



# HippoCampus

Soerendonk, zondag 25 juni 2006

Dear Sir, Madam,

**Why we make this material public:**

There is currently heated debate about the LDR/Hyper flexion/Rollkur Method of riding, not only within the FEI, but also among a large group of horse friends and riders across the whole world. We believe that credible and well founded conclusions must be backed not only by scientific research, but also by an analysis of photo and video material on the practical and systematic use of this riding technique. Such material has neither been published by the riders/trainers using the method nor by the press or other media. However it is an essential component of the debate.

The past few years, our institute has researched and analysed the common practice and underlying theory of the Rollkur/LDR/Hyper flexion method of riding and training dressage horses. We have analysed in total more than 10 hours of video samples of riders using the Janssen Training System in the warming up area, during the test and after the test. Our analyses (which we carried out in cooperation with equine specialists in the Netherlands and other countries) led us to the conclusion that this method, or rather the essence of it goes against the aim of dressage (physically, mechanically and mentally), the dressage training scala and horses' biomechanical and ethological nature (the nature of the horse's body and mind). Following the very vague statement made at the FEI workshop, we are very concerned that this method will become more and more accepted at all levels of riding. It has a negative influence on riders' attitude towards horses and poses a threat in terms of ethics.

It is our belief that some of the photo- and video material we have collected can help to analyse these impacts. This approach to riding has practical implications. This is why we decided to make the material in question public.

**We are concerned:**

It is obvious that we do not have any commercial ambitions and it is not our intention to harm persons nor to cause damage to one of the riders. We watched and filmed objectively, systematically and very closely during public performances. The picture can only be complete by showing riders and their horses in action. We are concerned that people will approve of and get used to this way of riding, and only be aware of what they are told about the method. The aim of these videos is to demonstrate in motion the way this method is used during warming up before a test during the Dutch Championships in 2004. With this material we hope to show the method in practice and its consequences for the horses' mind and well-being to a large public.

**Content per DVD:**

One rider performing the Hyper flexion technique in the top sport filmed for some longer time during warming up at the Dutch Championships.

- Short introduction and comment in English (instruction where to focus on when watching)
- Some essentials in short scènes
- Some essentials and impressions commented by photo's taken out of the scenes. These photo's are marked to focus attention to the aids or the movement characteristics of the horse
- Some longer scènes

These DVD's have been produced for non-commercial use only and give an idea of the practical use of this method during warming up before a test. These DVD's have been sent to about 30 key-persons from the equine sport and equine scientists.

In order to make this material public copies of these DVDs could be ordered for the production and shipping costs for non commercial use only as a documentation of the practise of this training method. They are amateur video's burned on DVD -R. (Which sometimes gives problems with





some older DVD players or computers. Please try then on another player or computer.)

When watching what really happens, persons who are not familiar with the equine sport seem to realise instinctively that something is wrong. They realise that there is a lack of harmony and that the interactive dialogue between rider and horse no longer exists. This current approach has been profiled as a unique method for success, without people realising how it effects and damages the horse (physically and psychologically).

**Some questions we should like to ask the riders on our DVD's:**

- Why are the horses at the beginning of the warming up 20 – 30 minutes ridden in high speed on the forehand?
- Warming up should support the muscles and brain with extra oxygen and supple the muscles and joints step by step. In a permanent hyper flexion position the bronchial tubes cannot work properly. What is the benefit of this high speed and active workout with less oxygen support at the beginning of the warming up?
- Why to flex the neck by use of the curb (!) into positions and not in co harmony with the direction of the movement?
- Why are the gaits sometimes limited or disturbed on purpose?
- Why not working on correct bending and engagement of the back legs and croup.(Hankenbiegung)
- Why are the horses forced into positions they cannot relax and work with their loins muscles with tension . This tension is remaining during the whole warming up..
- Why is it intended to force the horse (by bringing it on the forehand and taking away his head and neck for balance ) to take more weight on the forelegs than when the weight is equally distributed over the 4 legs by helping the horse to carry the weight in balance.
- Why is it intended (by using the low and short position) to make it more difficult for the horse to bring up his forelegs as these forelegs stay longer in contact with the ground and have to be taken up with more muscular force .
- Why are the half halts and halts not used to prepare "hankenbiegung" and to make the horse supple to bend . During the test suppleness in the haunches and bending will be requested by the FEI rules..
- Why is the extremely high tempo used and collected trot or collected canter cannot be trained during the warming up?
- Why is the horse frequently disturbed in its balance and forced by the hand and the power of the riders instead of helping him to find its own balance by moving him in its natural way with the rider positioned right above the centre of gravity?
- Why are the horses limited by the hands of the rider asked to react from behind without giving them the opportunity to bring their reacting legs under their centre of gravity.
- Why are the riders "giving leg " or kicking at moments the horse is not able to collect his hind quarters. The horses are forced to place their activated back legs sideways.
- Why are the riders giving contradictory aids by blocking the front and asking activity and forwards by their legs and weight.
- Why is the horse not allowed to lengthen its frame during extended gaits with a maximum during the suspension and even disturbing the required breathing at these moments.
- Why are the horses sweating extremely on not natural places in comparison when the horse is moving free or is worked out in classical training?
- Why is it necessary to force the horse in more and more activity and tension without giving it the chance to relax while being active (Durchlässigkeit).
- Why is it intended to restrict the walk that it loses its rhythm?
- Why is it intended to ride half passes without collection and bending in high speed and tension?
- Why are flying changes performed on the forehand and with a high croup?
- Why is the rhythm often disturbed by making the horse "react". taking him completely out of its movement. and making the horse extremely nervous..





- *What is the definition of correctly riding according to the hyper flexion method and how does a bad practice of this method look like?*
- *Looking at the pictures during the warming up what is the definition of a Happy Athlete for these riders?*

**No answers and no open discussion yet:**

The riders and trainers presented on the DVD have been contacted by us and are informed that we intend to make this project public. We have asked them for their co-operation and to provide us with their comments. The riders in question not only refused to cooperate but also threatened to sue us. I received letters from their lawyers threatening us with court proceedings and very high fines, even in the case of a completely non profit and educational use of the material. In the event of a court decision to stop distribution,

At this moment the riders haven't taken any legal action so far. Of course it is still possible that after the delivery of our DVD's the riders will take legal actions to our Institute. In case there will be a court decision stopping distribution we have to demand you to return the DVD's on our first request. This means further that you are only allowed to use these DVD's to analyse the methods of training.

We hope to have informed you sufficiently and we also expect to provide interested persons with substantive documentation on the topic of the debate.

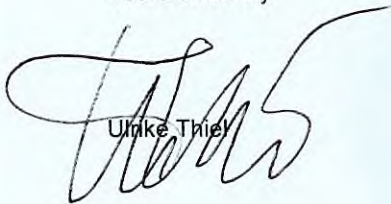
**If you have comments:**

If you want to deposit your comments on the riding you have seen on the DVD's or on hyper flexion in general you can do this on the homepage of HippoCampus. Further we will make these comments public on our website and send the comments to the FEI committee (with your permission only).

Form on the homepage : [http://www.hippocampus-nl.com/s2e.php?content\\_id=363](http://www.hippocampus-nl.com/s2e.php?content_id=363)

Or mail to: [hippocampus@iae.nl](mailto:hippocampus@iae.nl)

Yours sincerely



Uirke Thiel

