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**Volume 8 Issue 1**

# *TOUCH TIPS*

Equine Touch and Tellington-Touch - *By Raian Kaiser*



Equine Touch for Kelly, a 20 year old Appaloosa mare. Kelly has been a school horse for 14 years. ET helps to keep her happy in her work, which includes helping me to teach riders of all levels to improve their horsemanship. The ET is also a wonderful way for me to say "thank you" for all she has done and still does for me.

We are often asked whether ET is the same as TT, or even which is better. Here, I give you my opinions and observations about ET and TT, based on over twenty years experience teaching, learning, and using TTEAM, and about a five years doing the same with ET.

The TTEAM training method was developed in the early 1980's by Linda Tellington-Jones, a Feldenkrais Practitioner. Tellington-Touch (TT) is an integral part of TTEAM, though TT can be used on its own. Equine Touch (ET) was developed in the late 1990's by Jock and Ivana Ruddock by transferring Jock's human version of body work called Vibromuscular Harmonization Technique (VHT) to the horse. VHT is Jock's evolution and extrapolation from the pioneering work of the Australian osteopath Tom Bowen. Both ET and TT are used world-wide, on animals besides horses.

## **Are ET and TT the same?**

Much of the philosophical underpinnings of the methods are the same. For example, the goals are to build self-awareness and release tension and memory of fear and pain in the horse, thereby allowing his innate healing ability to function as it should. Both methods are non-invasive and stress harmony between human and horse during the work: being focused, having integrity, correct breathing and balanced use of the Practitioner's body are essential for either method to have the best effect. Both Linda and Jock stress the importance of continuing education for their Practitioners: neither method will last if saddle, rider, horse's feet, etc. are out of balance. To achieve the best results, the performance of either method must become a habit and instinctive for the Practitioner so her mind and hands can be open to other information besides how to do the work. I have had both Linda and Jock work on me, and both methods - while considerably different in application - have a very profound effect on the body.

## **Then, how are they different?**

They differ mostly in their intent. With TT, the aim is to give information to the horse's nervous system at a cellular level through non-habitual touch and movement. TT is not energy work, and knowing where, when, and which TTs to use is very intuitive. TTs can be done in any order, anywhere on the body, and the whole body doesn't necessarily have to be worked on.



TTouch and Equine Touch require very different use of the hands in order for the body work to be most effective.

The ET move targets specific muscles and muscle attachments, fascia, and other body structures and follows the body's meridian lines. I did not realize that I have some small ability to feel changes in a body's "energy flow" until I learned ET. The sequence of ET moves is choreographed, and no matter what the ET Practitioner wants to target, the horse receives a whole-body address first.

There are at least 20 different TT moves: circles, strokes, lifts, etc. TT is easy to learn, but it is a complex method, especially when you consider TT is only a small part of TTEAM. In contrast, there is only one ET "move", but learning to do it correctly can be a challenge! I have found, however, that the focus on anatomy and accuracy in the ET work has made me a better TT Practitioner. In short, TT is easy but not simple, and ET is simple but sometimes not easy!

## **How do they work?**

No one can really answer this. What will make sense to you will depend on your background, what you have studied in the past (e.g. energy work vs. allopathic medicine), and your own personal world view. Jock has made the interesting observation that we really can't discuss scientifically within western understanding how his method works, because our language doesn't yet have the necessary words we'd need to describe it.



TTEAM/TTouch includes ground exercises to improve a horse's balance and awareness, and to improve communication between horse and handler.

The effect of TT on a horse's (and human's) brain has been studied. TT, when performed by a well-trained and experienced TT Practitioner, causes all four brain waves to be activated. The physical/mental state of the horses appears to become more relaxed and balanced, yet alert. The effect of ET on brainwaves has not been studied, but I have seen the deep, internally-focused "processing" that the ET can trigger happen even for very novice ET students.

### **Then which one is better?**

Fortunately, I do not have to choose: I do both! The more tools you have, the greater the chance you can interact positively with the animals that share your life. In my opinion, no horse training method is better than TTEAM. And when it comes to teachable, repeatable, and reproducible body work methods, Equine Touch tops my list. 🐾🐾

***About the author:***



Raian Kaiser, owner of 7 Acres Horse Training, has worked with horses for more than 2 decades. She rides and trains horses for a variety of disciplines, and has developed a teaching method incorporating TTEAM ideas, the Equine Touch work, correct dressage training and movement awareness for English and Western riders called Riding to Lightness. She is a TTEAM Practitioner III, TFACT Practitioner, and Equine Touch Instructor.

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