

INDUSTRY UPDATE

by Inge van der Net and Lilianne van den Brekel

LET'S GET SOME AIR!

Jim Chiapetta, one of the two nasal strip's inventors, takes us through its short history. As is often the case, the aid started as an idea, over ten years ago. Many athletes then used nasal strips to support their own breathing. The nasal strip supports the nasal passages making it easier for the horse to breath when it needs oxygen the most. In humans the nasal strip is also known as a remedy against snoring and nowadays there's even a version

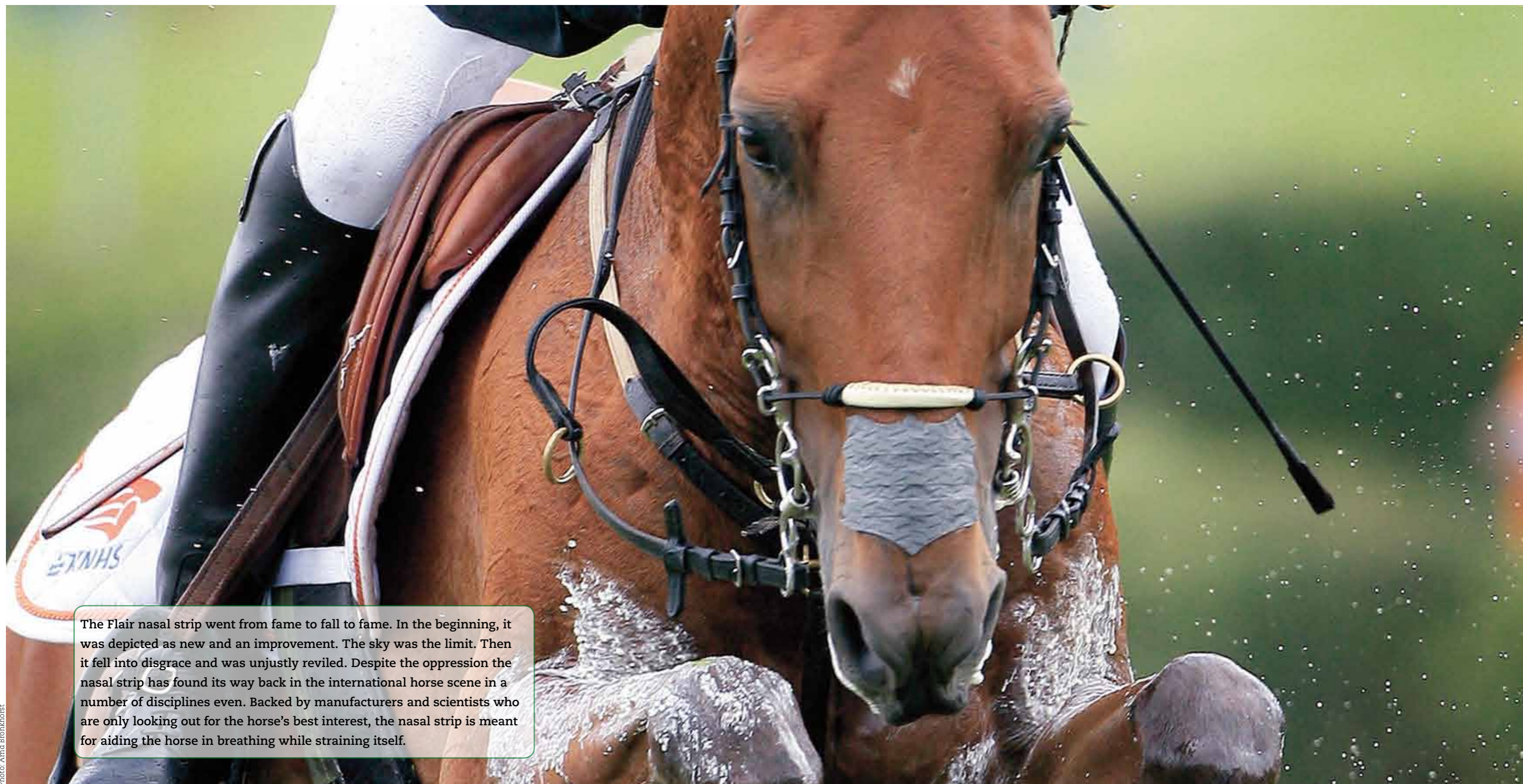
for children. Jim understood the strip could mean a lot for horses as well. Together with his partner Edward Blach, with whom he worked with when he was a young veterinarian, they decided to develop a nasal strip for horses. They prepared themselves with extensive research into the horse's breathing apparatus.

