

DRESSAGE TODAY

VOL.3

EXTRA

10 Tips to
Boost Your
Next Score

Expert
Advice for
Better
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A close-up photograph of a brown horse's head wearing a dark leather halter. Overlaid on the horse's face is a black silhouette of a horse's head in profile, facing left. This silhouette is surrounded by a ring of approximately 12 small black stars.

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Patty Lasko

TEN TIPS FOR A 10

Easy fixes to increase your scores and improve your ride at every level

By Cesar Torrente

As an FEI 4* judge, I see a lot of moments in the competition arena where I wish I could just tell the rider, “You could correct that mistake by doing ‘X’ and get an extra point.” Obviously, in the real world of judging, I cannot coach a rider at the precise moment help is needed. In the judge’s box, all I can do is provide helpful comments to the scribe, have faith in the legibility of her handwriting and hope the rider is able to review the test carefully and truly learn from it.

Certain fixes are more common than others, and I have compiled a list of 10 tips that I find myself wishing more competitors would keep in mind before heading down centerline. Try them out, and hopefully they will help you achieve higher scores and a better ride, and you will be happier for it—goals we all need in order to grow our sport.

1 Choose your test carefully. As an FEI competitor myself, I understand that we all want to progress through the levels and that each year we want to show in a more advanced level. Many times I hear a rider saying, “I must do ‘X’ level this year because I have been doing the same level for two years already.” However, I

believe that the horses are the ones to tell us when it is the right time to move up and not the calendar. We have an obligation to listen to our horses.

It is always better to earn a good score in a lower level than a really bad one in a much more advanced level. Therefore, please choose the right level for you and your horse and be realistic about it by trusting your trainer, video and/or mirror (if you don’t have a trainer).

Use your judges’ scores to find out how you are doing at your current level. If your percentages are not more than 65 do not try to rush to the next level. Remember that in dressage, every step of training that you skip will force you to come back and redo it sooner or later.

I have always said that you should show at a level lower than what you are currently training. In this way you and your horse will be more confident and,



Terri Miller

Visualize your test—down to the individual strides—so that you can focus on riding your horse instead of trying to remember what movement or figure comes next.

therefore, more at ease and harmonious when showing, instead of you being worried about your capabilities at the competition. Within the level, ride the test that best shows off your horse's talents, and only move up when you are ready. Judges would rather see a lower-level test beautifully ridden than a higher test badly performed.

2 Know your test by heart—study and visualize it. Once you have decided what level and which test you are riding, you really have to learn it. Do this with the help of your trainer. You can practice your test by visualizing it, by doing it on foot at home (or wherever you find it easiest for you) and by practicing the movements with your horse. I not only mean memorizing exactly what figures and movements you are going to perform, but also visualizing the way you are going to ride every single stride during your test. Knowing your test will lead to success in the ring because you can properly anticipate and

prepare for the movements.

There are so many things that you have to do in a test that you must be able to ride it without even thinking what the next movement is going to be. Be truly prepared so you don't waste energy on that. Use all your focus and mind to get a better performance instead of thinking whether you have to turn right or left or what is waiting for you on the next long side. If your memory sometimes plays a trick on you, it is OK to use a caller during your test, but do not rely on one.

I know there are a lot of discussions as to whether or not it is good to ride the test many times since many horses start anticipating transitions and movements. However, it is my opinion, especially for less-experienced riders and at lower levels, that if you practice the movements, then you will be much more confident when you enter the arena because you will know exactly how to prepare a transition or movement and how the horse will react to specific

aids and, of course, what preparation is required.

3 Give a good impression as you circle the arena. Even though the rules state that what happens before you enter the arena at A cannot affect your score, usually the judges start looking at you before that. So ride to impress. Use this time to show the best you can of your horse and do not do inappropriate things like kick or jerk your hands because it does not give a good impression.

Also, even if you are feeling really scared, try to show confidence and smile. Try to have your horse on the aids, active and in the way you want to show him during your test, not more, not less. This is the first impression for the judge.

4 Master your entrance and halt. Even before you enter the arena, you must look where you are going. On the short side at A you

must start focusing on the letter C and actually look into the eye of the judge who is usually exactly behind C. In this way you will find yourself on the centerline and not off to the side. Once you are on the centerline, start preparing your halt before you get to X, and do not just stop at X. It sounds simple, but time and time again, I see riders approach X with no preparation for the halt. The results are abrupt or unbalanced halts, and this, with practice and planning, can be so easily avoided.

