

## FOUNDER TRACK SYSTEM (Or 'How Rome WAS Built in a Day!')

*By Lezley Golding*



Natural Lifestyle is a wonderful thing, but some of our equines need a little extra help.

Here at Stevley Park (Natural Barefoot Agistment Farm) we try to provide the best possible lifestyle for our horses. I like to keep up with any news on keeping horses naturally, and when I saw the new book from Jamie Jackson, 'PADDOCK PARADISE - A Guide to Natural Horse Boarding' I immediately ordered a copy. This book is about the "Track System" that Jamie has devised after observing the life cycle of the wild horses in America. I was so excited by what I read, especially as we have been struggling to manage a founder prone pony.

Steffi was a three year old skeleton when she arrived here as a rescue pony. It is obvious now that her metabolism had been compromised through starvation. Now Steffi is six years old and has stopped growing, managing her weight is a big problem. She is one of those ponies who needs a lesser food intake and more movement. This is where Jamie's new book inspired me to design and built a Founder Track.

This turned into an "all hands on project". We rounded up volunteers Mike, Ysabelle and two kids, Lindsey and Carly. Steve and I looked at our property and decided the track would be best set up around the perimeter of No. 2 paddock. This paddock is 10 acres and Paddocks One, Three and Four adjoin on three sides, so when the herd is rotated into the next paddock, the ponies in the track system still have contact with the herd.



Ysabelle and I walked the perimeter and sketched a diagram of where the fence would run, where we would make wider areas for rest spots and hay feeding stations. Next I worked out what materials were needed and ordered them at the local produce store. We decided to use star pickets with caps and two rows of electric tape with a single plain wire between. On Monday morning on the train, while travelling to work in the city, Mike and Steve (IT Project Managers to the core!) drew up a timeline diagram of the project, which was then distributed to everyone involved. Through the week, materials arrived, plus I had two truck loads of road base delivered and dropped onto the track. Come the following weekend we were ready to install our Founder Track System. As this is July in Melbourne, you have no control over the weather, and yes we did get showers through the weekend.



Firstly I walked the perimeter and placed all the corner pickets. The boys followed, running out a line of electric tape; this was secured and tightened at each corner and provided a straight line for the pickets in between. Then Ysabelle drove the 4WD with pickets on the trailer while I paced and laid out a picket every four meters. The boys followed with the banger and banged the pickets into the ground. Lindsey and Carly followed the boys and put an insulator on every picket.

Note: when buying pickets and caps, make sure they fit each other. We did not realize star pickets come in different widths, and the caps were too big. Mike had an excellent idea; to squirt a little expanding foam inside the cap, place it on the picket and let it set. So as not to put the project behind schedule, Steve raced down to the hardware store and picked up 3 cans of No More Gaps. Then we did another lap to put the caps on the posts. Ysabelle and Mike drove around again and ran out the second line of electric tape.

By Sunday morning all the caps were set on the pickets, so another circuit to run the tape through the caps and insulators. We have also run a plain wire in between the two electric tapes. If the ponies try to put their heads through the fence either above or below the plain wire, they will touch the electric tape. Over gateways there is no plain wire, just the tape on handles.

There are mineral blocks and salt licks in corners and a trough on one side. The ponies drink every time they do a circuit. The trough is situated in the middle of a load of road base.

#### **Observations so far:**

With travelling over the road base several times a day, the ponies' feet have little or no dead sole and look almost polished. They are not standing around very much, wandering and grazing.

I would like to thank Jamie Jackson for inspiring us and showing us how simple this track system was to install through his new book 'Paddock Paradise' available through Star Ridge Publications [www.star-ridge.com](http://www.star-ridge.com)



I would also like to thank, Steve Golding, Ysabelle Dean, Mike Farrow, Lindsey Hobson and Carly Winther for all their help with this project.

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