

Healing Hands for Horses

by Joyce Bower, E.S.M.T.

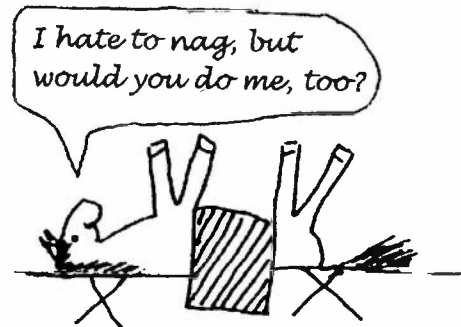
While "reaching out to touch someone," as the commercial advises, we want to be sure to include our animal friends. Horses especially need healing touch, for two reasons: because they are the world's greatest athletes, and because they are routinely subjected to uses and lifestyles for which they are not made. Few people realize that horses are not structured for carrying riders, jumping, twisting, racing repeatedly at extreme speeds or living in confinement.

The ever-practical horse world is beginning to explore the benefits of natural healing modalities as a complement to veterinary care. The benefits of adjunct modalities for horses are:

- (1) freedom from pain,
- (2) enhancement of the horse's focus and willingness by means of relaxation and freedom from pain,
- (3) maximization of performance by means of balanced gait and free movement,
- (4) improvement of recovery from intense activity or injury by means of improved circulation and release of muscle spasm and micro spasm, and
- (5) reduction of veterinary costs and extension of the useful life of the horse by recognition and elimination of small problems before they become big ones.

Horses are "wired" differently than humans, and are more complicated to deal with due to variations in breed and training, complex and varied gait patterns, and the obvious factors of weight, build and communication. Furthermore a degree of danger must be recognized at all times, and an equine bodyworker needs to know how to behave around a horse.

Here is a wonderfully effective yet simple system of energy work for horses which integrates aspects of Touch For Health™, Applied Kinesiology, Applied Physiology™, and Acu-Tone™ (my own acupressure system). This system, *Natural Touch For Horses™*, is suitable for both lay people and



professionals, given a basic knowledge of the lay person of how to be around horses with safety for self and horse. A *Natural Touch For Horses* session includes INCREASE self-balancing technique, cranial/sacral technique, muscle testing of equines, energy balancing technique, meridian tracing of equine meridians, reactive muscle techniques, Laminitis ("Founder") and Bowed Tendon techniques, and mouth techniques for proprioception, stress and pain.

Natural Touch For Horses™

Step 1: INCREASE™ Technique (Integral Circuit Rejuvenator And Self-balance™). Everyone who will be handling the horse should first clear and balance your own circuits, as imbalances in your energies could alter results of muscle tests or limit the effectiveness of some techniques. This breath-based technique works in all levels of bioenergy. It is quick and effective and, used daily, will gradually improve your circuits. Effects last up to one hour and may be reestablished by tapping your thymus three times. (Ref. 1) When working on a series of horses use INCREASE before the first, then rebalance before each subsequent horse with the thymus tap. (Ref. 1)

Directions:

(Not affected by right/left-handedness)

1. Bunch tips of first three fingers and thumb of left hand. (Ref. 2) Point tips into the area mid-way between bottom of sternum

and navel. (Ref.3) Use your right fingers (not palm) to close left nostril. Breathe through right nostril 5 times with eyes *closed*.

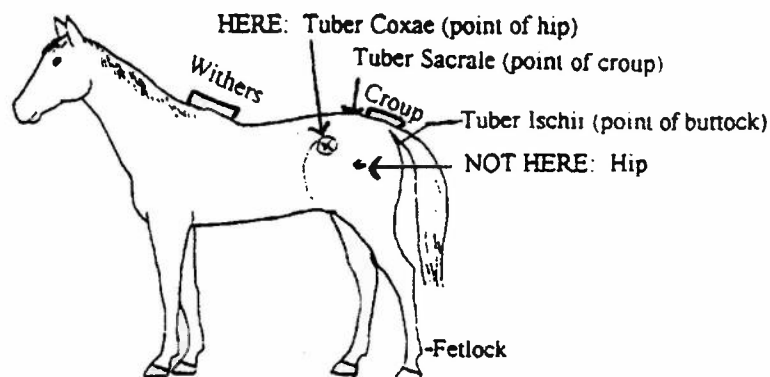
Switch hands and repeat, closing right nostril and breathing 5 times through left with eyes *closed*.

