

KRISTIN JACOB: Taking Education to the Next Level

This Colorado-based trainer creates an inspiring horsemanship program that goes beyond the saddle.

Every summer, students and trainers in each USHJA zone put their collective knowledge to the test by participating in the USHJA Horsemanship Quiz Stable Challenge. The winner of this 30-day contest is the trainer whose students have earned the top scores in the Horsemanship Quiz Challenge Practice Quiz.

Instead of simply asking her students to participate in the Challenge, Kristin Jacob, head trainer at Blue Star Farms LLC in Longmont, Colorado, took the competition to the next level. She encouraged them to excel by building an educational horsemanship summer camp so they could expand their knowledge and master the competition.

With a passion for education, Jacob, a USHJA Certified Trainer (and longtime Stable Challenge contestant and trainer to multiple HQC National Finalists), sought

to create an engaging group learning experience around the contest.

While the HQC Study Guide serves to prepare those participating in the HQC and the Stable Challenge as a free, comprehensive study resource, Jacob found it even more beneficial. She used the study guide as a curriculum to form a camp for her students. And this wasn't just a camp that involves a patient horse covered in sticky notes labeled with equine anatomy. Jacob invited industry professionals to speak with her students on a variety of topics, including equine health and first aid, shoeing, tack and riding theory.

"It's one thing to read something in a book and remember the answer, but I wanted to take it further and create a hands-on experience for our barn," said Jacob. "I took each section of the study guide and either had guest presenters or



"It's one thing to read something in a book and remember the answer, but I wanted to take it further and create a hands-on experience for our barn," said trainer Kristin Jacob, right.

hands-on exercises to help the camp participants learn.”

Jacob noted that it was important that the practical involvement provided them with an interactive, in-depth way of learning as opposed to studying a print-out.

“The participants, even the older, more experienced girls, realized how much they didn’t know and gained a thirst for learning more,” she said. “They also know how to speak to our vets, farriers, chiropractors, etc., in a more educated way now. As the camp went on, they started thinking more and gained enough knowledge to ask thoughtful questions—this continued on past the camp.”

Created to engage a trainer’s entire barn as a team and encourage horsemanship for riders of all ages, the USHJA HQC Stable Challenge requires at least three junior and/or amateur students per trainer to compete. They complete the online USHJA Horsemanship Quiz Challenge Practice Quiz between June 15 and July 15 in order for their barn to be eligible to win in their Zone.

In addition to expanded knowledge in the barn, Jacob found the group involvement made learning enjoyable and facilitated friendships and camaraderie between barn-mates. Both aspects proved invaluable to her students, who said they benefited even more from the experience.

Lisa Munro, an amateur rider who helped Jacob organize the summer camp, said, “I loved that the Stable Challenge brought our whole barn together—from juniors to amateurs to industry professionals. It really brought our community together as one! The Challenge is so much more than just taking a test. It’s about bonding with teammates and with our four-legged best friends.”

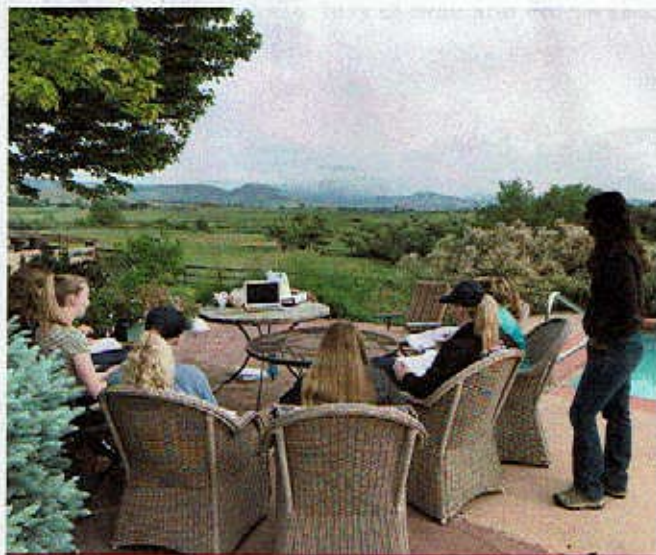
“I liked that we could all learn as a group,” said Leonie Richardson, one of Jacob’s students and a participant. “It makes the whole experience a lot more fun, and you get more out of it. You get to hear everyone’s answer to a question instead of just the study guide’s or your trainer’s.”

At the end of the multi-day camp, participants took the HQC Practice Quiz and Level One Quiz, showcasing what they’d learned and thus partaking in the Stable Challenge. As a result, Jacob was the highest-scoring trainer in Zone 8 after the three top scores under each trainer were averaged to provide an overall score, plus bonus points for each level they completed.

