At Fieldstone Farm Therapeutic Riding Center, we are dedicated to providing optimal care to our 40-horse herd. Our program would not be possible without their physical and mental support. Thus, we feel it is our responsibility to seek out innovative ways to understand and support their health and well-being.

Measuring heart rate is considered a reliable indicator for horse and human health and wellness. Environmental, internal, and external stimuli can impact heartrate. However, when measured consistently overtime, heart rate paints a picture of health. “Since the cardiovascular system is responsible for delivering blood to the muscles and removing by-products of metabolism, it is central to the horse's musculoskeletal system's ability to function”[[1]](#footnote-1). Variations in heart rate, particularly between horse and rider, further depicts how the pair are working *with* each other throughout a ride.

Enter Hylofit…Hylofit is a system designed for horse and human to track heart rate while riding. The sleek system has two sensors: one that is fixed to the inside of the girth near the horse’s heart (e.g. behind the shoulder), and the other worn around the chest of the rider. Once both sensors pick up the heartbeats of the horse and the rider, they are paired in the application through a cell phone. The rider can designate the type of ride (i.e. schooling, trail walk, flat work, etc.). Once the ride is started, the app has the ability to track heart rate of horse and rider, intensity zone based on heart rate, speed, and location.

Through a unique partnership with the Equus Foundation, Hylofit has been generously gifted to a selected number of therapeutic riding centers across the country. The intention is to product test the system and determine how the data may be interesting and useful for horse insight and program decisions.

Fieldstone Farm Therapeutic Riding Center received two systems at the end of 2019. Seven horses and six instructors who school program horses regularly for fitness, agreed to test the system during their weekly rides. Before we began tracking the heart rate of horse and human while riding, we began by attaining resting heart rates. Each horse’s heart rate was measured using the girth-system while the horse was comfortably resting in their stall. All heart rates were taken between 10:00a.m-12:00 p.m. Once three measures were taken per horse, the average considered their resting heart rate, instructors began measuring heart rate while riding.

From the very first ride, we were able to see that the horse and rider track together – their variation in heart rate appear to mirror each other in response to external stimuli and work-effort. Seeing the collective output, in real time is not only fascinating but also incredibly useful.

In the coming months, our team at Fieldstone Farm aims to continue pilot testing the system and providing feedback to the team at Hylofit. From there, if there are research questions that emerge, we will collaborate on a study to apply Hylofit in the therapeutic riding environment – a continuation of the Equus Foundation’s original interest.

As a therapeutic riding center, it is incredibly important for us to understand how horses internalize their work, and experience their riders. We always want the best for them. Seeing their heartrate is another layer to being able to provide optimal care.

1. # Hylofit (2020) Why Should I Use Heart Rate Zones To Train With My Horse? Retrieved from: Hylofit.com/blogs

   [↑](#footnote-ref-1)