



WYE VALLEY RIDING CLUB

Established 1974. BHS Affiliated

Website: www.wyevalleyrc.co.uk

Volume 10 Issue 2

COMMITTEE FOR 2019/2020

Spring 2020

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Welcome to the Spring edition of the Newsletter, which is full of reminders of times gone by (or pre C-19 as we may call it eventually!). We did hold our monthly meetings in February and March, and ran training events until 13 March, before the world changed. It seems strange that it was only a month ago. We hope that you are all keeping safe, and perhaps giving your horses/ponies a bit of an early summer holiday or an easier time, while we try to avoid staying out of hospital at all costs.

The committee will be 'meeting' virtually in some way during May to review where we are and to make tentative plans for future activities, so do get in touch with any of us in the next couple of weeks if you have any ideas. We have booked dates for shows at Howick already, and will aim to book some training sessions when we can to replace those we lost. There are some virtual seminars and training suggestions on-line to keep our minds active and some members have been doing online Pilates and other exercise sessions to keep our bodies fit and flexible. It is amazing how adaptable we can all be!

Meanwhile, please do stay safe and well, and enjoy our wonderful countryside. It is at times like this when poor broadband speeds, being out in all weathers and doing all that poo picking seem like positive advantages compared to being cooped up in cities. At the same time, we should spare a thought for our members who are key workers in difficult situations, cannot visit family members, are experiencing financial hardship, or who are unable to see their horses, and hope that they can return to some sort of normality as soon as possible.

The link to the BRC advice pages is here: <http://www.bhs.org.uk/enjoy-riding/british-riding-clubs/news>
(Reporter: Janet Peters, Chair.)

Reports

Christmas Party 4th December 2019

Our ever-popular Christmas dinner took place at the Anchor Hotel in Tintern again on 4th December. We gathered in their main dining room for a delicious 3-course meal. As well as the traditional turkey and Christmas pudding, there was a choice of several other dishes to suit everyone's taste.

Another WVRC tradition is the Christmas word game devised by Diana Such which gets the little grey cells working before we eat. This year we also had a raffle which raised funds for Redwings SWHP - several of us have their ponies in our care.

A very enjoyable evening to start the Christmas season!

A Little Story from a friend

One summer evening during a violent thunderstorm a mother was tucking her son into bed. She was about to turn off the light when he asked with a tremor in his voice,

"Mommy, will you sleep with me tonight?"

The mother smiled and gave him a reassuring hug.

"I can't dear," she said. "I have to sleep in Daddy's room."

A long silence was broken at last by his shaky little voice: "The big sissy."

WVRC Club meeting, 5th February 2020

Farriery

Speaker: Tim Rooney

Wye Valley Riding Club were delighted to welcome Tim Rooney to the February monthly meeting. Tim, noted for his point to point and team chasing successes, has been a highly respected Training Farrier near Cardiff for very many years, educating many of our local farriers. His son, Sam, is now also a farrier and the pictures in this article are of Sam as we didn't have any action shots of Tim!

Tim started training as a farrier in 1972 and qualified in 1976. He was therefore able to give us an interesting talk about Farriery and how it has changed over the last 40 to 50 years. Tim is still riding regularly and he, his wife and his daughter are all members of Riders 2000 Riding Club. There was also a useful question & answer session which allowed many members to find out more about some of their own horses' problems and to share their experiences.

The report below picks up some of the items that were discussed and gives a flavour of the evening.



There have been many "fashions" in shoeing over the years but most farriers still use the traditional normal concave shoes. However all horses are individuals and some of the newer types, such as the natural balance shoes, will suit some horses. A farrier needs to be aware of what is available. The glue on plastic shoes have a place in particular circumstances, as do gel pads and specialist shoe types, but Tim's view is that for general use the fullered concave shoes seem to work best. Copper nails can work with some horses since they prevent the growth of bacteria around the nail.

Most horses are now shod regularly—at 5/6 week intervals in summer although 6 to 7 weeks may be all that is necessary in winter as hoof growth is slower. As many horses do less roadwork than when he



started, shoes do not wear as fast and they don't need to be replaced at every shoeing. Roadwork, although good for the horse in many ways, does cause problems with the shoes as the nails can loosen and move and damage the hoof wall.