For the halt movement's required immobility and salute you have to consider how your horse is behaving on that particular day and anticipate how he will behave during the halt. Please remember that in accordance with Article 402 of the FEI Rules, "The halt must be shown for at least three seconds." Therefore, if you think your horse is calm and will stand still, take your time and then you can proceed with your salute. However, if you feel that your horse is a little tense and can move at any time, three seconds is very brief and it is better to initiate the movement yourself rather than wait until he starts to move on his own. Judges can easily tell the difference.

Since immobility is an essential part of the movement, work on that at home and it will be easier at the show. However, after a nice halt do not stay there for an eternity, waiting for your horse to get impatient and move. If he moves on his own, without your permission, don't make it worse by pulling on the reins. Just proceed with your trot.

For the salute itself, simply take your reins in your left hand and lower your right hand to salute. Remember that the rules now allow men to keep their

hats on. Before, the rules forced men to remove them, which, in my opinion, was a disadvantage for men because some horses get more anxious with us moving the hat at the halt.

Another consideration is what to do with your whip during the halt. Since you usually salute with your right hand, it is practical to have the whip in your left hand, but there is nothing in the rules about this. My only recommendation is not to move the whip from hand to hand during the salute or afterward during the test losing your contact and concentration by doing it. This action will disturb your test and focus.

Some riders have asked me what part of the horse should be exactly at X. Remember that your body must be over

Experienced riders forget the mistake or error, keep working on the test and, in the end, often win the class.

the letter at all halts and movements prescribed during the test. However if it is the head of the horse or his haunches, as judges we find it acceptable because we are looking for the quality of the movement. Also, many times I see riders looking from right to left trying to find X or G, which disturbs the horse's balance and the preparation of the halt, and that is really the important part of it. So please don't do it.

On the other hand, some horses that have competed a lot always try to halt earlier. Therefore this is the only movement that I will not practice a lot on the centerline. Instead, I suggest you do a lot of centerlines at the trot or canter, without the halt, with your horse really in front of your legs. By doing this, on the day of your competition you will be able to go down the centerline straight, with your heels down on a horse that is in front of your leg. This will allow

you to prepare for a nice halt through a series of half halts, which is what judges want to see.

Regarding the transition itself, it is very important to remember that in a Training Level test some walk steps are allowed, but please consider that as the level gets higher you must go directly to the halt. In any case, avoid abrupt halts and transitions to the halt on the forehand because this will not result in a very high mark. Also remember that it is not just a perfectly square halt that counts because if the transitions had big problems your score cannot be high. I mention this because sometimes you see a picture with a perfectly square halt, and riders usually say: "I do not understand why I did not get a 10 for this."

Unfortunately, the picture does not show your entrance, your approach to the halt and your transition to the trot after the halt, and all of this counts.

One final comment: The rider must only salute the judge at C and not the three or five judges around the arena. Some riders may do this due to a lack of experience and others may do this as a way to impress the judges, but, believe me, it is not very effective.

5 Focus on accuracy. Although basics are always more important than accuracy and geometry, please do not ruin a good score by riding circles, diagonals or serpentines the wrong way. I recommend that you know the exact distance between the letters as indicated in the FEI or USDF rules so that you can ride accurate figures. It is also very important that you look up and know exactly where you are going. You cannot show good geometry if you are looking down instead of looking where you are going. For example, look at the letter you are headed

toward while you are still on the short side before the corner and diagonal. Before you start a circle, think about how you are going to use your aids to make it properly round. If your horse is really on the aids you will be able to control him and have exact geometry.

For the judges, good geometry also indicates that your horse is obedient and supple. In conclusion, if you can execute good geometry, please do it and don't throw away points in each movement.

6 Refocus and move on if you make a mistake. Whether you forget your test, canter on the diagonal or make any other mistake, forget it and keep going. Unfortunately, many times the tests do not go as planned. In these cases, don't panic and do not lose hope. You have to remember that you have a problem with that movement's single score. Do not lose your focus and concentration for the remaining part of the test. Just start preparing for your next movement. Judges often see that after an error of course or a mistake, a rider loses his concentration and the entire test falls apart. On the other hand, experienced riders forget the mistake or error, keep working on the test and, in the end, they often win the class.

7 Don't change a thing in competition. This includes your equipment and your way of riding. And please ride, don't freeze. Never change a saddle, bridle or even boots

for the day of your show. The horse will have to cope with so many different new things that there is no reason to increase them.

