



Why Working Equitation?

Dressage + Obstacles = Working Equitation (WEq) often called “Dressage with purpose”

WEq is now a competitive sport around the world that anyone can participate in, from beginner to Grand Prix level regardless of breed of horse or type of saddle. It's a fun sport that promotes varied styles of riding culture from different countries. It combines gymnastic aspects of classical dressage with the skills and fitness required of horses working stock in the field. Simply, you put a few obstacles in a dressage lesson and suddenly you create purpose and meaning to the same exercises. The experience you and your horse can gain from WEq training is transferable and beneficial to all disciplines.

Why is dressage easier with obstacles?

A gate to open makes lateral work meaningful. A barrel in the middle of a volte makes more sense to the horse, something to go around, and to focus on. The rider finds it easier to focus & turn & create bend & the horse mirrors our balance and position.

By planning and looking ahead & focussing on the job – the movement is more balanced and soft. At lower levels you may work on basics like bending, leg yields and transitions. At higher levels flying changes around a line of poles gives the horse a visual reference for the timing and purpose of the change. The quick changes of bend create more collection & lead toward achieving good canter pirouettes.

Leadership

Horses are easily bored and often lose forward motivation and straightness when the pilot lacks a clear plan. Horses like variety, they want to have a job.

Exposing horses to a range of obstacles in a safe and supportive environment gives them something to do. The horse learns to explore and gains more confidence. Giving riders a set course makes them think ahead. A relationship of discovery and trust develops between horse and rider as the “leader” emerges to guide the horse through challenging obstacles. Riding it well & with ease becomes easier if it is based on classical principles. Hence a foundation in dressage begins to take shape without the ‘drilling’.

WEq can make your riding safer

At home, competing, or riding out, we need to control our horse in a range of situations, so we can ride anywhere and feel safe. WEq is a very progressive sport. Harmony & understanding of aids are paramount and steps are taken slowly to progress. Horses can be desensitised to cope with an array of strange things that they may not normally see when we guide them calmly with respect for their physical and emotional capabilities. This leads to progress & confidence.

The arena is the gym

It is easy to fall into the trap of endless circles and straight lines thinking we are ‘straightening’ and training our horse for dressage. In reality we don’t straighten asymmetrical horses by riding them straight, we straighten them by stretching, loosening and suppling them, by flexing and bending on curved lines, voltes, figure 8s, serpentine, rein-back, moving the quarters around the shoulders, and the shoulders around the quarters, and progressively by all the lateral work.

In WEq, as well as asking horses to complete a short dressage test at each level, the obstacles are designed to enable a workout of stretching, loosening and bending to take place with purpose and direction. A few barrels, cones and poles provide a wealth of creative activities in a fun and challenging environment. Why not give it a go?

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