

2026



Functional Horse Training

Combining art with science to establish optimal movement

Functional Training Masterclass

NOVEMBER 6-8 2026 – ROMSEY, NSW

FUNCTIONAL HORSE TRAINING BY THIRZA HENDRIKS

🌟 Introduction

We all want our horse to have optimal quality of life and move with fluidity – to perform with athleticism, lightness, confidence and resilience. This calls for balancing science, ethics and the art of practical training.

This masterclass is designed for **dedicated horse owners and professionals** who are ready to take their knowledge and practical skills to the next level. This course is grounded in science and enriched by hands-on learning. This experience will leave you empowered with inspiration, deeper understanding of the horse's body, practical tools and a new perspective on training. Finally – it will also be lots of fun and enjoyment of being with likeminded people.



🧠 What You'll Learn

Through in-depth theory, practical sessions, and interactive discussion, we'll explore the horse from the inside-out. **You'll learn what goes on beneath the skin and deepen your understanding of equine movement science** including:



- Applied anatomy
- Biomechanics
- Neuroscience
- (Exercise) Physiology
- Fluid dynamics
- Functional training



This masterclass isn't just about science – **it's also about practical skills and feel.**

You'll learn the art of whole horse assessment, adapting in the moment, goal-oriented functional training and measuring results over time.

Why Functional Training?

Functional training means ethical training that promotes performance without (or as minimal as possible) compensation. It **transcends disciplines** and allows a horse to move with maximal efficiency, but minimal effort in any given context (discipline). It is about encouraging **fluid, sustainable movement**.

Functional training is mostly about prevention, but its principles can also be used for rehabilitation as Progressive Movement Therapy. During this course, **you will learn how to prevent overload injuries and address any potential existing dysfunction / restrictions** – always with the horse's welfare at its centre.

Whether you are a returning student or joining for the first time, you'll leave with greater understanding and practical tools to support your horse's functionality and long-term quality of life!

Venue

This masterclass will take place on:
November 6-8, 2026, 09.00 – 17.00 at:



Quiet Oak Park Performance Horses, 1781 Romsey Rd, Romsey, VIC 3434

If you bring a horse, please contact **the venue** for stabling / paddock opportunities. For general inquiries please contact organiser at: thea@duaneportwayfamilylaw.com.au

Course Overview

This 3-day masterclass is designed as an introduction to my approach to functional equine training. The course establishes the scientific framework behind my training approach before translating these principles into practical assessment and training. It is suitable for riders, trainers and therapists who are new to my work, while still offering plenty of depth for experienced professionals wishing to strengthen their understanding of movement science and

a functional approach to training.

Course Structure

Day 1 – Movement Science & Functional Assessment

09:00 – 15:00 Interactive Theory Lectures on Movement Science covering:

- Functional anatomy
- Biomechanics
- (Exercise) physiology
- Neurology
- Fluid dynamics
- Functional assessment
- Functional training principles



Theory sessions are highly interactive and integrate the latest scientific research, (dissection) case studies, comparative videos and

15:30 – 17:00 Functional assessment demonstration

Using slow-motion video analysis, I will demonstrate my complete assessment process, explaining:

- what I look for / at (observation markers)
- how to connect the dots (clustering)
- how to interpret (functional relevance)
- how to use this as basis for management, treatment & training decisions.

We will then pick this up on day 2, where I will assess each horse brought to the course individually while explaining what I see/feel and allow both the owner and spectators to ask questions and train their eye. Spectators are not allowed to palpate but will be provided many observation markers for gait analysis.

Days 2 & 3 – Practical Training

Each participant will work with their own horse and receive **three individual practical sessions**.

Session 1 – Functional Assessment (approximately 30 minutes)

Your horse will undergo a complete functional assessment to establish status or baseline, discuss potential wishes & challenges and set both up for success.

Sessions 2 & 3 – Practical Training (approximately 40 minutes each)

Based on the assessment findings, we will work on an individual training plan tailored to your horse.

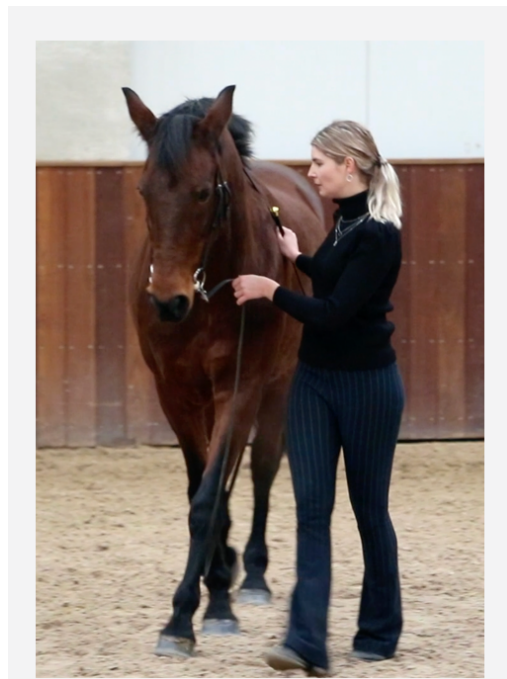
Depending on the horse, sessions may include:

Brainwork & Breathwork for horses; Soft tissue therapy

- Groundwork, lungeing, work-in-hand, long reigning and riding
- Obstacle work (jumps; objects etc)

Each session builds upon the previous one, allowing participants to understand not only **what** to do, but **why**.

