



The Equine Touch

Editor:  
Janis Hobbs  
equinetouch@hotmail.net.au

Hi Everyone,

It's July, and now winter's cold has taken a grip. But don't let that stop you! Soon it will be **July 25th** and you know what that means? **International Equine Touch Day** when we take the time to remember Jock Ruddock, originator of The Equine Touch, and celebrate the occasion in our own way. Some perhaps will spend some special time on the day or over the weekend with their own horse or perhaps get together with other ETers, like ET students & practitioners the world over. How will you celebrate Jock's birthday this year? Email in your experience to share.

Keep in touch, Janis, Ed

### Inside this issue:

Anything Affects Everything (cont)	2
Northwinds Apollo from NZ to WEG 2014, Frnace	3
Rum's Life	3
Date & Sign aka Rosie	4
Course & Events Calendar	5

# ANZET NEWS

The Equine Touch™— Australia and New Zealand Newsletter

Volume 5 Issue 3

June-July, 2014

## Anything Affects Everything

By Jock Ruddock & Ivana Ruddock, MDV  
(From the Natural Horse Magazine Vol 8 Issue 2)

### Hooves

During our travels we continue to find that 'barefoot-mania' still remains the hottest and most controversial topic of discussion among horse owners and professionals worldwide.

There is an almost desperate need to exchange information about the hoof anatomy and function, the role of individual parts of the foot during movement as well as to understand the new approaches to barefoot trimming that are constantly emerging. Many horses that are returning to a natural barefoot status still suffer due to either neglect, ignorance, egotism or too radical a technique which leaves them crippled for years during this period of so called 'transitional rehabilitation'.



Balanced and properly functioning hooves play one of the most important roles in the well being of the holistic horse. As body workers we are very aware that balanced feet are the key to long term success of not only our Equine Touch but many equine therapies. It is a recognized fact that no musculoskeletal or skeletal realignment for that matter, will last if the feet are out of balance, are compensating for an imbalance. Or are in pain, not to mention the emotional tension and stress the horse is under.

We have to remember that just as hooves affect the body, so the body affects the hooves. If there are problems, for example pain in the muscles (from any origin), the compensation factor will compromise the balance and function of the hoof.

The continual landing on one part of the hoof instead of the flat (due to spasms or pain in the soft tissue for example) will concentrate concussion forces into that specific area, cause damage, and finally destroy living tissue, affecting the blood supply and causing pain. The posture of the animal will ultimately change, and to maintain 'balance' while in this compensation mode from the painful feet (or body) the horse will also make use of his head as a counter-balance in order to adjust his body weight to alleviate discomfort.

Holding the head constantly in certain positions in an effort to reduce the pain, however, will very quickly affect the chewing pattern and temporo-mandibular joint, and after only a short time the teeth will begin to exhibit pathological wear.

The training and performance of the horse will then come under direct compromise as the presence of hooks and points on the teeth in the mouth can cut painfully into the gums during attempts to turn or collect the horse. This in turn affects the safety of the rider as in addition to the physical difficulties, the emotions (which influence behaviors) can be extremely volatile. In trying to avoid this discomfort in his mouth the horse will endeavour to use his body differently, putting extra pressure onto compensating muscles and hooves. Now we are faced with a horse firmly locked into a vicious circle. This is only one scenario of how 'anything of influence' on the horse's body affects everything.

(Continued on page 2)

## Elements of Influence

There are many 'Elements of Influence': hooves, teeth, saddle, rider, training, nutrition and environment being the 'Equine Big Seven'. Each has an effect on the other, the hooves having an effect on any or all of the other six and any of the other six capable of having a direct or indirect effect on the hooves.

Working with many veterinarians, trimmers and farriers (or ferriers, from 'ferrum', iron) we were often asked to assist them with our Equine Touch techniques during periods of rehabilitation of the hoof or transition from shod to barefoot. We find that, especially during this 'adaption time', horses greatly benefit from this gentle bodywork and the Equine Touch itself is complementary to any intelligent trimming program. If the rehabilitation of the hoof is to be successful, however, all the 'Elements of Influence' must be taken into consideration, because natural environment, revised nutrition and dental care are as essential a part of this phase as is bodywork.

When making the change from shod to barefoot it is very important to address the hooves sensitively and carefully, trimming the feet non-invasively to allow the complete hoof to work physiologically without stress. This is the 'publicized' goal of many techniques but from practical experience the integrity of these goals is jeopardized all too often with too fast an approach or too radical and invasive a trim causing pain to the horse. No caring horse owner should accept the excuse from a barefoot trimmer that the pain and discomfort that they have caused is simply a transition that the horse must go through.