Besides this, a rider who freezes because she is trying to sit pretty in the arena cannot give her horse the correct aids. Ride as you do at home. Do the same routine from the warm-up to the final salute. Sometimes you may start watching other competitors doing things that you have never seen and that look really good. It is understandable that you may want to copy them. But this is no time for last-minute changes. Just do your warm-up and your test exactly the same way you have done them at home.

One final recommendation: Don't take a clinic right before a show with someone you don't know who will try to change a lot of things with you and your horse. The only thing you will accomplish is that you and your horse will be very confused and the results will not be good. You can obviously do clinics in order to improve your skills and your way of riding and training your horse, but please do them far in advance of a show.

8 Don't forget the importance of the walk. Some riders are often so tired after the trot work that when the walk comes in the test, they think it is time to rest before the canter starts. Huge mistake. You have to ride your walk properly and remember that there are usually coefficients here. You must be sure that your horse is active, marching

and relaxed, but in front of your leg. And remember to get good marks on a free walk, allow your horse to stretch down and out.

9 Give and retake the reins when the test calls for it. What we want to see here is that the horse has the ability to maintain the same rhythm and balance without the support of the rider's hands.

Please don't show the give and take so quickly that we cannot see it. Your movement must be clear to us. You must push both hands forward toward the bit, maintaining a straight line from elbow to hand to the horse's mouth, and you must show a very clear release of the contact. If you ride with very long reins you will never be able to show this movement properly. Therefore, check the length of your reins before you do the movement.

10 Make it look easy and smile. Always start with a smile or at least with a serious professional attitude, but never leave the arena frowning or crying. You have worked hard to get there and you must show that you believe that you and your horse are the best partners ever and maintain that same impression during the test. Even in your final halt and departure from the ring, your expression and attitude are very important. At that point in time, judges start giving their final marks. There is nothing worse for a judge than having a good impression of a rider right before she shows a very sad or mad face at the end of her test. That will certainly put doubts in the judge's mind as scores are decided.

Obviously, there are many other tips for specific movements and exercises at the different levels. As a competitor and a judge, I know that following these tips when riding and showing will help you gain points. 📌



A native of Colombia, **Cesar Torrente** is an FEI 4* dressage judge and an FEI-level dressage competitor. He has had the honor of standing on the podium to receive a team gold medal twice at the Central American Games. In addition to traveling the globe to judge, he maintains a balance between his career as a corporate lawyer and his passion for horses.



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Expert Tips for Healthy Horsekeeping

Dressage riders with everyday access to veterinary expertise share their strategies.

By Kim F. Miller

As a dressage rider, being a veterinarian or being married to one seems to offer an unfair advantage in the daily effort of maintaining a happy, healthy, peak-performing equine partner. Not many fit that description, but *Dressage Today* found five who were happy to share their strategies for things all owners can do or provide for their steeds.

“The first and most important thing for everyone to remember is that horses, just like people, are individuals,” notes Melanie Burnley, DVM, a veterinarian and Grand Prix competitor. “The most important thing that a rider can do is get to know



Amy K. Drago

Low-impact movement promotes healthy joints.

her horse as an individual and then treat him as such. Everything else is just suggestions." She and her husband and fellow FEI trainer and rider, JT Burnley, own Wrenwood Dressage in Fulton, Kentucky.

No "cake-baking" in the feed room, "psyllium Sundays" and a stimulating stable life are among the practices most owners can incorporate into their horses' daily routine. Read on for more expert ideas on fitness, nutrition and maintaining digestive, joint and respiratory health, plus tips for healthy stable keeping.

Fitness

"Never let horses get completely out of work," recommends Carolyn Simmelink, DVM, who juggles her Redding, Connecticut, practice with keeping and riding two horses at home. Her herd consists of a senior "possibly Trakehner" she rescued and competed through Novice level eventing, and a younger Connemara/Thoroughbred cross who events at Beginner Novice. Both also do lots of dressage. Downtime from the show circuit is great, says Simmelink, but it should include regular physical activity and work. With the exception of

the few horses who give themselves a good workout during turnout time, she suggests at least two days a week of deliberate exercise even during time off from regular work. Twice-weekly work is required to maintain muscle, she notes, and four times a week is needed to build it.