2. Repeat the above with eyes *open*.
3. Breathe 10 times through open mouth with eyes *closed*.
Repeat with eyes *open*.
4. Bunch fingers of right hand as above. Point *tips* into area between and slightly above tops of eyebrows. Place left hand palmar over navel. Breathe normally for 30 seconds. Time precisely, right to the second. (*Or do this step with the hands reversed -- whichever feels right -- but only do it one way.*)
5. *Challenge* to see if correction is sufficient: Tap thymus (Ref 1) firmly 5 times. Inhale, hold breath 1 minute. Difficulty in holding breath indicates a need to repeat INCREASE. Repeat up to 2 times.

Step 2: Acu-Tone Cranial/Sacral Technique™ This technique should be performed routinely on all horses. It will stabilize blood pressure and realign ligaments and tendons underlying the pelvis, and will help relieve psoas and sciatic problems, reset proprioceptors for the cranium, and more.

Directions

1. Identify horse's dominant *side* by determining its dominant eye, as follows: Hold your thumbs and forefingers in circles around your eyes. Close one eye and look at the horse straight on (horse's head must be rather still), noting which of the horse's eyes is looking into yours. Repeat with *your* other eye. The horse's eye which looks into both of yours is its dominant eye, on its dominant side.
2. Begin on horse's NON-dominant side. Stand near its hip, your surrogate near its head, both *facing* the horse. You and your



surrogate connect (hold hands or whatever) so that you conduct energy as if you were one person, and try to breathe in unison for the remainder of this procedure.

3. Both inhaling through your *noses*, place *your* hand nearest horse's tail palmar over its hip bone (tuber coxae).
4. Exhaling through your *mouths*, surrogate place hand nearest horse's head palmar, lateral to (behind) its eye, with *outer* edge of hand at corner of eye (hand will be vertical, fingers pointing up).
5. *Maintaining all contacts*: Inhale through your noses, hold breath as long as comfortable, exhale through your mouths, for 3 breath cycles. Move your hand from hip bone to croup placing it palmar alongside--not on--the spine (at any angle), and repeat the 3-breath cycle.
6. Move to horse's dominant side and repeat steps 2-5.

Step 3: Surrogate test. Due to the considerable differences between horse and human systems, this phase will not imitate a TFH surrogate-test of another person. **For your safety and the horse's if you are untrained in manipulating a horse's -- limbs you may omit this step without sacrificing effectiveness.** *If you omit muscle testing, do all of the corrections in Steps 4-6.*

Directions:

1. Choose one or two simple muscle tests to use with your surrogate such as Supraspinatus and Anterior Deltoid, making sure they test strong on both

sides. You will use only these *indicator* muscles for surrogate testing.

2. Observe the horse both standing and moving--its structure, posture and gait. Using your observation, veterinary diagnosis, behavioral changes and any other relevant factors, identify which muscles might be involved in its problems.
3. Surrogate test the suspect muscles *as a group*. Take each through its range of motion one time, one after the other *within six seconds* of each other (include both sides of the horse as applicable), then surrogate-test *within six seconds* of the last muscle. To surrogate test -- either of you place your hand nearest the horse palmar on the horse anywhere except on a suspect muscle or related meridian; test surrogate's indicator muscle(s). If indicator doesn't give, try testing the opposing muscles or touching a sore area or joint and testing. If the indicator gives, you have successfully identified problem muscles--go to Step 4. If the indicator does *not* give, you have not been able to identify problem muscles but can correct the horse's energies equally well. Perform all corrections, beginning with Step 4. (Ref. 4)

