



Your POLAR Horse Heart Rate Monitor

10 Ways To Use It

With advancements in technology, the horse heart rate monitor is now starting to replace the stethoscope in many stables, studs, farms and veterinary clinics. The latest *POLAR Horse Heart Rate monitors (HHRM)* are accurate and reliable, simple to use and quick and easy to put on your horse. In addition, there is no 'hard wire' connection between you and the horse transmitter allowing you freedom of movement. The **HHRM** allows you to see the immediate heart rate of your horse and eliminates 'human error' that can occur with 'counting the heart beats for 15 seconds'. So the technology now exists to give you an accurate and reliable reading of your horse's heart rate – either at rest, during exercise or during recovery. But why should you have a **HHRM** – what essential information will it provide you? What are some of the ways you can use heart rate in the day-to-day management of your horse(s)? Below are 10 practical uses of a **HHRM**.

No. 1: Monitoring Vital Signs

Abnormal readings of your horse's resting, exercise or recovery heart rate (often known as 'Vital Signs') can alert you to immediate or impending problems such as injury, illness or fatigue. Monitoring these heart rates, and comparing them to values that you consider normal, gives you a way to communicate with your horse and make management decisions before any abnormal condition worsens.

In some equine disciplines (e.g., endurance riding), recovery heart rate plays an important role in deciding whether the horse can continue in competition. Recovery heart rate can now be measured quickly and accurately.

No. 2: Know How Hard Your Horse is Working

The usefulness of continuously seeing your horse's exercise, training or competition heart rate comes from the knowledge there is a linear relationship between heart rate and how hard your horse is working. *In general terms, the higher its heart rate the harder it is working.* By 'heart rate auditing' each of your different training sessions you will soon (1) know exactly how much stress each particular session imposes and (2) exactly how each individual horse handles the session. Any change from normality is a possible warning sign that all may be not well. Remember, intensity or how hard your horse is working is the most important ingredient in any training program. Working too hard for too long invites injury and fatigue. Working at too low an intensity provides little training benefit. In endurance riding, overtaxing your horse during competition can lead to poor recovery and elimination from the event.

No. 3: Measure Your Horse's Improved Fitness

Improvements in your horse's fitness can be detected by its exercise and recovery heart rates. Equine training studies have consistently shown an increase in a horse's fitness is associated with a *reduction* in heart rate at a given running speed. The V_{200} field test is often used to identify fitness changes with training. In addition, increased fitness is reflected in a more rapid decline in heart rate after the completion of exercise.

No. 4: Monitor Your Horse's Recovery During Interval Training

Many owners and trainers are now using interval training to improve their horse's fitness. Two important components of interval training are (1) the intensity (or hardness) of the interval and (2) the recovery period between each interval. Recovery periods of 3-5 minutes are often used with a suggestion the horse's heart rate should be below 100 bpm by the end of the recovery period. A heart rate higher than this may suggest your program is too hard, your horse needs more recovery time or he or she has just had enough for the day.

No. 5: Check How Well Your Horse Has Traveled

Your horse's heart rate is very responsive to physical and emotional stress. Measuring and recording your horse's 'air travel' or 'floating' heart rate can give you excellent information on how well your horse(s) has traveled.

No. 6: What Gets Measured is What Gets Done!

Many owners and trainers don't do their own riding or driving. So how do they know what actually occurred during the training session?

With an 'on board' heart rate monitor you can give specific instructions to what you want achieved in the training session: "10 minute warm-up at 120-130 bpm, 15 minutes between 140-150 bpm and 10 minute warm-down at a heart rate of less than 120 bpm". With the **POLAR HHRM** you can even record this information in memory and check to see what was actually done after the session has been completed.

No. 7: Cross – Training

Many owners and trainers now incorporate swimming in their horse's exercise program. This is because swimming is useful for keeping joints moving and muscles toned as well as conditioning the cardiovascular and respiratory (heart and lung) systems. But how hard is your horse working when it swims? Some horses are good swimmers, some are poor, while others are just plain lazy when in the water. Using the waterproof **POLAR HHRM**, you now have a measure of exactly 'how hard' your horse is working during its swimming session.

No. 8: See How Your Horse Responds to New Equipment, Skills, Trails, Terrain etc

When your horse is exposed to new riding terrain, new rider, new equipment, new skill etc, its heart rate may be abnormally high. As the horse adapts and becomes more relaxed and / or efficient, its heart rate should return to its original lower level. In conjunction with your horsemanship, you now have a measure of how your horse is coping with any change to a normal routine.

No. 9: Increase Your Professionalism

Whether you are the owner and trainer or just the trainer, the horse is your most important asset. By using a heart rate monitor to help your daily management and decision making, you will not only be increasing your knowledge on each individual horse but also be seen as a more professional horseperson. You will be seen as a person who is looking for new initiatives and someone who is using the latest technology to improve the horse's general health, training and day-to-day management.

No. 10: Give Yourself an Edge Over The Opposition

Additional information on how your horse responds to training, competition, travel etc may give you that small edge over the opposition. Add this to point No. 8 above and you will soon be recognized as a responsible, accountable and professional horseperson. If your not using a **HHRM**, the chances are your opposition are or certainly will be in the near future.

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