

# *Sports Therapy for Horses*

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Sports Therapy includes a number of activities including:

1. Massage to increase blood circulation and enhance mobility of joints
2. Stretches to assist in elongating and maintaining muscle elasticity
3. Lymphatic drainage to enhance removal of toxins
4. Rehabilitative exercises to reduce habitual patterns of movement and rebuild strength following sports related injury.

In conjunction with this the Equine Sports Therapists will assess and provide advice on saddle fit to reduce the onset of problems that will limit performance. Combining this with the above techniques the therapist is able to encourage restoration and maintenance of muscle function, and keep your horse performing at their best for their sports career

## *What is Sports Massage, and when is it used?*

Sports Massage involves specific massage techniques used to improve the physical performance of horses. These techniques are employed before, after and between work sessions.

### *Before Work:*

- Muscles, tendons, joints, nervous system and the vascular system are stimulated in preparation for work.

### *After work:*

- Waste removal is assisted, reducing muscle pain and stiffness.
- By relaxing both body and mind, your horse is truly rewarded.

### *Between work sessions*

- Aids the horse to recover from sports related injury.
- Assists to reduce boredom and behaviour problems.
- Increases the horses' awareness of their physical capabilities, and
- Decreases movement restrictions due to tight muscles and tendons.

### *Would your horse benefit from the use of an Equine Sports Therapy?*

All horses benefit from sports massage techniques. Exercise causes strain on the physical structures of the horse, whether your horse works regularly, irregularly, goes for a quiet wander or works hard, their ability to perform, and recover will be enhanced by the use of massage.

Your horse will appreciate the personal attention, the physical feeling of the massage, and following the session the feeling of being free from tension and discomfort, all combining to assist your horse in both mental and physical performance.

Through employment of a Sports therapist, their expertise in rehabilitative training and massage, you will gain a valuable member of the equine health care team in the ongoing performance of your horse.

An Equine Tactile Therapist provides:

- Preparation for, and recovery from, work sessions, giving treatments where needed.
- Instruction for rider/trainer in specific techniques to assist progression through training and reduce the risks of muscular damage,
- Regular thorough physical assessment to ensure any musculo-skeletal problems are identified early and treated, enhancing recovery.
- Identification and removal of the factors contributing to muscular problems.
- Advise on rehabilitative training, nutrition and health care to enhance performance.

These items combine to assist in attaining maximum equine performance, by providing specific, individualised management concentrating on a holistic approach to performance. By instructing the owner in techniques to assist their horse, the care is ongoing ensuring the rider is able to feel and treat specific issues as they arise and be well aware when the therapist is required to attend again.

To locate an Equine Sports Therapist in your area contact The Australian College of Animal Tactile Therapy at [acatt@alphalink.com.au](mailto:acatt@alphalink.com.au), you can also gain information on courses to undertake to enhance your knowledge and skills in this vital area of equine training management

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

