

# The Importance of *Stretching*

Horses instinctively stretch when they feel the need, tuning up muscles they use the most and those that are sore, stiff or tired. In addition, we can easily make stretching part of a preventative maintenance plan because all horses can benefit from it. Whether they are performing as athletes, aging or recovering from injuries, it is often helpful to incorporate stretching in as part of their exercise routine. Often times, stretches are done after an equine massage and before and after competitions or exercising. Stretching a horse's muscles and soft tissue will help them in many ways:



- Relaxation
- Increase circulation
- Reduce overall muscle tension and stiffness
- Promote the absorption of nutrients and oxygen to the tissues
- Improve range of motion and flexibility
- Increase elasticity of soft tissues: muscles, tendons and ligaments

Learning how to do stretches with your horse only takes a little time to learn and can be done easily, safely and effectively. There are a few important facts to understand.

- Never stretch a cold muscle – this could cause an injury
- Stretching helps reduce post-exercise soreness
- Soft tissue that has been stretched resists stress better than un-stretched tissue
- Make sure to stretch slowly and gently, never overextending the tissue
- Always release the horse's limbs with care and make sure to help put them back into place gently

The stretches can be done by an equine massage practitioner or you can be taught how to do a variety of stretches with your horse so you can do them on your own. The techniques themselves are easy to learn and then a routine can be developed that fits your horse's needs. So, no matter what size, shape, discipline or age, stretching is a simple and fast way to help keep your horse healthy.



## **About Peace of Mind, Body & Soul**

Products and services to help maintain the health and wellness of animals using integrative methods: animal communication, equine massage, Reiki, acupressure, Raindrop Technique<sup>®</sup>, Young Living therapeutic-grade essential oils, nutritional supplements & body care items. For more information contact Jenny Gott, E.C.M.T.,

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