

Jill's Training Philosophy

As I work full time as a doctor I am time poor. I really enjoy spending my leisure time having fun with my own three mares. When people ask me to train their horse, I encourage them to try training their own horse - which will be so much more satisfying for them. Hopefully they will find it interesting and fun. I am assisted by my background as a former pro TB jockey, former elite athlete (Australian marathon record holder for 42.2 km road run in 1982-83) and my scientific/medical knowledge as a practising GP doctor. However, maybe the most important factor is my 64 years spent being truly present with horses.

I advise novice trainers to listen to their horse, keep asking questions, attend seminars and read the good information on the racing websites. TB racehorse trainers and Arabian trainers such as myself are usually only too happy to mentor newcomers. If one is receiving feeding advice from a TB trainer, just remember that the Arabian needs much less high energy /grain feed than a TB.

Because we are trying to entice more people to race Arabians, one message would be that most of the training, can be done by any owner who is a competent rider. There is a relatively small time commitment involved.

just need a track or a safe trail where they can build their horse's fitness and speed. I mainly use boundary tracks that I keep mowed around my back paddock. I do not have access to a walker/treadmill/swim facility/stables. My horses are paddocked together in 5 to 10 acre paddocks, they are never shod, rarely rugged and they move around a lot, day and night.

Weather and time permitting, I work the horse 3 - 4 days per week, about 7 km on each occasion, initially mainly at a slow trot with some uphill walking, building over the weeks to a fast trot and an increasingly faster canter. After about two months of this 'legging up', once or twice a fortnight I will float my horses to a small private 1200 metre racetrack for some interval work. Once the horse is fit and ready, we gallop the straights and ease back to a hand canter around the bends (to protect their legs). This easy training regime has certainly worked for my three Aloha mares, who in the last year have raced 12 times for 6 wins, 4 x 2nds and 2 x thirds. They love to race. They do it for me and there is no need to use the whip.

I closely monitor each horse e.g. their attitude, their weight, breathing/sweating during workouts, recovery heart rates, muscle tone or tightness, hoof quality, teeth etc. Their feed, workload and work increments are adjusted accordingly. I do all my own barefoot trimming and I utilize a very good horse muscle ligament therapist. The horses have dental check ups every 6 -8 months and are wormed and vaccinated regularly, including for Hendra.

I don't think we should be encouraging novices to try to become race jockeys overnight. In my opinion, race riding is best left to those who have ridden hundreds of hours in the jockey pad, riding TBs in trackwork. Balancing in short stirrups over the withers of a galloping horse takes a very different skill and fitness level to other equestrian disciplines, as does the ability to jump from the barriers wearing slippery race silks, pace the horse in the race and stay out of trouble in a field of galloping horses. Most of the jockeys currently approved to ride in registered Arabian races are current or former pro jockeys or current trackwork rider licensees. (I also think this is an important point to make as it enhances the professionalism of Arabian racing in the eyes of any skeptical TB people, Turf Clubs or Insurers reading this article)

In 2013, when I decided to attempt a comeback into racing after thirty years away from the game, I initially sent my quietest pure bred mare, Aloha Desert Jewel to be trained by Cassie Saunders. I frequently detoured to ride some pacework on Jewel. She had been started by Natural Horsemanship methods and had only ever been ridden in a halter. Jewel was unsure whether she should be going fast and it was quite a while before Cassie and I could encourage her to take up the bit in her track work.

Cassie and her partner Al Barnes gained approval to work the Arabians at Bundamba racetrack. I had been reasonably fit from endurance riding (including some 160 km competitions on horses owned by Dick Collyer and Peter Toft) but I now added regular gym workouts and cycling to my fitness regime and re applied for a Racing Queensland trackwork licence so that I could ride Jewel and some TBs on the track. I passed the required medical examinations and the obligatory trackwork riding assessment conducted by the RQ steward and subsequently the NARA stewards passed me to race ride through the barrier trial test process. It was an amazing feeling to be granted my jockey licence again at the age of 61. It felt like coming home... I will be forever grateful that Cassie gave me the encouragement and confidence to apply for and regain my jockey's licence in 2013 and to take out my own trainer's licence in 2014. It has been a wonderful ride.

Dr.Jill Colwell – Owner – Breeder – Trainer – Jockey.