He thought that Cleveland Bays and Irish Drafts traditionally had the best feet. Horses now are finer bred and often have more trouble with their feet due to changes in shape and the strength of hoof wall. Thoroughbreds often have particular problems. If a horse has one or more white feet, this will often have more problems than the others (although this is not the case with the more cobby types).

Tim also observed some horses naturally have odd front feet i.e. one front foot is slightly different to the other. This is common and, in fact, approximately 80% of horses show this.

The wet weather is making it difficult to turn horses out and they are spending more time in the stable, which can cause problems with their feet. His horses are out during the day and in at night and he doesn't pick out the feet until the morning as the impacted mud is better for the hoof than dirty and wet bedding. Tim uses Kevin Bacon hoof dressing regularly to maintain hoof quality (recommending the oil version in winter, since it is easier to apply in cold weather).

The meeting concluded with coffee and several members took the chance to ask Tim many more questions about their own horses.

(Reporter: Liz Pitcher)

Another Little Bit of Fun From My Friend

SENIOR DRIVING

Vernon, a senior citizen was driving down the motorway, his car phone rang. Answering, he heard his wife's voice urgently warning him, "Vernon, I just heard on the news that there's a car going the wrong way on M25. Please be careful!" Hell," said Vernon, "It's not just one car. It's hundreds of them!"

QUESTION?

Why is it that when someone tells you that there are one billion stars in the universe you believe them, but if they tell you there is wet paint you have to touch it to check?

WHY WE LOVE CHILDREN

It was that time, during the Sunday morning service, for the children's sermon. All the children were invited to come forward.

One little girl was wearing a particularly pretty dress and, as she sat down, the pastor leaned over and said,

"That is a very pretty dress. Is it your Easter Dress?"

The little girl replied, directly into the pastor's clip-on microphone,

"Yes, and my Mom says it's a bitch to iron."

Continued on page 5

WVRC Club meeting, 4th March 2020

Bit and bridle fitting

Speaker: Lyn Beattie, Horse Bit Fit

A large audience of around 40 people came to the Beaufort Hotel for the March club meeting. Lyn Beattie works for Horse Bit Fit, a horse bit and bridle consultation service, covering the UK and her area is South Wales, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. Given that she lives in Pembrokeshire, she covers many miles!



Horse Bit Fit was founded 8 years ago and provides brand independent advice, although they do seem to have their favourite designs of both bits and bridles. Some owners approach them when they have a new horse or want to check the appropriateness of a particular bit or bridle but they are often contacted when riders notice either physical problems, such as tension or lameness, or behavioural issues such as a strong or inconsistent contact, schooling problems or napping.

Lyn described what they do when they come for a consultancy visit. First, they look at the anatomy of the horse (not just its mouth), checking for any asymmetry in muscle development. Obviously this is not necessarily caused by the bit, although it might be. Then they check:

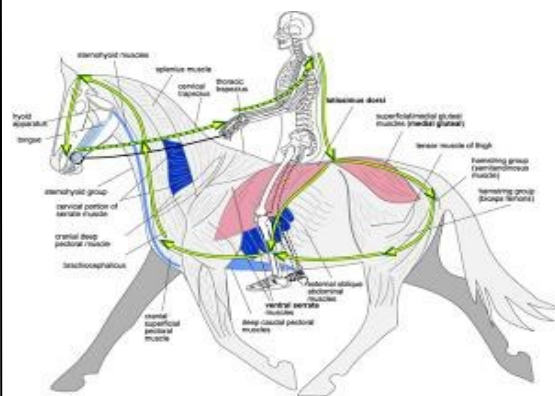
- **Poll area** for tension
- **Temporomandibular joint (TMJ)** (just below the ears, where the top and bottom jaw join, which has lots of nerves around it) for any soreness or tension
- **Masseter muscles** (cheeks) for tightness
- **Temporalis muscles** (just below forelock) for evenness
- **Base of ears** for tension/rubs
- **Length of 'smile'** which is the distance between the top of the lip and the bottom end of the molars. If very short, it can affect the type of bit that should be used
- **Lips** to see how fleshy they are
- **Overall symmetry of face**, particularly the TMJ and nostrils

They look inside the mouth, to check:

- **Symmetry of teeth**
- **Location of canines/tushes** (up to 25% of mares can have canines!)
- **Bars** for thickness of skin covering. In some breeds (eg TB), they can be very narrow or sharp, which affects the type of bit that can be used
- **Upper palate** can be domed or flat and narrow or wide. This will affect the design of the bit required and the size of port that could be used.
- **Tongue** can be very fleshy, taking up space in the mouth. The genioglossus muscle, which can be seen towards the back of the tongue, is used to pull grass into the back of the mouth and varies in its position and shape. If the bit touches it, this can cause discomfort or the horse thinks it is eating grass, and will chew and salivate.

