



PROPOSAL

TO PROVIDE PHYSIOTHERAPY TO HORSES COMPETING AT CHELTENHAM RACECOURSE

Hannah Ashton, of Cotswold Horse and Hound physiotherapy, is experienced in the therapy and rehabilitation of racehorses. With modern equipment, Hannah has been working alongside vets treating racehorses post injury or fall, and pre and post racing to ensure sustained peak condition for competition.



WHY YOU SHOULD USE PHYSIOTHERAPY AT THE COURSE

Physiotherapy will improve a horses' performance in races, and appropriate treatment will speed recovery and ensure they maintain optimum performance. It is classically and valuably used to treat chronic conditions and maintain a performance level, however, it's effectiveness on acute conditions and post exercise is often forgotten.

Physiotherapy can be used at a number of stages:

Pre-racing

Should horses have travelled great distances or become tense and unsettled at the course, a stimulating massage and full range of movement stretching will loosed tight muscles that can ultimately affect their racing performance.

Cool down phase

Treatment applied in the cool-down phase after racing, can dramatically affect the horses' recovery. Issues such as sore, tight muscles, bruising and swelling often develop after racing or a fall which, may not be obvious, but can ultimately affect their training and performance ability for a number of days post racing. In some cases, cold water hosing is used in the belief that it is a sufficient treatment. Although this method cools the skin, the temperature is uncontrollable and unlikely to sufficiently reach the structures involved in sports injury.

Acute Injuries

By instantly treating acute injuries and managing the horse after exercise, potential issues can be avoided or quickly rectified, avoiding further issues. Allowing the trauma to develop into a chronic condition causes further problems and as such can take a considerably longer time to heal, therefore affecting their training and future performances.



Chronic conditions

Horses with chronic conditions typically receive on going treatment from the trainers' resident physiotherapist and typically these are not treated at the racecourse. However, should the trainer wish, I am able to offer therapy for a range of injuries and yard visits for continued treatment.

Whilst it is understandable that trainers have reservations about unfamiliar professionals treating their star horses, correct treatment at the right stage will significantly help a racehorses' short-term and long term racing career.

PROPOSED METHODS

The proposed methods of treatment are:

- Manual techniques - to identify areas of pain and swelling (which may not initially be obvious)
- Cryotherapy (cold and ice therapies, including ice massage)
- Education – help the carer to continue with the therapy at home
- Loan equipment – Should the horse be unable to receive physiotherapy upon returning home, specific equipment can be loaned to ensure consistency of treatment, thus giving the horse the best opportunity to heal quickly and effectively. Importantly, continued treatment will also prevent the development of secondary or chronic complications

MANUAL TECHNIQUES

In-depth education and training as well as years of valuable experience in treating horses of all disciplines, specifically racehorses, enables me to identify areas of pain and discomfort that may not be obvious to the untrained hand and eye. For this reason, I know that by working alongside the onsite veterinarian, I can make a significant difference to the horses' performance and recovery post racing or injury.

After competition, the ideal recovery would involve a firm, stimulating sports massage. However, a horse with bruised, sore or fatigued muscles will not welcome such pressure, and as such the treatment is unlikely to be fully effective. A horse that has been treated in the cool down phase is less likely to experience the aches and pains of an untreated horse, and as such, be able to receive fully effective physiotherapy from the yards usual therapist, and continue work with little or no interruptions or complications.

THE DIFFERENCE CRYOTHERAPY CAN MAKE

In human sports medicine, the use of cryotherapy (ice therapy) is widely used in the treatment of musculoskeletal injuries. Athletes know that using cryotherapy soon after exercise decreases pain, swelling, stiffness and fatigue all of which typically arise 24 hours after exercise.



The most effective form of cryotherapy comes in the form of ice massage.

Ice can be applied to:

- Muscular pain (to break the cycle of muscle spasm, ischemia, pain, more spasm)
- Sever bruising or hematoma, resulting from direct trauma such as a fall, kick or collision
- Trauma from concussion such as splints or bucked shins
- Acute tendonitis

Beyond the surface, the effects of cryotherapy are:

- Improve the metabolic rate of tissue
- Capillary constriction (reducing local tissue metabolism)
- Reduce the levels of chemicals associated with inflammation
- Reduce the development of oedema (a by-product of muscle damage). Should oedema develop, movement within joints can be significantly restricted
- Reduce pain which may permit the horse to push themselves harder, potentially improving performance

In summery, the combination of cryotherapy directly after exercise followed by 24 hrs of rest can make a significant difference to the horses' recovery, avoiding interruptions of their training regime.

EQUIPMENT HIRE AND EDUCATION

Continuation of therapy is vital in the horses' recovery. After the initial treatment, training the horses' carer, and if appropriate, loaning equipment to continue with the treatment, is the most effective combination of treatment to ensure a speedy and healthy recovery.

Equipment that can be hired is:

Pulsed Electromagnetic Field Therapy (PEMFT)

This treatment...

- reduces inflammation
- aids pain relief
- encourages the healing of tendon and ligament injuries, bone fractures, sore shins and muscular trauma



Infra-red phototherapy

This treatment...

- encourages the release of endorphins
- prepares muscles for further treatment
- promotes tissue re-growth and collagen synthesis
- strengthens scar tissue making it less likely to break down
- prevents the development of proud flesh
- increases blood and nutrient flow to affected areas



Ultra-violet phototherapy – this treatment manages and prevents the development of...

- superficial bacteria
- low grade infections
- skin conditions

Massage and Manual Techniques

Various massage and exercise techniques can be taught that will...

- prepare muscles before exercise
- encourage, maintain or restore joint flexibility
- ensure full range of movement



FINANCIAL

I would be happy to offer an initial trial period of agreed length during forthcoming race days to enable trainers, vets and stable staff to fully understand my offerings and experience the positive impact and value of the treatments.