

# Changing up the way we keep horses

Horse SA project



Horse SA's series of educational events empowered 517 members of the local horse community to more sustainably manage their animals and land.

## Horse SA

Horse SA is a community-run organisation advocating and supporting those involved in the horse industry. Horse SA works with horse owners, local communities, environmental groups and government to develop valuable projects and contribute to horse-related legislation.

Since 1999, the group has been running training courses, workshops and information sessions to build the capacity of horse owners and those in the equine industry.

Horse SA's *HorsesLandWater Action Planner* and *Horse Property Management Guidelines* were developed in conjunction with the EPA and are key documents which direct sustainable horse keeping in the South Australia.

## Building on previous work

Horse SA has been working tirelessly to build the horse community's capacity for sustainable horse keeping, and to develop resilience across the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management region in the face of climate change.

Recent work includes:

- aligning horse grazing patterns with horse keepers' lifestyles to achieve stock health and sustainable land management requirements
- addressing set stocking and helping horse keepers meet regulatory requirements
- developing the *Climate Change Adaptation Plan for Horse Owners*
- sharing vital learnings from the Sampson Flat and Pinery fire grounds.

Horse SA's work aligns with key Natural Resources Adelaide Mount Lofty Ranges outcomes:

- an increased number of landholders engaged in managing natural resources
- an increased number of landholders improving productivity through undertaking measures to reduce soil erosion and increase biodiversity.



Government of  
South Australia



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## Equiculture popularity

Equiculture philosophy brings horse welfare and land management together, for lasting beneficial sustainability outcomes. Equiculture principles, developed by Jane and Stuart Myers, are centred on sustainable, responsible and ethical horse ownership. An example is considering grazing regimes, ground cover and property design to suit the natural behaviours of horses. Awareness around equiculture principles has increased and positive feedback from attendees has resulted in Horse SA embedding these principles into its workshops.

## Responding to local needs

Horse SA tailored its educational events to suit busy landowners with competing priorities. Consequently, events are local and structured to suit different needs (i.e. a short workshop on a weeknight). Horse SA also utilises webinars which increases knowledge accessibility as people participate in the local horse keeping network via a computer.



Horse SA event regular Wendy Harrison from Tatchilla, pictured with her horse in a native grass paddock established with the help of Natural Resources Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges



Participants identifying weeds on the farm walk with Land Management Advisor, Andy Cole

## Upskilling the community

Through an extensive series of workshops, webinars and field days, Horse SA develops stronger networks between horse property owners. Regular community sessions support networks and build relationships by providing opportunities to meet and discuss horses and issues around landcare. The sessions aim to inform, upskill, connect and empower those in the horse keeping community for more sustainable outcomes benefitting the environment, people and horses.

By utilising social media to promote events Horse SA reaches a larger audience, resulting in many new faces at educational events. Those attending have included potential property buyers not yet living in the area but keen to upskill themselves and explore horse keeping options for the future.

Between January 2015 and May 2016, Horse SA hosted a suite of educational events under their *Changing up the way we keep horses* project, reaching a total of 116 attendees.

The project included:

- five community information sharing sessions on topics from dung beetles to biosecurity, hazards, native grasses and paddock renovation
- three educational farm walks with Land Management Consultant Andy Cole, at the Sampson Flat fire ground, Harrogate and Willunga. These field sessions gave attendees a real-world insight into horse property management issues, providing practical solutions to common problems.
- one equiculture workshop with Jan and Stuart Myers of Equiculture which explored property management themes of pasture, water and soil and focused on the reasoning behind the 'Equicentral' property design theory

As part of the project, Horse SA also supported the delivery of three educational webinars with 160 people registering their interest, and 71 logging onto the sessions.

The webinar sessions consisted of:

- **Enriching the lives of horses**, exploring ways to improve environmental and social surroundings, and how to improve property management through considering the animal's behavioural traits and social needs.
- **The secret lives of horses**, explaining how an understanding of common horse behaviour can simplify horse care routines with added benefit to horse health.
- **Horse paddock design tips**, highlighting the importance of understanding your property's natural resources and detailing the features of a well-designed paddock. Good land management design leads to improved environmental sustainability and a better environment for horses.





Active dung beetles in pasture improve soil health and productivity

### Real behaviour change

As a result of Horse SA's capacity-building sessions, a number of properties have begun to incorporate improved management methods. Paddock walks have been noted as especially inspiring and motivating, such as the Harrogate farm walk, which showcased rotational grazing, shelterbelt plantings and the use of dung beetles for improved soil health and manure management.

Participants at these events improved their horse-keeping knowledge and skills which has led to:

- better property management
- increased rate of information sharing through new and existing networks
- reduced use of chemicals
- improved biodiversity and water quality protection
- improved ground cover and animal health
- greater resilience and preparedness for climate change and disaster recovery.

### For more information

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