

PERFORMANCE HORSE DIGEST



VOLUME 8, ISSUE 6

Counterbending
Basics **BY CLINTON ANDERSON**

ALSO FEATURING
articles by

AARON RALSTON, AL DUNNING,
BARBRA SCHULTE, DICK PIEPER,
DOUG LINDGREN, JIM MASTERSON,
LYNN PALM, MARTHA JOSEY,
MONTY BRUCE, PAT PARELLI,
RICHARD WINTERS, SANDY COLLIER,
AND MANY MORE!

A Good Horse
IS A GOOD HORSE

BY CRAIG CAMERON

Feeding the
SEVERELY NEGLECTED
Rescue Horse

BY JULIET M. GETTY, PH.D.

RAYMOND SUTTON
QUARTER HORSES AND PAINTS

SEE CENTERFOLD FOR DETAILS



Lameness With No Visible Injuries

By Jim Masterson

From time to time I receive questions about horses that have been caught in a fence or have slipped and fallen and have no visible injuries, yet are not sound. Here is one of them:

*Dear Jim,
Recently my horse had her left fore-leg caught in a fence. She has since been "off", and has pain in her back which seems to run diagonally across her back and down her right hind. What would be your advice?
Signed: Person*

Hi,

With any accident that results in lameness the first thing to do is to have the horse examined by a veterinarian. If the vet finds anything that involves damage to soft tissue such as muscle, tendon or ligament, or fracture or damage to bone, then you have something that can be treated.

When a horse gets a leg trapped or slips and falls, and is afterwards lame, "off", or not moving right, and there is nothing diagnosed in the feet and legs, then there may be a problem in the body that bodywork can help with. This would be similar to us doing something such as slipping or taking a bad step and "pulling something" or wrenching" our back. We don't know exactly what it is, but it still hurts. This may be the case here.

It is common with this type of accident that groin, psoas or other deep core muscle are strained or go into spasm. Pain from the muscle strain or spasm itself can cause the horse to be off. Many of the deeper muscles in these areas are not manually accessible, which can make the exact source of the lameness difficult to trace.

However if you can release the tension in the core muscles and see an improvement in movement and behavior, then you can assume that that was the problem. There are some simple techniques that involve the use of very light touch and close observation of visual responses from the horse that the owner can use to help the horse release tension in these deeper muscles. We'll discuss these further on. Often we don't know exactly what has released, but the horse shows us the visual signs of release (responses to the bodywork) and he's moving better, so we know there's an improvement in the condition.

This type of accident can also create spasms that pull or put "torque" on certain areas of the body that are connected to, and affect, other areas of the body. For example, commonly a yank on the front leg will cause a spasm that puts torque on the poll-atlas junction. Tension on this key junction can create muscle tension or spasms in other areas of the body. This is also the case with the C7-T1 junction, where the neck joins the body.

This is something you could expect suspect from a front leg being trapped, but may also show up after a front shoe has been pulled or "sprung" by another foot catching a branch or heel of the shoe. Nothing can be found in the foot after the incident, but the horse is still not quite right. Often the

poor farrier (you don't hear those two words together often) gets the blame after putting the shoe back on and is accused of putting in a "hot nail", but that usually isn't the case. The problem may be that the yank has created a spasm in the poll-atlas and/or C7-T1 junction.

These are important junctions because tension in these junctions affects the rest of the body. We can see the connection between the front and hind ends when, for example, we release tension in the poll or the neck-shoulder junction and the horse begins to wobble, shuffle or stomp the ground behind. This is due to the sensation the horse feels as tension on the sacroiliac and in the gluteals relaxes.



You can see why trying to track down these sorts of "lamenesses" can be so difficult. Sometimes these will sort themselves out over time and sometimes they'll drag on for years but it's important that the whole horse be looked at as the muscles, fascia and nerves of the body are interconnected. As I mentioned earlier, there are simple techniques that involve the use of

very light touch and close observation of visual responses from the horse that the owner can use to help the horse release tension in the deeper muscles of the horse. These have been explained in more detail in the 2 part Mystery Hind End Issues article that appeared in recent issues of PHD, and in even more detail on training clips at <https://www.mastersonmethod.com/training-videos.html>.

Rather than using up another page here to explain them, you might find it more beneficial to have it explained and see it done if you are interested in finding out more about what's going on with your horse's body, almost literally straight from the horse's mouth. These techniques are rewarding not only for the improvement you might see in performance in your horse, but also for the improvement in relationship that develops through this interaction on the level of the horse's own body language.

In my experience the type of accident described above can result in an injury that can be diagnosed and treated by a veterinarian, a secondary "hidden" lameness that might be helped with bodywork, or both. It's important that if an injury is found and is being treated by a veterinarian that the vet be consulted before doing any bodywork. Often bodywork is not recommended when an acute injury is involved. You don't want to interfere with any treatment the horse is receiving unless the vet approves it. Once the horse has recovered from an injury then bodywork may help restore movement by releasing residual tension, or tension resulting from compensation for the injury during recovery.

Jim Masterson, equine bodywork therapist for the 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2014 USEF Endurance Teams and for thousands of equine athletes competing on the AA level and in FEI World Cup, Pan American and World Equestrian Games competitions, teaches a unique method of equine bodywork to horse owners and therapists in which the practitioner learns to read and use the responses of the horse to touch to release tension in key junctions of the body that most affect performance. This is an effective and rewarding method of bodywork that anyone can learn to use to improve performance, and open new levels of communication and trust with the horse. He is author of the book and DVD **Beyond Horse Massage**, the DVD **Equine Massage For Performance Horses** and the new DVD **Dressage Movements Revealed**. Go to www.mastersonmethod.com for more information.

EZ DOES IT



EZFOUNT
AUTOMATIC

NO DIGGING. NO HASSLES. NO EASIER WAY.

Portability, fresh supply of water, simple hose hookup? The EZ does it! The all new EZ Fount delivers these great features and more and it's only available from Classic Equine by Ritchie.

Classic Equine
By *Ritchie*



Visit www.ClassicEquinebyRitchie.com for additional information.