

# “It’s A Curious Thing – Colour”!

*Have you paused to stop and think about the role played by colour in our media-rich society today?*

*Fashion forecasts for spring 2010 are alive with bright orange and deep pinks blazoned across your chest and floral prints for your legs! Even with our horses - take a trip to your local tack shop and you’ll see shelves stocked with numnahs in shades of lavender, pink, and pale blue pastels. Long gone are the black or navy options of my early days of riding some 35 years ago!*

*So what’s driving this recent passion for equine fashion? Can there be an explanation beyond purely the aesthetics?*

To begin to understand our apparent ‘need for colour’ with our horses, let’s start at the beginning – the past!



Over the centuries, many societies and cultures across the world have a history of decorating their horses be it for pleasure or for war! In some cultures we know that the intention was for spiritual and well being reasons – typically to protect them from evil spirits.

In certain cultures the more the horse was ‘dressed’ would symbolise the owner’s level of wealth. Just as ancient European families created their own family coat of arms for recognition and belonging; a horse’s decoration was the modern day ‘identity card’ for warriors, chiefs, noblemen and royalty.

Even today, this legacy lives on in our love of being “in the ribbons” and the joy of showing off our equine success by hanging our newly acquired rosette on our horse’s bridle for all to admire!

In mainland Europe they still enjoy a healthy appetite for colour you only have to look at the ornate costumes of the Arab horse in ceremonial attire or the Spanish horses with all their colourful splendour for festivals.

## How do we explain this trend, or do we just enjoy ‘dressing up’ our horses?

It is widely recognised that over the centuries the effect of colour as a therapeutic tool has profound effects on both people and animals. Did you know that your typical domestic pet has 7 main energetic centres called chakras? The 7 colours of the spectrum correspond and resonate with these 7 chakras. These colours and chakra points can be used to determine any imbalances in animal energy vibrations. Energy from different light waves is then used to rebalance and enhance your pet’s (e.g. cat, dog, horse etc.) natural ability to heal itself.

## How and what can 'colour' help?

The more knowledgeable we become through the expansion of medicine and holistic research, the more choice we have for the appropriate remedy we elect for our horse. Despite our evolution, many return to the tried and tested methods of centuries ago. Colour therapy is one such concept which is being used today for emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual problems.

For many of us it can be a huge leap of faith to consider 'colour' as a solution to physical or mental problems. Yet we accept that, x-rays and ultra-violet light (forms of energy we cannot see or feel) have immediate, long term and cumulative effects on our bodies. We often seek these other energy sources out... whether it is for a sun tan in winter, to cure skin diseases / cancer... or to use certain wavelengths of the light spectrum (invisible to our eyes) to lift the depressive effects of SAD (seasonal affective disorder). We even consciously choose colours as mood enhancers when deciding what to wear to feel more "comfortable" or "confident"!

## Where can colour lead us?

We ask much of our horses today; higher performance levels; travel to events; adapting to new environments; the pressures of competition. It can be helpful to know how to support our horse to cope with the different stimuli we face them with, otherwise problems can develop in their training or management. We see horses behave with either hesitation or alarm to obstacles on the ground, both in ridden work or in-hand.

[Research conducted in 2005](#) demonstrated that certain colours cause the horse more alarm, than others. Colours such as yellow, white, black and blue caused a greater number of adverse reactions in horses than colours such as green, red, brown and grey. This is useful to bear in mind when beginning a horse's pole work and jump training to give him every opportunity to cope with what we are asking.



Today, with all the colours on offer for bandages and rugs it is useful to know how such colours can impact our horse's energy and ultimately his behaviour.

Next time you decide to buy a new rug and make a spontaneous selection for lavender or turquoise, know that the latter (turquoise) typically has a much more preferable impact on the horse's psychology, and that lavender can change a horse to become unpredictable and less easy to manage.

To share your experiences of colour or colour therapy [contact us](#) - we welcome your thoughts and experiences.