

► BETWEEN ROUNDS WITH:

JEREMY STEINBERG

Teach Your Children Well

Our columnist insists young riders don't need fancy horses or unlimited funds to learn how to ride and train—but they do need trainers who won't give up on them.

PHOTO BY COURTENAY FRASER

As the U.S. Equestrian Federation's national dressage youth coach, I hear a lot of commentary about the state of the sport from people of all different regions and financial backgrounds. I hear ideas from the high performance end of things all the way to the grassroots level. I hear from the judges, the riders, the parents, the trainers and everyone at USEF about what works well, what doesn't, what we need more of, and what people would like to see or hear less of.

Over the last few weeks I've repeatedly heard people comparing youth riders in the United States to those in Europe. I've heard that we need more kids doing the Under 25 Grand Prix, and I can't disagree with that. We need a continual stream of fresh faces moving and shaking their way into the Grand Prix ranks. We need riders who, under 25 years of age, are already starting to feel and see what it takes to make it in the Grand Prix arena and who have the skills to be able to compete at that level. Those Under 25 Grand Prix classes need



Jeremy Steinberg believes it's possible to teach a rider to have a classic seat and be a "thinking" rider on any kind of horse.

to be teeming with riders who we think are going to be rising stars of the sport over the next few years.

Who wouldn't like to see a herd of Under 25 riders from the United States flooding the likes of Aachen and giving the Europeans a run for their money? That would be a great day for American dressage.

That being said, whose responsibility is it to bring the kids and horses to that

level? And why don't we have them there now? Do we blame it on the kids—that they don't ride well enough? Do we blame it on the horses—that we don't have mounts that are good enough? Do we blame it on the trainers for not being able to bring the kids to that level?

Unfortunately, the answer is not simple. I get frustrated hearing that the kids just need better horses, and we need to throw more money

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¹ McClure SR, et al. Gastric ulcer development in horses in a simulated show or training environment. *J Am Vet Med Assoc.* 2005;227(5):775-777.

² ULCERGARD product label.

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GastroGard® (omeprazole) Oral Paste for Equine Ulcers

Caution

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Store at 68°F – 77°F (20–25°C). Excursions between 59°F – 86°F (15–30°C) are permitted.

Indications

For treatment and prevention of recurrence of gastric ulcers in horses and foals 4 weeks of age and older.

Dosage Regimen

For treatment of gastric ulcers, GASTROGARD Paste should be administered orally once-a-day for 4 weeks at the recommended dosage of 1.8 mg omeprazole/lb body weight (4 mg/kg). For the prevention of recurrence of gastric ulcers, continue treatment for at least an additional 4 weeks by administering GASTROGARD Paste at the recommended daily maintenance dose of 0.9 mg/lb (2 mg/kg).

Directions For Use

- GASTROGARD Paste for horses is recommended for use in horses and foals 4 weeks of age and older. The contents of one syringe will dose a 1250 lb (568 kg) horse at the rate of 1.8 mg omeprazole/lb body weight (4 mg/kg). For treatment of gastric ulcers, each weight marking on the syringe plunger will deliver sufficient omeprazole to treat 250 lb (114 kg) body weight. For prevention of recurrence of gastric ulcers, each weight marking will deliver sufficient omeprazole to dose 500 lb (227 kg) body weight.
- To deliver GASTROGARD Paste at the treatment dose rate of 1.8 mg omeprazole/lb body weight (4 mg/kg), set the syringe plunger to the appropriate weight marking according to the horse's weight in pounds.
- To deliver GASTROGARD Paste at the dose rate of 0.9 mg/lb (2 mg/kg) to prevent recurrence of ulcers, set the syringe plunger to the weight marking corresponding to half of the horse's weight in pounds.
- To set the syringe plunger, unlock the knurled ring by rotating it 1/4 turn. Slide the knurled ring along the plunger shaft so that the side nearest the barrel is at the appropriate notch. Rotate the plunger ring 1/4 turn to lock it in place and ensure it is locked. Make sure the horse's mouth contains no food. Remove the cover from the tip of the syringe, and insert the syringe into the horse's mouth at the interdental space. Depress the plunger until stopped by the knurled ring. The dose should be deposited on the back of the tongue or deep into the cheek pouch. Care should be taken to ensure that the horse consumes the complete dose. Treated animals should be observed briefly after administration to ensure that part of the dose is not lost or rejected. If any of the dose is lost, redosing is recommended.
- If, after dosing, the syringe is not completely empty, it may be reused on following days until emptied. Replace the cap after each use.

