

# Equine Sports Therapy

## Lisa's Story

By Kristen Giglio

Have you ever looked into a horse's eyes and just known that there was something very special about them. That is how Lisa has touched anyone who came into contact with her...she was a bright spirit. Lisa's unique personality is what you notice from the first moment that you lay eyes on her. She was honestly the sweetest, friendliest, most gentle horse that you will ever meet, despite her shortcomings and painful past.

Lisa was shipped from up island as an “add on” to a horse that was being sent down on a trial basis. As soon as she walked off the trailer you could see that Lisa was in no shape for being ridden and had suffered irreversible neglect. Lisa was malnourished and under weight by at least 200 pounds due to poor nutrition and an absent worming schedule. Not to mention the rain rot; patchy hair loss due to chronic exposure to heavy rain conditions, and mud fever; caused by poor living conditions creating constant painful, inflamed skin along the back of the pastern. Upon further examination Lisa had a progressive mechanical founder on both hooves due to a shoeing schedule that did not exist. Founder rings were visible on both hooves but more significantly on her right hoof. The laminae was severely damaged and starting to separate from her hoof wall. There was also a concern that her coffin bone would start to put excess pressure on the sole of her hooves causing her to completely founder.

Since Lisa was no longer under the care of her owner, who didn't want to have her returned, she received



a physical exam from a Vet to determine what else was going on with this poor young mare. The Vet stated that Lisa had suffered from a major pelvic and lower back injury and her whole right side was dropped comparatively to her left. I was then asked to work with Lisa and try to rehab her if at all possible. The prognosis was guarded.

My first examination was March 27th. Surprisingly Lisa, despite her broken body had an adequate range of motion on both her front and hind end. However she was reluctant to put any unneeded weight on her



front end, due to the pain she was experiencing from her front hooves. When assessing her pelvis and lower back initially she was not reactive, but the area presented itself with excessive heat and static. The only work I could do at this point was energy work. After feeling the heat start to disappear and an intense pulse in my hand. I re-assessed the area, Lisa winced in pain. I had opened her meridians, therefore she was able to be reactive to stimulus. Her shu points were more sensitive showing me how unbalanced; internally, she was. Lisa's right tuber coxae, part of hip was rotated cranially (forward) and dorsally (down), her left sacral area (lower back) was elevated and the head of her tail had edema (fluid). The right side of Lisa's wither was dropped and the left was elevated. All of these findings indicated trauma and Lisa was experiencing intense body pain, so much that she would not allow for anything more than for me to just hold my hands over each area to help release a stagnant energy build up and encourage circulation to the area. That was all I was able to do at this point.

My second visit was March 30th. Lisa's body was much less reactive and I was told she had been moving better. Today I was able to do energy work and very light massage. She was still very painful but much more receptive to the treatment. Lisa was still vastly underweight so it was recommended to have her teeth floated to eliminate that as a potential reason for her weight problems. At this point Lisa had also been dewormed with three different rotations of wormer. Upon the recommendations of the

Vet, Lisa had 2 tubes of Panacur for five days to try and rid her of her overgrowth of parasites. It was later determined that she had a parasite resistance causing nutritional absorption dysfunction.

April 4th was my next treatment. I was able to work all her muscle with a much deeper massage. Lisa's back no longer had heat and the fluid in her tail had gone down. She was carrying herself better and her hoof placement was steadier. But she was still a long way from better. Her hooves were still a concern as was her broken body.

I wanted to see Lisa sooner because of the success of her last treatment. I was also told that she was feeling much better and had been more active and playful. April 6th was her next treatment. Lisa back shu points were much better, not as sensitive or reactive. This treatment Lisa also allowed for even deeper work, as her muscles were not as tight and her withers were starting to feel more asymmetrical. Her range of motion, along with her stride, she was able to track up better and carry herself, was showing improvement.

April 11th, was Lisa's next treatment. Again she seemed to progress, better muscle tone, less tension. She eyes were softer indicating less pain, however her feet were still a concern and no amount of treatment could help with that because of how far her founder was allowed to progress. Lisa showed a great life force and seemed determined to get better, and after each treatment she seemed just a little better.

April 18th, I had left her for a week to see whether Lisa continued to show improvement, or if she was really just getting by with the treatments. Today she was very sore and agitated. Her eyes were wild and she did not really want for me to touch her. Back to energy work, a decline in progress, this was concerning. My concern at this point was that Lisa had suffered and compensated for so long with a painful, unbalanced, crooked body that she was unable to support her body's framework once her muscles were able to relax.

On April 21st I stopped in to check on Lisa. She was not happy, very sore and reactive. I did a brief energy session in which she was fidgety and kicked out a few times, which was not like her at all.

April 24th, my more than weekly trip to the barn. I was told since Saturday she was miserable, didn't want to be touched and was very feisty. Lisa's condition had declined. She was achy again, had edema along her gluteal area and was very painful. Her eyes showed great pain and agitation. The Vet was to come out on Friday and reassess her.

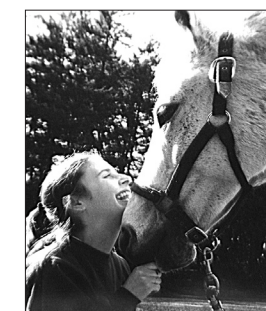
The news was not good and had us all very upset. Lisa's founder had worsened so much so that she was unresponsive to the hoof tester, meaning complete nerve damage. It was really unfair for her to be kept alive in such pain and discomfort.



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My hope with Lisa's story is to bring awareness to the importance of proper care of your horse. Leaving a horse out on pasture to live its life is not in the best interest of any horse. We have domesticated horses, and with that we must be aware of the upkeep, maintenance and prevention that is required. A proper trimming/deworming program, an adequate feed and vet schedule is what is required to prevent such a tragic ending to a life that could have been saved, had Lisa had had these basic necessities.

I know that Lisa has really touched many lives in the short time we had all known her. I wanted to acknowledge Liesl Fulton, an incredible horsewoman, for all the time and total commitment that she provided for Lisa while under her care. And to all the kids at Rancho Relaxo for showing Lisa what unconditional love was. May her memory stay with us and I hope that we will always continue to learn from her.



*Kristen Giglio is a Certified Equine Therapist and Animal Health Veterinary Technician. She owns/operates Advanced Connections Equine Therapy and offers such services as massage therapy, magnotherapy, trigger point therapy, applied kinesiology, saddle fitting and acupuncture. Contact Kristen at (250)*

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