

Equine Sports Massage

Your Horse is an Athlete, treat it like one

Some horses are more naturally gifted than others, but the common denominator between them all, is that the musculoskeletal system equates to over 60% of their body weight. This system is responsible for movement and yet it is the muscles that are often overlooked when it comes to preventative maintenance and injury rehabilitation. "A million dollar horse is not a million dollar horse if it is not moving like one." (Jack Meagher)

Unlike us, horses can't verbalise their pain so they rely upon us to notice it. They often indicate muscle pain to us in the following ways:

- Refusing or resisting leads
- Repetitive head tossing or shaking
- Shortened or choppy stride
- Hind leg scuffing
- Stumbling
- Hip and shoulder lameness
- Cold, sore or hollowed back
- Bucking
- Loss of performance ability
- Resistance to training
- Irritable or bad disposition
- Hanging over jumps or on corners in racing
- Girthiness
- Loss of impulsion
- Loss of suppleness
- Reduced range of motion
- Bracing against or avoiding the bit
- Uneven muscular development (may cause saddle to slip to one side)
- Coordination difficulties
- Improper tracking forward, back, or laterally
- Resistance of lateral flexion and/or backing
- Hind limb interference
- Unwilling or unable to walk up or down inclines
- "Off" for no apparent reason

Excessive Muscle Strain/Overuse

Muscles contract and release, whereas contraction is a generated process, release is not. When muscles tighten and cannot achieve full release, they remain tense and shortened, or contracted. This puts strain on the surrounding areas. For example, tight shoulders can pass their inability to release to the digital flexors and tendons of the fore leg and this puts the structures of the lower limbs at risk. When a muscle is no longer able to do what is being demanded of it, it will tear. It is the challenge of any training programme to find the balance between maximum muscle strengthening and overtraining. The following cycle is very common:

Trauma or strain leads to tightening of the muscle which creates a knot. spasm or micro tears in the muscle. This means the muscles are unable to operate through their full range of motion, which leads to further tightening of the muscles and so it goes on. Ultimately this can result in a reduction in performance ability.



elementals
EQUINE THERAPIES

Even a playful buck and gallop with the herd can strain a muscle but imagine the stress on muscles in a performance horse. Most injuries due to muscular strain are cumulative and it is not necessarily the last thing your horse did that caused the problem. By the time you notice a problem with your horse's movement, it's a sign that muscular dysfunction has already occurred. **Regular maintenance massages can release these small issues before they become big ones.**

Sports Massage

Sports Massage can help locate and relieve knots and other muscular issues that may be limiting your horse's range of motion and therefore performance. Minor injuries & adhesions caused by over exertion & or overuse can be broken down quickly & effectively. It can help prepare the equine athlete for peak performance, drain away fatigue, relieve swelling, reduce muscle tension, promote flexibility & prevent injury. Sports massage can include pre-event, post-event & maintenance techniques that promote greater athletic endurance & performance, lessening injuries & reducing recovery time.

Massage shortens recovery time by flushing the issues of lactic acid, uric acid & other metabolic wastes. It increases circulation & stretches the ligaments & tendons keeping them supple & pliable. Massage also stimulates the skin & nervous system while soothing the nerve endings, which reduces stress both physically & emotionally. It can help alleviate the stress & tension which builds up in the body's soft tissues during physical activity.

Incorporating stretching into your training program can further increase the athletic ability of your horse.

Pre-Event treatments help to loosen, warm and ready muscles for an event. As deep work should not be done 2 days before an event pre-event massage is best for horses that are already in a regular maintenance program.

Post Event treatments help to relieve muscle pain and stiffness and aids in the removal toxins from the horse's body. This is particularly useful for horses competing regularly the within 2 -4 days after a competition day.

Regular maintenance treatments mean that any muscular problems are noticed quickly and can be addressed before developing into a more serious injury. Short frequent massages are far more productive than long and infrequent sessions.

Unlock your horse's potential & maximise your horse's performance.

Human athletes have been using massage and stretching for years as part of their training regime, why not treat your horse as an athlete. If you and your horse are working at the highest level or just enjoying weekend fun, use equine sports massage as part of your existing training or health programme to help you achieve your goals.

We offer our massage services at events, your property or agistment facilities and cover the Southern Highland, Wollongong, South and Western Sydney areas. Other locations by agreement and travel may apply. Discounts offered for 5 or more horses.

If I do not cover your area, I can assist in finding a suitably qualified therapist.

Call Rebecca on 0419 003 530 or (02) 4631 1148 for more information

Fact sheet