



## The benefits of Equine Sports Massage Therapy

Equine Sports Massage Therapy is the application of long recognised professional massage techniques to promote good health and enhance performance. It is one of the oldest and most effective forms of therapy.

ESM not only benefits your horse pre and post competition, it can reduce the chances of injury at any time and helps to speed up the healing process should injury have already occurred. There are many benefits including:

- Mobilising joints and keeping them supple
- Releasing muscles spasms and stress points which can be the sole cause of other problems
- Increasing the horse's range of movement and suppleness, reducing the risk of repetitive strain injury
- Improving co-ordination, balance and jumping ability
- Reducing crookedness and helping to develop muscles more evenly
- Preventing muscles shortening which occurs after muscle injury
- Removing scar tissue from the muscle
- Preventing muscle wastage after injury
- Reducing built-up tension in the muscles

### Massage is also beneficial to the skin and may help to:

- improve circulation to the skin, increase nutrition to the cells and encourage cell regeneration
- increase production of sweat from the sweat glands, helping to excrete urea and waste products through the skin
- encourage vaso-dilation of the surface capillaries thereby helping to improve the colour of the skin and improve elasticity,
- increase sebum production, helping improve the skin's suppleness and resistance to infection.

**The Equine Circulation System and the benefits of massage:**

Massage can also soften hard fat deposits in the adipose tissue in the dermis, and speed up its removal by the circulatory system.

**Massage may also help to:**

- Assist the venous flow of blood back to the heart
- Dilate the blood vessels thereby helping them to work more efficiently
- Produce an enhanced blood flow – delivery of fresh oxygen and nutrients to the tissues is improved and the removal of waste products, toxins and carbon dioxide is hastened via the venous system
- Decrease blood pressure temporarily, due to dilation of capillaries
- Decrease the heart rate due to relaxation
- Improve circulation by mechanically assisting the venous flow of blood back to the heart

**Benefits to the Equine Nervous System**

The purpose of a relaxation massage routine is to relieve stress by utilising the horse's nervous system. In addition, the stimulation of nerves can help rejuvenate an injured part of the body and is therefore very useful in rehabilitation

**Massage may also help to:**

- Improve muscle tone
- Improve recovery time from workouts
- Increase flexibility
- Aid in the recovery from injury and reduce the chance for future injury
- Support the immune system
- Stimulate the motor nerves
- Deliver relief from restlessness and sleep disturbance
- Improve proprioception (body awareness)
- Calm nervous horses or horses in unfamiliar surroundings and/or stressful conditions.
- Reduce pain by the release of endorphins (endorphins are also known to elevate the mood)

### **Benefits on the Equine Lymphatic System**

Equine massage techniques, applications and therapy promotes and restores the flow of lymphatic fluid which improves the immune system function.

#### **Massage may also help to:**

- Reduce oedema (excess fluid in the tissue) by increasing lymphatic drainage and the removal of waste from the system
- Remove toxins, waste, bacteria and viruses from the body
- Improve energy levels
- Bring pain relief and/or improvement of overall comfort levels
- Balance levels of electrolytes
- Balance and regulate levels of sodium
- Balance and regulate fluid levels (stocking up)
- Balance and regulate levels of antibodies, due to increase in white blood cells
- Encourage an inbuilt ability to fight off viral and bacterial infections.

### **Benefits of the Equine Respiratory System**

The respiratory system is responsible for transporting oxygen from the air into the body and removes waste gas in the form of carbon dioxide. The system also has a function in regulating temperature and eliminating water.

#### **Massage may also help to:**

- Normalise breathing through a balancing effect on the Autonomic Nervous System
- Encourage deeper breathing and a more complete breath through the relaxing effect of massage
- Loosen the intercostal muscles and free the rib cage to allow greater chest expansion, thereby allowing deeper breathing resulting in more oxygen to all cells
- Release congestion and aid in lowering blood pressure
- Generate heat to raise body temperature and respiratory rate
- Stimulate proprioceptors in the joints and increase respiration through the range of motion in an inactive horse
- Increase the action of the heart and stimulate blood flow to and from the lungs, helping with the elimination of waste and the absorption of oxygen
- Decrease external and internal respiration

### **Benefits to the Equine Digestive System**

**Massage may also help to:**

- increase peristalsis in the large intestine, helping to relieve constipation, colic and gas
- promote the activity of the parasympathetic nervous system, which stimulates digestion.

### **Benefits to the Equine Urinary System**

- Massage increases urinary output due to the increased circulation and lymph drainage from the tissues.

### **Benefits to the Equine Physiological System**

**Massage may also help to:**

- Reduce stress and anxiety by relaxing both mind and body
- Create a feeling of well-being and enhanced self-esteem
- Promote positive body awareness and an improved body image through relaxation
- Ease emotional trauma through relaxation