

# In the rider's seat

Small cameras can be used as an educational tool or entertainment

BY LIANE CROSSLEY

NOT EVERYONE can experience the thrill of cruising at full speed on a Thoroughbred, but wannabes can ride vicariously from the comfort of home thanks to video from helmet-mounted cameras. The concept popularized by NASCAR and extreme sports is gaining momentum not only as a gimmick for fans but as a tool for trainers, handicappers, and others.

Jockey Gabriel Saez was outfitted with equipment from EquiSight when he was aboard Havre de Grace in a workout at Keeneland Race Course in October for the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1). Trainer Larry Jones said while the use of the helmet camera was intended for her fans, the footage served as a gauge of her performance.

"I could tell how much Gabriel was asking the horse and I could tell if he was asking her to do more

### Uses for helmet cameras

- Provide replays for studying workouts
- Give coverage of all track areas so fans can remain seated
- Offer vicarious riding experience
- Allow handicappers more information for analysis
- Serve as educational tool for apprentices and jockeys
- Bring owners in closer contact with their horses
- Use marketing tool for selling horses
- Provide added insight to potential buyers

or if she was doing it on her own," Jones said. "It gave me a chance to see how much effort the jockey had to put in to get a horse to work. It gives me some insight, but it might not help other trainers as much, but I ride her myself so I can get a clue about what Gabriel was doing."

Jones said he has used the helmet camera on riders on other horses and looks for nuances like ear position and head movement to judge

### More information on helmet cameras

**EquiSight**—"Ride the race"  
www.equisight.com  
**JonesCAM**—"Capture the experience"  
www.jonescam.tv

the workouts.

Companies like EquiSight and JonesCAM that market the cameras envision a wide variety of uses for their product.

The concept got an enthusiastic response from leading trainers when Michael Jones, president and chief executive officer of JonesCAM based in Fort Edward, New York, introduced a helmet-mounted camera at Saratoga Race Course in 2004, but a major drawback was that it was considered too large and therefore a safety hazard to horses and riders if it was dislodged. Technological advances have allowed the device to be scaled



Jones Cam photo

down to the size of a shotgun shell or lipstick case.

"The technology just was not there—everything was much bigger," Michael Jones said of his initial prototype of the helmet camera. "It had to be 12 volts, have a bat-

tery, and use a separate recorder. We worked with a lot of people over the years and the bottom line was that it was not safe. Everyone recognized how it would enhance the sport, educate people, and be entertaining."

## GROOMING PULLING MANES

### Pulling manes

How to make juveniles look good at sales

BY CYNTHIA MCFARLAND

A NEATLY pulled mane helps make a good first impression, but it is practical as well, since it makes grooming easier.

With juvenile sales season just around the corner, we spoke with Shari Eisaman of Eisaman Equine, a prominent consignor of two-year-olds based outside Ocala, for tips on pulling manes.

"You pull manes on juveniles differently than mares because with broodmares you want their manes a little longer since they actually offer some protection when the mares are out in pasture," said Eisaman, who operates the agency with her husband, Barry Eisaman, V.M.D.

The Eisamans do a basic touch-up on their yearlings' manes in December. In the winter or early spring, those horses will have their manes pulled about two weeks before leaving for the two-year-old sales.

The length of a dollar bill is frequently the standard measurement when it comes to pulling a mane.

"You don't want them too short or they won't lay nicely," she said. "Four to six inches is a good rule of thumb. I don't want it 'Quarter Horse short,' but it should lay pretty and they should look like they're ready to go to the races."

Mane pulling is easier if done when the horse is still warm after training because the pores are open. After hosing the horse off, the mane will be damp, making it easier to pull than a dry mane.

### How-to

Many horsemen say horses hate having their manes pulled, but this is likely because of how it is done. None of us would appreciate having substantial sections of hair yanked out, so the key is to pull only a few hairs at a time.

You can use a mane-pulling comb, or a "people" comb. Start in the middle of the mane, not at the withers or behind the bridlepath. Holding your hand parallel to the neck, take hold of a few hairs along the bottom of the mane. Use the comb to tease the rest of hairs in that section up to the crest. Holding your thumb against the comb and hairs, quickly pull it away. You can pull in an upward or downward direction; some say pulling up is more comfortable for the horse. Keep checking the length as you go, making the next section match with the section you have just pulled as you work up and down from the middle of the neck where you started.

