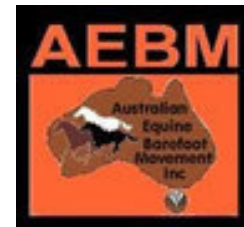


ON TRACK

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As a horse owner living on a tiny little urban property, I would love to share my experiences and give heart to those in a similar situation. My property is 75 metres long and 25 metres wide. My house occupies one third of this space and I have, for



several years, thought about how to give the horses more movement. Two years ago I decided that they could fight for their tucker so I opened up all the yards and observed an endless movement of the three of them; seeing who had the best feed, or the most feed or who had some left. At this stage I still fed them all their feed in the same place, in their own yard. Well, the

most dominant horse, Bentley, won every time. The other two had to move on every time he appeared in their yard.

Then I got the book "Paddock Paradise" from America. How utterly straight forward and simple! Why had I not thought of the "tracking" idea? It is so obvious!

The next weekend I went and bought more droppers and set it up. I camp out a lot and do ten day rides, so already had tape, light metal fence pins, a dropper knocker, etc.

I opened up every nook and cranny on the place and built a fence two meters out, so creating a track. The horses still eat their hard feed (copra cool fuel and some minerals) in their yards, and then I deliver small amounts of hay in about 12 different places by wheelbarrow and, on the way back, pick up the manure. It takes me no longer to do this than what I was doing before. Then I walk around with carrots, greens (cabbage leaves, lettuce, broccoli, etc., -leftovers from the veggie shop), sometimes a little molasses sprinkled over wasted hay, and sometimes sunflower seeds. I vary the tidbits and put them in different places that may have had



hay yesterday but not today.

It is the food, the knowing that there are treats, that keep them walking, Keesh, the big black horse (22 years young), does the rounds looking for carrots first, and he may clean up all but one or two nests of them. Then he goes around again eating mouthfuls of hay here and there. Bentley hunts everyone along; he has this “get out of my way” ear-language – and so they walk. Princess does her own girlie thing, and although she’s hunted on, she tries to mostly ignore the boy stuff.

I estimate that over 24 hours they are now walking up to eight times further than they did before. Their water is up the back and is muddy around the trough, but that is my next project, because I need to conserve water. I want to cement the bottom (like the foot baths I’ve seen in photos of Stevley Park Natural Agistment Farm in Victoria, but not quite so elaborate) – and make it more like a miniature creek bed.



I have halved my yard between the stables and the house by running the tape across, so now every time the horses go around they have 20 metres of gravel to negotiate. This was easy as they have been barefoot for three years and are used to the rough surfaces.

But the upshot of all this is that I hardly have to trim the frogs or remove the old sole. They just need a rasp on the roll over to remove chips (a manicure) every so often. We do six to eight km four days a week and up to 26 km on some weekends.



But still, I’m sure the walking on my tiny track has helped too. If not just hoof wise, then most certainly mentally, because the horses are constantly looking for different things to eat. They have a resting place - under some trees – and two dung piles. They also have to walk over a raised platform covered with rubber belting that

moves when they walk on it ... Very scary until you realize there is a nest of carrots on the other side every day! Then it becomes just part of the track. Several sheets of roofing iron are pinned to the ground and have to be traversed, and they also have

to go over low obstacles - logs, a row of bricks. They have to visit five small yards each containing a small serve of hay, and they have access to the sand roll. Sometimes I change the track, unhooking it so they can go into the middle and do something different, like lie about on a nice day.

All this on a 75 by 25 metre suburban block!* So take heart! Whatever you've got, no matter how small, you can create a better lifestyle for your horses. I just wish I had 10 or 20 acres. What an adventure playground that would make!