

Inhand Equine Therapy



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Postural imbalance

After your horse's postural assessment it appears as though your horse shows an asymmetry. Normally with quadrupeds there will be a weakness shown in one area, and this weakness will shift throughout the body as the animal compensates. Be sure to check your horse's personalized notes to see if it is a right- or left-sided asymmetry, and adjust the following exercises accordingly. As an example, if your horse is underusing its right hip, this hip will normally sit a little lower in the body than the left hip. When traveling on a circle, the horse may try to pop this weaker right hip wide to the outside of the circle when it is on the outside during flexion, and it will drop the weaker right hip down to the inside of the circle when it is on the inside during flexion. Due to this imbalance there will generally be less gluteal muscle in the right hip, less quadriceps tone in the right leg and less lumbar tone in the back. There is often left oblique and left mid-back soreness from this posture as well. The horse may feel weaker in the right hind and often the rider will notice that the horse struggles with changes, lateral flexion, collection or engagement, and will notice a non-equal push from behind. Remember this is not lameness, but simply a case where the tissue on one side isn't as strong as the other and, as such, the body isn't working as efficiently as possible. This will create fatigue in the horse and, of course, fatigue is the primary cause of muscle and soft-tissue injury; fatigue can even be linked to some things otherwise thought of as unfortunate traumas from overuse of tissue. Coinciding with this hip posture to balance itself, the horse will roll the shoulder to the left to help to balance the drop in the right hip. The horse will then overuse the pectoral muscles on the left as well as the muscles at the base of the neck - both of these areas often become sore. One of the major issues that this posture creates, other than asymmetry in the body, is saddle imbalance. The wither pocket (where the tree point of the saddle is placed) on the left side will be cupped out due to the postural drop in the shoulder, so that even your well-fitted saddle can start to shift such that the pommel falls to the left and the cantle falls to the right. This affects how the rider's weight is distributed on the horse's back and also how the saddle places the rider's position. If you ever find that you have to step in your stirrup to straighten your saddle, it may be ultimately due to your horse's posture. This postural asymmetry can also travel forward into the neck, with the base of the neck shifting to the left with the shoulder, and the upper-neck shifting to the right to ultimately balance the base. A problem that starts at the back of the horse, as with this example, will make its way forward to the poll, and similarly a problem that starts at the poll will make its way back to the hip. The way to correct this posture is to address and focus on your horse's straightness. The horse must use all of its body parts equally. To simply say the horse is lazy behind will only allow the posture to continue in the horse's body, and as the horse starts to feel stiff in the neck it can appear that the horse has a neck issue when the true origin may be in another part of the body. Exercises: Poles, cavalettis, traversing hills, up and down hills, backing up, leg yield, side pass, flexion and counter-flexion, shoulder-in/out (as long as the horse holds the sternum up)

Paraspinal

Stifle Isometric

A-E Cookie Stretches

Clock Stretch

Hip Tuck

Tail Pull

Rocking Hip/Rib

Rocking Neck/Rib

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