

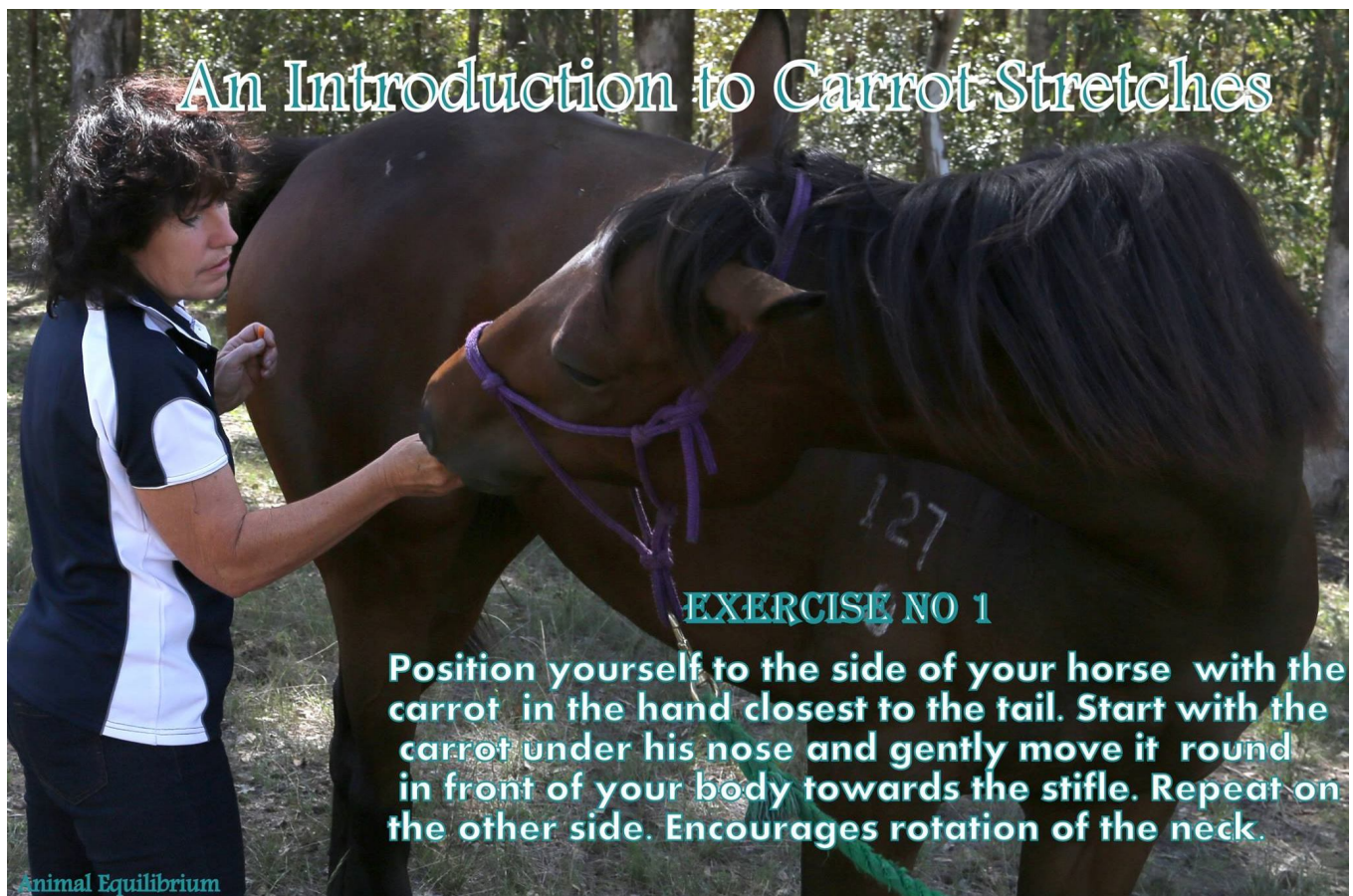
CARROT STRETCHES WITH YOUR HORSE

Simple stretches that you can do with your horse

Exercise No 1 –Head to the side of the body

Here is the first of a series of stretches that you can do with your horse using a piece of carrot, to gently encourage their range of movement. They are great for increasing core stability, and lengthening and flexing muscles, and fostering joint flexibility and they are easy to do. These are important for any performance horse but can also be a way to help horses maintain flexibility as they age. To see the benefits of these stretches they will need to be performed regularly. Taking less than 10 minutes a day at least 3 times a week will really help your horse's core stability, suppleness and strength.

As a general rule always ensure stretches are done following a warmup, for example after 10 minute walk and where there are any post injuries or joint related problems, do check with your vet in the first instance.



The importance of the stretch - It is the rigid nature of the spine, together with its' supporting ligaments, that allows our horse to carry us. However, without a strong core, our horse cannot properly use or engage his back and hindquarters. Working long and low helps develop abdominal muscles and flex the spine, helping to support the weight of the rider.

Exercise No 2 – Head between the legs

The aim of this exercise is to stretch the muscles through the back, withers and neck, and encourage the horse to contract their thoracic sling and abdominal muscles to lift their chest and the back. This exercise also helps stretch and separate the spinous processes in the thoracic region of the spine.

Combine this exercise with exercise No 1 (earlier post), along with one more carrot stretch that will be posted soon, and this can be part of your general routine to enable subtleness and flexibility.



What you should know...

The horse's forelimb carries 60% of the forces. Horses do not have a collar bone therefore the limbs are held together by muscles, ligaments and fascia in what is known as the thoracic sling. These soft tissues help support the limb as it hits the ground. These same muscles can become tense and stiff and therefore benefit from Bowen and stretching.

Exercise Three – reaching round and low to each side

Stand with your back to the side of your horse about where the saddle would go with a carrot in the hand closest to his tail. Ask him to follow the carrot round slowly in front of your body to about where your knee is, hold there for a few seconds and then gradually take to the ground. Try to keep the movement as smooth as possible and ask the horse to hold the stretch for about 8 seconds before giving him the carrot and releasing. As your horse becomes more proficient you can stand slightly further back and ask him to stretch a little more.

This exercise encourages flexion through the base of the neck and the thoraco-lumbar region of the spine, and stretches muscles through the withers, neck and back, all of which should improve his ability to bend.



Okay, so that completes the 3 carrot stretches.

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