

FEBRUARY 8th, 2004

EQUINE CANADA CONFERENCE – RICHMOND, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Dear Friends,

Horse sport is an exciting field of business; I personally could not be happier that I work in a manner that keeps me in touch with these magnificent animals. As a horseman myself, I can appreciate the gentle beauty of horses without losing sight that the sport is not without its danger. Each year riders, in a variety of equestrian sports, are injured, some minor, some quite serious, and there is still worse than serious injury. A rider should be aware that there are real risks associated with the nature of the sport. While we hope it doesn't happen, and we take every precaution to avoid injuries, they can still occur. As riders, we are willing to take the risk to do a sport that we love.

The law has a term called Assumption of Risk – it is a legal doctrine under which a person may not recover for an injury received when he has voluntarily exposed himself to a known danger. If you are an owner of a facility that has patrons training on horseback at your facility, this protects you. Right? Yes, to a degree. Your liability is reduced if you have done everything to insure that you have provided the safest setting to train in. Besides being a tall order, what does it mean? I will explain with a quick anecdote that will illustrate the opposite point.

On a number of occasions recently, my firm International Equestrian Design, has been retained as Experts Witnesses. One case in particular has an owner of an equestrian center who, with little experience as a rider, developed his own footing for his training rings. Everything was wrong with this footing. I say this within a reasonable degree of certainty or probability on what would define good footing. One of his patrons, an experienced rider, had an accident serious enough that she has sustained an injury that will be a life long disability. He is in trouble legally, despite the laws that would protect him, because he disregarded the safety of his clients. By creating an unsafe riding surface, he increased the risks commonly associated with horseback riding in an organized school setting. The risk of a horse tripping due to improper footing is not a risk assumed by a horseback rider of any skill level in such a setting. Such actions are negligent by failing to provide for the safety of the users of the facility. It is very likely he will be found liable.

I love this sport, as an individual who has spent a major portion of my lifetime promoting the sport; I would hope that all owners would be conscientious enough to make sure that safety would be job one. Unless you are an expert, you can protect yourself and your clients by using an

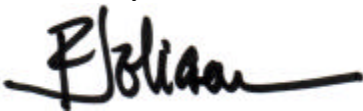
expert to plan the details. Shameless self-promotion? Perhaps. However, you cannot overlook that working with an expert may cost you up front, but will save you money in the long run. Savings in the cost of liability as well as savings in the know-how in choosing appropriate materials and their proper application. I would be putting myself out of business if I explained to the last detail how to achieve the perfect footing. What I will present to you will be how footing is developed for specific types of training. I want you to see that creating footing is serious business. You can take this knowledge to determine if the footing you have, or plan to have is safe. Safe, not just for your users, but for yourself too, certainly if you are an owner, you will be a user at your own facility from time to time. Footing is only one example of a potential hazard that requires careful planning. Fence design, location of irrigation equipment, and kickboard designs are all important.

Footing is composed of sand and stone, not just any stone or sand, but materials with specific properties. Good footing is one of the most important ingredients in the development of horses in training, and for the safety of the rider. The footing will enhance the rider's performance, provide comfort for the horse, and allow the rider to train in a relatively safe environment.

Getting good footing requires work. To be brief, we start at the sub-base preparation. Then we proceed to the selection of materials for the base and sand topping, lab tests will determine the suitability of the materials. Once materials have been selected, a carefully coordinated program to prevent contamination of commodities has to be employed during the transportation, storage and installation. The base material will be installed to a prescribed thickness; one which when properly compacted a horse will not be able to break through. The base will need time to cure before it receives the sand topping. The topping is installed to a uniformly homogenous layer that provides cushion without excessive depth. Fine-tuning will be performed to perfect the "feel" either by changing the depth of the sand, or using additives. Some additives loosen sand, while others will bind it. The final step in the process is maintenance. A maintenance program will be needed to keep the footing in top shape, as the nature of the ring will change with time. The appropriate equipment will be needed otherwise base materials will break down, and migrate into upper levels that could cause injury to horses. The process described above is over simplified. It will take time, money and effort to get it right, but as with any investment, you need to do it right the first time to maximize your profit. A ring can be built at a reasonable cost, trying to cut corners only increases your risk of liability, correctly constructed a ring has a good return for your money.

I hope that you enjoy the seminar. I wish to educate and promote awareness and safety, so we can all get a good nights sleep. I wish you all a safe ride. For more information and more photos of our projects, we invite you to visit our web site at <http://www.iedsopra.com>

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Jolicoeur', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Robert Jolicoeur