

## **Stretch Your Horse: There's an App for That! Enhance Performance. Prevent Injury. Save Money Too!**

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We have all heard many times.... Stretch your muscles before and after you exercise. But, did you ever stop and think that this applies to your horse too? Your horse is an athlete, and just like human athletes (and non-athletes too!), their muscles need attention to remain healthy.

### **What are the Benefits of Horse Stretching?**

A horse's muscles can become tight, stiff, sore, strained or even develop tears. Stretching the muscles is an important part of maintaining muscle health. "We do not think enough about injury prevention. By warming up the horse and putting it through some stretches, we can increase range of motion and enable the horse to perform more fluidly and to the best of its ability," said Dr. Jack Root, DVM, Oakhurst Equine Veterinary Services and Owner, Grindstone 1996 Kentucky Derby winner.

The benefits obtained by safely and effectively stretching a horse's muscles are:

- Helps improve flexibility and range of motion (ROM) thereby enabling the horse to perform to the best of their ability
- Helps prevent injury by strengthening supportive tissue and helping to guard against muscle tightness and tendon shortening
- Helps reduce post-exercise soreness, stiffness and muscle fatigue
- Helps improve disposition by relaxing the horse
- Helps provide early warning signs of a potential injury and can aid in injury rehabilitation
- Helps the rider bond with their horse

### **Why Does Stretching Help? Just a Bit of Science....**

Skeletal muscles are made up of several muscle bundles, which in turn are made up of muscle fibers. Muscle fibers have bundles of myofibrils, which are rod-like structures that run parallel to one another. Muscle is covered by fascia, a fibrous tissue, to which other muscles can attach. Muscles attach to bone via tendons.

When a muscle is overused or underused, it responds by shrinking or tightening which can cause stiffness. As explained by Dr. Ava Frick, DVM, "Stiffness can result in injury, leading to inactivity, and eventually speed up the aging of the musculoskeletal system. To remain supple, the connective tissue and muscles need regular stretching. Stretching helps resist the gradual shortening and tightening of tissue that otherwise sets in from both underuse and overuse, reducing discomfort and slowing the progressive loss of capacity that accompanies tightening." See [Stretching Exercises for Horses: Are They Effective?](#), Dr. Ava Frick, DVM, Journal of Equine Veterinary Science, Vol. 30 No. 1 (2010)

## How Can I Learn to Stretch My Horse?

"The stretches Ilene taught me were a wonderful addition to my lesson horse Wyatt's regimen. I was so impressed with the results, I started doing stretches with all of my horses, and I taught all of my students how to do stretches too! I highly recommend stretching to anyone who wants to do everything possible to help their horse be successful in their work and happy in their body. "

*Andrea Quale, Trainer*

The great news is that everyone can learn to safely and effectively stretch their horse's muscles regardless of riding ability or experience. In fact, a mobile app called Stretch Your Horse is now being developed to teach riders and horse lovers worldwide to do just that! It will be released at approximately the end of June.

The Stretch Your Horse App contains 24 individual stretching videos that can be downloaded to an iPhone or Android phone. No cell service or internet connection is needed after the initial download. The videos reside on the rider's phone. Riders download only the stretches their horse needs making the App very affordable. Videos can be replayed as many times as desired right at their horse's side. It is almost like getting personalized instruction!

Help get the word out about the importance of stretching! It is an important, though often overlooked, aspect of horse healthcare.

Check out and contribute to the [Stretch Your Horse Mobile App Kickstarter Campaign](#). Check out [StretchYourHorse.com](#) for more details. Contact [ilene@StretchYourHorse.com](mailto:ilene@StretchYourHorse.com)

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