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## YOUR HORSE'S COMFORT

# Equine Massage

According to equine massage therapist Jim Masterson, horses that work for a living, regardless of their discipline, often accumulate stress in the junction of the neck, shoulders and withers. Fortunately, you can release that tension quickly, easily and painlessly with these five easy steps.



1. Flex the horse's head and neck toward you with your left hand.
2. Next, place a knuckle above the lowest neck vertebra with your right hand.



3. Slowly slide the fingers of your right hand in a downward motion, under the forward edge of the shoulder blade. Feel your way under the shoulder blade. Be sure to move your hand slowly.



4. Lightly rock the back of your right hand while your horse's head is flexed toward you. Work slowly and easily.
5. Step back and study your horse for visible tension releases: yawning, licking or chewing, or his eyes rolling and blinking.

*Tip:* When bringing your horse's head toward you, never use force. Ask him to bend, keeping your left hand *softly* on the nose or noseband, and your right hand *gently* on the lower neck. If your horse is relaxed, his eyes should appear "soft," and his eyelids might blink or twitch. If he remains wide-eyed, that means his defenses are up and his body won't release tension.

To learn more about reading the responses of the horse and improving equine performance, visit on the Web [mastersonmethod.com](http://mastersonmethod.com).

## HOOF CARE

# Bentonite for a Better Trimming, Shoeing

What's the key to getting a better hoof trimming and shoeing job? Bentonite powder, says Dr. Jack Roth, director of the Oklahoma Horseshoeing School in Purcell. A soft, volcanic clay with absorptive properties, bentonite is commonly used for everything from intestinal cleansing and poultices to E. Coli reduction and moisture balance for hooves.

Two days before your farrier arrives, mix a 1:3 ratio of bentonite powder and water in a five-gallon bucket. Let the mixture sit overnight. The next morning, take a putty knife and fill the bottom of each hoof with the resulting clay (this works best on a shod horse). Scrape the excess off so that you have a flat, even surface. Allow the horse to wear the clay for a 24-hour period.

The following day, when your farrier comes, flip the molded clay out of each hoof. He should have a softer, more pliable hoof to work with, which means your horse will get a better trimming and shoeing job.

To reuse the clay, pick out the debris and place the rest back in the original bucket. Be sure to cover the bucket and keep the moisture level consistent for months' worth of use.

Bentonite powder is available in health-food, lumber and hardware stores.

## WELLNESS CHECKLIST

# Stringhalt

**Definition:** involuntary flexion of the hock; leg springs upward in a reflex-like action

**Symptoms:** mild to exaggerated hock flexion upwards to the belly; can be intermittent, mostly during turns and backing; in some cases, cold weather can increase symptoms

**Causes:** true causes generally unknown; thought to be caused by injury or certain neuromuscular conditions

**Treatment:** dependent upon veterinary diagnosis; surgical removal of the tendon causing the involuntary flexion has shown to be beneficial

## VETSPEAK

**NSAIDs:** Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs; a group of drugs known for their pain-relieving, fever-reducing and anti-inflammatory properties; includes aspirin, phenylbutazone, ibuprofen and related drugs.

## SCRIPTS

"Animals are unpredictable things, and so our life is unpredictable. It's a long tale of little triumphs and disasters, and you've got to really like it to stick to it."

—JAMES HERRIOT, DVM,  
ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL