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Volume 6 Issue 2

Spotlight on The Equine Touch The Equine Touch™ - Five Years in the USA

It has been 5 years since Natural Horse Magazine sponsored its first Equine Touch course in the United States. We asked Equine Touch founder, Jock Ruddock, for a follow-up interview to discuss this incredible modality and its impact on the horse world. Here is what he shared with us. Thank you, Jock!

As we know, The Equine Touch can be learned by anyone who has a love for horses. From what areas of the horse world have you had students?

Five years ago I had no idea what I was getting into - by that I mean the size of the eclectic horse world here in the USA. Every single discipline has had participants attending Equine Touch clinics - dressage, eventing, police, flat racing, steeplechasing, barrel racing, cutting, rodeo and circus, showjumping, polo, polocross, endurance, carriage competition, showing - from Tennessee walker enthusiasts to Friesian devotees to Fjord and Irish pony lovers, and, believe it or not, farriers. I could go on forever - there are so many people out there in every form of horse endeavor who just want to be able to help their horses and take care of them. Perhaps the biggest input to our classes comes



Jock and Ivana Ruddock, developers of The Equine Touch

from the horse lovers who are practicing natural horsemanship on their own horses and realize that ET is a positive ingredient in preparing a balanced horse at all levels and helps the horse relax and recover after a training session. A really great bonus is that we hardly have a clinic in which there is not at least one equine veterinarian.

Have you seen positive changes for the horses in the areas where you have had Equine Touch courses?

Absolutely. The proof is in the pudding, so to speak. In Pennsylvania, horses who had not achieved any positive results in dressage are now scoring points in the upper 70's. Horses who have never won a race are winning regularly. In the barrel racing and cutting horse world down in Texas, Equine Touch horses are nearly always up there taking home the prizes, and on many occasions that improvement comes after they have been showing problems and losing for a long time prior to having been worked on by an Equine Touch Practitioner.

How have the Equine Touch courses evolved and adapted to meet the US horse world's needs since the first course in 2000?

Originally we started off with a three-day, very basic, wholistic address of the horse, which people immediately found extremely beneficial for the equid, wherein horses seemed to be 'miraculously' healing themselves from problems that allopathy, massage, acupuncture or any other 'therapy type' work could not address. These people wanted to learn even more, so my wife Ivana (MVDr) and I put together a manual of moves and procedures for addressing areas of concern, which we had only previously taught to veterinarians.

We taught this level 2 or advanced class for about two years and during this time ET continued to evolve. Ivana and I developed new procedures for addressing focused concerns, and other leading equine bodyworkers throughout the world generously shared their secrets, which we were able to develop or adapt within the principles of ET and add to our toolbox to share with our even more advanced students in a level 3 clinic. The level 3 clinic ultimately became more and more important as horse owners began to see the effect the work was having on the students' horses and began asking them to come and work on theirs. The horse owners of America virtually created Equine Touch Practitioners.

On top of that, Ivana, who is a consummate researcher, has been studying various influences which have a profound effect on the whole horse and its overall health including saddle fit, dentistry and of course hoof care. On many occasions we have found that any work which has had a positive result on a pain-ridden horse does not last long due to a badly fitted saddle, neglected teeth or bad dentistry, and of course neglected or abused hooves.

People often forget the horse has the highest compensation factor known. If just one hoof has been wrongly trimmed or shod, the entire horse is negatively affected in a

very short time, physically and emotionally, as he struggles to attain balance and keep the weight off the problem, thereby creating new problems that may remain locked in long after the initial insult has been removed. Likewise with the teeth, a misaligned TMJ due to oversized hooks will in turn not only affect the atlas and neck but the spine all the way down to the sacrum. With Ivana's input and research we have been able to recognize and identify such negative influences, and while we do not work on these areas of expertise ourselves, our practitioners are now able to provide the owner with respectable knowledge and information to pass on to the respective professionals in these areas. Once the 'criminal' has been taken care of we can then use developed area-of-concern procedures to help the horse address the problem after the foundation work has been completed.

At what events and educational institutions have you had the opportunity to demonstrate The Equine Touch?

I have to be honest with you - I hate doing demonstrations, but for the past two years Ivana and I have enjoyed presenting ET at the Parelli Savvy Conference in Colorado. For us it has been a great learning experience just as it was demonstrating at the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) in Phoenix, AZ last November. In the UK we are based and demonstrate the work regularly at the Bristol HorseWorld, England's leading horse sanctuary.

