

Introduction

It's magical how just the simple act of laying your hands on a horse's muscles can bring such dramatic change to both the horse and to you. Massaging and manipulating the muscles can cause profound changes in your horse's health, his performance, and his trust in you. These changes go deep, beyond just the physical act of manipulating the muscles. They bring about physiological changes to the muscles at a cellular level that increase muscle health and performance. And they can induce psychological effects that increase the horse's emotional and mental health.

These tactile interactions can create a "multi-level connection" that will deepen the relationship you have with your horse. And the wonderful thing is that everyone has the ability to achieve this connection and experience the joy that comes with it. You only need to bring the intent to learn and the desire to relate to your horse on a new level. This book will bring you the tools that you need to carry out that intent and to achieve that desire.

I have been pondering writing about massage therapy for horse owners for a very long time. I have been practicing as a professional equine massage therapist for a number of years and have worked on hundreds of horses. Almost without exception, the owners of my equine massage clients want to know what they can do to help maintain their horse's health and performance between professional massage

sessions. As a result, “Equine Muscle Magic” has been swimming around in my head for the better part of the past decade.

Through this book, I want to inspire horse owners to use massage as a tool to connect on a deeper, more enriching level with their horses. It will help you to develop and expand the bond that you already have with your horse. It will not only deepen the physical, psychological, and physiological relationship that you have, but also enhance the love and affection felt by both of you.

Once your horse understands that you are giving back to him and addressing his body needs, the connection becomes unlimited. It will grow into a true human/horse relationship, one in which each gives to the other. It may take a little time for your horse to understand that you are there strictly to give to him, to address the needs of his body, and not just to give him shots or to take him out riding. You may only be able to massage him a few moments at a time in the beginning; but as his trust builds, you will find that he will let you do more in every session.

This book is designed to take the guess work out of massaging your horse. It will give you step-by-step instructions for each of the interactions that you will want to perform. It will show you how to give your horse a “10-Minute Massage” for use between full-body massages or when you don’t have time for a complete treatment. It will also show you how to build a “body map” of your horse, locating all the places where his muscles are in need of work. And finally, it will provide

you with the complete procedure for giving your horse a full-body massage from head to tail.

In addition, the book will show you how to do stretches for both yourself and your horse that will prepare both of you for a safer and more enjoyable ride. It will also take you through some mental exercises to clear your mind and prepare you for approaching the massage with a proper attitude. And finally, it will look at a number of muscle problems that are the result of specific activities (such as trail riding, jumping, dressage, and endurance riding) and show you which muscles are affected and how to relieve their stress.

This is not intended to be a technical anatomy book. It is an easy-to-use, user-friendly guide designed for horse owners to learn how to massage their own horses between professional sessions. There is enough technical information provided to allow non-professionals to achieve significant changes in equine muscle health and performance, while at the same time building a multi-level connection in their human/horse relationship. If you want a technical reference text, you might consider purchasing Dr. Nancy Loving's "All Systems Go" veterinary manual (see the Appendix for a reference).

My goal for "Equine Muscle Magic" is to help as many horses as possible live a healthier, more emotionally-stable life that is filled with love. If I can teach horse owners to achieve this goal with their horses through the proper use of massage, I will feel that I have made my contribution to the equine world that I love.

Imagine how empty our lives would be without horses. I want every horse owner to have the ability to make a significant change in the way their horses live their lives. Horses truly want to be companions of humans. How else can you explain how a 100+ pound human can manage a 1200-pound animal. I believe it is because horses truly want to be with humans and even have a desire to take care of us. It's their immense capacity to love that allows them to be generous toward us humans, even when we exhibit our many flaws. Through the years, horses have helped me through the loss of loved ones and other emotionally trying times, and have helped me celebrate many happy events. Horses have reduced the sting of my tears and helped me celebrate the happiness of living. I am so very grateful that they have graced my life and helped to keep me balanced. It is only fitting that I return the favor to them in any way I can.