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OTTB Gets a Second Chance at New Career Thanks to PBEC *by Lauren Fisher, Jump Media*



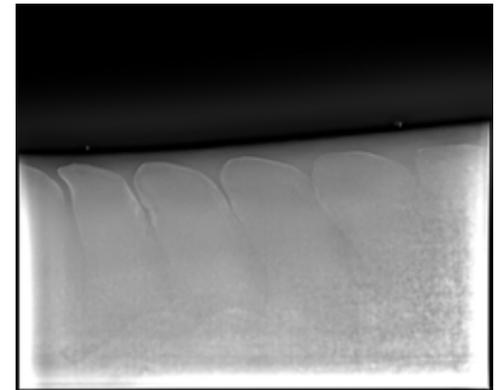
Megan O'Neal with Blessing.

Palm Beach Equine Clinic is renowned for its exceptional care of performance sport horses of all disciplines around the world. Sometimes, the veterinarians and surgeons have the opportunity to treat the horses owned by their colleagues. This summer, PBEC veterinary technician Megan O'Neal experienced the clinic's surgical expertise firsthand when her rescued off the track Thoroughbred was diagnosed with severe spinal impingement.

O'Neal adopted Blessing, a ten-year-old mare, almost three years ago. After Blessing's career on the track ended, she was given to Pure Thoughts Horse Rescue in Wellington, FL. Blessing had moved through a few foster homes before O'Neal gave her a forever home. Blessing had been successfully jumping

three-foot courses with one of her previous foster homes. After adopting Blessing, O'Neal was jumping the mare as well, but only about two-feet high. She had plans to compete, but Blessing's behavior changed under saddle. The mare began rearing and bolting, endangering both herself and her rider. Her attitude on ground handling turned sour as well, no longer enjoying to be groomed and pinning her ears in agitation.

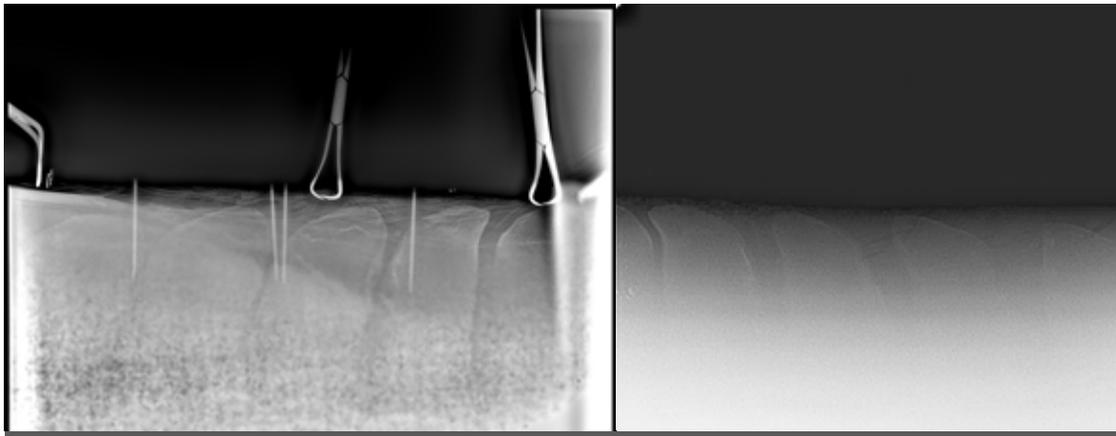
With the help of staff surgeon Dr. Weston Davis and the excellent imaging technology available at PBEC, O'Neal was able to pinpoint the cause of Blessing's troubling change in behavior. The diagnosis was severe chronic back pain with dorsal spinous process impingement (kissing spine lesions). The vertebrae in her back



from T16 – L1 were affected, which is the mid-section of the horse's back, in the general region of where the back of the saddle sits.

The first course of action was to try several non-surgical techniques to treat Blessing's pain. Dr. Davis tried treatments of intramuscular injections for arthritic pain and corticosteroid injections in between the spinal vertebrae. A veterinary chiropractor adjusted the mare every few weeks. For almost eight months, several additional methods were tried to avoid surgery including acupuncture, back stretches and oral muscle relaxants. In July, when the pain continued after all their efforts, O'Neal finally decided that surgery was the only option for recovery.

