

Equine Holistic Health

Tip of the Month

Tequila & Sylvia – A tale of having faith

Tequila is an Irish Sports Horse who in January, while training at Elementary Level Dressage, developed slight lameness in her left fore limb. Despite rest, Tequila's lameness worsened. Her partner, Sylvia was determined to find out what was causing Tequila to be lame and began to search for an answer and a resolution. She did not realise how long it would take her to achieve her aim, but was prepared to give her partner, Tequila, all chances.

From Late January through to December Sylvia enlisted the services of many practitioners including equine physiotherapists, veterinary & holistic veterinary practitioners, an animal manipulator and a Deep Tissue Therapist. At Werribee Veterinary Hospital Tequila had multiple tests performed including flexion tests, x-rays, ultrasound and scintigraphy. A thermography scan was also performed prior to attendance at Werribee.

The various practitioners identified a number of problems with Tequila, including "a pulled muscle" in her hind leg, a stifle problem, bony issues in her knees, Poll malalignment, nerve entrapment in the left shoulder and soft tissue injury of the same area. The test performed at Werribee did not show any definitive diagnosis.

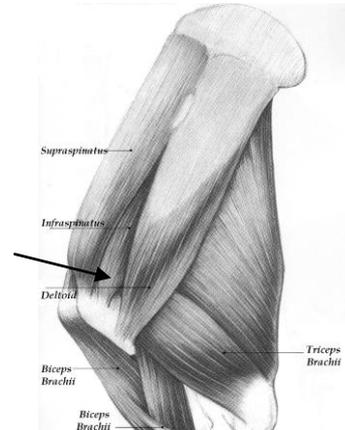
Tequila continued to worsen despite all instructions given by the various practitioners being followed. Sylvia remained unsure as to what the problem was and how to go about getting Tequila on the road to recovery.

In the following June Sylvia rang me to ask if I could help – she felt this was the last chance for Tequila as all other avenues had been tried.

Tequila was not fully weight bearing on her left forelimb, and in movement showed reduced length of stride and reduced stance phase in the same leg.

On palpation I could feel extreme generalised tension through out both shoulders, left side of neck, back and loin. This was treated with sports massage giving good resolution. On the second treatment we noted that Tequila's mood had lifted – a change that continued on an upward spiral as she returned to her working partnership with Sylvia. The muscle tension had reduced significantly and adhesions between the muscular attachments at the base of the scapula could be easily palpated. (see diagram) these "stuck muscles" were restricting movement of the shoulder joint.

Sylvia and I devised a plan including massage, diet, tissue salts and a progressive exercise program that was possible and probable within Sylvia's time limits.



Our aim was to enhance the range of movement of the shoulder joint, remind Tequila how to move evenly and to regain the rider and horse partnership of 18 months ago.

Our exercise program began with various configurations of poles for Tequila to negotiate while working in hand. Over time the configurations became more complex and Tequila was to negotiate them both in hand and under saddle. Gymnastic jumping, hill work, road work, dressage training and cross country fun were included in the routine. We massaged Tequila anywhere from twice per week to once every 3 – 4 weeks, as dictated by her symptoms. Sylvia studied massage with The Australian College of Animal Tactile Therapy and now massages Tequila before and after work, and once per month Tequila is given a full body massage.

Tequila returned to dressage training the following January, under a progressively loaded program that continues to utilise gymnastic jumping, hill work, road and ground work. Tequila spends about one day per week doing traditional dressage training, this has significantly enhanced her dressage ability. Mid that year Sylvia and Tequila competed in their first EFA elementary tests since the injury and won both classes entered. In a note following these tests Sylvia thanked me saying "Our Saviour – Tequila and I are eternally grateful to you for helping Tequila get to where she is today...enjoying life again."

As a practitioner I know Tequila would not have returned to this level of work without such a dedicated owner. It took Sylvia 20 – 40 minutes, 4 times a week and a lot of planning to achieve such a great outcome. In our equine care we can all learn a lot from Sylvia's determination, respect, partnership, sense of responsibility and logic that would not let her give up in her search for an answer. May you all give your horses the same chance.

Until next time take care of yourselves and your equine friends
Christine