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SYMPTOMATIC LAMENESS

PART II

If you have an equine patient whose lameness isn't responding well to treatment, consider how the fit of his saddle might be contributing to the problem.

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Jenn Winnick DVM, CVA practices dry needle acupuncture on a horse at a 2010 Chi Institute Equine Acupuncture Class Session 4 Wet Lab.



In previous issues, we have discussed several aspects of a badly fitting saddle, which can lead to symptomatic appearances of various issues. Persistent lameness, back pain and S-I joint issues are just some of these.

Some of the actual damage that can be caused by a culmination of one or more features on poorly fitting saddles include cartilage shearing at the shoulder blade, pinched nerves, vertebral subluxations, and muscle atrophy, to name but a few.

What exactly is muscle atrophy? If a saddle puts too much pressure on a muscle because of being out of balance, the horse wants to avoid and lessen this pressure – resulting in a protective postural change that affects his gaits and causes muscle contraction. These muscles then begin to atrophy, as they will experience circulatory inhibition and less necessary nutritional supplementation. However, fix the problem and the picture can be changed for the better again. Muscle definition, on the other hand, can be considered either positive or negative, since muscles can develop correctly through training – or incorrectly as the result of “protective posture” as a measure against saddle pressure.

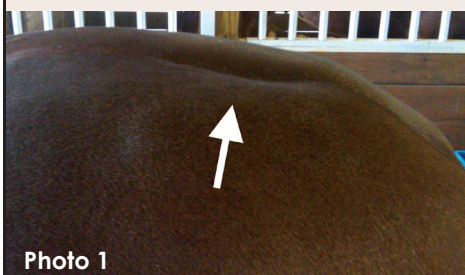


Photo 1



Photo 2

Photo 1: Incorrect definition of the muscles at the croup caused by a saddle which was too long, gullet channel too narrow (and possibly incorrect training!)

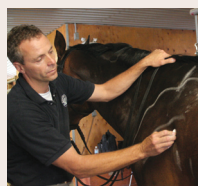
Photo 2: Muscle contraction at the flank as the result of a saddle pinching at the withers or on the vertebrae (tree angle incorrect; gullet channel too narrow.)

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