



***Equitopia produces educational videos based on science & research.***

In modern times, the role of the horse, for the most part, has progressed from functional to recreational. As horse owners and enthusiasts, how do we find our way through the minefield of opinion and information to find the path we seek for the journey with our horses?



It is this question, along with her own personal experiences, that inspired Equitopia founder, Caroline Hegarty, to further investigate and seek clarification on the processes of training and riding horses. Equitopia is located in Northern California's Fairfield.

“When you stop to think about it,” Hegarty said, “taking an animal that is not designed to be ridden, does not understand what you are saying, and strapping a saddle, bridle and rider on board to ask it to perform a variety of gymnastic endeavors is a daunting task.”

Equitopia's approach delves into the various schools of thought on the care, welfare and

training of horses and aims to separate fact from fiction as much as possible.

Bearing in mind that there are many factors that influence the outcome of a training and riding partnership, Equitopia presents information in a number of categories, from saddle fit, hoof care, nutrition, biomechanics of both horse and rider, behavior and more.

Through a global collaborative effort with professionals in the industry, Equitopia's high-quality videos present the results of their investigative efforts in a format that highlights just how much education and awareness is necessary to be good custodians of our horses. Whether you are aiming for international competition or recreational trail riding, you should strive to absorb as much knowledge as possible for the benefit of both your horse and your partnership.

Last year, Equitopia's team travelled to Holland and the UK to film with Dr. Karin Liebbrandt, Dr. Sue Dyson and international event trainer and inventor of the Micklem Bridle, William Micklem. The topics covered include considerations of fitting headwear relative to the placement of sensitive nerves and brittle bones on the horse's face with Micklem, recognizing subtle lameness with Dr. Dyson and signs of topline deficiencies with Dr. Liebbrandt. This series will be available to view this year.



In addition to their online educational videos, Equitopia also has a select number of rescues that have been donated to them from various sectors of the industry, and whose stories are being documented in a series of short films. These rescues include an abandoned older mare found emaciated and laminitic; a 12 year old FEI horse with chronic kissing spine who was considered for euthanasia due to no longer being competitive; and a Zebra-Pony hybrid named Ziggy.

Executive-produced by Equitopia's founder Caroline Hegarty and directed by Kathryn Lauritzen of Padma Video, the documentary "Don't Shoot the Zebra Pony" gives viewers an inside look at

Written by CRM

Tuesday, 30 January 2018 21:54

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the rescue efforts of the neglected 19-year-old Ziggy. Bred for novelty and never handled by humans, Ziggy was left to her own devices on a farm in the Sacramento area's Winters, where her overgrown hooves caused her pain and difficulty in movement for many years. Her trust in humans tarnished, Ziggy would not allow anyone close enough to care for her, and her owner contemplated shooting her before Hegarty and her team stepped in to the rescue.

"We are very pleased with the success and response to Ziggy's story," Hegarty said. "Her film was shown as part of last year's Napa Valley Film Festival and will be screened this year at the Prescott Film Festival in Arizona and the Equus International Film Festival in Montana in September."

Ziggy's story can be viewed without charge for a limited time on Equitopia's website, Facebook page, YouTube and Vimeo.

If you are interested in supporting the efforts of Equitopia, you may purchase Equitopia's art prints through Fine Art America or purchase the children's books "The Adventures of Syrus" on Amazon, whose proceeds go directly to the non-profit. If you would like to donate directly, you may do so through their website at [equitopiacenter.com](http://equitopiacenter.com)

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