"I just wrap a few strands around the pulling comb and pull down," Eisaman said. "Take your time and only pull a little bit at a time; if you pull a lot, that's when it hurts."

If the mane is thick, you will want to pull enough hair to actually thin the mane at the same time you are making it even and neat. If the horse already has a thin mane, just pull enough to tidy it up and even the bottom. Do not use scissors, which can make the mane look clumpy and uneven.

"If a horse has a really thin mane, I will only pull a little and then trim it up by 'back blading' it," Eisaman said. "I pop the blade off the clipper and just use the blade to kind of feather the mane."

The pulling process will go more smoothly if the horse is used to having its mane combed regularly. Dampen the mane and comb it down every day. Not only will this get the horse accustomed to the comb, it will train the mane to lay on the correct side. ❖



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### Future uses

Kenleigh Hobby sees an array of possibilities for the cameras. Hobby, along with David Matt and Brendan Gowing, are the founders and owners of EquiSight, a student project at the University of Arizona's Race Track Industry Program that progressed into a business venture in 2011.

"We feel the most pressing issue in horse racing is lack of video technology," Hobby said. "Other mainstream sports like poker and NASCAR have embraced viewer technologies, which has attracted a younger demographic and increased fan viewership. The sights and sounds of horse racing are not even captured correctly. There is no intimacy, no sounds, no thrill—just a pan shot of

horses going around in a circle."

Hobby envisions jockeys wearing helmet cameras from the time they leave the jockeys' room to when they dismount to give spectators intimate views of the paddock, post parade, starting gate, and post-race activities. The video is an obvious attraction for those not at the track but can be beneficial to fans onsite who will not have to leave their seats. Hobby said fans would be able to select any horse in the field from a variety of views and be able to change views whenever desired.

"I envision using a smartphone, tablet, or some kind of technology interface where I can stay in my seat and experience [what is happening in the saddling paddock] without

leaving my seat," Hobby said.

Videos can allow handicappers to judge the workouts rather than relying simply on the official recorded times. An eyewitness account of a workout or race might not be enough to draw conclusions, but a video allows for endless reviews and analysis.

"In the case of Havre de Grace, Larry Jones did not think her times were fast, but he was able to notice that as soon as she saw another horse her ears perked up and she got busy," Hobby said. "So he was able to take the jockey's feedback but able to have a visual to interpret everything he had seen and heard."

Michael Jones said he expects to be testing a wireless device at one or two tracks in mid-January. He sees

other benefits, such as using footage as a teaching tool for riders, a marketing strategy for selling horses, and a method for Thoroughbred owners to feel connected to their horses.

Footage could be used by sales companies and consignors at two-year-old in training sales.

"We as a sales company are always curious to new technology and how it might help market our product," said Bayne Welker, vice president of sales for Fasig-Tipton Co. "As for the helmet camera, I am not sure that it has evolved enough yet to be a viable marketing tool for consignors or prospective purchasers. Video does play an important role in two-year-old sales from breeze videos to the compa-

nies that specialize in stride analysis, et cetera. Now that we live in a time where technology is changing so fast, the next good marketing application of that technology might be just around the corner."

Whether helmet cameras will become commonplace in the future is unknown, but there is no denying that the technology provides a unique view of Thoroughbred racing.

"People want to see what people do whether it is car racing or wind surfing," Michael Jones said. "They want to live vicariously and this is the only way that it can be done." ▀

Liane Crossley is a freelance writer based in Lexington.

## VERSATILE STRUCTURES **BARN** & FENCING

# More than a shed

Large and small run-in sheds can be constructed for various situations

BY LIANE CROSSLEY

THE TERM run-in shed conjures up images of a small, three-sided structure designed to keep horses out of bad weather at their own convenience. But the buildings can be modified to accommodate a variety of uses on small and large scales.