For Simmelink, a Northeasterner without an indoor ring, that often means jumping on her horses bareback and riding up and down the driveway in the snow. "It's a half-mile driveway on a hill, so it's great conditioning while also providing something completely different from arena work.

"It doesn't have to be dedicated training work," she continues. "Forty-five minutes of walking will do or 20 minutes of refresher exercise like transitions. The horses just need to be reminded of how their muscles need to move and what's expected of them.

"I think it's really healthy for the horse to do trail riding, get out of the ring or do some gymnastics or small jumps inside the arena. People are afraid of things like that and always want to work in perfectly groomed rings. If the horse has never seen uneven terrain or, heaven forbid, a bit

of a dip in the arena, he won't know how to handle it."

She notes that riders in England are known for trotting horses on hard-surface roads for a few minutes as part of their daily conditioning program, a practice proven to strengthen bones. If you decide to incorporate road work into your program, Simmelink stresses that riders should start the practice gradually if the horse is new to it or get creative with other ways to mix up the routine. "Some variety is good, mentally and physically," Simmelink says. "If they do the same thing on the same footing, they don't know how to adapt to other circumstances. Horses are amazingly adaptable if we prepare them for what their body is going to have to do."

Correct training is critical to fitness and soundness, notes veterinarian and amateur rider Sara Bartholomew, DVM, whose mobile practice, Capitol Equine Veterinary Services, is based in Sacramento, California. "As an amateur, it takes six times as long as a professional to produce the same result in terms of collection and throughness," she says. She makes a point of lessoning during the four days a week her rounds enable her to ride, but she also



Quality forage is a nutritional priority.

has both her horses in full training with trainer Rachel Wade. “Soundness is hugely related to correct riding,” she explains. “Just like weight-lifting on the human side, it’s important to have a professional help us along the way.” Full training also ensures that Bartholomew’s horses get worked well and regularly when she can’t ride herself, a frequent occurrence given the demands of her profession.

Nutrition & Digestion

Good-quality forage is a feeding priority. “From there, decide if your horse needs additional nutrition,” says Simmelink. “Everybody thinks of grain when they think nutrition, but it should start with hay.” Appropriate body weight, muscle condition and coat quality are the main indicators of sufficient nutrition. A 5 score on the Body Condition Scoring System is ideal in her view. She acknowledges that many dressage owners prefer the look of 7s and 8s, even though that’s less healthy. Ribs that can be felt but not seen characterize a 5 while the “fleshy” and “fat” 7 and 8 scale-points include enough fat to feel it between the ribs, possible fat deposits near the withers and/or a crease along the spine of fleshy hindquarters. “Equine metabolic syndrome is almost an epidemic among horses, on par with

heart disease in people,” she notes. “Keeping the Body Conditioning Score lower helps with that.” A little extra weight on an older, retired horse is OK, she adds, because it counters winter weight dips that are typical in that equine demographic.

If grain is called for to add weight, it should be small amounts fed frequently, not large amounts all at once, and preferably with low-carbohydrate but high-fat content. Large amounts of carbohydrate-rich grains are a culprit in ulcers and other gut problems, she says.

“Psyllium Sunday” is a mnemonic phrase Simmelink uses to remind clients of the benefits of a weekly dose of the fiber supplement. “It’s a colic preventive, a great prebiotic that feeds the good gut bacteria we like and also treats sand colic.” Sand colic, she says, is a threat any time horses uproot grass, not just for those grazing in areas with lots of sand in the soil. Reaching under a fence rail to get that distant blade of grass, for example, often results in a horse ingesting equal parts dirt and grass.

In her Northeast neck of the woods, frequent weather changes often lead to erratic water consumption and psyllium helps address that by drawing fluid into the gut.

Living in California, Bartholomew

also advocates simple supplementation. Caring for horses who range from backyard buddies to upper-level dressage stallions, “I lecture my clients that if you feel like you are baking a cake in the feed room, you are probably overdoing it.” Risks of oversupplementation range from spending more money than is necessary to unknowingly increasing an ingredient like selenium that can be toxic in large quantities. Selenium is one of many minerals that should be, but are not always, available in hay. It varies by region and type of hay. So if you don’t know how much of it is in your hay, it’s impossible to know how much is building up in your horse’s system. Most important, she says, is knowing what’s in the supplements you are feeding.

She, too, asserts that good-quality forage is the most important dietary component. Knowing what’s in hay is key to savvy supplementation. Testing hay samples, drawn from the middle of a bale, can determine how much digestible fiber, protein and carbohydrates it contains. “If your horse is a little too fat or too thin, has insulin resistance or another condition, you can make adjustments,” Bartholomew notes.

