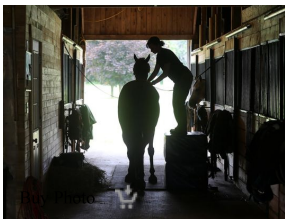


Horses get acupuncture in preparation for Stuart trials



Kristin Browne, a rehab veterinarian, talks about how she uses laser therapy and other forms of therapy to keep horses as healthy and competitive as they can be. The Stuart Horse Trials run July 10 to 12. Video by Jamie Germano.

Alisha Foster, Staff writer 10:03 p.m. EDT July 10, 2015



(Photo: Jamie Germano/@jgermano1 // STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER)

Kristin Browne stood next to a regal-looking horse, holding what resembled a handheld vacuum. She moved it around the empty space a foot away from the horse's hind legs, onto which it cast a red glow.

"What I'm doing now is lasering his hocks," said Browne, a rehabilitative veterinarian.

She was helping the horse, named Time to Tango, gear up to compete this weekend in the 26th annual Cosequin Stuart Horse Trials in Victor.

He had some arthritis from his days on the professional racetrack. Laser therapy, she said, helped prevent the horse from getting worse. So did chiropractic—and acupuncture.

"I always talk about having a love-hate relationship with acupuncture because when it works, it's fantastic. When it doesn't, obviously it doesn't. And it's hard to know what animals are going to respond," Browne said.



Veterinarian Kristin Browne uses laser therapy to treat a competition horse. (Photo: Jamie Germano/@jgermano1// STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER)

Browne said she has tried all her rehabilitative methods on herself because she's naturally skeptical of them.

She has used laser therapy on herself many times, including on an achy neck.

"It takes maybe a few hours to actually work," she said. "You don't feel it. There's no heat ... When I first did it I was like, oh, it's not doing anything for me. And then before I knew it, my neck felt better."

Tango will "event," the technical term for competing in the Trials, with trainer Troy Wing.

They will compete in the most advanced of four divisions at the trials, the two-star category for top international riders. The trials have drawn over 200 competitors this year from this level down to the beginner-novice level to compete in the three events that make up the equestrian triathlon: dressage, show-jumping and cross-country.

Friday Tango and Wing competed in the dressage event, the technical part of the trials in which horses and riders must perform a set of memorized movements in a ring. They also competed in show jumping, a test of horses' bravery similar to hurdling.

Saturday, they will go cross-country.

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Veterinarian Kristin Browne applies a laser treatment on a horse in preparation for the Stuart Horse Trials. (Photo: Jamie Germano/@jgermano1// STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER)

One of the interesting things about the cross-country event, Stuart Horse Trials spokeswoman Amy Blum said, is that the horses are not allowed to see the course at all until competition day. Only the rider gets to walk the course beforehand.

Troy Wing, who owns and competes with Tango, explained that the bond between man and horse makes competing really special.

"You know, one of my trainers and I joke a lot that it's kind of like couple's counseling. It really is kind of everyday-basis ... finding that compromise between the two of you," Wing said. "You've got to find that flexibility and grounds to stand on, but still have direction and still have that desire to work together."

Wing also trains students and horses in eventing. Fourteen of the horses he has trained will be competing in the Trials.

Browne gives them therapy.

She owns Altair Farms, where Wing trains the horses, as well as a separate facility from which she runs her Thera-Vet Rehabilitation and Fitness company. Both are in Macedon.

She will also race her own horse, Sirius, at the beginner-novice level. She has attended every Stuart Horse Trials since they began in 1990, but this is only the second year she's taking part in them.

"It's a hobby for me," she said. "As much as I would love to be able to have time and compete at the level that Troy does, it's tough with business and family because for three phases, you've really got to train a lot for it. It's hard to find the time."

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Veterinarian Kristin Browne applies a laser treatment on a horse in preparation for the Stuart Horse Trials. (Photo: Jamie Germano/@jgermano1 / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER)

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