



FEATURE

The horse herbalist

Angela Davison has had a long and fascinating career. She spoke to **AMANDA MAC** about her work as an equine herbalist.

Angela Davison, now a herbalist and equine practitioner with many years' experience, has always loved horses. She spent her first ten years in a small village near the border between England and Scotland, learned to ride when she was three, and was not too far off that age when she

became fascinated with the travelling gypsies who visited her village every year.

Taking up residency on the village green for weeks at a time, they would pay knacker money for poor, sickly horses at the local sales, and then work their magic. Collecting herbs and flowers from nearby fields and hedgerows, they brewed up

remedies to treat the horses, who quickly became sleek, bright eyed and full of vitality before they were sold for much more than their original purchase price. "It was incredible, like a miracle," Angela recalls, and what she observed planted the seeds for what would later become her passion.

A keen show jumper, a bad accident put an end to that career when she was in her late teens. It took a year for her to recuperate, during which time there was a stint as a singer in a rock and roll band, after which she travelled to Australia. "I was just going to have a look around and then go back to the UK," she tells me, "but something felt very right for me here, so I stayed."

Initially, she worked in the music industry, but after 12 months horses drew her back in. "I started looking after Heath Harris's place while they were away doing films, and then I met Tommy Smith's breaker in Sydney." To cut a long story short,



ABOVE: Three liver cleansing herbs Angela frequently uses in her herbal preparations - 1) St Mary's Thistle; 2) Tinospora cordifolia, a vine indigenous to tropical regions of the Indian subcontinent; 3) Dandelion root.

Angela began working with racehorse trainers and became one of Australia's first licensed female jockeys. Her racing career included rides on Emancipation, Kingston Town and other track legends, several hundred wins, and of course, her fair share of spills: "But I had a chiropractor who also gave me herbs, so I was usually quickly back in the saddle," she adds.

Eventually Angela felt she had gone as far in the racing industry as she wanted, and decided it was time for a new path. She had always massaged and stretched horses, which had taught her a lot about their body mechanics. However, to develop her capabilities as an equine therapist and healer, which is what she was strongly drawn to, she decided to study herbal medicine and in 1987 graduated from Dorothy Hall's prestigious College of Herbal Medicine in Sydney. Intent on adding to her steadily expanding therapeutic toolbox, Angela next embarked on studies in Craniosacral

Therapy at Florida's Upledger Institute, followed by a course in the clinical science of mineral therapy, training in the Bowen Technique, and then Equine Muscle Release Therapy with Ali Goward.

For 12 years, Angela operated a busy mixed horse and human herbal practise, until in 2000, she decided to specialise in horses. Now with more than 30 years' experience as a full-time equine herbalist, she is a Fellow of the Australian Traditional Medicine Society, and a member of HATAA, the Holistic Animal Therapy Organisation. She has taught at TAFE, delivered herbal horsemanship courses, and to this day continues with her own studies, gaining even greater expertise along the way.

While herbal remedies have been used successfully for centuries, Angela's method of arriving at a formula appropriate for the horse she's treating is a little different. She has developed a system of hair analysis that is, as she

laughingly says, her point of difference.

And different it is – it's hair testing by holding a sample of horse hair in her hand. But before we go any further, let's address the elephant in the room. Angela's approach sounds a little woo-woo, right? However, although it might appear that way, it's important to keep a couple of things in mind. Firstly, quantum physics, the study of matter and energy at a subatomic level, has led the way for some remarkable advances (think lasers and quantum computing). But it has also revealed some mind-bending truths about the nature of reality, which quantum physicists believe may ultimately show that everything in the universe is connected through 'dimensions that our senses cannot comprehend'. Well, that's food for thought!

Secondly, Angela's methods work! So well in fact, that some veterinarians have recommended her to clients because although they're not sure how she gets

results, they know that she does. As Angela says, “I have clients who have been with me for over 20 years who still don’t understand how I do what I do, but they don’t care because they get great results from the treatments.”

Hair analysis is more usually carried out under a microscope, and detects problems such as heavy metal exposure and mineral imbalances. Angela’s hair assessment technique, which she officially brought into her practice in 1998 after seven years spent working on and refining it, is more closely related to kinesiology, a modality she also studied and had for many years used in her practice with both humans and horses.

Simply put, kinesiology involves muscle testing as the practitioner asks a series of questions relevant to the person’s wellbeing. Based on the premise that subconsciously we already know within ourselves what we need to bring about healing, kinesiology creates a biofeedback mechanism for identifying physical and psychological stressors within the body.

In a random ‘aha’ moment, it occurred to Angela that kinesiology and hair testing might work well together. Could she, she wondered, hold a sample of horse hair in her hand, ask a range of questions about the horse’s wellbeing and intuit answers accurate enough to confidently blend together herbal preparations to benefit the horse?

And if that sounds a little out there, consider this, it worked! “In the beginning, I only dealt with horses that vets wanted to euthanise because they were in such poor health,” she tells me. In most cases, the horses’ wellbeing improved to the extent that still today, long after working on them, she receives messages from owners thanking her for all the extra years they wouldn’t otherwise have had with their horses. “People need to know that there is another option. Many horses wouldn’t be here today if their owners hadn’t given me the opportunity to help them.”

Angela offers a staged treatment program. Owners can begin with




ABOVE: Angela at work in her dispensary blending herbal remedies.

hair testing, which includes an initial investigation into their horse’s wellbeing followed by a phone consultation. If they wish (and most do), they can move on to a full program of testing and treatment, in which Angela blends the herbs necessary to help remedy their horse’s problem. Seven weeks later she retests to gauge the horse’s progress and reassess the combination of herbs, followed by a final check at 15 weeks. She is also happy to advise owners which of her range of unique tried and true formulas might be most appropriate for their horse, whether or not the horse has been hair tested.

One thing that Angela is adamant about is that the success she has with her approach is the result of her continued study across an extensive range of healing modalities, coupled with many, many years’ experience. She also points out the importance of using only the best quality herbs. “There are herbs and then there are herbs. All the herbs I

use are the highest grade, concentrated, practitioner only tinctures that go through strict Therapeutic Goods Administration testing in the same way as all orthodox drugs,” she explains.

Over time, she has treated horses from every conceivable English and Western discipline, including Olympic and other well-known horses. Although professional confidentiality quite rightly prevents her from naming names, there are some glowing testimonials on her website from clients who swear by Angela’s testing methods and her herbal preparations.

And if those methods are giving you pause for thought, keep in mind that as quantum physics has shown us, there’s more to our universe than might otherwise meet the eye. 

Visit [The Horse Herbalist](#) to learn more about Angela and her work.