In the state-of-the-art hospital at PBEC, Blessing was sedated to obtain pre-operative radiographs that map the exact site of the lesions. She was placed under general anesthesia and the surgical site was sterilely prepared. Dr. Davis made a single 20cm incision on the dorsal midline over the palpable dorsal spinous processes. Eighteen-gauge needles were inserted at regular intervals and used as radiographic markers to identify the interspinous spaces. The incision was extended through the supraspinous ligament at each site. Dr. Davis used sterile surgical equipment,



Radiographs taken during (left) and after (right) Blessing's surgery.



the surgery. Following confirmation, the supraspinous ligament was internally closed with absorbable sutures. The skin was closed with surgical staples and a stent was sutured in place over the incision. After several weeks of healing, the stent and staples were removed.

The surgery was performed without complication and Blessing was provided a good prognosis. Soon after surgery, the space that was created between vertebrae filled with a non-painful, fibrous scar tissue. Blessing went home the following day after surgery. She was monitored closely at home and received routine peri-operative antibiotics (gentamicin and penicillin) and anti-inflammatories (phenylbutazone) for pain. Recently, O'Neal was given the okay from Dr. Davis to resume riding for normal exercise. O'Neal looks forward to continuing her partnership with this special mare. Thanks to Dr. Weston Davis and the team at Palm Beach Equine Clinic for their exceptional care to get Blessing back to happy and healthy!

known as a bone rongeur, to elevate the soft tissues and resect some of the affected dorsal spinous processes (DSPs). The rongeurs, which are similar to large pliers, were used to slowly remove the edges of the overriding bone. This process frees the space between adjacent vertebrae until widened enough that the index finger of the surgeon could easily pass in the interspinous space. The site of resection was lavaged to remove any loosened tissues. Lastly, Intra-operative radiography was used as needed to confirm location and completion of

Palm Beach Equine Clinic to Exclusively Offer New Natural Supplement for Headshakers

by Lauren Fisher, Jump Media

Does your horse struggle with sudden and involuntary head tossing movements that seem to be intermittent or unintentional? He or she could be suffering from a common syndrome known as headshaking. Headshaking is a well-known term used to define this odd and problematic behavior, most prevalent during the spring, summer, and fall seasons.

Behaviors associated with headshaking may vary between horses. Many will shake or jolt their head into the air in an abrupt and unexpected movement. Some horses may aggressively rub their muzzle on the ground or on nearby objects, as well as continuously snorting and sneezing in an attempt to alleviate their discomfort.

Interestingly, most researchers agree that even though headshaking may be initiated by former medical issues or injuries, the source of the behavior can also originate from a stimulus to bright light known as "photoic headshaking". The light stimulation triggers an abnormal communication with the trigeminal

nerve and powers a continued response that results in an uncomfortable and irritating feeling for the horse, known as neuropathic pain. Dependent on the level of brightness and amount of exposure, this hyper stimulation of the trigeminal nerve controls the nerve endings in the face. The physical motion of headshaking is a reaction by the horse to relieve the tingling sensation felt when the nerve is stimulated.

Palm Beach Equine Clinic is proud to exclusively offer a new supplement created by Top Stock International Limited that helps alleviate reactions and symptoms to headshaking. Top Stock Equestrian is based in New Zealand and creates an array of organic stock supplements under the name "Performance Plus Top Stock Supplements". All of the products manufactured by Top Stock Supplements use an all-natural kelp and molasses base, making them a safe and viable product for continued use. Top Stock Supplements contain antioxidants and vitamin

concentrations that help to target overactive nerve tissue in equines to reduce the prevalence and intensity of the headshaking syndrome. The use of vitamin E and antihistamines have also been noted as successful aids in calming overactive nerves. These products are only available for purchase in the United States through Palm Beach Equine Clinic.

With an exceptional reputation and commitment to maintaining the latest advancements in horse sport technology, Palm Beach Equine Clinic continues to stay ahead in equine veterinary science and is pleased to offer new products to the United States equestrian community. Please call the clinic at (561) 793-1599 to learn more or place an order for Top Stock products through our Pharmacy.

For additional information on Top Stock products, please visit www.horseheadshakinghelp.com or visit our website at <http://equineclinic.com>.