MOCKERY

Unlike humans, horses can only breathe in and out through their

nose. Jim and Edward set out to find out exactly what happens in the horse's nose when it strains itself, what problems horses run into and how these could be solved. Their broad research confirmed what they had already suspected: the horse's air supply could be substantially benefitted by applying external nose support comparable to the BreatheRight strip human athletes use. Jim: "When we confronted several vets with our findings, their

response was rather dull. The experts felt it wasn't possible because of the unique construction of the horse's nose. When we suggested the nasal strip could also be a remedy for bleeders, we were mocked by a number of leading equine respiratory experts. But that was okay, because we were on a mission to take the edge of traditional views on respiratory physiology and the causes of bleeding."



The Flair nasal strip went from fame to fall to fame. In the beginning, it was depicted as new and an improvement. The sky was the limit. Then it fell into disgrace and was unjustly reviled. Despite the oppression the nasal strip has found its way back in the international horse scene in a number of disciplines even. Backed by manufacturers and scientists who are only looking out for the horse's best interest, the nasal strip is meant for aiding the horse in breathing while straining itself.



Inventor Jim Chiapetta and eventing rider Clayton Fredericks

Jim and Edward had been waiting for. Soon, the nasal strips were introduced into racing. During the American Breeders Cup several trainers used the strip on their horses for the first time. Three out of the eight winners of the 1999 Breeders Cup was a horse with a strip, a historical moment. All of a sudden the nasal strip was totally out there. The strip production went sky-high and Jim and Edward had trouble meeting the demand.

BACKFIRING

But... The success backfired, as the people using the nasal strip started seeing it as the magic potion. They felt the nasal strip was a guarantee for success and victory. Jim: "People lost track of the fact that the strip is simply a tool; it's there to support, not to replace. It's not the magic potion, but with the health benefit it gives them they might just go that extra length."

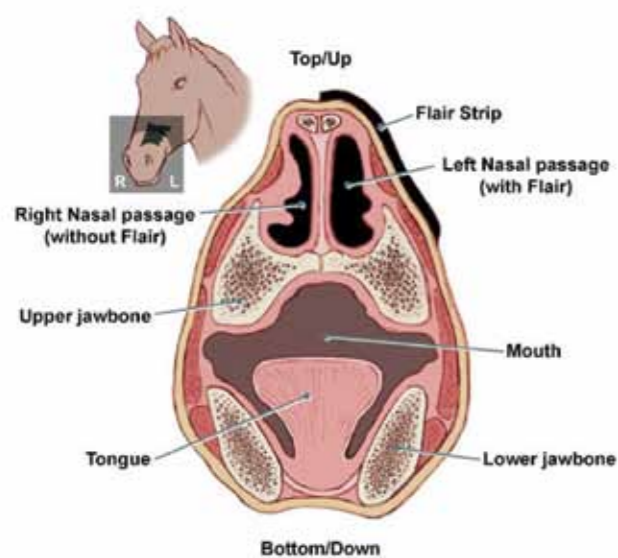
Despite the strip's ability of opposing bleeding, contrary to what you might expect, people in the European racing regulation scene weren't all too keen on the strips. Jim is sorry, but he does feel for their point of view. He explains. "They spent years and years improving the race sport's image. Having to come forward then with the bleeding issue in horses is not a very inviting outlook. Of course, over the years a number of other remedies for bleeders have surfaced, but the nasal strip is one of two methods scientifically proven to reduce bleeding and is by far the most horse-friendly one, and obviously doping free. So I do feel frustrated

LONG FACE

Despite the adverse wind Jim and Edward did not lose faith in their product and pursued their mission to develop the perfect equine nasal strip. It's a good thing the two kept their motivation, as they met quite a number of obstacles on the way. For instance, a horse's

nose is quite long. A strip easily sticks to human skin, but a horse's coat is a whole new ballgame. Thanks to their love of science and their undying determination Jim and Edward eventually finished their prototype. Now, it was time for the real thing: testing the strip in practice. Jim and

Edward were well acquainted with Monty Roberts. They decided to team up with the well-known horse whisperer for the initial tests. The first tests were very promising. The riders stated their horses could handle more and their breath was back to regular levels much sooner. This was what



When horses breathe hard the soft tissue overlying the nasal passages are sucked in creating resistance and making it more difficult to breath. The nasal strip gently hold open the nasal passages.



A overview for the correct way to place the Flair nasal strip.

LUCINDA AND CLAYTON FREDERICKS

International three-day event riders Lucinda and Clayton Fredericks both use the Flair nasal strip. Clayton won a silver medal at the 2008 Summer Olympics as part of the Australian eventing team. Lucinda was part of the same silver-medal winning team, she won three of the world's six CCI4* FEI events, Burghley, Badminton, and Kentucky. Both Clayton and Lucinda, and all at Team Fredericks, are big fans of the nasal strips and feel that they really make a difference to the horses airway, not just in the cross country but also in show jumping. "Use the nasal strip only on a clean, dry, oil-free nose. They open and lift the nasal airway to allow the horse maximum clearance and airflow."



Clayton Fredericks



Lucinda Fredericks

Photos: Hippofoto

and more riders follow the example. It's good to know the FEI approves of the use of the nasal strip. The dressage world seems to be in arrears a bit, but Jim has an aesthetic explanation for that: "Dressage includes appearance. There are some dressage riders though that use the strip in training and while warming up the horse, but the strip comes off as soon as it's show time."

EFFORT

After ten years of hard work, seven different scientific researches, numerous features, congresses and even more debates Jim and Edward have finally managed to prove the nasal strip's effectiveness with regard to benefitting the horse's health and decreasing bleeding. It took them quite a breath, but they did it. Jim: "We want nothing but the horse to breathe easier and stay healthy and perform at its best. This way, the horses recuperate quicker and there is less damage to the lungs, less bleeding."

OTHER PRODUCTS?

If we ask Jim what else horse lovers can expect of him. He smiles. "I'm especially interested in the science behind a product. I enjoy developing a useful product for horses so much. The idea that perhaps a hundred years from now people will be writing about this product saying it was our invention is thrilling. We're keeping a close eye on developments. If we run into something worth investigating we won't hesitate to get into it. Who knows. We don't have any specific plans at the moment. Next to the nasal strip business we both work fulltime. It's a hobby, actually.

Jim's wife Michelle is a low level three-day event rider who has not had time to train lately because her time is split between managing our kids, our farm, and her anaesthesia company. On a day to day basis Michelle keeps the company running by tending to many company demands including ensuring that all product shipments are sent out quickly at the best price upon receipt of orders from around the world. She has developed significant expertise on import laws and shipping logistics for every continent on the globe. We also have several great product support team members located in Europe, the U.S., New Zealand, South America, South Africa, Japan, and the Middle East." <<

that they're not really open to the strip in European racing. On the other hand, it's not easy challenging a sport's culture and most of all I want to treat these people with respect. They're entitled to their opinions. However, I won't relinquish fighting for the good cause. I am negotiating with several European authorities on this topic. My goal is to have the the ban on the strip lifted. Other countries had initially banned the strip for racing as well, but in time came to understand the health benefit, so the ban has been lifted and they now fully support the nasal strip."

NEW DISCIPLINES

As we've seen, racing in Europe was the first discipline to adopt (and ban) the nasal strips. Meanwhile, the strip has found its way into other disciplines of equestrianism. The eventing and western riding branches were the first to follow the racing world. Nowadays the nasal strip can also be seen in show jumping. More



The position of the strip is very important for getting the best result.