

Dancing Horse Farm Eventing Loves Border Blocks!

While surfing the Internet for lumber prices for some new schooling jumps, I stumbled upon Border Blocks, a new, incredibly simple landscaping anchoring system. I immediately considered the possibilities for equestrian applications, so I went directly to the company's website to learn more.

This anchoring system has NOT been formally tested for equine/equestrian applications and to the best of the company's knowledge, I was the first person who ever contacted them about using them that way. But, I weighed several factors and ended up making the personal choice to get some to see how they'd work. So far, so good! If you think you may want to give them a try for your own farm, know that you do so at your own risk, and neither I nor Border Blocks Landscaping Anchoring Systems, Inc. make any claim that they are safe for these applications or that there has been any formal testing regarding the applications for which I'm using the system.

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Why I think Border Blocks are a good idea for my farm...

They are extremely affordable...when compared to either dressage arena building systems or cavaletti building systems:

Enough Border Blocks for a 20-meter x 40-meter dressage boundary costs just over \$450, and shipping is free.

And, that's enough for a contiguous border...

I can realistically do a lot with about \$200 worth of Border Blocks...enough for dressage corner boundaries and some cavaletti.

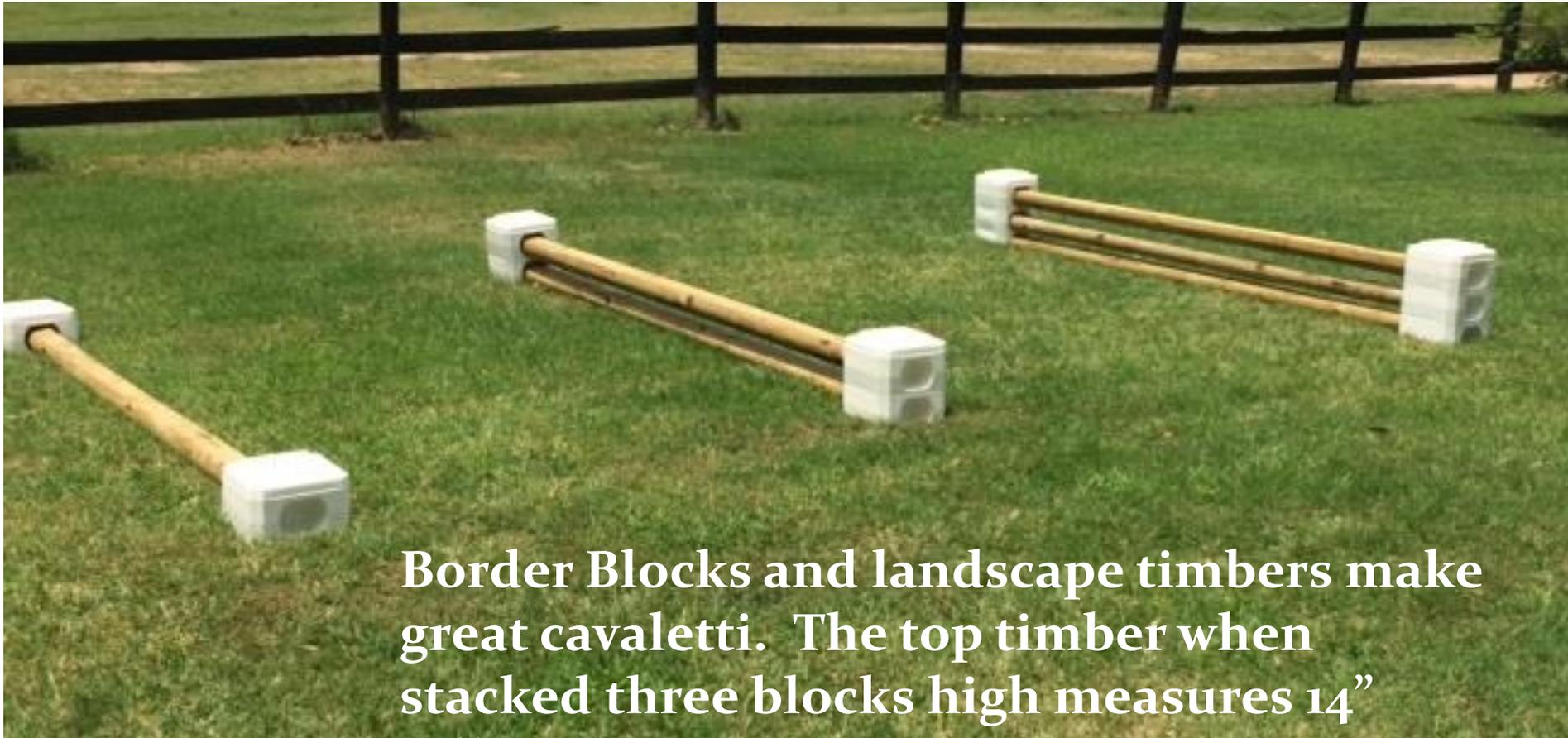
Border Blocks are SO multifunctional! I have a small acreage and not a lot of \$\$\$ to spend on training equipment...my space and time are limited, something with so many quick reconfiguration possibilities is great...