Caring for the Senior Performance Horse, Part Two *by Lauren Fisher, Jump Media*

Palm Beach Equine Clinic emphasizes the importance of proper care for our equine athletes as horses age into their senior years and advances in equine medicine are enabling horses to perform longer at their specific careers.

Last month, we discussed the importance of routine veterinary examinations to ensure top health, appropriate fitness programs to maintain stamina and muscle mass, treatments for physical discomfort, and proper care throughout the hot summer months. This month we would like to continue this discussion by highlighting the evaluation of metabolic function, organ function, and proper parasite control in the senior horse.

Horses from the ages of 12 and older are considered "seniors". Many horses that are in the prime of their careers are considered "seniors" and may require extra maintenance in order to continue performing at their best. To maintain these athletes in peak condition requires a little more work on the owner's part with the help of their veterinarian. Preemptive attention for your aging athlete's needs will keep your equine partner performing longer.

An important component to physical health within the aging equine is metabolic function. As horses age, they are more prone to develop a metabolic disease known as Cushing's disease. Cushing's disease, also known as Pituitary Pars Intermedia Dysfunction (PPID), is a dysfunction of the pituitary gland increasing the production of Adrenocorticotropic Hormone (ACTH) ultimately resulting in an overproduction of the hormone Cortisol. Cortisol is the stress hormone and a surplus of this hormone effects the body negatively. Veterinarians use the fasting test of ACTH that evaluates the hormone levels to screen for possible Cushing's disease. This hormone test should be conducted every six-months to monitor hormone production, especially in horse's currently battling the disease.

Cushing's disease is often detected in older horses typically between 16 to 23 years of age, but it has been documented in horses as young as 8 years old. A few of the clinical signs of Cushing's disease include change in



body conformation such as development of a swayback and pot belly, lethargic attitude and in some horses, the growth of long, "curly" hair with delayed shedding. Horses suffering from Cushing's disease are at serious risk to develop laminitis without any specific predisposing causes. Occasionally, horses may have Cushing's disease without showing any outward clinical signs as the onset is quite slow. A simple blood test will be extremely helpful in the early detection of Cushing's and other metabolic diseases. Additional blood tests can also be evaluated to determine whether your horse has anemia (low red blood cells). Serum chemistry testing can evaluate liver and kidney function to insure these organ systems are working properly. Palm Beach Equine Clinic has the laboratory equipment on site to run the vast majority of these tests for rapid same day results.

Palm Beach Equine Clinic strongly suggests a fecal test to evaluate your horse's internal parasite count. In Florida, the peak worm season is year round due to the lack of frost. The effectiveness of different dewormers can be measured using a fecal egg count reduction test, which involves performing a fecal egg count before and after deworming your horse. Equine tapeworms are also difficult to identify in fecal

examinations. Deworming for tapeworms is strongly recommended annually with a product containing praziquantel, available in products such as Zimectrin Gold®, Equimax®, and Quest Plus®.

Establishing an effective deworming program for equine parasites has become an open topic for discussion on which method is most effective. Veterinarians have changed their views on worming in recent years, noting that minimal parasite load within the horse's hind gut is actually helpful in producing a natural immunity; however, it is crucial to control the parasitic load. Due to the emergence of new resistant parasites, the recommended method is adding proper barn management for prevention and control to routine rotational treatment with anthelmintic medications. Environmental management is imperative to equine parasite control. Veterinarians recommend removing manure in the pasture at least twice weekly. Mowing and harrowing pastures regularly will break up manure and expose parasite eggs to the sun. If possible, rotate the use of pastures by providing a period of rest or allowing other livestock to graze them. Grouping horses by age in a pasture can reduce exposure to certain parasites. Additionally, reducing the number of horses per acre to a minimum can prevent overgrazing and reducing fecal contamination of the grazing area. Owners should consider feeding horses in a feeder for hay and grain rather than on the ground. Lastly, caregivers should routinely groom all horses to remove bot eggs from the hair to prevent possible ingestion. For parasite control, contact your Palm Beach Equine Clinic veterinarian and he/she will provide you with specific parasite control protocol recommendations.

It is important for owners to consider all of these issues in the senior horse and coordinate with their veterinarian for routine testing in horses 12 years and older. For more information on caring for your senior horse, please contact Palm Beach Equine Clinic at (561) 793-1599.