“I gained more knowledge of horsemanship than I’d known before. Every time I take the test (multiple years in a row) with our juniors, I learn more and more,” said Munro. “There’s always so much to learn in this sport, and this just proves that it’s endless!”

It’s a lifelong quest to understand the horse and become a horseman—never stop learning.—

Kristin Jacob



Trainer Kristin Jacob created an educational camp for junior and amateur students to advance their horsemanship knowledge and compete in the HQC Stable Challenge.

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Lisa Munro

Fellow participant Lucy Erikson agreed. "It gave me a whole new perspective and respect for the sport and the horses! With everything that we learned, I feel so much more prepared for any kind of out-of-the-ordinary situation that could come my way. Overall, I think that the HQC Stable Challenge has provided everyone at our barn with a great set of skills and has given us all the tools to become great horsemen and horsewomen one day."

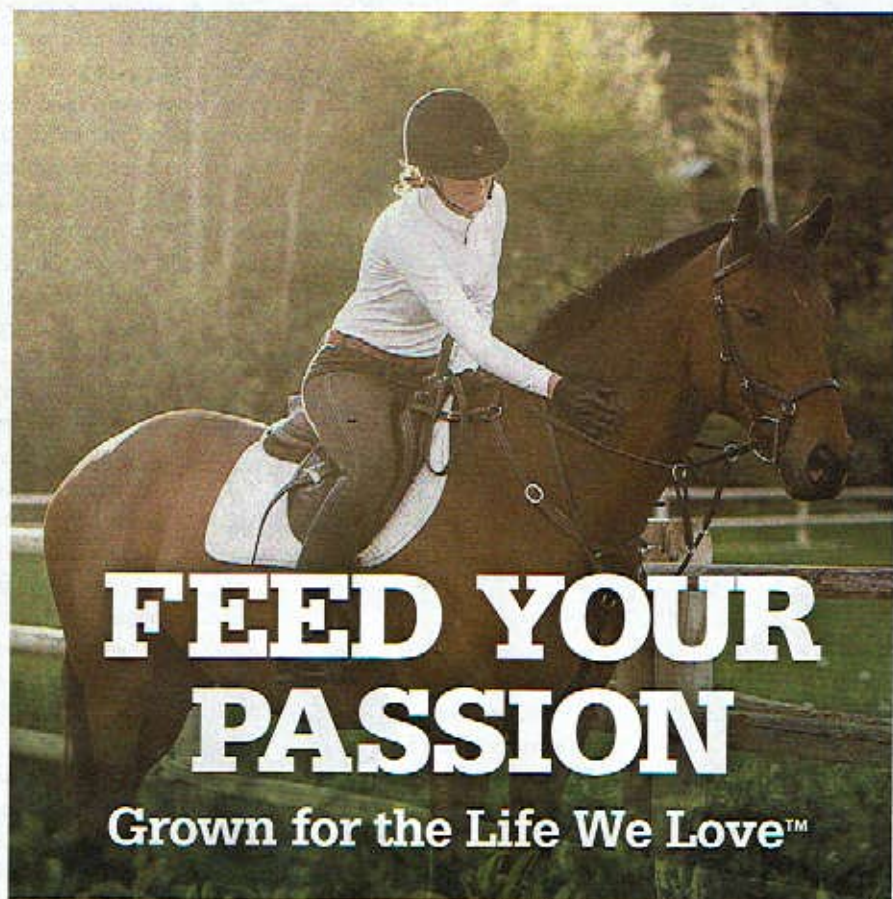
Jacob's dedication to helping others advance their horsemanship knowledge earned her a unique trainer-inspired award package, but her heart isn't in it for the prizes. She plans to build on the summer camp experience in 2020 with expanded activities and more guest presenters to help her students continue their education.

The newly updated HQC Study Guide, which now features sections covering saddle fitting, teeth, various therapies and a history of the American Forward Riding system, will help her do just that.

While she still intends to be a competitor this year, Jacob has valuable advice to future Stable Challenge participants: Use the HQC Study Guide to fuel learning off-paper.

"Don't be afraid to go out and ask questions [of] your trainer or other industry professionals. Everyone is so happy to share what they love and will be very happy to help bring along a young horseman," she said. "Try to spend as much time as you can learning outside of lessons. The study guide is a good framework, but there's nothing like hands-on experience with the horses and around the barn. It takes such a long time to grasp much of this; always be open minded and ask questions. It's a lifelong quest to understand the horse and become a horseman—never stop learning."

To learn more, access the free study guide and take the HQC quizzes, please visit www.usnja.org/StableChallenge.



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