...and, they are attractive...they give a dressage arena border, a line of cavaletti, or the filler under a stadium jump a nice, clean, finished, professional look.

I love my Border Blocks dressage boundary. I could stack the blocks for a higher border, but I like just having a visual border...and it's so quick to assemble...no tools, no measuring and calibrating headaches, and no stakes to drive! It works on any footing surface...in my arena or out on the grass.





Border Blocks and landscape timbers make great cavaletti. The top timber when stacked three blocks high measures 14”

Border Blocks and landscape timbers as trot poles into gymnastic grid...



The trot poles look tidy, are less likely to get bumped out of alignment, and give the horse and rider a nice visual “channel” to help with straightness.

Border Blocks are an inexpensive way to make a stadium fence look more substantial...



Rather than spending the money on several sets of cups and pins and expensive jump rails, I can just use a rail or two at the top and “fill in” with the border blocks and timbers.

Border Blocks are sturdy, but lightweight. The plastic is thick and substantial, but it is still plastic, and I believe it will move/fall in situations where it needs to. And, when they are upright, capped, and undamaged, there are no sharp edges.



If I want to make an end block look finished, plugs are only 88 cents each!



I can take down parts of my dressage boundary as needed...



...if I want to set up a course of fences in the midst of it, I just pull out the blocks and timbers that will be in my way, and I've still left enough of the outline intact to make putting it back together a breeze.

Border Blocks are handy if I just want to make some corner boundaries or delineate parking or warm-up areas at clinics or shows at my farm.



When I'm not using any or all of my timbers in conjunction with the blocks, they take up a relatively small area if piled together...but, it's rare that I'm not using them for something! They are great ground poles for jumps...they keep my expensive cedar jump poles off the ground. Also, they do a good job at the low end of the arena lined up along the edge to keep my sand from washing away when we get a heavy rain.



Since I never know where or when I'll need some, there are usually a few under the rail all along the perimeter of my arena. Or, I can get fancy and stack them with the blocks in a corner of my arena and pull blocks and poles off the stacks as needed.

It is doubtful I will ever have need to store every Border Block I have, but when I do want to store them, they take up very little space...enough Border Blocks for a 20x40 single-block tall dressage arena, when stacked 12 blocks high, will take up a space only 20 inches square and a bit over four feet high...less room than single pair of jump wings! The covers for all those blocks will fit in one of the larger Rubbermaid tubs. Border Blocks are meant to be used outside, and left outside, so even when I store them, I don't need to put them under cover...they can just live quietly in the corner of my arena...



AGAIN, Border Blocks have not been safety tested/rated for equine/equestrian applications...they are a landscaping system element. I'm trying to use them safely by

- 1. Not stacking them more than three blocks high when using as cavaletti. That puts the top rail at about 14" and hopefully reduces the likelihood of more serious injury to horse or rider if the horse hits the obstacle.***
- 2. Only stacking them one block high when used as arena border. Arguments could be made whether a higher boundary would actually be safer. But, for me, the very low boundary of one Border Block/timber high (about 3" at the top of the timbers and 6" at the top of the blocks) is adequate, as I only want a visual boundary and it allows better visibility of the horse from outside the arena.***
- 3. Only stacking them more than three blocks high when using them in/under a regular stadium jump...the highest point(s) of the obstacle are still jump poles in jump cups on regular standards.***
- 4. Not turning horses out where they have access to the Border Blocks.***
- 5. Checking for insect nests/spiders, especially when a block has been left in one place for awhile...the manufacturer told me about that one! But, that's an issue with regular jump standards, jump fillers, etc. as well.***
- 6. Not sitting, standing, or climbing on the Border Blocks...and not sitting or standing next to stored blocks and timbers stacked more than five blocks high (which is the maximum stacking height suggested by the manufacturer when used in landscaping)...and not allowing anyone else to do so.***
- 7. Checking Border Blocks regularly for any cracks, breaks, etc.***

**Dressage Arena
Boundary
Specifications...**

To set up my 20 x 40 meter dressage arena with border blocks (for a contiguous border...no opening at "A") takes the following:



Four corner (90-degree) Border Blocks



44 straight Border Blocks (terra cotta color option shown)



48 Border Block Covers



Two Border Blocks plugs (optional)



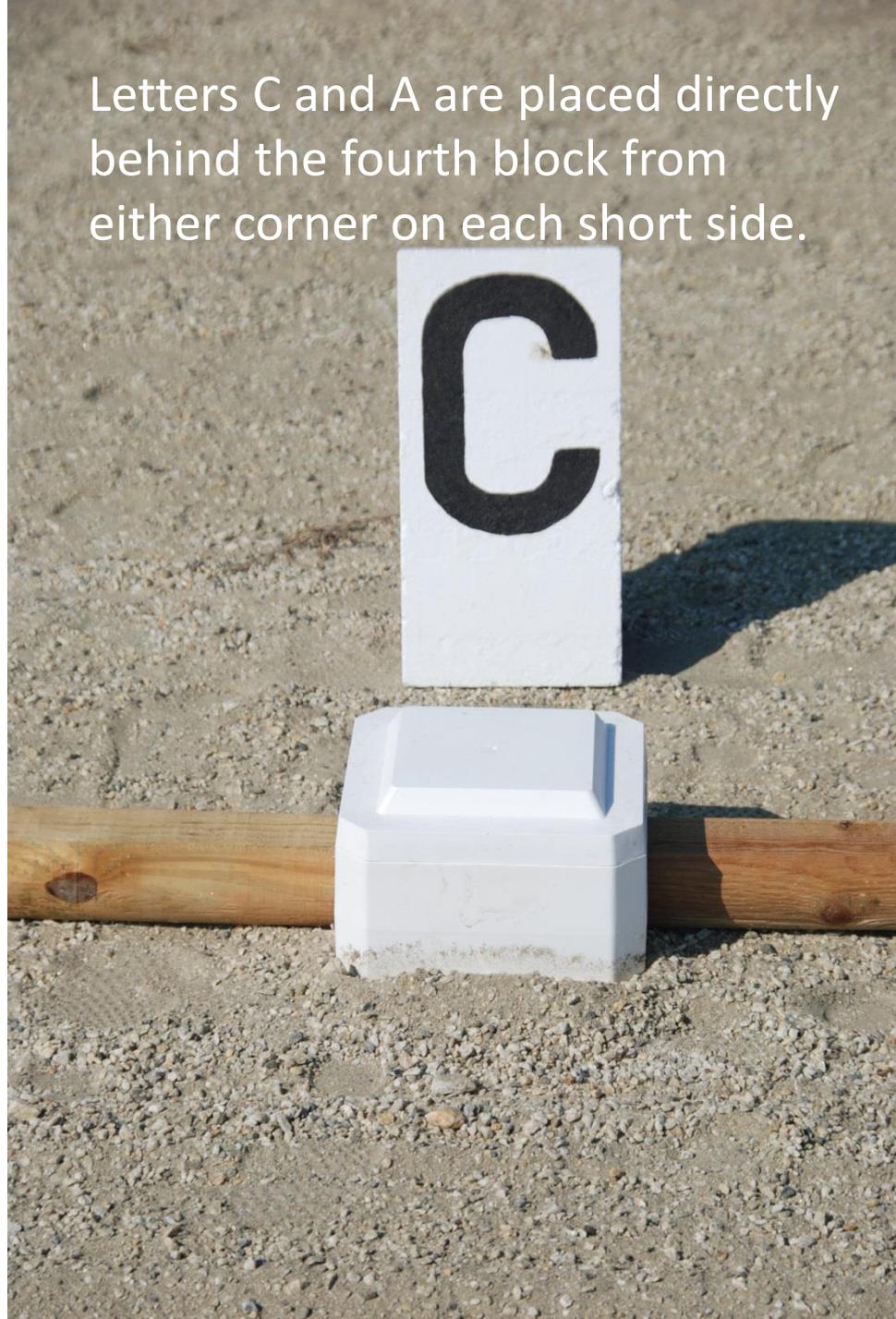
48, 8' landscape timbers, no cutting required
(available at Home Depot)

- Each corner needs one 90-degree block.
- The short ends of the arena (20 meter spans) each need 8 poles and 7 straight blocks.
- The long sides of the arena (40-meter spans) each need 16 poles and 15 straight blocks.

