

Positively influence your horses musculoskeletal health

BY ADDING THESE THINGS
TODAY

one pole a day

Place a pole or log somewhere you walk daily and its already done! This great all rounder exercise increases recruitment of the core muscles & encourages muscle engagement in hip flexion and pelvic stability. Improves suppleness and flexibility through the shoulder, elbow, hip, stifle and hock.

mount by leg up

To avoid putting unwanted pressure on your horses spine, lower neck and the muscle that reaches as far back as the lumbar area, mounting by leg up or from a tall mounting block (with someone holding the opposing stirrup) is the most preferred method. Mounting from both sides will elevate your horses muscle health even further by avoiding muscle atrophy on a preferred side.

back lift exercise

Introduce to your daily routine for a healthy back and good posture. Also known as the tummy tuck this is a good exercise to stimulate the abdominal muscles. Use your fingertips to scratch the belly under the wither area. Using your fingertips drag the skin upwards to see a slight lift/engagement of the muscles in the back.

feed from the floor

There are many benefits for feeding your horses forage on the floor; its good for the back as the thoracic vertebrae are in the best possible alignment and stimulates the supporting muscles, helping to carry the weight of a rider. A lowered head puts the nervous system into rest and digest. Respiratory and digestive systems will be working at their best.

extend your warm-up

Get the synovial fluid flowing efficiently to protect joints. Without a sufficient flow joints can rub against each other and cause irreparable damage. Begin in hand (on both reins) by walking the arena twice. Follow with 3 x 10m circles and a minimum of 10 steps in back up. Once Mounted – Continue in walk for 15-20 minutes with a variation of lateral and bending exercises. A short trot, into canter and back to trot will give you a better flow and good transition work.

ride in 2 point position

Being a skilled or "light" rider does not impact the ground force reaction or limb loading for a horse. So to maintain a healthy and stable back for longer try to carry out some of your session in 2-point position. Often used in rehabilitation it has been proven that this can improve the biomechanical effect on the back, as pressure from the saddle and rider are at their lowest.

do nothing

Observing your horse in the field on a regular basis, finding what they do through choice and how they move can be invaluable information to share with your team of practitioners, farriers, bodyworkers etc.