It does not matter how much we want to use the word 'natural' regarding any kind of equine discipline or even care - domestication and what comes with it, do, at some stage, if not all the time, involve stress to some degree. The stress may be simply from directing the horse to go in a direction opposite to what he wants to go, making him go backwards when he wants to go forward, making him perform an unnatural cross-legged dance, go faster than he wants to go, jump logs and land in water, cut out a calf, or try to balance an unbalanced rider or handicapped person on his back. Forget the smile on the horse's face - it all involves stress. What is the number one killer of horses in the world today? Man. What is man's gift to the horse? Stress. What is the number one enemy of stress? Relaxation! One, if not the main, goal of the ET wholistic address is to relax the horse, physically and emotionally.

What organizations do you hope to get involved with in the near future?

Both Ivana and I would like to get more involved with organizations like NARHA, the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association (AHVMA), Parelli Natural Horsemanship (PNH), and others. We teach several NARHA and AHVMA members and held a foundation clinic at PNH headquarters in CO for instructors and higher-level students. The results and feedback were incredible and all were positive about how ET complemented and improved their relationships with their horses. The link between training a horse and taking care of the stress you inflict through that training, no matter how natural, cannot be ignored, and it was great to see professionals being aware of this and showing so much enthusiasm.

In what direction do you envision The Equine Touch evolving?

One of the primary focuses this year will be to form an Equine Touch Practitioner's Association, which will be a worldwide organization - we are now teaching ET from Norway to New Zealand. The association will have a committee - international and national; a board of advisors - respected veterinarians and professionals; and a code of ethics, guidelines, standards, and principles that all who practice ET, be they novices at Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 or Certified Practitioners, will abide by.

What suggestions do you have for beginning students?

Have faith in the work. Go out and practice and practice and practice until the move itself becomes a habit. Practice it on your friends, your dogs, the cat, and on yourself until you cannot touch anything at all without doing the move. When the time comes for you to work on a horse, the hands are then well trained tools which will perform the mechanics of the move automatically, thereby freeing up the rest of your being to work in the unique human- horse- harmony realm, which is so essential to the success of any equine hands on bodywork.

What words of advice do you have for Equine Touch practitioners?

Egotism is the anesthesia that deadens the pain of ignorance.

You must always remember that often the reason that people come to you with their horses is they have been to 'everybody' else. If all of these experts could not 'fix the problem' with their diagnostic-inspired therapies, red, blue and green lights, magical oils and potions, 'whack em and crack em' methods and power-stretching, then put your ego away and do not follow suit. Work 'whole-istically' and have faith in the horse's desire to be well and your desire to help *the horse* achieve that state, without force. Then leave the rest to the Universe and the flow of Ki. Don't chase the pain or the problem; don't ever diagnose - you are not a vet; just have faith in your work, do the job and know when to walk away. Having faith in the work does not just mean having faith in that which you do; have faith in what the horse can do with the gift you have just given him.

What have you learned from teaching The Equine Touch?

That is a hard one; every day, every horse, every clinic and every student is different. Probably the most important thing that I have learned is the internal feeling of harmony, which is infinitely necessary when one is working with a horse using Equine Touch. I recognize it or name it as Integrity and Intent.

In my classes I try to teach my students something I have learned and truly believe in having worked on thousands of horses - A. I. I. - Accuracy, Integrity, Intent. And for the horse, A. I. I. - Awareness of that Integrity and Intent. Without these two ingredients the Equine Touch is quite simply a mechanical, soft-tissue-manipulation

discipline; with these two ingredients backed up by the knowledge, skill and desire, the horses we are in charge of can receive a gift which is beyond description in helping them achieve a higher quality of life, a reduction of pain, better health, and improvement in performance. 🙏🙏

About Jock and Ivana:

Jock Ruddock, who pioneered The Equine Touch, and his veterinarian wife, Ivana Ruddock, have turned the Equine Touch into a discipline that is now recognized and applauded by all who see or use it, including veterinarians throughout Europe. For more information, visit www.theequinetouch.com.

About The Equine Touch:

The Equine Touch, a rebalancing, retraining, and some would say healing modality for the horse, is a non-diagnostic, non-invasive, energy and connective soft-tissue discipline which works at a complete holistic level; that is, it addresses the equine as a whole without paying any particular attention to any named problem as such. On a practical level it consists of a series of gentle moves performed over specific points in predetermined patterns that are interspersed with waiting periods to allow the equid to recognize and process the effects of these subtle procedures.

For more information:

Visit www.theequinetouch.com or call 800-660-8923 for more information and for class schedules. From March through June, Jock and Ivana will be teaching spring classes all across the US, including in PA, where it all began.
