



Continuing Education with The Institute of Registered Veterinary and Animal Physiotherapists

SURE FOOT® Equine Stability Program – The Murdoch Method

SUREFOOT Stability Program with Wendy Murdoch great success at first UK Course!

The Official SUREFOOT Stability Pad was launched in January 2016 after 2 years in development so IRVAP were delighted to host the first course to be held in the UK. The venue was at the state of the art new Newmarket Horseracing Museum and Retraining of Racehorses Centre in Palace House

What are Equine SUREFOOT Pads? SUREFOOT Pads are Equine Stability Pads. They can help a horse improve his own balance, posture, stance, movement, balance and behaviour. They can benefit a horse pre/post exercise, during a training session to improve/enhance performance, recovery from injury while stall bound or in limited movement to reset proprioceptors to re-establish normal patterns of movement.

The Pads have 4 different densities and 2 basic designs – rectangular and angled. Each Pad is 25cmX30cmX5cm providing sufficient area for horse's hooves and thickness to absorb



SUREFOOT Pads:

- Firm – Green Pads
- Purple – Medium Pads
- Blue – Soft Pads
- Yellow – Slant Pads
- Orange – Impression Pads
- Air Pods – Same as Canine

horses' weight. The variation in density provides the horse with different sensations and responses. Each pad also has two different surfaces each side (except the impression pad) – the

coloured surface distributes the horses weight while the direct surface will give wherever hoof makes contact with the pads. Wendy also uses balance pods – 7inch pods with a raised surface, which some horses also opt to stand on for increased proprioceptive input.

The Impression Pad retains the imprint of the horses hoof for a period of time so the therapist can see how the horse is weight bearing on the different hoof structures. Interestingly there has been no differences in responses between barefoot or shod horses.

Initially following the lecture all the Equine Delegates got to stand on all the different pads to feel the sensation of the different densities.

We had a great selection of horses on the day to practice on with the pads. We started with two ex- racehorses who are being retrained at Palace House.

We also were delighted to have Stand Guard attend who is trained by John Butler and is a winner of 28 races but also shows. Alice Haynes who rides Stand Guard also brought her young 4 year old Connemara Stallion. Other horses included Splash, a showjumper, who was initially very wary of the pads, but once over her suspicions chose to stand on the balance pods, even repositioning them herself.

The responses of the horses varied - head dropping, eyes closing, breathing slowed, neck movements side to side, swaying, yawning... to list a few. The horses self-select which pad (the therapist recommends one depending on issues of horse but sometimes the horse chooses differently) and also choose length of time to stay on pads –self-adjusting themselves to



balance on the chosen pad. It was an extremely interesting to watch each horse's reactions. After standing on the pads for their chosen length of time, the horses were then walked or ridden away, for the therapists and the riders to note any changes in movement. Further research into these fascinating tools is underway, including a proposed research project by IRVAP therapists in conjunction with Wendy.

I have begun incorporating SUREFOOT pads into my treatments usually post a sports massage or acupressure session. As the horse's foot is a neuro-sensory organ, by allowing the horse to stand on the pads it re balances itself, restoring original map and function-re-wiring its body to correct posture. It is still very much a learning process as they are a new addition but I am finding them a fascinating tool.

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A national hunt racehorse post treatment



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The IRVAP Canine CPD Day

The IRVAP Canine CPD Day, hosted at the Animal Health Trust (AHT) in Newmarket Suffolk, on the 29th March 2017 was a very interesting and insightful day. The day started with a lecture on pain management by DR C Joliffe, the head Anaesthetist at the AHT. This lecture was a fantastic overview on the signs of pain and the available pain medication available to help the canine patient, including new research that is coming through and the future of pain management. This area of research is looking very interesting and is advancing fast.

The second lecture of the day was on 'Cruciate disease: prevention, treatment and recovery' by DR G Haimel, the senior clinician in soft tissue and orthopaedic surgery at AHT. This was a very relevant lecture for us all. Did you know 85% of stifle disease in canines is cruciate disease? The lecture included types of surgery and the positives and negatives of them and the research into how rehabilitation work can help recovery. Cruciate disease is one of the most common diseases seen in practice, understanding and keeping up to date with the current research is so important in this fast moving area of advancing techniques and practices.

Lunch time included a guided tour around the Animal Health Trust hospital, hydrotherapy unit and brand new cancer unit. The final lectures of the day were titled 'Neurological and Metabolic causes of weakness' by DR M Sharman, the senior clinician in Internal medicine at the AHT, and DR A Shea, the senior clinician in Neurology at the AHT. Wow what an informative and insightful afternoon we had with these lectures. These in-depth lectures included the pathology of the diseases, how to test for them and the available treatments and the how therapists can help these patients.

This day showed yet again that IRVAP is not just for physiotherapists, but all animal therapists. I am an Hydrotherapist and Canine Massage Therapist and an associative member of IRVAP these lectures were very relevant and informative.

Amy Shorrock, My Vet Hydro Rehabilitation Centre, Lancashire