Warning

Do not use in horses intended for human consumption. Keep this and all drugs out of the reach of children. In case of ingestion, contact a physician. Physicians may contact a poison control center for advice concerning accidental ingestion.

Adverse Reactions

In efficacy trials, when the drug was administered at 1.8 mg omeprazole/lb (4 mg/kg) body weight daily for 28 days and 0.9 mg omeprazole/lb (2 mg/kg) body weight daily for 30 additional days, no adverse reactions were observed.

Precautions

The safety of GASTROGARD Paste has not been determined in pregnant or lactating mares.

Efficacy

- **Dose Confirmation:** GASTROGARD® (omeprazole) Paste, administered to provide omeprazole at 1.8 mg/lb (4 mg/kg) daily for 28 days, effectively healed or reduced the severity of gastric ulcers in 92% of omeprazole-treated horses. In comparison, 32% of controls exhibited healed or less severe ulcers. Horses enrolled in this study were healthy animals confirmed to have gastric ulcers by gastroscopy. Subsequent daily administration of GASTROGARD Paste to provide omeprazole at 0.9 mg/lb (2 mg/kg) for 30 days prevented recurrence of gastric ulcers in 84% of treated horses, whereas ulcers recurred or became more severe in horses removed from omeprazole treatment.
- **Clinical Field Trials:** GASTROGARD Paste administered at 1.8 mg/lb (4 mg/kg) daily for 28 days healed or reduced the severity of gastric ulcers in 99% of omeprazole-treated horses. In comparison, 32.4% of control horses had healed ulcers or ulcers which were reduced in severity. These trials included horses of various breeds and under different management conditions, and included horses in race or show training, pleasure horses, and foals as young as one month. Horses enrolled in the efficacy trials were healthy animals confirmed to have gastric ulcers by gastroscopy. In these field trials, horses readily accepted GASTROGARD Paste. There were no drug related adverse reactions. In the clinical trials, GASTROGARD Paste was used concomitantly with other therapies, which included: anthelmintics, antibiotics, non-steroidal and steroidal anti-inflammatory agents, diuretics, tranquilizers and vaccines.
- **Diagnostic and Management Considerations:** The following clinical signs may be associated with gastric ulceration in adult horses: inappetence or decreased appetite, recurrent colic, intermittent loose stools or chronic diarrhea, poor hair coat, poor body condition, or poor performance. Clinical signs in foals may include: bruxism (grinding of teeth), excessive salivation, colic, cranial abdominal tenderness, anorexia, diarrhea, sternal recumbency or weakness. A more accurate diagnosis of gastric ulceration in horses and foals may be made if ulcers are visualized directly by endoscopic examination of the gastric mucosa. Gastric ulcers may recur in horses if therapy to prevent recurrence is not administered after the initial treatment is completed. Use GASTROGARD Paste at 0.9 mg omeprazole/lb body weight (2 mg/kg) for control of gastric ulcers following treatment. The safety of administration of GASTROGARD Paste for longer than 91 days has not been determined. Maximal acid suppression occurs after three to five days of treatment with omeprazole.

Safety

- GASTROGARD Paste was well tolerated in the following controlled efficacy and safety studies.
- In field trials involving 139 horses, including foals as young as one month of age, no adverse reactions attributable to omeprazole treatment were noted.
- In a placebo controlled adult horse safety study, horses received 20 mg/kg/day omeprazole (5x the recommended dose) for 90 days. No treatment related adverse effects were observed.
- In a placebo controlled tolerance study, adult horses were treated with GASTROGARD Paste at a dosage of 40 mg/kg/day (10x the recommended dose) for 21 days. No treatment related adverse effects were observed.
- A placebo controlled foal safety study evaluated the safety of omeprazole at doses of 4, 12 or 20 mg/kg (1, 3 or 5x) once daily for 91 days. Foals ranged in age from 66 to 110 days at study initiation. Gamma glutamyltransferase (GGT) levels were significantly elevated in horses treated at exaggerated doses of 20 mg/kg (5x the recommended dose). Mean stomach to body weight ratio was higher for foals in the 3x and 5x groups than for controls; however, no abnormalities of the stomach were evident on histological examination.

