

Polar Sport Zones for horses

Notebook: Heart rate monitor

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Finding the best training methods for your horse is essential when you want to improve your horse's performance. You can easily do it with Polar Sport Zones for horses.

Studies show that it's not only the amount of training, but above all the quality of training that matters when aiming for better results.

The way you train your horse in different target heart rate zones has an impact on your horse's health. As is true with any form of sport, basic training is good for health and physical wellbeing. But in competitive sports in particular, discipline-specific training and testing can lead to considerable results. The first step towards better performance is to figure out the right intensity of training, and with horses that can be a challenge. However, by using Polar Sport Zones for horses, you can find out the most beneficial target heart rate zone for your horse and carry out training at an intensity that makes the horse stronger, healthier and fitter. Like this, heart rate monitors make measuring aerobic capacity easy and give information of the horse's current general condition and which sport zone should be used. All this helps you create specifically tailored training plans of suitable intensity and duration.

The table below gives you details about the benefits, training recommendations, heart rate and training modes at different training zones for horses (ref. Bitschnau et al. 2013).

Sport Zones 1-5 (Intensity in % of HRmax)

Sport Zone	Benefits	Recommended for	Heart rate	How
5 MAXIMUM 90-100%	Increases maximum sprinting capacity and tunes the neuromuscular system	Enhancing anaerobic capacity; only for well-preconditioned horses	Maximal heart rate	Fast trot/gallop - short sprints of up to 2 minutes after an appropriate warm-up in zones 1-3
4 HARD 80-90%	Builds up high-speed endurance (stamina)	Developing anaerobic power for horses that compete at intensities eliciting lactate accumulation or at maximal intensities	Thoroughbreds and standardbreds around 200 bpm, eventing horses around 190 bpm, endurance horses and warmbloods around 180 bpm	Fast trot/gallop - up to 4-6 intervals of short durations of 2-3 minutes; the shorter the interval, the higher the intensity; appropriate warm-up in zones 1-3 and sufficient recovery between intervals are very important
3 MODERATE 70-80%	Enhances aerobic power	Mainly aerobic moderate training, an essential part of training	Thoroughbreds and standardbreds between 160-190 bpm, eventing	Canter - may consist of intervals followed by recovery periods;

		independent of the equestrian discipline or breed of horse	horses between 160-170 bpm, endurance horses and warmbloods between 150-160 bpm	trotting in this zone is especially effective for improving endurance, blood circulatory capacity of the heart and skeletal muscles
2 LIGHT 60-70%	Improves basic endurance, increases the metabolism and strengthens the body so that the horse can tolerate higher intensity training	Aerobic endurance training, an essential part of training independent of the equestrian discipline or breed of horse	Thoroughbreds, standardbreds and eventing horses up to about 160 bpm, endurance horses and warmbloods up to about 150 bpm	Walk, trot and slow canter - training of 40-80 minutes duration
1 VERY LIGHT 30-60%	Improves overall health and promotes active recovery	Recovery training, rehabilitation, warm-up and active recovery from more strenuous training sessions, an essential part of training independent of the equestrian discipline or breed of horse	All breeds and disciplines up to about 140 beats per minute (bpm)	Walk and trot - recovery training for a total of 40-80 minutes duration or an initial warm-up followed by an active recovery exercise of about 30 minutes

Here's a brief summary of the Polar Sport Zones for horses according to equestrian disciplines:

	Racing horses	Eventing horses	Endurance horses	Jumping and Dressage horses
MAXIMUM 90-100%	HR _{max}	HR _{max}	HR _{max}	HR _{max}
HARD 80-90%	around 200 bpm	around 190 bpm	around 180 bpm	around 180 bpm
MODERATE 70-80%	160-190 bpm	160-170 bpm	150-160 bpm	150-160 bpm
LIGHT 60-70%	140-160 bpm	140-160 bpm	140-150 bpm	140-150 bpm
VERY LIGHT 30-60%	Up to 140 bpm	Up to 140 bpm	Up to 140 bpm	Up to 140 bpm

The way heart rate responds to exercise intensity depends on various factors such as fitness and recovery levels as well as environment. It's extremely important that you're alert and keep an eye on how your horse is coping with the strain, and then adjust the training program accordingly.