If a horse is in pain as a result of a barefoot trim, it is counterproductive. Removing hoof material while it is needed (destruction) causes sensitivity and pain, and undermines hoof structure, interrupting and discouraging hoof reconstruction. Such trimming can start the horse on a downward path that has, in some instances ended up, unfortunately in many instances, as being the direct cause of death to the horse. In the 'phase-of-change' from shod to barefoot it is most important to keep the horse relaxed in his maximum comfort zone. This will then encourage the healing and allow him the natural movement that is so crucial for optimum re-growth and rehabilitation of the hoof.

Addressing the body with a gentle hands-on technique is beneficial for soft tissue and helps re-educate the proprioceptors which, due to the changes, could be in confusion. At the Equine Touch Foundation we believe that a gentle non-invasive approach is more effective than extensive or deep techniques. Bodywork can be performed prior to trimming. Working with a relaxed, calm and cooperative horse will assist in the completion of a balanced trim, as the released muscles will not lie about the true posture or conformation of the horse. We have received many reports from owners and farriers that an Equine Touch session helped to calm down 'troubled horses' - even those who normally required sedation prior to their hooves being worked on.

Equine Touch bodywork performed as a body balancing session immediately after a trim. As well as perhaps an area-of-concern address of the legs, has been shown to have beneficial properties, assisting the horse in recognizing and accepting his new stance.

Equine Touch has a proven history of improving lymphatic and blood circulation, which is extremely important in the healing process. By stimulating the horse's nervous system, it brings awareness to the different parts of the body as well as encouraging muscle tone—especially if the horse is showing atrophy of the muscles. Equine Touch is also helpful in recovering the normal function of the fascia, which assists in healing and achieving proper function of the muscular system.

As a support and therapeutic aid while in this stage, Equine Touch has been performed with success on a four-day to weekly maintenance schedule. Equine Touch assists the horse by reducing any pain spiral present, balancing his body, encouraging relaxation and encouraging his own healing system to work at its maximum potential—to reach the ultimate goal: allowing the hooves and body to rehabilitate in harmony.

The ideal situation during the transition period is of course no discomfort at all, because should there be discomfort then the natural desire for balance and dispersion of pain will immediately bring compensation factor into play and thus the whole vicious circle begins all over again.

The Equine Touch in this situation is an excellent tool to use in conjunction with a non-invasive trim and as part of positive teamwork, because 'anything affects everything'.



**NZ News**

*Northwinds Apollo, wings his way to WEG 2014, France*



*Northwinds Apollo* has been selected for WEG\* endurance team for NZ.

This amazing little horse when I first started working on him could easily be mistaken for a kids Pony Club pony. Would barely be a hack in height, and carries plenty of condition even when at racing fitness. He has never really had many body issues, not serious ones, but Equine Touch has certainly helped him keep top form. He's done 2 x 100mile races this year and has come through them well.

All credit to Chris she does a fantastic job of fitness, preparation and caring for these guys' mental welfare as well as the physical. They are paddock kept, and she pays great attention to hoof balance, saddle fit etc. She is very perceptive when the horse indicates something is amiss and I am called in immediately.

I started treating Chris's team about 18 months ago; there was a filly with terrible scarring on her lumbar area from neglected rain scald, not from Chris's care. She was bucking when this tight and hot area of skin came under any pressure. Chris thought she would most likely never be rideable again. She would squeal and kick if you even looked like touching her back or hind end. After 6 months of regular work with all my tools including ET, *Nhadia* was back not only racing but placing in high level national endurance events. Sadly the Nationals were cancelled because of the weather or she may well have been joining her stable mate going to WEG. It's a great privilege to work with competent and sensitive trainers who constantly put their horses' welfare at the top of the list, and I will be watching with pride as little *Apollo* shows them all what a tough kiwi attitude can do.

*Janice Clyma, (ET Instructor)*

\* WEG World Equestrian Games

*Rum's life*

Rose and I were loaded onto the float...I wondered what was in store. We ended up at the equine dentist visiting Horsham, (Victoria). Our human, Donna, did these nice little moves all over my body including my head and face and I felt quite relaxed in that new environment. Wasn't even too fussed about having my teeth "done". Neither was Rose. The dentist was pleased that we were so calm during the whole thing. So was Donna.