The tongue is attached to the **hyoid bone**, which sits suspended between the mandible bones in the lower jaw. in the bottom half of the head, and is connected to the neck and

chest muscles. Any tension in the mouth may affect the length of stride, lift in the shoulders and in the wither.



The significance of all of these checks is that tension and tightness in any part can affect the rest of the body, as shown in the diagram. For example, if the muscles around the TMJ are tight, it can cause tension in the pelvis as these are connected by musculature and fascia. There are many nerves around the TMJ and these are related to balance and proprioception (perception or awareness of the position and movement of the body) Restriction and pain in this area can be a cause of stumbling or being heavy on the

forehand although, of course, there may be other reasons for all of the above as well.

Lyn then moved on to the choice of bit that might suit the horse. She will identify the type of bit based on her observations but emphasised that the horse also has its preferences, so they always carry out a ridden assessment, and try at least a couple of bits, if not more.

The mouthpiece recommended will depend on

- Anatomy
- Weight
- Material
- Links/joints
- Thickness
- Action (where pressure is applied)

Lyn thought that the rings or sidepieces of the bits have less affect on the horse comfort and way of going.



Lyn said that the “two crinkle rule”, which many of us are familiar with, is not a good way to find where the bit should sit as the anatomy and the depth of smile is different for each horse. The bit should sit between the canines and the molars and will often sit within one of the grooves in the upper palate mouth, as shown in the photo. A thickness of 14mm diameter seems to suit most horses, with ponies often needing a thinner bit. The bit should fit snugly if it has fixed sides (such as an eggbutt), and have a 1/4 inch each side for a loose ring. Apparently many of us tend to use bits that are too wide rather than too narrow!

There are many myths around bits, which Lyn explained.

- French links and Dr Bristol bits are both now considered to dig into the tongue around the edge of the plates, with the angle of the Dr Bristol possibly being less severe than the French link.
- Hanging cheek snaffles provide poll relief, not poll pressure (provided the cheek pieces are not over-tightened).
- Some saliva is good, lots is a sign that the horse may not be able to swallow properly.

- Gags can send mixed messages to the horse, asking it to lift its head, but also applying poll pressure. A back strap fitted to the cheekpiece ring will reduce the poll pressure. Lyn said that a Pelham, used with two reins, was often a useful alternative.

Finally, Lyn talked about bridle fit—a correctly fitted bridle is as important as a correctly fitted saddle. They should fit well, preferably with a single piece headpiece, curved around the ears. Browbands need to be long enough so that they do not pull the headpiece into the back of the ears or apply pressure to the TMJs and the nerve centre. For the same reason, buckles on the cheekpieces should be level with the eye, not higher up by the TMJ. Nosebands should be fitted loosely, so that two fingers can be inserted under the front, whatever the type, although Horse Bit Fit prefer cavessons.

This was a very interesting and thought provoking talk and the number of members crowding around Lyn to ask questions after she had finished showed how much the topic was appreciated.

Reporters: Janet Peters, Liz Pitcher, Karen Chase, with thanks to Lyn for providing some of her slides.

JUST ONE MORE QUIP FROM MY FRIEND

Two blondes walk into a building
you'd think at least one of them would have seen it!

Phone answering machine message - 'If you want to
buy marijuana, press the hash key!'

A man takes his Rottweiler to the vet.

'My dog is cross-eyed, is there anything you can do for him?'

'Well,' said the vet, 'let's have a look at him'

So he picks the dog up and examines his eyes, then he checks his teeth. Finally, he says, 'I'm going to have to put him down.' 'What? Because he's cross-eyed?'

'No, because he's really heavy'

Hope you all enjoyed the little quips and stories from my Friend and made you laugh a little in these challenging times. Best wishes to you all. STAY SAFE, STAY WELL AND LOOK AFTER YOURSELVES

MARILYN.

Picture is me 2018 at Chepstow Racecourse Halloween meeting. Needless to say the rat is rubber!!!!

