrum. Dr. Navas de Solis noted that the way horses are managed -- usually in barns much of the day -- makes them predisposed to respiratory disease. He emphasized the importance of "improving the environment as much as you can."

Exercise associated deaths are an area of special interest to Dr. Navas del Solis. He explained that New Bolton is using fitness trackers with an EKG affixed to the girth to monitor heart rate and rhythm, stride length, speed, etc. The data is hoped to help reduce or prevent such tragic outcomes.

Questions during the cardio and respiratory health webinar ran the gamut. For example, an upper level eventer asked about training routines to strengthen the respiratory system and another participant asked whether there is a correlation between obesity and asthma in horses.

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That answer is yes, Dr. Navas del Solis said, though not to the extent that it exists in people.

Eventing competitor and USEA Area VI chair Asia Vedder tuned into her first For The Love Of The Horse episode for Dr. Navas del Solis' talk. She described the series as valuable to all horse owners and as coming at the right time. "There is so much information out there, especially now as more people are doing things on social media, where you can post anything: opinions, false articles, etc. Having these topics addressed by experts is really good."

Asia hopes that the pros and cons of various therapeutic products will be a future topic, along with supplements, muscle recovery, shoeing and recognizing a properly balanced foot, etc.

This month's presenter, Phoebe Smith, is excited to share information on metabolic conditions and their treatment and management. Long passionate about education for all who care for horses --veterinarians and owners -- Dr. Smith notes that horse owners are like everybody else in that they often don't know much about a health subject until they've had to deal with it. She describes the talks as a nice counterpoint to the considerable amount of misinformation that exists and agrees the COVID era is a good time to offer it. Among her own clients, she's noticed that the down time with no shows has led many to ask her great questions: like, "I'm going through my horse's medicine cabinet and I need to know how this drug works. Or, I've wanted to know why my horse makes this noise forever, and now I have time to address it."

The next For The Love Of The Horse presentation is Sunday, Nov. 8, at 4 pm, with Phoebe Smith, DVM, on Equine Metabolic & Cushing Syndrome. For more information, visit www.lovethehorse.com

The Gallop welcomes news, tips and photos. Contact Kim F Miller at kimfmiller1@mac.com.

**For the Love
of the Horse** 

November 2020 - The Gallop: Straight Talk

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Presentations in the free, on-demand library at www.lovethehorse.com include:

- Back Issues in Performance Horses, with Kent Allen, DVM
- The Impact of DNA on the Performance Horse, with Samantha Brooks, Ph.D.
- Tendon Issues: Reducing The Strain, with Sherry Johnson, DVM, MS, Dipl. ACVSMR
- Hay: What's In It & What Else Does Your Horse Need? with Clair Thunes, Ph.D.
- The Value of the Ridden Lameness Exam, with Rick Mitchell, DVM, MRCV, Dipl. ACVSRM
- Unraveling the Mystery of the Stifle: Anatomy & Rehabilitation Approaches, with Melissa King, DVM, PhD., Dipl. ACVSRM
- Hoof Lameness: Understanding Causes & Cures, with Raul Bras DVM, CJF, AAPF
- Breeding For Success: It's More Than Luck, with Pat Garrett, DVM.
- Laminitis: Understanding the Disease & Best Practices in Prevention, with James Orsini, MS, DVM.