

*A Pessoa is a lunging aid that has been designed to strengthen the horses's topline, stretch the back and train a horse to work in the right outline.*

# GRACE'S GUIDE...

*to Pessoa training with thoroughbreds*

*Right: Yeoman Sailor using the Pessoa system on the low setting.*



**HEROS uses this programme specifically to help with the rehabilitation of ex-racehorses.**

Our guide is based on primarily using the low setting (right), to improve muscle and build up a strong topline. The higher settings and canter work can be introduced at a later date to develop the Pessoa training further and aid the horse's balance.

I would stress that the Pessoa should only be used by those trained in its correct use and who have been fully trained in fitting it correctly to the specific horse.

Here are some guidelines on using a Pessoa training aid:

**1** When you start using a Pessoa try to work your horse in frequent but short sessions, 5-6 times weekly. This allows you to achieve maximum benefit as quickly as possible.

**2** Take a before and after photograph to plot your progress.



*Left: An example of a horse before his Pessoa training started.*



*Right: Six months later, his muscles have developed and his topline is strong.*

**3** Start by working your horse for 4 minutes on each rein to start with, at walk for a lap, followed by trot for the first 2 weeks.

**4** Increase the time to 5 minutes after the first 2 weeks for a period of another 2 weeks and then on to 6 minutes and 7 accordingly.

**5** Once you are at 7 minutes on each rein you are then working at the maximum time necessary for one session, to achieve optimum results.

**6** Please bear in mind that working in the Pessoa is hard work, rather like gym work for humans so do not increase the times too quickly otherwise you will cause your horse undue discomfort and he may not benefit from your efforts.

**7** By working on the low setting, with the attachment on the girth, between his front legs (as above), you will increase strength and top line muscle (this is equivalent in the horse to the human's core strength).

**8** It will also increase mobility in his hocks and hind limbs ensuring that he uses his hind end to propel him along rather than dragging himself with his front end.

*Right: this picture shows a horse very soon after back surgery. Just four months later (inset) you can see the improvement in his shape.*



**9** When you have completed an initial 8 weeks (2 months) work you should, by then, see a marked improvement in your horse.

**10** As stated previously it is really useful to take a picture before you start and then one at monthly intervals to realise the progress you are making.

**11** After the initial 2 months you can then start working on high setting (i.e. attach clips to the withers), which is where you set the Pessoa to do canter work.

**12** Canter using the Pessoa should be again started at 3 laps on each rein to start with and gradually increased as the horse manages to do this more easily and in a more balanced manner.

**13** Please bear in mind that cantering is difficult and improves balance and self carriage but does not build muscle and should not be used in the initial stages of rehabilitation.



*Below: here you can see Pessoa training in action with an experienced horse and the Pessoa at the high setting. By this stage a horse's muscle is already built up and can handle the extra demand.*



**Grace Muir**  
Chief Executive

*Yeoman Sailor*