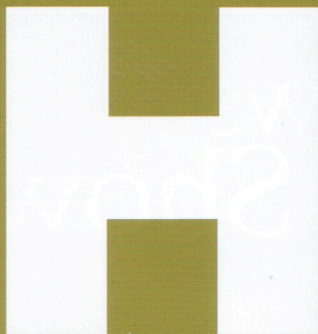


Spring 2015



OPEN NOW FOR
IH INSPIRATION!

**Is your horse
for a season,
a reason or a
lifetime?**

**FROM THE
CASE FILES:**
HELP WITH RIDER
CONFIDENCE

WHEN
THE WORST
HAPPENS:
Dealing with
trauma

**GO WESTERN: SIX
BRILLIANT RIDDEN
EXERCISES**

**WIN A
GRAZING
MUZZLE!**

**Turnout
turmoil:**
what's best for you
and your horse?

Healing body AND MIND POST TRAUMA

By IHRA Sue Palmer

Recently some of my clients were stuck in a traffic jam and very late getting to me. Eventually we heard that a trailer with two horses had overturned on a dual carriageway nearby, and the police and fire service were there and the vet was on the way.

One of the horses was ok, but the other was trapped; I felt sick hearing the news. Thankfully, later that evening, we heard that both horses and owners had escaped with nothing more than scratches.

But would it really be nothing more than scratches? Few of us have managed without having a nasty fall at some point in our lives, and I think we would all agree that even if the only visible trauma is cuts and bruises, the damage goes deeper, both mentally and physically.

Often the older you are, the longer it takes you to heal. If you're lucky, the bruises settle in a few days, and there's nothing more to show from your accident. If you're unlucky, you could suffer more serious soft tissue injury such as damage to tendons or ligaments, a bone may be chipped or even broken, or there might be damage to your internal organs.

If your horse is involved in a physical trauma, the results can be very similar. But with a horse, only the cuts will be visible, and maybe heat and swelling depending on what structures are damaged under the skin.

That's why it's so important to get your horse checked thoroughly by an experienced, qualified professional, for example your vet or Chartered Physiotherapist. This needs doing not only immediately after the accident, but again before bringing him back into work, and again a few weeks later.

Pain and restriction of movement may be minimal initially but have the potential to worsen over a period of a few days or weeks, especially once the horse is in ridden work again. A slight asymmetry can develop into more significant unevenness, or can lead to compensatory pain or tightness elsewhere.

From the psychological point of view, every horse is an individual and will react as such. One horse I worked with had put her foot through the floor of the trailer as she was travelling; she then refused to load again, and I was asked to help.



Photo courtesy of Simon Palmer / Into The Lens

It's so important to get your horse checked thoroughly by an experienced, qualified professional, for example your vet or Chartered Physiotherapist

“It's so important to get your horse checked thoroughly by an experienced, qualified professional.”


I did get her walking into the trailer and standing in it, but she continually stamped at the floor with her right hind as if to test the floor out. Her owner decided it was too stressful (for both her and her horse) to continue the training.

A pair of Thoroughbreds I treated had been travelling in a trailer which turned over (because the car pulling the trailer was too lightweight). Both loaded straight into another trailer at the side of the road, and neither appeared to suffer any long term physical difficulties.

When trauma has occurred, it's down to you as your horse's 'guardian' to put damage limitation in place. Physically, follow the earlier advice, and trust your instinct – if your horse doesn't feel right, he probably isn't right.

Psychologically, the sooner you can assess your horse for any problems and put in place a training program to overcome them, the easier it will be for all concerned. Your local Intelligent Horsemanship Recommended Associate is the ideal person to help with this.

• Sue Palmer is an IHRA and Chartered Veterinary Physiotherapist. More information about her work at www.holistichorsehelp.com. For a full list of chartered physiotherapists for animal therapy, see www.acpat.co.uk

• We will be looking at dealing with trauma and PTSD/I in humans in the summer issue of *IH Magazine*.  >>