The run-in sheds at Adena Springs Kentucky might be more accurately described as all-inclusive complexes that offer the best of all worlds for horses and workers in one area. A barn with three to five stalls, storage rooms, and loft are attached to the shed. The barn's back door opens to an expansive covered area that is 140x40 feet. A contiguous metal rack filled with top-quality hay lines the interior's three sides. More hay—unraveled and fluffed from round bales grown in designated Adena fields—is used on the ground as bedding.

Immediately outside the run-in shed is what Adena Springs employees refer to as a catch pen, but arena might be a better description since the open area encompasses 140x140 feet. Each pen is fenced and has a gate that opens to fields ranging in size from 60- to 100-acre pastures. Each shed complex typically houses about 20 mares that are at least 30 days away from their foaling dates, or houses 15 yearlings.

Eric Hamelback, general manager of Adena Springs Kentucky, said the configuration allows numerous options with minimum labor. When barren mares are assigned to the sheds, lights affixed to poles in the catch pen are automatically turned on around sunset and go off a few hours later.

"The nightwatch crew will open the gate around 11 p.m. and most of the mares will migrate out," Hamelback said. He added that the routine saves considerably on labor and bedding compared with the practice of keeping mares in stalls with the barn lights on.

Testing mares' readiness for breeding also can be simplified by placing a teaser stallion in a portable



Run-in sheds at Adena Springs Kentucky might be more correctly described as all-inclusive complexes that offer the best of all worlds for horses and workers in one area

pen inside the catch pen area. Mares can be led to the teaser's enclosure or allowed to roam the vicinity and observed to see their interest in the teaser.

Mares and yearlings are fed twice a day on ground feeders inside the catch pen. If a horse needs to be placed inside for any reason, the attached barn serves as the holding area. Yearlings are fed in stalls on a rotating basis so that each yearling will be inside for short periods of time every few days so the youngsters become accustomed to being handled.

### Smaller size

Run-in sheds do not have to be jumbo-sized for functionality. Hobbyists with just a few horses can have buildings that serve many purposes.

"The benefit to the backyard hobbyists of having a run-in shed is that they don't have to go to the expense of building a barn," said Matt Johnson, owner of Equine Facility Design ([www.equinearchitecture.com](http://www.equinearchitecture.com)) in Portland, Oregon.

He notes that in some areas a building permit is needed for a barn but not a shed. The loophole allows land owners to bypass a sometimes complicated process.

Possibilities for versatile run-in sheds are endless. The structures can be configured to include storage areas, and stalls and can be expanded to fit evolving needs. Johnson advises his customers to have a clear

understanding of their present and future needs before starting the project, which can be done in stages.

"The first thing we do with clients is clarify their goals," Johnson said. "Not everyone has the finances for an entire project. We focus on what is most important and most economical to install first. A lot of people phase their projects because you can grow as a facility that way. If you plan from the beginning and you can only afford the posts and the roof of a run-in but your hope is to have a concrete aisle and tack room, design it as that structure and pay first for the things that you can't change down the road. You can add walls, add concrete, add electricity—you just have to plan for them."

Johnson said a popular design, especially when space is limited, is a building with stalls attached to a small covered area that he calls a run. The setup can be further configured by adding stall gates to limit or expand a horse's options.

"We recommend building a run off the stall with an extended roof over it," he said. "The horse has the ability to go outside under the roof or further outside under the sky. It is a progression of confinement—the stall, a run, a paddock, and pasture. It is the ultimate flexibility."

Johnson emphasizes the importance of building with climate in mind. A run-in shed that converts to stalls with only a gate will not

be nearly as cozy as a structure with walls and would not be a good option if warmth is a concern.

Many companies offer movable sheds that might be ideal in some regions but would be a poor choice for windy conditions. These economical structures can be dismantled and reassembled or moved with a tractor so that pastures can be rested. Regardless of size and design, run-in sheds are convenient for horses and people and can be constructed for any situation.

"The greatest benefit is that you

### Advantages of run-in sheds

- Offer shelter from weather without confinement
- Reduce bedding costs
- Minimize labor
- Can be built for specific needs
- Are less costly than barns
- Might be built without a permit in some areas

can give your horses shelter," Johnson said. "It might be from rain, sun, or wind, but that is what run-in sheds are designed for." ▀

Liane Crossley is a freelance writer based in Lexington.

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