Testing hay makes sense for those with control over the source and consistency of their horses’ feed. Many owners don’t have that luxury. “When you can’t know the nutritional quality of the hay or are getting poor or erratic quality of hay, that’s when you might need to add more supplements or go to a pelleted feed,” Simmelink explains.

Joints

Maximum low-impact movement throughout the day is the best joint health approach for horses in every stage of life, says California FEI rider and trainer Tiffany Silverman, who is married to Mark Silverman, DVM, MS. “Ample time to move around is



probably the most critical part of our program,” says Silverman, who placed ninth overall in the Intermediaire I National Championships at Gladstone with her Oldenburg, Sebastian, in the summer of 2017.

Horses in her training business, Unbridled, Ltd., work five days a week and get two days off from formal training. If turnout or Eurociser (similar to a hot walker, but the horse is confined by gates rather than tied to an overhead spoke of the machine) time is not an option, she recommends hand-walking for as long as possible to increase low-impact movement. Although time-consuming, it has the bonus of bond-building between horse and rider while loosening up the rider’s muscles and joints, too.

Icing is also a big part of Silverman’s program. After cooling down from a work-out, a horse is likely to receive a 20-minute session to cool the tendons and sometimes the hocks.

As her horses reach riding age, they get regular Adequan® injections. It’s the cheapest insurance policy, and joint health is something you have to get ahead of, the rider explains. “We recommend it for horses who are doing any significant level of work. A Legend® dose before competitions provides a little extra lubrication, too.”

Loosening joints before working out

is important to their long-term health. Cavallettis set at a walk distance (about 40 inches apart) is a pre-schooling favorite the rider learned from German dressage master Conrad Schumacher.

Respiratory

“The real limiting factor in performance is the respiratory system,” says Burnley of an often-overlooked component of horse health. “As a trainer, I can condition the heart and the muscles constantly, but the respiratory system does not get fitter with training. The lungs don’t get better with exercise. That’s why we must protect the respiratory system so fervently.”

Most young horses go through a phase dominated by infectious respiratory issues, much like children do upon entering preschool or day care, she notes. “As horses get older, allergies and irritants cause the respiratory system to deteriorate.” Dust particles brought into the barn in hay and bedding are major culprits.

Respiratory diseases look different in horses than in people, she continues. “Horses are less likely to cough than people with respiratory problems. Oftentimes all we see is an increased respiratory rate and effort at rest. We must look closely at our horses in their stalls when they are not excited to notice this.”

Travel is a particularly high-risk

Trailer poses challenges for the respiratory system. Opening windows and vents in the trailer and taking frequent stops to let the horse get out and lower his head will help reduce respiratory risks.

time. Stress, closed spaces with poor ventilation and dehydration are contributing factors. So is the horse’s inability to lower his head when trailering, which is part of nature’s design for clearing

inhaled material from his airways. Opening windows and vents in the trailer and taking frequent stops to let the horse get out and lower his head will help reduce respiratory risks. If traveling with the trailer’s front windows open, put a fly mask on your horse for protection against bugs and other objects.

Multiple studies confirm that stable-air quality is a major factor in respiratory health, she continues. An outdoor lifestyle is ideal, but there are several ways to improve indoor air quality for that high percentage of the equine population that spends much of its life inside the barn.

Rubber stall mats decrease the need for bedding and the dust that comes with it. “Clean them regularly. If you smell ammonia, it’s at a level that’s irritating to a horse’s airway.” Dampen shavings slightly if they are extremely dusty, Burnley adds, and remove the horse from the stall while cleaning it.

Clean hay is also key. Even good-quality forage can have big quantities of respirable particles in it. The Burnleys’ horses, including FEI mounts Fuerst Falco and Furst Tanzer, get forage that’s been steamed to 212 degrees Fahrenheit in a Haygain® hay steamer. It keeps the hay as clean as possible and significantly improves the hygienic quality with less loss of nutrients than soaking hay.

Year-round ventilation and a little draft are air-quality boosters. "Open doors, windows and vents to keep air moving year-round," Burnley advises. "Horses with a good rug don't mind cold temperatures in the winter."

Stable Environment

Maximum time outdoors is the agreed ideal for healthy horses, but most dressage horses' realities include lots of hours indoors.