All sessions are tailored to the physical and mental capacities of both horse and trainer in each movement – always prioritizing fluid movement with minimal effort, but maximal efficiency.



Daily Timetable

Day 1

- 🕒 09:00–13:00 Interactive Theory on Movement Science (with coffee break in between)
- 🍷 Lunch
- 15:30 – 17:00 Functional assessment demonstration

Days 2 & 3

- 🕒 09:00–13:00 Practical sessions
- 🍷 Lunch
- 🕒 13:30–17:00 Practical sessions

The final day concludes with a course wrap-up, discussion of individual homework for participants and recommendations for continued training.



About your teacher

Thirza Hendriks (MSc, Pg. Dip.) is a scientist, educator, and training coach specializing in Equine Movement Science and Functional Training (Progressive Movement Therapy). With a strong foundation in anatomy, movement science, and exercise physiology, she is dedicated to advancing evidence-based, horse-centred practices in management and training.

Since 2018, Thirza has been a member of the ***Equinestudies Dissection Team***, conducting many full-horse dissections annually across the globe—including primitive breeds and zebras for comparative anatomical research. Each case includes thorough hands-on assessments and complete medical histories, which provides a unique opportunity to map movement patterns and link them to dissection findings. It is Thirza's passion to translate knowledge of the horse inside out into practical management and training considerations so horse owners and professionals can make better informed decisions to optimize the horse's quality of life and performance.

Thirza collaborates closely with international pathologists to explore complex systemic diseases—such as autoimmune conditions—and to improve diagnostic approaches.



In the area of training, Thirza holds qualifications in exercise physiology (Pg dip); rehabilitation training and studied at various (classical) training institutions. She has also successfully competed in the past (carriage driving, jumping & dressage).

Her integrated knowledge has led her to develop a unique approach to **Functional Training**—aimed at helping horses move and perform efficiently with minimal effort. While Thirza is

widely recognized for her successes in rehabilitation, her true passion lies in **prevention**: Educating both professionals and horse owners to allow them to make informed decisions regarding breeding, selecting form to function and functional training to set a new improved standard within the industry so that not rehabilitation, but instead functional and fluid movement becomes the norm for (performance) horses.

Today, Thirza is a much sought-after international clinician and lecturer in the field of Anatomy, Physiology, Movement Science, as well as Exercise Physiology and Functional Training for horses.

 By now, she travels to Italy, Sweden, USA, Taiwan, South Africa and Australia on a yearly basis, working together with other highly valued and renowned veterinarians, body workers, saddle fitters, and trimmers.

Together with Equinestudies, Thirza is a main driving force behind international research centres including Gilvarry Equine Medical Centre in Cape Town, South Africa.

 More information about Thirza can be found on: www.thirzahendriks.com



Participation Requirements

This masterclass is open to new students of all levels, hence no prior qualifications are required. See horse requirements below.

Horse Requirements

 Minimum age: 4 years

 Stallions: please enquire with the venue in advance for accommodation options.



Gaited horses: please enquire with Thirza directly if she has the necessary expertise to coach you or not.



Horses need to be (relatively) healthy and free of pain. Horses that are visibly lame or unwell on arrival might have to forfeit training sessions. As Thirza feels she owes highest responsibility to the horse, when horses present with illness or lameness that requires veterinary or therapeutic care over training, alternative arrangements will be discussed.

For example: if the horse appears lame with high likelihood of a hoof abscess, active training will not be beneficial in that moment as the body needs its energy to rest and recover.



Challenges are welcome, but complex rehab cases need to be submitted beforehand to see if I can help you out or advise other pathways first. Although Thirza has extensive experience with rehabilitation, this course is not designed as a primary rehab course!



Ideally, your horse is already used to being trailered and traveling to new places. If that's not the case and your horse is very anxious about its first outing and navigating unfamiliar terrain, practical sessions may focus more on creating a positive experience and building the horse's confidence in new environments.



Meals



Coffee/tea will be available.



Please bring your own lunches.



Investment

Option	EUR	Approx. AUD
Single Day Spectator	€85	~155 AUD
Full Course Spectator	€240	~430 AUD
Full Course Participant	€625	~1120 AUD

 This includes:

- ✓ Full- day tuition
- ✓ Asking questions all day(s)
- ✓ Course handouts
- ✓ All practical sessions



Participants will also receive a short-written summary + homework suggestions at the end of the course.

Cancellation policy

- A 30% refund will be given upon cancellation of the participant up till 12 weeks prior the event.
- Any cancellation on behalf of the participant within 12 weeks prior to the event will not be refunded. However, if the participant can find a suitable replacement for taking over the spot the fee can be refunded.
- Upon the unlikely cancellation of the event by the organizer, a full refund of the participation fee will be given within 14 days. Additional costs like flight tickets / overnight stay will not be refunded.



You are strongly advised to close on a cancellation insurance