



The weather plays such a big part in dictating what you can do through the winter. Even though we compete through the summer I focus on training in the winter then give my horses small breaks through the season. Its a great time to focus on improving yourself and preparing for next year.

Gareth Hughes
- Dressage Rider

Keeping your horse warm will help him maintain condition. Rugging up and feeding plenty of forage will both create body heat, which will reduce the energy he expends trying to keep warm.

Mark Todd
- Eventer



It is important to get the right balance of fitness for show jumpers and one thing is for sure I don't like to over jump them at home. We adapt the length and complexity of the training to the age and ability of the horse so not to over face them, especially with a younger horse. Like a human athlete, it is a gradual process and we keep exercise interesting with hacks out too. A good show jumper needs to be supple and responsive, so we do flat work in walk, trot and canter and set up a few jumps to school over with a variety of exercises. Jumps don't have to be large, it's more about technique and keeping up a good rhythm without too much stopping and starting which helps to build up fitness levels.

Robert Smith
- International Show Jumper



Every year we completely clip-out all of the in-work dressage horses on our yard. We have a special routine when clipping that helps ensure that our horses are kept beautifully turned out for the winter competitions and that the horses feel comfortable after all their hair is removed.

We will completely clip out a horse from top to bottom and after clipping we will immediately give them a hot bath to remove all of the loose hair and thoroughly clean the skin. Then we will wrap them in hot towels to warm them up and encourage the skin to soak in some of the moisture. Following their hot towel wrap we rub lots of baby oil into their skin, mane, tail and coat. The baby oil keeps their skin soft and supple, and the oil also helps us to keep them clean as mud doesn't stick as easily. The mane and tail is also kept cleaner and has less tangles. This is a long clipping process, but the horses really enjoy the luxury and attention, it also means that the horses are much quicker to groom, their body is protected from the winter weather and they really shine in the arena.

Warming-up and warming-down is important at the best of times, but in the winter extra care is essential. Your horse will be colder naturally in the winter and they need even more time to stretch their muscles and warm up their bodies. In the winter we wrap up our horses in thick rugs so they get all warm and toasty, then we clip them and strip them for riding, which makes them tense up to keep warm. Be sure to allow your horse to stretch in the walk and allow them to work in gradually. It is also as important to give your horse plenty of time to warm-down after every training session. Many injuries occur at the end of a training session in the winter, and you will not discover the problem until you get on them next to ride. Be sensitive to your horse's warm-up and warm-down and if in doubt always give them an extra 10 minutes at the beginning and end of your session - better safe than sorry!

Andrew Gould - Dressage Rider & Trainer



We are lucky to have acres of farmland to ride around to keep our horses fit. The hilly terrain helps them build up their muscle tone and we hunt our horses too. I like to have them quite fit for the ring, especially the working hunters. Every horse is different so we have to adapt their fitness training accordingly. Some horses need more jumping training than others. Younger horses for example generally need more jumping education than the older, more experienced horses. On the whole, we would probably school a couple of times a week.

Louise Bell - prolific winner of Working Hunter championships



I do a lot more hacking out in winter and my treadmill is excellent as all the horses really enjoy exercising on it.

Lee Pearson - Dressage Rider