"Boredom is a stabled horse's worst enemy," says Burnley. While people might prefer a nice quiet atmosphere, a busy barn is often best for horses.

"Many of our horses enjoy their turnout, but when you look out 30 minutes later, they are at the gate ready to come back into the barn," the veterinarian explains. "It's usually because they enjoy their stall due to a busy, interactive stable environment." Clean stalls, ventilated interiors, ample, clean, fresh water and feed, effective fly-control systems and proximity to buddies are all part of that. "All horses need stimulation in multiple forms and have special social needs. A busy barn, once horses adjust to it, makes for happy horses."

Stall toys are good stimulation, Burnley adds. Amazing Graze Treat Toys by Horsemen's Pride are a favorite at Wrenwood Dressage. The device dispenses a small amount of treats, forage or, in the Burnleys' case, pellets, when moved in a certain way. "It really helps when they can't have turnout at shows to keep them entertained for hours."

Good lighting facilitates constructive regular checks of the horses and their hay and water supply, but horses don't benefit from night lights. "Many horses need a dark stall to sleep well, so don't forget to turn off those good lights at night."

What the Silvermans' horses stand on is a priority for the couple, who

happened upon ComfortStall's sealed, orthopedic flooring system when it came with a San Diego stable they purchased several years ago. They made it a priority in their current barn in Rancho Santa Fe, where Mark's Sporthorse Veterinary Services and his Southern California Equine Podiatry Center are based.

Minor weight shifts required to stand on the cushioned surface stimulate circulation to the point of greatly reducing lower-leg inflammation, Tiffany explains. The constant motion is great for joint health and eliminates the need for overnight bandaging of her horse's legs unless there's a medical reason to do so. Mark values the cushioning aspect for the many laminitic or otherwise footsore cases in the podiatry branch of his practice.

"Everybody lays down on it," adds Tiffany. "From a 7-year-old Second Level horse to a 21-year-old Grand Prix horse, their tails are full of shavings in the morning." Hock sores are not an issue with this flooring and it's a money-saver because bedding is not needed for cushioning: only a small amount of bedding is required to absorb urine.

Florida-based Amy Swerdlin's homebred Oldenburg, Quileute CCW, had a terrific 2017. The Quarterback gelding helped Swerdlin become the No. 1-ranked amateur for Prix St. Georges and Fourth Level, and has continued to progress.

Quileute's future, however, didn't look so bright as a 5-year-old. That's when he began developing what became a chronic cough, occasionally so severe he was unrideable.

Swerdlin's husband, Scott, is a veterinarian and president of Palm Beach Equine Clinic in Wellington, so she had access to a wide range of expertise and methods to address it.

Ventipulmin syrup was an option that made the already hot horse extra

wired, plus it's not allowed for competition. Tests determined that Quileute was allergic "to a ton of stuff," Swerdlin says. Unfortunately, that includes the Bahia grass common to pastures and landscapes throughout the Wellington area where the Swerdlins and their horses live year-round. The facility's 33 paddocks, for example, are all planted with Bahia.

The Swerdlins replanted one paddock in St. Augustine grass, which helped quell Quileute's cough a little. Soaking his hay to reduce allergens seemed to help some, too, but it was a switch to cardboard bedding that brought about a "180-degree improvement," she reports. "You would think shavings are dusty, but it's straw that's the worst for having a lot of allergens. High-quality shavings can be low dust, but Quileute is super-sensitive."

After trying all types of bedding, including ground-up diapers and pellets, she was delighted to find that a relatively new product, Airlite Animal Bedding, worked wonders. "The very next day his coughing was already down," she says. "It's made such an amazing difference." Airlite looks like normal shavings, "but it's fluffier and way more absorbent with zero dust." It also decomposes to black dirt in 60 days, Swerdlin reports of an environmentally friendly side benefit. The Swerdlins changed all the stalls in Quileute's barn to Airlite to reduce overall dust. An open, airy shedrow barn design, with partitions composed mostly of bars, enables great ventilation.

Having 24/7 access to veterinary expertise is handy for sure, but these suggestions allow all to implement simple best practices for happy, healthy horses day in and day out. As Burnley says, it all starts with the simplest and most affordable endeavor: getting to know horses well enough to create an individualized care routine. 🐾

A rider in a dark jacket and cap is leaning over a brown horse with a white blaze on its face. The horse is wearing a bridle and has a small white triangle with stars on its forehead. The background is a solid dark brown color.

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