



Equine Hamstring & Gluteal Pain

When dealing with a horse with hamstring and/or Gluteal pain there are many factors to consider. The horses' hamstrings and gluts are an integral part of your horses' ability to move. A major part of your horses' engine, the gluteals and hamstrings are huge muscles that make up your horses hip and hind leg. Your horses power comes from these large muscle groups and it is very easy to have them work so hard they sustain small injuries and hold muscle adhesions, that you as a rider might overlook as just some stiffness or slowness to warm up. Because these muscle groups consist of several individual muscles it's easy for the group to pick up the slack if one of the muscles has a restriction within. Due to the depth of the tissue as well, it's easy for riders to be lacking in proper warm up and cool down needed to keep this tissue in tip top shape. We often see horses that need veterinary maintenance on the hock joints and with any horse that has this therapy, or if you are considering that the horse may need maintenance there, hamstring soft tissue therapy is a must to release the huge muscles that are attached to the joints. As these large muscles gain pain, they shorten, as they shorten they not only affect the joints below in the hind leg but they can pull on the balance of the hip and the pelvis can rock back. This is a posture that can vary in severity but at its worst will be one of the factors in hunters bump (raised sacrum, rotated pelvis)

Tips for Working with Hamstring and Gluteal Pain:

- Have your horses postural balance checked.
- Check saddle, padding, hind leg boots and anything that affects the horses back and hip.
- Application of heat (can be used before and after work). Use 12-18 min of heat.
- Therapy products that increase circulation.
- Light to moderate massage using your hand or if the horse allows it a massage mitt to increase circulation and stimulate nerves.
- Use the Hip Rock, Quick Tail Pull and Tummy Lift technique to warm the tissue and mobilize the joints before work.
- Try not to force the back, hip, or hind leg into a static posture with training aids that force a shape, the muscle will not be able to have full range of motion and this will only encourage more stiffness.
- Use hind leg dangle bracelets to stimulate lift and reach.

Exercises:

Ensure your horse has an adequate warm up and cool down; muscles need that circulation to function at their best. Encourage the hind leg to move during this time and work through full range of motion.

Inhand work

- Poles
- Cavaletti
- Turn on haunches
- Labyrinth
- Hill work; up hills, down

- hills, and transverse (across) hills, gait transitions on the hill going up or down the grade.
- Backing: both straight line and circles
- Zig Zag laterals
- Figure 8 or small diameter serpentine

Ridden work

Quads and hip flexors often take a long time to warm up; taking the time to do some ground work will pay off. If you choose not to do the extra ground work, you will need to take a longer time in the saddle in the warm up phase, moving the hind end around, through full range of motion and really ensuring there is adequate circulation in the muscles to start the training phase of the ride.

- All of the above exercise can be done as well under saddle once tissue is warm.
- Flexion work; True flexion, Counter flexion, Serpentine, Spirals, Figure 8's
- Lateral work; Leg Yield, Haunches In and Out, Hip Yield, Half Pass, Side Pass.
- Transitions; both up and down as well as within the gait, gait transitions in a straight line and on a circle
- Backing; in a straight line and on a circle
- Roll Backs, Pirouette work in the walk or canter
- Gymnastic Jumping

Range of Motion Exercises

These should be performed before and after work, also safe for the horse that has been taken out of ridden work altogether.

- Rib/Hip Rock

- Quick Tail Pull
- Stifle Isometric
- Foreleg Lifted Rock Back
- Tummy Tuck

Stretches

- Tummy Tuck
- Stifle Isometric
- Rib/Hip Rock
- Hind Leg Stretch
- Tail Pull
- Lateral Hind End Tuck
- Quick Tail Pull
- Neck/Rib rock

Do you need to get on the fast track to getting your horses' fitness InHand?

I know how busy life can be, and I know we all want to do the best we can for our horse. If you don't have the time to do the complete program listed above with your horse, it's better to do a little work rather than skip it all. Choose one exercise a day from the exercises, range of motion and stretch list above. Even if you rotate through the above list of work on a daily basis, you will be making a positive change and helping your animal. Choose to do something every day, no matter how small will be a step forward in your horses' wellness program. When we work our horse in the peak and valley type of program with a ton of work for a few days and then nothing for a time, we may actually be doing more harm than good.

Steady work towards your horses' postural goals will bring the results you want, and the more time you can devote the quicker you will get there, however slow and steady will win the race as well.

****NOTE: Therapy is not a replacement for Veterinary Care.****

