

AN EDGE WITH EVERY BREATH ...

KYMS GIRL



EQUINE NASAL STRIPS

Equine Nasal strips since their launch have gained high profile recognition with such big race winners as Kyms Girl (NZ Trotting Cup), Flight South (Auckland Trotting Cup), Elect to Live (Horse of the Year) & the latest star Pullover Brown (NZ Oaks, Australian Oaks, Breeders Crown).

However despite over one thousand race winners who have worn strips there remains much debate about their merits.

The FLAIRÔ equine nasal strips were invented by two US veterinarians, Dr Jim Chiapetta and Dr Ed Blach. “Our ultimate goal” Blach explained “was to relieve the stress that occurs in a horse’s respiratory system, particularly his lungs. Horses can only breathe through their noses and we noticed the image of the nasal passages collapsing with every inspiratory breath”

Blach & Chiapetta ran into considerable scepticism along the development path but persisted. “One of the biggest bits of scepticism” Blach said “was how can something so light, so simple have any effect”. The vets started on FLAIRÔ three years ago and toted it around racetracks. They would get trainers to try the Breathe Right human strip, explain how it worked on clearing nasal congestion and muffling snoring. Bingo they had a potential customer.

“Early on” Blach said, “we heard several jockeys come back from a workouts and say my horse seemed to relax better, or he worked better because he was more relaxed, he didn’t fight me.”

“Many people think the horse will get more air. Not so. We’re looking at a closed system, full lungs are full lungs. But if we can help them get the same amount of air with less work, the results are reduced pressure, less stress, not more air or more oxygen. It will not make the horse run faster, but if the nasal strip puts less strain on a horse, makes him more relaxed, it has to be beneficial.”

The strips were released in the US in late 1999 and had immediate success with the legendary American thoroughbred trainer D Wayne Lukas winning the \$US4M Breeders Cup with an outsider, Cat Thief. An interesting aside to the race was Pat Day; the Irish jockey wore a Breathe Right nasal strip.

Brian McMath, at the time a committee member of the NI Standardbred Breeders Association & long time harness racing enthusiast was in the US and read about Cat Thief’s win. On his return to NZ he used the Internet to find the manufacturer and imported a few samples.

“I gave a few samples to Mark Purdon & Stephen McKee who was my neighbour” said Brian. “We used one on Ebony Honour in his final work out prior to the NZ Derby & Mark Purdon was impressed enough with the effect the strip had on Cool Hand Luke that we pressed ahead with the approval process” Brian added. Harness Racing NZ gave their approval following evaluation by Dr Cliff Irvine & Cool Hand Luke become the first horse in Australasia to race in a nasal strip when starting in the Victorian Derby which was won by Stars & Stripes. Cool Hand Luke drew the second line & never really got in the race & immediately after the Derby had a wind operation.

Trevor & Stephen McKee soon had their first nasal strip winner with Shading, a Desert Sun filly part owned by Stephen. Ebony Honour has raced in a nasal strip & has become the unluckiest galloper to race in NZ with placing’s in both Auckland & Wellington Cups.

The first big race winner to wear a nasal strip was the Cran Dalgety trained, Jim & Susan Wakefield owned Glacier Bay, who won the \$105,000 PGG Sales Series final at Alexandra Park in April 2000.

Big race successes have continued since then such as Hero (PGG Sales Series Final), Caps Off (NZ Oaks), Tupelo Rose (DB Fillies, NZ Messenger), Bogan Fella (Kaikoura Cup), Franco Heir (Sires Stakes Final), Under Cover Lover (Queen of Hearts, 4th NZ Cup), Cool Hand Luke (Noel Taylor Mile, etc), Sly Flyin (Welcome Stakes), Jack Cade (Sires Stakes, Sales Series Final, etc), Oaxaca Lass (Civic Video Fillies, Queensland Derby, etc), All Hart (Great Northern Derby), Hot Shoe Shuffle (Sales Series Final, etc), Yulestar (World Record Air NZ FFA), Panky’s Pacer (Hannon Memorial), Facta Non Verba (Franklin Cup, etc).

Brian’s biggest thrills since the introduction of nasal strips have been the wins of Kyms Girl & Flight South in the NZ & Auckland Trotting Cups. He added” Kyms Girl’s win was special as Colin & Julie De Filippi were one of the first to use nasal strips & have been committed supporters of the strips benefits”.

Thoroughbred trainers were harder to convince of the benefits of the strips than their Standardbred colleagues but Brian’s belief in the technology has seen him win over such doyens of the game as Noel Eales who has won two Group One races with Greene Street. “It was very satisfying this year to see Golden Flare achieve the first ever “Double/ Double”-successive Great Northern /McGregor Grant Steeplechases as Raylene Whiteside (trainer of Golden Flare) has been one of the strips committed users” said Brian. “Since then Brian Jenkins of Jezabeel Fame has won the Hawkes Bay Guineas with Stardane so slowly the thoroughbred trainers are being converted” It is interesting” Brian added” I have found harness trainers more willing to adopt this new technology than their thoroughbred counterparts which I attribute to an age thing as most of the

GOLDEN FLARE achieve the first ever “Double/Double” – successive Great Northern/McGregor Grant Steeplechases.



leading harness trainers are much younger than their galloping counterparts”

Torlesse’s win in the NZ Galloping Cup this year for Mandy Brown was the fourth Group winner in November for horses racing in nasal strips following successes by Roman Gladiator (*Sires Stakes Final*), Leica Guv (*Counties Cup*) & the NZ owned mare Zirna (*Singapore Gold Cup*).

Singapore’s leading trainer, Malcolm Thwaites who races all his horses in nasal strips, trains the latter.

Nasal Strip Group 1 successes have continued in 2004 with Coburg winning in the NZ Standardbred Breeders Stakes. Brian keeps a close eye on nasal strip winners statistics & to date there have been over 700 winners in both codes since their introduction.

Following the launch of the strips there have been various studies on their effects. Research at Kentucky Equine Research & Kansas University Veterinary School has shown nasal strips significantly reduce the incidence of EIPH (Exercise Induced Pulmonary Haemorrhage). EIPH is found in a large proportion of performance horses. In addition these studies also showed hoses wearing strips use 6-8% less energy.

The most recent study, which was published in the American Journal of Veterinary Science, found that 50% of a horses airway resistance is in the nasal passage. This is quite remarkable when you consider the length of airway passage from the nostril opening to the lungs. The three embedded springs in the nasal strip “tent” the skin over the nasal valve opening the narrowest part of the nasal passage, resulting in a decrease in airway resistance. This has the impact of decreasing the energy required for breathing.

The feedback from trainers who have used nasal strips is that their horses recover faster which as Brian emphasis “ is proof enough that the benefits found in the laboratory are real, as if a horse is using less energy & the incidence of EIPH is lowered, the recovery must be quicker”. He further adds” I have a technology background in chemistry & engineering & what convinced me the strips work was basic physics-its all about windpipe pressures & how a simple mechanical device like the springs in the nasal strip can beneficially alter these pressures”.

In the racing world nasal strips have added new meaning to ‘winning by a nose.’”