Step 4: Acu-Tone Energy Balancing Technique.TM This technique should be performed routinely on all horses. It restores most imbalances and helps remove their underlying causes. Stand to horse's left near its tail with your left shoulder to the horse, facing *caudal*. Reach across your body with your right hand and place it palmar on the horse's rump under its tail (tuber ischii), making as much contact as possible without applying pressure. Hold the contact for 3 normal breath cycles. This technique is done from the horse's left side only.

Retest the muscles as in Step 3. If the indicator now tests strong, skip to Step 7. If still weak go to Step 5.

Step 5: "Flush" the associated meridians. Use any appropriate text to locate equine meridians, and trace each backward then forward, three sets.

Some equine muscles are part of TFH but are on different meridians in horses, some are part of TFH but their meridians are not, some are not part of TFH but their meridians are, and some are on more than one meridian. The equine Governing Meridian includes Trapezius, Rhomboids, Semitendinosus, all of Facia Lata, and tendons. Central Meridian includes all of Pectoralis, Semimembranosus, and ligaments and tendons *beneath* the pelvis and scapula.

Some muscles which are commonly involved in equine problems are on a different *type* of meridian, which cannot be traced. There are eight such meridians--four Yin and four Yang. Indicator muscles for the four Yin meridians are Longissimus Dorsi/Longissimus Costarum, Serratus Thoracis, all Hamstrings (though part are on Central and Governing), and all Quadriceps. Indicator muscles for the four Yang meridians are Infraspinus, Multifidus Cervicus, Braciocephalicus, and Rectus Capitis Lateralis. If the *yin* are "out," look to *how the horse has been worked* for underlying causes. If the *yang* are "out," look to the horse's *diet* for underlying causes.

Retest the muscles. If they test strong skip to Step 7. If circuits are still out, reactivity is indicated go to Step 6.

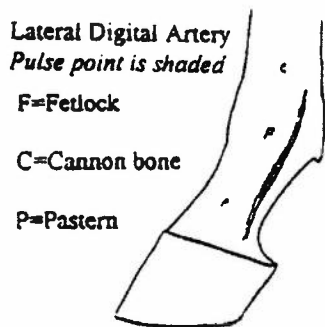
Step 6: Acu-Tone Reactive Muscle Techniques.TM Activate the TFH Neuro-Lymphatic Reflex Points for each muscle **WHILE** taking it through its range of motion three times. Use a lot of fingers and cover a lot of area, being more gentle and slow than with humans -- horses are very sensitive. The correction achieved in this way is not permanent but can become permanent if repeated as needed, and it does not risk creating additional problems.

If the NL Reflex points are unknown, use flat of hand to make wide, sweeping circles *counterclockwise* over horse's back and sides *between* (not including) withers and croup. Do not retrace circles or repeat an area, but overlapping is ok. Connect circles in a flow rather than lifting hand between every circle. Do both sides of body.

Retest. *If corrections have not been achieved, the problem is not energy based and a different mode of therapy is needed.*

Step 7: Laminitis and Bowed Tendon Techniques. Two severe problems affecting horses' feet and limbs are laminitis ("founder"), and bowed tendons.

One of the first signs of **laminitis** is for a horse to stand leaning backward, taking its weight off its front feet. This ailment mostly affects stabled horses. It is weather and diet related, caused by failure to adapt the horse's diet to the level of moisture in the air. To help heal laminitis, soak the horse's feet by wetting compresses of standard horse wrap with 1 part white vinegar to 4 parts *cold* (but not icy) water and wrapping the feet *including the soles*. For best results rewet the compresses three times a day. Keep the horse confined except for veterinarian-recommended walking keep compresses on during walking. You should see benefits in three days; the maximum duration is five days. In cold weather the barn should be heated because of the wet bandages.

