

# Equine Sports Therapy To Prevent and Maintain

By Kristen Giglio



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How is your horse's physical and mental health? As we progress further into summer and the show season, we need to remember that our horses are athletes and will require maintenance therapy as we ask more of them, whether it be at a show or just a long trail ride. Many people assume that if a horse appears sound, there must be no compensations or weak areas. This assumption is often incorrect. That is why it is very important to prevent and maintain. Having an Equine Therapist out to do a routine overview of your horse is the best approach to injury prevention and to assess if muscle imbalances are present. Equine Therapy has been proven to promote natural healing and body balance. It is beneficial to both your horses' physical and mental health.

Massage is an excellent diagnostic tool as it enables you to feel and detect problems much sooner

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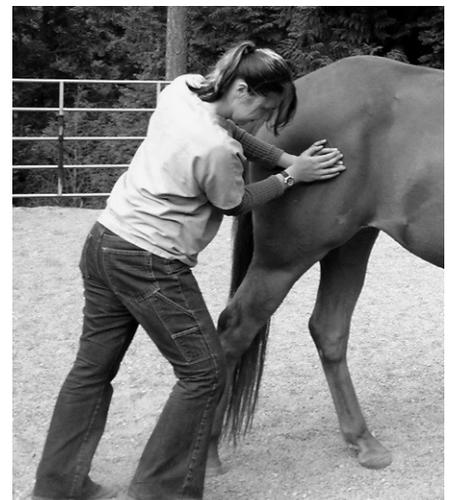
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than any abnormalities and problems can be visibly seen. Massage therapy is the most effective way to help maintain your horse's optimal performance. As a whole it helps to affect your horse body by:

Injury prevention - alleviating muscle imbalances before they becomes a secondary problem. Aiding in the breakdown of muscle

knots and scar tissue - by increasing blood flow to the weakened area. Assists in the relief and treatment of muscle fatigue and atrophy. Helps to tone muscles and maintain anatomical structure and strength. Improves movement by creating better flexibility. Better mental health - because of the reduction of tension and pain. Often I see horses that have been in discomfort for months before they





present themselves as being sore and unbalanced. In cases like this, an initial weakness can multiply into many imbalances causing a domino affect the longer that your horse is asked to work in an undesirable body balance. In this situation correcting the problem takes a significant amount more time. If your horse had preventive work done, it does just that, prevent any muscle weaknesses or body imbalances before they become an issue and start to affect your horses' soundness and overall wellbeing. Most athletes, after a game or tournament, receive therapy to assess their body condition after such a strenuous exertion. This is done so their body is able to perform at its best to withstand what is asked of

it. Because they can not speak for themselves and it is their natural instinct to compensate for weaknesses, our horse athletes require the same attention. After a show or intense work schedule use preventive therapy. An Equine Therapist will be able to detect any imbalances before extreme compensations begin to affect their body. Although you may not see any tension, it may be there. Most people don't recognize it until a problem is noted and their horse is "off." If your horse is having problems bending, carrying and balancing your weight, knocking rails or even stiff in a particular direction, an Equine Therapist can balance your horse's body and maintain its performance and optimal body struc-

ture. I was called out to see a horse last week for a routine preventive treatment; everything, as the owner saw and felt was going well. This horse was carrying out its job. But upon assessment, it had a sig-

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*Because they cannot speak for themselves, our horse athletes should receive the same attention that human athletes get.*

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nificant amount of tension present in its muscles and overall body. After one treatment, the owner could feel the difference in how the horse carried itself, stride, range of motion, and its overall performance. In detecting such a slight weakness we were able to address the problem, prevent any progressive compensations and maintain an ideal body balance. If you are asking more of your horse or maybe have never had an Equine Therapist out to overview your horse, it is definitely something to consider. We love our horse and put a lot of time and training into their performance. Make plans to include a routine massage as part of your horse's health schedule. 