

## December 2016 Newsletter



### **SADDLE FITTING (Training & Qualifications) STEERING GROUP**

A key outcome from the SRT Research Workshop in December 2014 was the consensus amongst the delegates that introducing principles of best practice and bringing consistency to standards in saddle fitting was urgently required. The SRT therefore initiated an industry consultation process which presented detailed evidence of the need for a greater number of skilled saddle fitters and improved, evidence-based education in saddle fitting across the entire equine industry at all levels. A steering group under the chairmanship of the Worshipful Company of Saddlers has since been formed and has had a preliminary meeting to agree strategy. The next meeting will be held in March 2017. The SRT is pleased to have provided the catalyst for change and looks forward to the development of this important initiative.

### **THE FIT WEIGHT PROJECT**

A key outcome from the 2012 Research Workshop was the consensus that industry guidelines were needed in order to assist riders in determining the appropriate weight ratio for a horse and rider combination. A working group under the chairmanship of the



British Equestrian Federation and supported by World Horse Welfare has now been formed and industry consultation is underway. A research project in collaboration with the Animal Health Trust to carry out preliminary investigations of optimum loading levels is being planned for 2017. A software program that may in the future be able to help calculate optimum ratios is in early development stages in collaboration with the University of Sunderland.

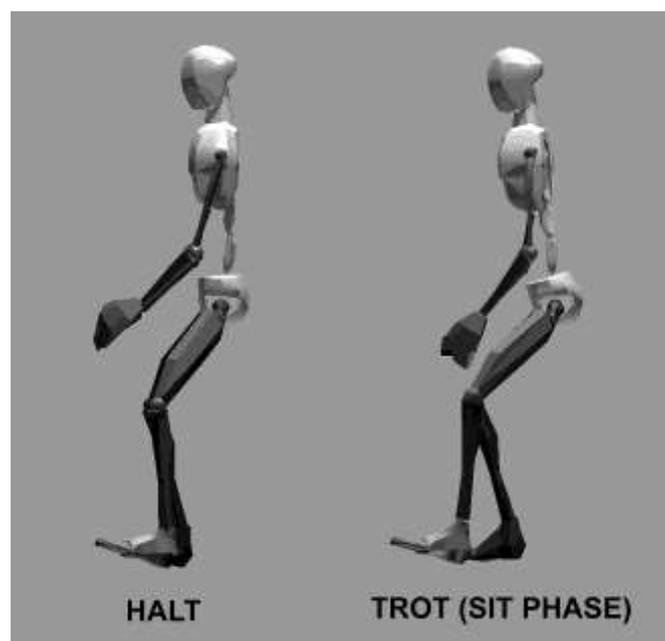
### **EVALUATION OF PAIN IN THE RIDDEN HORSE**

In 2016, the SRT was pleased to be able to support a research study carried out at the Animal Health Trust to develop an ethogram that will assist in evaluating pain indicators in the ridden horse and to test if it could be reliably applied. The results of this ground breaking work will be published shortly. The next phase of this project is to test the application of the ethogram to determine if horses with and without musculoskeletal pain can be differentiated by facial expressions and other aspects of behavior when ridden.



## **RIDER POSTURE EVALUATION RESEARCH STUDY**

An investigation of the use of inertial sensing equipment for the measurement of hip flexion and pelvic rotation as a risk factor of lower back pain and injury in horse riders has been carried out at the University of Sunderland. Staff and students from the Faculty of Computer Science worked in collaboration with the SRT and Sports Physiotherapist Tim Pigott MCSP on the development of a technology-based software tool for evaluating rider posture. Preliminary results showed that it is necessary to consider the rider's posture dynamically when attempting to identify those riders who may be at risk of lower back injury. The results also revealed the presence of asymmetry in rider hip flexion, which is a further risk factor for potential injury. The system developed has the potential for use in a practical context to provide biofeedback to riders and coaches and further research is underway to determine appropriate techniques for visualising the data. A paper resulting from the work done so far has been accepted for publication in the Journal of Sports Technology: Gandy, E.A., Bondi, A., Pigott, T.M.C. & Smith, G. "Investigation of the use of inertial sensing equipment for the measurement of hip flexion and pelvic rotation in horse riders".



## **SRT REFERRAL SCHEME FEEDBACK**

To support the need for an independent, expert advice service, the SRT has a referral scheme to assist horse owners in reaching a definitive reason for saddle related problems. We would like to share the story below which was sent to us by one of them.

*"Despite having passed a pre-purchase vetting with flying colours I had been having issues with my recently acquired 8 year old mare since purchase; primarily napping, grumpiness and showing signs of discomfort being groomed and tacked up, and then progressively difficulty picking up canter in the school. My local equine vet, instructor, and equine physio were not overly concerned with my mare's behaviour because she looked sound when trotted up, and doing flexion tests etc.*

*Although my vet thought the horse's behaviour was most likely her just being a 'chestnut mare', he agreed that if I was still concerned the next step would be a full lameness work-up at a likely minimum cost of c£1,500. I knew that my mare was not right but unfortunately she was not insured and so I was reluctant to spend £1,500 with a vet that didn't seem to be acknowledging there was a problem. So, I made an application for my mare to be seen by Sue Dyson through the SRT referral scheme.*

*Sue assessed my mare in the stable, and then in-hand, lunged, and ridden. Following the assessment Sue discussed with me the potential diagnosis based on what she had seen that day and the horse's clinical history. Based on this we discussed the cost of undertaking further diagnostic tests and the likely long-term prognosis for the horse to return to being a happy ridden horse.*

*Sue was confident that there were several significant health problems suffered by my mare that meant she was in pain when worked (both under-saddle and on the lunge), and I regret not trusting my own instincts on this earlier. However, it was a relief for me to*

*have my horse seen by a vet that has such extensive experience identifying and diagnosing performance related issues, and that acknowledged the signs of discomfort my mare was giving.*

*Sue gave a very honest and clear (as is possible without undertaking further diagnostic tests) prognosis for my mare which allowed me to make a sensible decision about her future that was in the best interests of the horse." [Emma Murphy]*

The referral scheme is exclusive to SRT Members and Friends of the SRT. Each case is assessed by the SRT and, if deemed suitable, referred to the SRT Veterinary Advisor who will carry out an independent examination of the horse, saddle and rider. A written report will be provided for the owner and their associated professional practitioners (veterinary surgeon, physiotherapist, saddle fitter etc).

More details on the scheme and information on how to apply can be obtained via the following link: <http://saddleresearchtrust.com/referralscheme.html>.

## **PROTECTION THROUGH PARTNERSHIP**

### **Working together to prevent equine infectious disease**

The Animal Health Trust, Royal Veterinary College and University of Nottingham are collaborating to undertake exciting new research into the control of equine infectious disease. All horse, pony and donkey owners are invited to participate.

Participation involves completion of a questionnaire about your horse's management and yard environment, as well as your own experience of infectious disease control. All information that you provide will be vital for the development of practical, effective recommendations for the control of infectious disease to reduce future disease outbreaks.

If you would like to participate, please follow the link and register your details:

<http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/2801853/Protection-through-Partnership>. For more

information contact the researchers by email at [caroline.hodgkinson@aht.org.uk](mailto:caroline.hodgkinson@aht.org.uk).

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More information about the SRT and its work and how to become a supporter can be

found at [www.saddleresearchtrust.com](http://www.saddleresearchtrust.com)