Reproductive Safety

In a male reproductive safety study, 10 stallions received GastroGard Paste at 12 mg/kg/day (3x the recommended dose) for 70 days. No treatment related adverse effects on semen quality or breeding behavior were observed. A safety study in breeding mares has not been conducted.

For More Information

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► DRESSAGE

at them to be able to compete at that level. Yes, it's a rich man's sport, and to be able to compete at a certain level, you have to be able to play at that level financially. We all know this. But the solution cannot just be that the kids need better horses, as it's not feasible for everyone.

Most U.S. youth riders cannot afford to compete and work at those levels. They don't have the funds to be able to buy the horses, pay for the training, shows, travel and a myriad of other things required at that level. It upsets me when parents or kids come up to me and say things like "a big name trainer told me my horse wasn't good enough" without that trainer taking into consideration the financial limitations of that family. I think we do more harm than good telling kids their horses are not good enough to take them to the levels to which they aspire.

Think about it this way: If someone repeatedly told you were not good enough to ever get promoted in your job, how long would you keep working hard and trying to improve? You wouldn't. If our kids keep hearing they need better horses, they will never fight to become above average in their own riding. They will believe the reason they don't succeed is based on the quality of their horse and not based on the quality of their riding.

This is going to create two different scenarios. One would be the youth rider who never works outside of his comfort zone, seeks out better help, learns to fight tooth and nail for every point in the show ring, or learns to think outside the box when it comes to horse training. This will produce a very average rider with no confidence, one who never tried to go anywhere because he was told his horse wasn't good enough.

The second scenario would be a rider who always blames the horse for his inability to win or score well and will continue to ride at the level he does, not seeking better help, not taking any responsibility and with no self improvement in hopes that maybe through sponsorship, one day he will have a better horse and be winning. These are the kids who think that sponsorship will solve their problems and get them on a medal podium.

Develop The Talent

Winning starts in your mind. It has nothing to do with what kind of horse you ride. I see \$1,000 horses that look like a million bucks because of the pride a rider takes in the ownership and training they do. It's true: No training in the world is going to take a very poor moving, very temperamentally difficult horse and produce a medal-winning team horse, *but* I also know that good training, good riding, good horsemanship, thinking and managing your horse well can produce a very well-trained, above average horse from very little horse flesh.

This kind of mindset and day-to-day work ethic can also produce an amazing rider. It can produce a rider who thinks, a rider who sits well, and a rider who has the skills needed to later compete at those higher levels. We need to be teaching our youth riders to become classically sitting riders who are "thinking" riders, and that is possible on any level, quality or type of horse.

The average youth rider in the country does not have resources to be buying expensive horses. On average, they do not have the ability to have a second or third horse in their string. Not all parents can spend the family savings on a horse purchase, and even if they would, we should not be encouraging that, as it's not responsible or self-sustaining.

In my travels, I talk to the youth riders, their parents, their trainers and their support teams. They hear that their horses are not good enough and are discouraged. They know they don't have enough money to be on the show circuit for the season and are discouraged, as well.

I'm the first one, much to the chagrin of the USEF staff, to tell the youth that not everyone is a winner. There can be only one winner on any given day in any given class. There are far more "losers" of a class than winners, and that's something we riders have to own and understand. It's OK not to win. It is *not* OK, however, to ride poorly.

Winning doesn't always mean the best rider; it means the best ride of that day, in that class. I was raised on the belief that good riding is good riding. Regardless of the horse you're on, a good seat will always stand out.

Instead of blaming our kids for not having better horses, why don't we continue to teach them to ride better? Are we giving up on them if they're not winning or they don't have a top horse, or are we taking it as a challenge to teach them to ride? Are we showcasing the riders with good seats and good horsemanship, or are we only showcasing the winners or the wealthy?