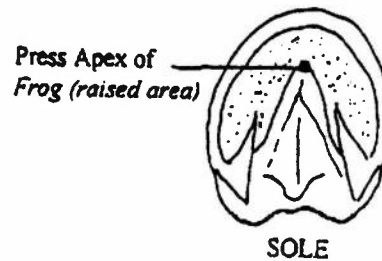


Bowed Tendon, a tendonitis or thickening of a superficial and/or deep digital flexor tendon, can be helped to heal as follows. This technique must be done at least five times a week to get real results, and results may take 10-12 weeks. For best results do it every day. Do *not* pick the foot up for Parts 1 and 2:

1. Bowed tendon reduces the strength of the pulse in the pastern. For the purpose of comparison, check the *strength* (not the rate) of the pulse in the *lateral* digital artery. Place three fingers (not your thumb) just below the fetlock on the *outside* of the pastern. The pulse may be felt more easily if you place your thumb

on the opposite (medial) side. You will need to keep your fingers in place at least 45 seconds, as horses have a *very* slow pulse rate. Compare the pulse to that of another foot.

2. Grasp the fetlock joint from behind and *gently* press the joint's inner and outer (medial and lateral) surfaces simultaneously, between your thumb and fingers. Press for a count of three, release for three--four times or more until you feel the strength of the pulse increase (keep checking). Do this a maximum of ten to twelve times.



3. Lift the foot and press apex of frog firmly with three fingers; hold the pressure for 3 of your normal breath cycles.
4. Repeat Step 2. The arterial pulse will respond quicker than the first time.
5. Repeat Step 3, then Step 2.
6. Keep horse's feet very clean and its water very pure; this condition is aggravated by bacteria.

Step 8: Mouth work. End your Natural Touch session with mouth work to help reset proprioceptors, and to help the horse's emotional state (horse's do not have the TFH *Emotional Stress Release Points*): Prop the horse's mouth open with a hard rubber dowel 6 inches wider than its mouth. *Gently* press the soft palate, in the center of where the bit goes, for a count of 3, release for 3 to 10 times. If the above point is sore, finish with T-TOUCH™ circles refer to the work of Linda Tellington-Jones for directions. This technique also helps relieve tooth pain when done anywhere in the mouth.

These *Natural Touch* techniques are safe, gentle and effective and do not require a specialized knowledge of equine anatomy. You will enjoy lending a healing hand where

it is so needed, and the horse will thank you and look forward to your touch. Be sure to protect both yourself and the horse in terms of *safe handling* of these powerful, sensitive animals. Greenhorns should take a few lessons in horsemanship before attempting to work on horses, advising the instructor of your goal so he or she can guide the parameters of your lessons for this purpose. Wear suitable shoes: sturdier is better, no open toes; avoid metal-reinforced toes.

I hope that with these simple directions and your common sense and good heart, you will enjoy having *healing hands for horses*.

References:

1. Thymus is located under slight hump in sternum at level of 2nd rib. Firmly tap sternum over it 3 times. Can be repeated as needed. (Thymus tap excluded from this copyright; no known copyright.)
2. The ends of your fingers should meet in the same plane, so that if you pointed

them into a board all four fingertips would touch equally.

3. The front of the hand is electrically positive, the back negative. The tips are neutral.
4. Applied Physiology surrogate testing technique used courtesy of Richard Utt.

Joyce Bower, developer of Acu-Tone and Natural Touch For Horses, is a certified equine sports massage therapist, TFH instructor and writer with a practice in horses and companion animals. Her background includes three years handling small wild animals as docent/interpreter/teacher for a science center. For additional information write to Joyce at
P.O. Box 1263,
Rancho Cordova, CA 95741-1263,
or call (916) 368-6223.

Copyright and trademarks Joyce Bower 1994, 1995, 1996.