Just recently I had another float ride, again to Horsham, but this time I ended up at the Vaulting workshop for RDA coaches. Turns out I had been volunteered to try out as a vaulting horse. I watched *Calico* the first day when I had a turn in the indoor arena. She has been doing this for a while now and knows to keep a steady pace on the lunge and respond to the voice cues from her human in the middle of the circle, not to all the other humans scampering about. The next day it was my turn. At first it was a bit of a challenge having a few elf-like figures approaching me and jumping up and down but I soon became used to it and then one by one, they took turns to leap onto my back and create poses which they would change every few seconds .... And then they would dismount. When they had all had a turn the training session came to an end and they all gathered around me and made such a fuss over me stroking me and speaking



Donna giving *Rum* an ET body balance; *Calico* in the background, just "chilling" after her ET session.



Tina, vaulting coach, and the vaulters thanking *Rum* after his first vaulting session.

soothingly to me. I felt quite surprised, and really special!

Then both *Calico* and I had another one of those sessions when the human does little moves all over the body to relax you. Donna worked on me again. I liked it, and I think she's getting even better at it.

From *Rum*, Clydie X

## Your Say

## Date and Sign ("Rosie")

By Denise McMasters. Level 2 ET

I am lucky enough to have a brother-in-law who trains racehorses. He is open to the idea of Equine Touch, so I get to practise on them whenever I want! (This is coming in handy for my assessments).

I think I have worked on about ten or so and all have some similarities. Often they are "twitchy" in their wither areas, and also forequarters is the area of concern I do most ... which is different to what I thought when I started as I had assumed it would be hamstrings.

It is quite amazing to work on them the first time, they don't really sleep like my own paddock ornaments do as they are in a work environment. I am there during morning training, so it is a busy time of day for the horses, so sleep is something that happens once the bustle has died down and they are left alone for a few hours. What they do instead of sleep is chew, yawn and quite often cat stretch or the horse version of "downward dog" yoga pose. I also get shaking their bodies and legs being stretched out.

One of my favourite racehorses is Date and Sign (aka Rosie). Rosie is getting on in her career and is a bit of a tough girl, with it often reported she was about to bite or at the least pulls faces and is generally a bit menacing in attitude. She has had quite a bit of trouble with knees – since she was broken in – and regularly is injected in the area to help. She finds it uncomfortable to put a lot of weight on one leg, so hence is reluctant to lift her legs (not sure if it is weight on one leg, or that the one knee gets bent when picking it up, but I think weight on one leg as she will hold the leg up but only for a short time). Because of this I do not pick her feet up for branding anymore as I know it makes her very uncomfortable and sore, so decided that I would prefer her to have a pleasant experience rather than me follow the "rules." (One great thing about ET is we are encouraged to do what is right for the horse).



The first time I did Rosie, she did an ENOURMOUS stretch and I was told that her track rider thought she moved really well the next day. I try to do her the day after she races and would love to do her beforehand too but unfortunately racing rules prevent any bodywork being done in the 24 hours beforehand!

Rosie has had regular sessions every 7-10 days since and she is probably the first horse I have worked on who "tells" me where she wants attention. I often get her forehead thrust at me and if you don't do any moves she keeps moving around and putting her head or body in the way until you do. Even when I walk past her stable she will push her head out as if to say "Excuse me... were you walking past without touching me?" Another area she "presents" to me is her wither and shoulder, and ribs.

One day I did a session with her and thought she was a bit sore in her last few ribs and above her flank, then found a chiro was coming and he told my brother-in-law she had ribs and hip out and did his thing. I was happy to know that my observations were similar to someone who has been working on horses for many years. The chiro also

encouraged my brother-in-law to keep getting ET done as it will work together with his chiro stuff.

All the TB's are interesting and it is great to actually be able to see and feel the muscle, which is hidden under layers on my horses. The track riders often comment that they are going really well the next day; (not sure they have clicked that it is, at least in part, due to ET). Sometimes the timing doesn't work out and I have sometimes done a horse only to discover it is about to go out for its morning ride, but they seem to be still getting some good effects as they go out looking very spritely and moving smoothly and again the riders usually say they were pretty good.

Another interesting aside is my teenage daughter who is a bit "Mum's weird ET stuff" has started to come around as she is often my official holder at the racetrack. (That and her own horse has some soundness issues and our vet told her to let me do ET as much as possible)... She now notices those small things she probably didn't before, such as chewing and sleepy eyes... as well as those more impressive things like cat stretches. She has even asked me to do a few sessions with her two horses, so that has been a "yay" moment for me!

Denise McMasters, Level 2 ET, Tasmania

**Next ET courses is TAS in September....**

Level 1 ET Sept 12-14; Level 2 ET Sept 13-15, 2014.

Anyone wanting to join us please email me as soon as possible on [equinetouch@hotmail.net.au](mailto:equinetouch@hotmail.net.au) Janis, Ed

**Look! →**