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## **Yoga For Horse and Rider Clinic**

- **Introductions**
- **Agenda review**
- **Goals/expected outcomes**
  - Learn key safety basics about yoga and stretching for horses and humans
  - Learn some key equine anatomy landmarks
  - Learn some key basic stretches/yoga poses for your horse
  - Learn some key basic stretches/yoga poses for yourself
- **Legal Disclaimer/Caveat: The stretches and yoga poses we will learn today can generally be done on a healthy, injury-free horse and person. However, not every stretch and yoga pose is appropriate for every horse or person. If any pain or discomfort is noted (human or horse), stop.**
- **Always consult an equine/human health care professional prior to beginning a stretching and yoga regimen.**
- **The human yoga poses we will cover today are “barn yoga.” Actual poses may vary slightly.**

## Why is stretching and yoga important for your horse and yourself?

### Key Stretching Guidelines

- Safety first...for both rider and horse!! Be aware of your surroundings prior to starting any stretch and practice good ergonomics and body mechanics when helping your horse stretch.
- Stretches should always be done on warm muscles. Do not stretch a horse or a person with cold muscles as that could cause tears, strains and other issues. Additionally, you/your horse won't get the full benefit of the stretch.
  - **What does this mean in terms of when you should stretch your horse?**
- Some stretches may be contraindicated (or need to be modified) for a given horse or person due to injury, conformation, age, current or past medical or dental condition or for a variety of other reasons. The frequency and type of stretches/yoga poses that are appropriate for a horse/human recovering from an injury can vary greatly. Do not assume a stretch that was appropriate for a horse with an injury similar to your horse's injury is appropriate for your horse.
- This is a claw-hand free zone. Breathing and relaxing your hands and body when stretching and doing yoga (for yourself and your horse) is key. If you are tense, your horse is tense. (Same as riding.)
- No cheating!! (Applies to humans and horses)
  - Not standing square, turning hips, leaning backward, turning out limb or foot when not supposed to, bending a limb, locking a limb
- Less stretch with proper form is better than more stretch with improper form!! ALWAYS!!
- Never hold or pull on joint when doing stretches.
- Never force a stretch or pose. STOP if pain or discomfort is noted.
- It is common for one side of the body to have different ROM (range of motion) than the other side. (horse and human)

### Warm Up

Practice what we preach....everyone out on the rail..... marching walk to warm up

- Deep breaths and shoulders up to ears and down 3X
- Deep breaths and shoulder rolls
- Mountain pose/Volcano pose

### **Stretching the Hind End (legs, hips, pelvis, gluts, obliques)**

- **Human poses/stretches**
  - Calf/Achilles tendon: heels down pose
  - Quads: supine (lying down) modified dancer pose
  - Quads: standing modified dance pose
  - Inner thigh (abductors) and calf/heels/foot: frog pose
  - Front of pelvis (psoas) and quads: warrior 1 (modified, bottom half)
  - Obliques: Supine (lying down) lower body curved U pose
  - Hamstrings and hips: triple strap stretch
  - Gluts: cross legged (bottom of cow pose)
  - Lower body strength: bridge pose
  
- **Equine anatomy**
  - Stifle
  - Quads
  - Hamstring area (semitendinosus, semimembranosus, gastrocnemius)
  - Abductors
  - Gluts
  - Lumbar spine
  - Sacral spine
  - Caudal spine
  - Point of hip
    - how to check if pelvis is level--airplane
  
- **Equine yoga poses/stretches**
  - Farrier stretch
    - Straight back, toward mid-line, abducted (away from body)

- Forward farrier stretch
    - Low toward front foot heal (center)
    - High
    - Through the opposite side
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- Hind end/Pelvic rock and hold
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- Equine frog: Demo only. Very advanced stretch. Do not perform without individualized instruction by an experienced equine healthcare professional.

### **Stretching the Neck, Shoulders and Pecs**

- **Human poses/stretchers**
  - Hand clasp shoulder stretch
  - Stick 'em up (supine)—90 degrees with roll and straight above head
  - Puppy pose; add C curve on finger tips (also stretches obliques)
  - Half dog at wall
  - Neck: chin to chest, ear to shoulder, nose to armpit (diagonal) :)
  - Shoulder block to wall (standing): demo; try on your own over break
  - Dolphin arms at gate (window ledge)/Alternate standing stick 'em up
  
- **Equine anatomy**
  - Pecs
  - Cervical spine
  - Scapula (shoulder blade) and surrounding muscles
  - What is a key difference in anatomy in the neck/pec area between horses and humans?
  
- **A few words about girths.....**

- **Equine yoga poses/stretches**

- Pec massage move (water gun)
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- 90 degree bent knee circles and push back
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- 90 degree bent knee abduction (straight and angled)
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- Shoulder acupoints LI 10 and LI 11 (LI = large intestine meridian)

LI 11--Less than an inch cranial from the lateral epicondyle of the humerus bone (crease of front leg)

LI 10—Approx 2 inches ventral from LI 11, slightly cranial in the groove between the extensor carpi radialis and common digital extensor muscles

- Treat to point of hip, stifle
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- Treat on diagonal behind front leg; tipped /level nose variation
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- Neck hug stretch
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- Neck clasp stretch
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- C stretch Demo only. Very advanced stretch. Do not perform without individualized instruction from an equine healthcare professional.
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### **Stretching the Back**

- **Equine anatomy**
    - Thoracic spine
    - Thoracic/Lumbar junction
    - Abdominals
  - **Horse yoga poses/stretchers**
    - Belly lift
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- Tail circles
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- Tail pull
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- Diagonal push core strengthener
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- Tail pull/ neck clasp extension Demo only. Very advanced stretch. Do not perform without individualized instruction from an equine healthcare professional.
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- **Human yoga poses/stretchers**
  - Dog/cat
  - Downward facing dog
  - Cobra (assisted or no arms) (aka superman/woman pose)
  - Crocodile twist
  
- **Putting it all together: human yoga**
  - Triangle pose

Questions/Wrap up

There is a link on my [Helpful Links page](#) to a very good equine stretching article.

**Note:** Some of the names of the stretches in the article are the same as the ones we learned today but are a different stretch. Variations of stretches we learned today are also shown.