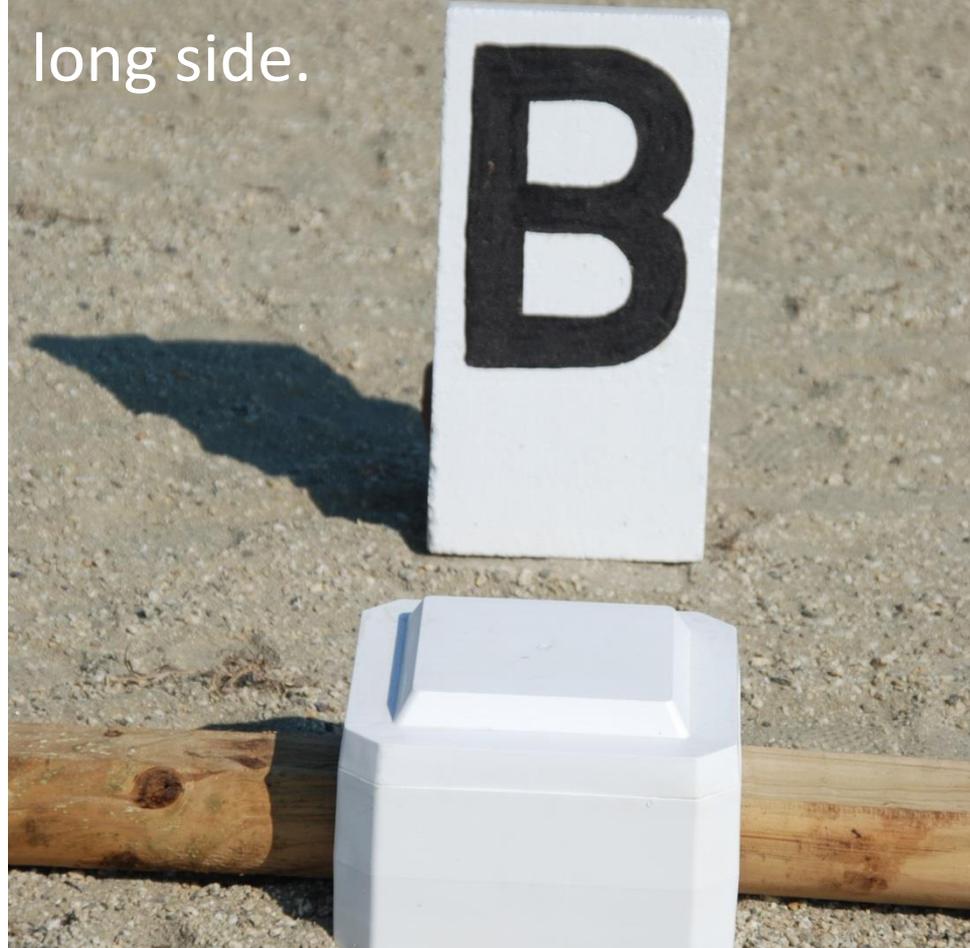
How awesome is this???

Even though they are being used with landscape timbers that are measured in feet, each segment (from the middle of one Border Block to the middle of the next, with an 8' landscape timber between) measures almost exactly 2.5 meters. This means there was no cutting of any timbers required to get the length and width of my arena to measure out accurately. This is also very handy to help with the size and “touch points” of circles and other figures, visual reference for quarter lines, etc., when I ride and teach, as two segments measure 5 meters, four segments measure 10 meters, etc.

Letters C and A are placed directly behind the fourth block from either corner on each short side.



Letters B and E are placed directly behind the eighth block from either corner on each long side.



(For 20 x 60 m arenas, B and E are placed behind the 12th block from either corner on each long side.)

Letters K, H, M, and F are placed 1 meter beyond the center of the second block of the closest corner.

2nd block
from corner



For an opening at A, I remove the middle block at that end of the arena and the two landscape timbers that come out of each side of that block. That leaves an opening of approximately 16 feet (just under 5 meters). I don't find that to be too big an opening. If I wanted a smaller opening at A, my arena would need one additional straight block and could cut two shorter landscape timber pieces...their length would depend on how large an opening I wanted. Two plugs would "finish" the dead-end blocks at the opening.



The Bottom Line

Total cost for Border Blocks, covers, and plugs for a single-block-high, 20x40-meter boundary is just over \$450, shipped to your door.

Depending on the cost of landscape timbers (watch for sales at Home Depot), 48 will cost anywhere from \$50-\$200.

To make the same contiguous border for a 20x60-meter boundary:

4 corner (90-degree) Border Blocks

56 straight Border Blocks

60 Border Block covers

2 Border Block plugs (optional)

64, 8' landscape timbers (no cutting required)

Please email me at
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or call my cell, (706) 540-4899
if you have any questions.

Thanks!

Karen Czarick,

Dancing Horse Farm Eventing