

CWSF 2015 - Fredericton, New Brunswick



Maren McIntosh

How our Thoughts Affect Horses

Challenge: Health

Category: Junior

Region: Central Alberta

City: Cremona, AB

School: Argyll Home School Centre

Abstract: As a dressage rider, I was curious how manipulating the nature of a rider's thinking would affect stress and performance. I hypothesized that riders listening to positive visualization in between performances of a dressage test would experience greater improvement in performance (and their horses would experience greater reduction in stress), than those simply repeating the test or receiving constructive feedback. My results support my hypothesis.

Biography

Hi! I'm Maren McIntosh, and I'm a grade seven student at Argyll Home Education, which means I do school at home on a computer ? and occasionally in my pajamas, I must confess. My family lives on an acreage, and we have seven horses, five cats, and a slightly neurotic border collie. I thoroughly enjoy traveling, writing, playing piano and flute, hiking, and sleeping in. As you may have guessed, I also love riding, especially galloping, jumping, and dressage on my horse Dubh (pronounced Doo). Dubh is, in fact, the inspiration for my project. He tends to get very excited at horse shows, especially dressage, and I'm always trying to figure out ways to calm him down and improve our performance. Thus, I became curious as to whether changing the nature of my thoughts through positive visualization would improve our performance and decrease Dubh's stress level. With show season looming, I'm very much looking forward to putting my results into practice! My advice to other science fair candidates would be to choose a topic you are really, really interested in, have fun with it, and if you get nervous, ride a horse (with positive visualization first, naturally)!