

OUT OF PUFF

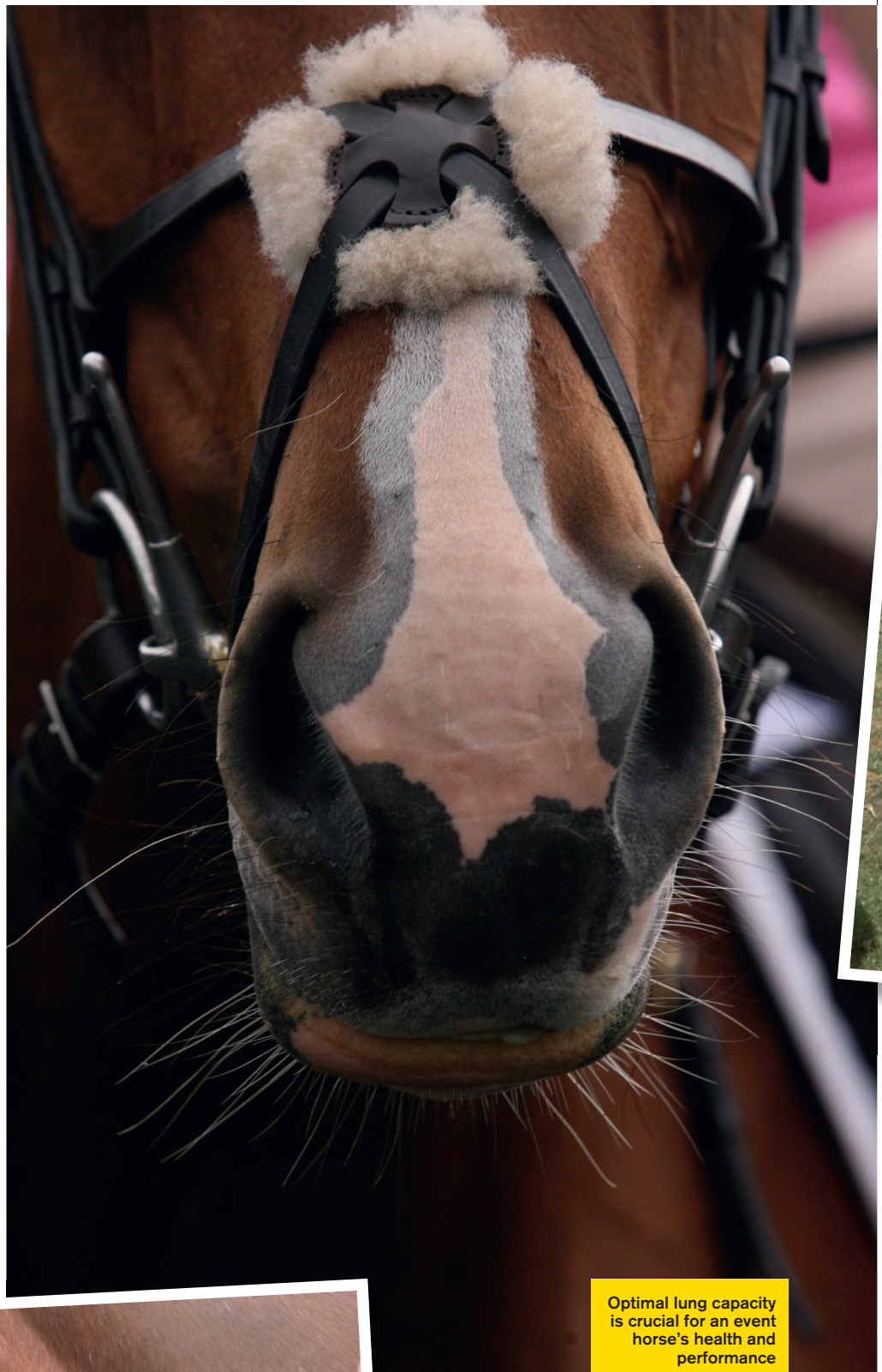


Does your horse tire quickly despite being fit? He may have

a compromised respiratory system and be unable to breathe as efficiently as nature intended, explains equine craniosacral consultant **MAUREEN ROGERS**

YOUR cross-country round is going brilliantly. You have just a handful of fences left to negotiate before the finish line when the power goes out of your horse's engine. He struggles on but his once exuberant jump is now laboured. You pass through the finish flags with a sense of relief rather than elation. Did you not get your horse fit enough? Have you not fed him appropriately for the work? Or maybe there is some underlying problem?

Frequently when horses show symptoms such as these — lethargy, tiring quickly and slow recovery after exertion — they have a problem with their respiration. Horses'



Optimal lung capacity is crucial for an event horse's health and performance



The trachea should be soft and supple. Horses with tightness in the muscle are likely to make a roaring sound or grunt when working

muscles need a healthy supply of oxygen to keep them functioning properly, especially as the level of activity increases in competition. There are three parts involved in equine respiration: the nasal passageway, the hyoid/trachea and the ribs — which include the lungs and diaphragm.

If any of these parts are not functioning efficiently the horse can feel flat or tire during competition. Furthermore, horses fail to recover as quickly post-exertion if their respiratory system is not fully functioning, which has a knock-on effect on the overall health of the body.

Although horses are naturally athletic, various factors — such as training methods, tack and injury — can compromise parts of the respiratory system and these are commonly overlooked during treatment.

Pictures by Lucy Merrell, Hamish Mitchell & Maureen Rogers