

Good Vibrations



Down on the Farm

by MARY KNIGHT

Whole Body Vibration is a rapidly expanding form of bio-mechanical stimulation that is ideally suited to reduce the effects of confinement on racehorses. It could have significant benefits to horses stabled at the racetrack, as well as horses confined to stalls at rehabilitation centers.

Athletes, the elderly, stroke victims, and patients suffering from multiple sclerosis, osteoporosis, scoliosis, arthritis, rheumatism, emphysema, cerebral palsy and Parkinson's disease have all benefitted from Whole Body Vibration therapy. It has reduced pain, improved flexibility, and increased range of motion, circulation, muscle coordination, balance and stability.

One of the immediate effects of WBV is improved circulation of both blood and lymph. This is achieved by the rapid, involuntary contraction and relaxation of muscles (30 to 50 times per second). Since racehorses are confined to stalls the vast majority of the day, anything that could improve circulation would be of significant benefit to them. Increased blood flow improves oxygenation of the tissues, removal of toxins and metabolic waste, and enhances the body's ability to heal itself.

A decrease in bone density is virtually guaranteed in horses unable to exercise due to injury. Even horses who are able to walk by hand 15 to 20 minutes per day are likely to experience some loss of minerals from their bones as this amount of exercise doesn't provide enough stimulation to the bones to signal a need to retain these minerals. WBV provides significant stimulus to the bones and helps prevent loss of bone density during prolonged periods of inactivity.

Professional athletes, from virtually every sports discipline, are using vibration platforms as a way to warm up before com-

petition. Five to 10 minutes of vibration will help prepare a horse without utilizing energy expended through excitement during conventional warm-up exercise.

Research has indicated an increase in levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin as well as increased hormone production such as Human Growth Hormone, testosterone and Intrinsic Growth Factor 1 after vibration. People who use the platform have expressed a general feeling of well-being, possibly due to the increase in hormones generated by the vibrations.

Horses that have used the VibePlate have taken to it very quickly. After three or four days of use they look forward to the session, nickering and greeting the handler at the door. They step up on the platform willingly and stand quietly for the 10 or 15 minute sessions.

The machine is safe and easy to use with separate controls for front and back vibrators. While a stall would be the safest most practical place to position the VibePlate, it can be placed on any flat surface that allows enough room for horse and handler to stand comfortably away from traffic or any activity that would scare or distract the horse.

Whole Body Vibration is a non-pharmacological intervention for loss of bone-density and enhancement of circulation. It is widely accepted by health and fitness, medical and rehabilitation, sports performance and anti-aging professionals. This treatment modality is ideally suited for horses who are confined to stalls for most of the day. The significant beneficial effect of treatment has been well demonstrated. Its potential for enhancing the performance of the Thoroughbred athlete is immeasurable. 🐾

