

EQUI-STRETCH®:

“If you admit that greater flexibility, improved muscle tone, or maybe even a little trimming along the stomach and hips could make you a better rider, then here’s some bad news: with the advent of the Equi-Stretch video, there is no longer any excuse for avoiding the necessary workout!

The work out’s convenient length--about 35 minutes - means that amateur riders can squeeze it in before going to the office in the morning and professional riders can work it in...well, at some point during the hectic day! Further, the Equi-Stretch regimen is user-friendly in another way. Rather than harassing the viewer with a “feel the burn” approach to exercise, where fitness is equated with sweat, this low key video concentrates on enhancing strength and flexibility without torturing anyone.

Well, not much, anyway. The video’s continuous, targeted movements comprise a tough constructive workout, but not a brutal one.

Professional dancer and fitness consultant Dan Weltner answers the key viewer question, ‘What’s in this for me, and why should I actually do it?’ early in the film. His Equi-Stretch session is divided into segments which specifically target problematic areas for riders-upper body strength, pelvic isolation, leg stability and flexibility, abdominal strength, and more. Equi-Stretch understands and targets the things that riders want to work on!

The pelvic exercises are designed specifically to help you use your abdominals to sit taller on the horse while lengthening your legs around the horse. With a rather sophisticated understanding of how the lower back can become stiff as the rider tries to straighten up. Dan also includes exercises to help the lower back stay flexible.

How challenging you find the leg series will depend on how stiff and inflexible your legs really are. Many of the movements focus on reducing resistance to the heels-down leg position. The toe-in-toe-out exercise is particularly fun and useful.

The abdominal series is designed to improve shock absorption in the back, make stomach muscles stronger to allow riders a taller position in the saddle, and simultaneously help the rider keep the shoulders relaxed. There’s some hard work here, including basic and modified abdominal crunches. At some point during the workout, probably as you try to imitate a position which looks effortless when he does it, you’ll start to wonder if Dan is a yoga guru.

Also, Dan’s taut, narrow hips and tight musculature raise serious doubt as to whether he has ever in his entire life had to worry about five extra pounds. His two assistants are not any better. One of the helpers, Kristi Weltner, is Dan’s sister. Kristi is a professional dressage and hunter trainer. By co-designing the Equi-Stretch workout, she brings credibility to the video’s goal of creating strengthening and stretching techniques specifically for riders.

A brief observation: Dan’s instructions as the exercise routine progresses are either soothing or monotonous. You decide. Bearing in mind that you may choose to work out with this tape several times a week, perhaps it’s best that the film avoids the strident sound quality found in many exercise tapes.

Equi-Stretch’s pre-ride warm-up advice is a nice bonus. It’s a five- minute series of movements that you can do at the barn before you mount up. Why waste your first five minutes in the saddle trying to loosen yourself up, when you should spend that time concentrating on what your horse needs to get warmed up? Equi-Stretch scores a 9 out of 10.”