I continue to see and be impressed by the drive our youth riders have. I see kids who work hard, come from little, don't have team-quality horses, but show up at the barn *every* day, early in the morning or late after school, to ride and work hard. Most of these kids are excelling at school, as well. Most know a good rider is educated, well rounded and smart, and if they don't, they hear it from me. I see kids with good brains, physical talent and the drive to make them champions. I see raw talent—lots of it. By that I am always encouraged.

“Winning starts in your mind. It has nothing to do with what kind of horse you ride.”

What's discouraging is time and time again, that raw talent stays raw. It doesn't get developed. When we do see these kids at shows, the upper echelons of the sport are quick to say they aren't good enough or their horses aren't good enough, and we let them slip through the cracks to undeveloped averageness. This is not the kids' nor the horses' faults. This fault is ours. It's time to stop blaming poor riding on horses or kids and take responsibility for their education.

If you're a dressage trainer or teacher, how many days a week do you work with your riders without stirrups? How often do you sit and watch videos of rides with your students and discuss

dressage principles and theory?

We complain that the kids don't have great seats when we see them in competition, but are we actually training them to have better seats when we're at home? Are we saying they can't sit or ride well because their horses aren't giving them the right feeling, so we ignore the quality of their riding? How many of us are trying to produce the next Helen Langehanenberg? I hear the complaints that the kids don't have enough basics, but are we giving them those skills and theory? Are we teaching them to think? Are we producing the next Kyra Kyrklund?

Love The One You're With

Yes, if we could put all the youth riders in the country who show talent for dressage on well-schooled horses so that they could really learn the right feeling, they'd learn it faster. I understand that if we gave them higher quality and better trained horses they would score higher and compete with an edge.

Unfortunately, I also know that the likelihood of a trainer having enough well-schooled horses in his barn to let the youth riders ride them regularly is not the same as with Europe. The sheer volume of horses in Europe that are trainable to Grand Prix is so much higher than in the United States. With that volume comes surplus, meaning the Europeans can sell them, ride them, trade them, and let the lesser quality ones work as school horses for the kids and amateurs. In the United States we do not have that volume or surplus.

Horses in Europe are big business—whether it's riding or training or breeding—and most all, they are family businesses. Think about how youth riders who are raised in the industry, live in the industry and have parents in the industry will turn out relative to those who don't.

I read a study a few weeks back about kids who are raised with professional parents, where both parents work in the same field. It was something like 87 percent of kids raised in those environments go on to be top professionals, surpassing their parents' level in the same field or relative field. Those kids have an advantage.

In the U.S., we don't have family roots

in breeding or training that go back 100 years or more to dressage or sport horses. In Europe, a huge percentage of those Under 25 Grand Prix riders have long-established roots in the industry, parents who are also trainers, dealers or breeders. So their success at that level is almost destined—a distinct advantage. Comparing our system to theirs is something that, in the end, is not fair to our kids.

That said, we do need to keep holding our kids to the standard of riding at that level. Our kids should be able to ride as well as the Europeans because we educate them to that even if they cannot score as well because they lack in horse quality.

It's our job to train the kids. We cannot wait for them to have better horses; we have to train them to ride what they have. If we do so, we train them to become horse trainers. If they can train the difficult ones, they can train the talented ones. Training an even-tempered, nice moving, supple, talented young horse to Grand Prix is easy relative to training its opposite.

When the kids have the skill set to train what they have, we are training them for the future. We are giving them the skills they need to succeed when the better horses come along for them. So what if their horse will never get a 9 on an extended trot? I know for a fact we can still teach them to sit classically, ride well and be good horse(wo)men.

If a youth rider with a lesser quality horse comes along, take it as a challenge to teach him to ride well. Teach him to sit well. Take away his stirrups and *create* a good rider. 🍎

JEREMY STEINBERG

Jeremy Steinberg is the U.S. Equestrian Federation Youth Coach and a well-known rider, trainer and competitor based out of Del Mar, Calif. He's also a selector for the Developing Horse Program and one of five clinicians who works with the U.S. Dressage Federation in its Platinum Performance/USDF junior and young rider clinic series. He worked with long-time friend and mentor Dietrich von Hopffgarten extensively until his passing in 2004. Jeremy has trained and shown many horses up through the Grand Prix level. He now runs a small "boutique"-type training business and travels the country giving clinics privately, as well as for USEF and USDF. More information can be found at steinbergdressage.com.