

Equine Natural Movement School

How to Build a Block for Equine Bodywork

Materials needed:

- (2) Sheets styrofoam block insulation 2 inches thick x 4 feet wide x 8 feet long.
You can get these at Lowes or Home Depot.
- (2) Caulking gun tubes of Loctite PL 3000 Foamboard Construction Adhesive.
You can get these at Home Depot.
- (1) Caulking Gun
- (1) Weaver Leather Brand large size Bale Bag. The styrofoam will be cut specifically to fit this bag.
- A 2 foot piece of clothesline or baling twine.

Cutting the styrofoam: Cut the styrofoam sheets into panels 17 inches wide and 38 inches long. If you start by cutting 17 inches off of one end of the sheet you can get five full panels from each styrofoam sheet. I like to use a table saw for rip cuts and a skilsaw or a crosscut saw for crosscuts. For crosscuts I lay the styrofoam on a disposable piece of plywood and set the blade depth so that it cuts through the styrofoam and barely scores the plywood. I recommend that you ask for help with this part of the project if you are unfamiliar with the use of these tools. I find that a fine toothed metal cutting blade works well for cutting the styrofoam sheets.

For a complete block you will need 7 panels.

Clean the 7 panels. I wipe them down on each side with a clean rag with some rubbing alcohol on it. Let them dry. Be sure to peel off any raised imperfections left over from the cutting process. Left in place, these would prevent a panel from making full contact with adjoining panel during gluing.

Gluing the Panels Together: Glue them together using the Loctite PL 3000 foam board adhesive. It is important to use this type of adhesive because other types of glue tend to cause the foam board to come unstuck over time. Make sure you do the gluing in a well ventilated area and that the ambient temperature is above 40 degrees F.

Lay the first panel flat on a level, even, flat surface. Put the Loctite adhesive in the caulking gun and snip the tip of the tube so that a 1/8 inch bead of glue can come out. Run a bead of glue on the top surface of the first panel all the way around it about 2 inches in from the edge. Next loosely zig zag some glue in the middle of the rectangle that you just made. Take the second panel and lay it on top of the first making sure to align the edges. Place a clean board the size of the panels over the second panel and gently walk on it to compress the glued panels together. Re check the edges for alignment and make adjustments if

necessary. They slide easily at this stage. Add glue to the top of the second panel in the same manner as the first then add the third panel. Compress it. Check alignment. Repeat the process until you have 7 layers of panels glued up. Check the alignment of all the panels one last time then place a board on top of the stack and weight it evenly. Three cinder blocks would do nicely for this. Let it cure for 7 days.

After 7 days, fit your cured block into your bale bag. Tie the handles together with your clothesline or baling twine and snip the loose ends. This helps prevent the horses from getting their legs tangled in the loose bale bag handles.

Enjoy your bale!

The three rules for bale use:

1. Introduce the bale to new horses gently.
2. When standing on the bale, always keep one foot in the middle of it. This will keep the bale from rolling.
3. When not using the bale, banish it to the farthest reaches of the stall or cross-tie area. This hard and fast rule keeps the bale from becoming a trip hazard.