Learn More About PBEC's Dr. Kathleen Timmins *by Lauren Fisher, Jump Media*

Dr. Kathleen A. Timmins is a 1993 graduate of the Ohio State University School of Veterinary Medicine. She completed her internship in equine medicine and surgery at the Illinois Equine Hospital near Chicago. Prior to coming to Florida, Dr. Timmins practiced in Aiken, South Carolina, where she met her husband, John Gobin, who plays polo professionally. Growing up in Central Ohio, Dr. Timmins began her relationship with horses as a child on the hunter/jumper circuit. She and her husband are enjoying parenthood with their daughter Schuyler.

Will you tell us more about your background riding on the hunter/jumper circuit?

I grew up in a family who was not involved with horses. At nine years old, I began showing in the hunters/ equitation locally in central Ohio and continued to ride until I went to college. I was fortunate enough to have a couple of nice junior Thoroughbred horses to show. I unfortunately don't ride very much anymore. I have passed the reins over to my daughter, Schuyler. My daughter began riding at a young age on a medium pony that she has since outgrown. Schuyler is now 13 years old and rides a really nice green hunter. My husband is also a polo player, so she has been fortunate to have grown up with horses her entire life.

Were you involved with polo before you met your husband? How involved are you with the sport in Wellington?

I was working in Aiken when I met my husband. I came to Wellington with my husband in 1996 and that was also the year I started working for Palm Beach Equine Clinic. I currently have a nice mix of clientele in all disciplines located in both the Wellington/Virginia areas. My clients are mainly show horses; however, I do have many polo ponies as patients. I am also a member on the USPA (United States Polo Association) Equine Welfare Committee and Drugs & Medication sub-committee that authored the USPA Drugs & Medications Rules Book which was implemented a few years ago.

What do you enjoy about being part of the team at PBEC?

I love working at Palm Beach Equine Clinic. All the Doctors and staff are very supportive of each other and always willing to help. All the doctors have our own area of expertise and everyone is always willing to work as a team when necessary. There are many employees that have been there for many years. Additionally, I love having all of the technology available to help with all my veterinary cases. I have worked as an ambulatory tech practitioner in the past where I have had to refer cases to the local hospital. I like being on the referral end and receiving cases to help with rather than having to send clients off for various reasons.

When and why did you decide to become a veterinarian?

I was the kid following the vet around the barn when I was young. I was always seriously interested in the sciences and animals; combining the two passions seemed like a natural progression. I just came home one day and said to my mom, 'I applied to vet school.' I have never regretted my decision!

Do you have a specialty or main focus?

In my practice, I do a little bit of everything, but I enjoy the challenge of the difficult medical cases the best. I take many of the patients that enter the hospital, including the seriously ill ones such as pneumonias, colitis, kidney failures, or colics; the types of cases that require problem solving. At Palm Beach Equine Clinic Hospital, I can closely manage their care every day to hopefully recover successfully. I also like working with the geriatric animals. We have seen an increase in the senior performance animals and I enjoy working to keep them comfortable and happy.

Who has been the biggest influence in your life or career? What did they teach you?

It really hasn't been any one person who influenced my career, it has been many. The truth is, you learn something or gain something from everyone, good, bad or otherwise. There are



always lessons to be learned and you are always influenced a little bit by everybody in your life.

What are some of your other hobbies or interests?

During the summers when school lets out in Florida, my family travels to Middleburg, Virginia. My husband runs Great Meadow Polo Club and also has a polo school up there. I help him with the club when I'm there. I am licensed in VA so I can still work with my clients from the clinic there. We also travel to Aiken as we have a farm and clients there, but we don't get there very often as we are so busy with the club in VA.

What is one of the most interesting cases you have worked on?

Recently, I had a racehorse filly with a case of multi drug-resistant pneumonia that was really tough to treat. Our team had to think outside the box from normal procedures to treat her, but it was successful! She recovered fully from her aggressive case of pneumonia and went home to her owners. In today's veterinary world, horses, like people, are contracting these drug-resistant bacteria as well.

If you were not a vet, what would you be doing?

I would be a chef and run my own restaurant. I really love to cook, it is a passion of mine!

Is there anything else that people would like to know about you?

I am an FEI Veterinary Delegate for the past 10 years. I have many close contacts within the FEI and I am knowledgeable with all of their up to date rules. An FEI veterinarian is present at the shows to monitor the care of the horses.