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Jump to another article

Select Item

Spotlight on The Equine Touch

The Equine Touch

By Cheryl Sellers

I kept hearing about the Equine Touch through the barrel racing "grapevine" and I wanted to know more about it. I have a couple of barrel horses that I thought could use it but I was a bit skeptical. So I called Pam Cantwell, a certified Equine Touch Practitioner, and asked a ton of questions. I asked Pam for a few of her client's names and phone numbers to investigate their Equine Touch experiences. What I heard amazed me. I just had to write about this new modality. Here are their stories:



Pam performs the Equine Touch moves along the back muscles.

Kelly Kaminski from Bellville, Texas was my first call. She told me that Pam did Equine Touch on her pro barrel horse, "Rock'em Sock'em Go", also known as "Rocky", last December before the Holiday Classic barrel race in Rosenberg. It was a big show with over 200 entries. She said she can't remember where he was sore, but sure that he was, due to all of the barrel races and hauling. After the Equine Touch

he felt good enough to win that day! It relaxed him to the point that his head was dropped and he was asleep while Pam worked on him. Kelly also asked Pam to come to their house the next week and work on her husband's roping horse. He was being difficult about going into a roping box. His neck seemed to be regularly sore from an old injury and Pam was able to alleviate this. He worked better than he had in years the next time he roped.

Judy Nietsch, of Gonzales, Texas, told me about their 14-year-old mare named "Chivy's Fantasy", otherwise known as "Abby". They were at a barrel race in Gonzales and her daughter, Tracey was having trouble with "Abby" setting back breaking lead ropes. The mare had become very high headed when Tracey rode her, and she was sore in her back. She had never heard of Equine Touch before that day. After talking to Pam, she decided to have the mare worked on. The Equine Touch takes over an hour to do, but it was worth it. After the first Equine Touch work, her head came down and she wasn't sore. So she had her done again after a few days and she loved it. After that she quit setting back when she was tied to the trailer, her head stayed down and she started turning the barrels better. Abby has not set back since that day.

The more of Pam's Equine Touch clients that I spoke with the more intrigued I became.

I spoke with Claudia Harris, Mexia, Texas, about "Sammy", her 10-year-old barrel horse. When she rode "Sammy", at times, he would buck and pitch. He was nervous and out of sorts. Pam went to her house in June 2002. Claudia said he seemed sore in his withers and neck. During "Sammy's" Equine Touch work, he arched his back straight up and then stretched down to his chest. He licked, chewed and yawned during the entire bodywork. He also kept moving over to Pam bumping her to do another Equine Touch move! It has calmed "Sammy" and it is a pleasure to ride him again. He hasn't shown any signs of soreness or wanting to buck. He is just easier to handle.

Claudia said she liked the Equine Touch since it is non-invasive. She said it's really great that it only takes one to two times for the horse to re-balance himself. Your horses move freer and more fluid.

Pam also worked on her 5-year-old mare, "True". "True" had been twitching her tail and being real witchy. Claudia said after the Equine Touch work, "True" stopped acting up. Claudia has started her on the barrels. She said she is very calm and doing very good on the barrels, bending and turning nicely.



The gentle and effective TMJ moves complete the balancing.

The next interview was the real kicker for me! I called Laura Coyle of Austin, Texas, about her 18-year-old Arab gelding. "Frankie" was very sick and had been diagnosed by a veterinarian with an auto-immune disorder. He had an overreactive immune system. He was very allergic to flies and gnats. His symptoms were very painful, skin splitting, with patchy and crusty skin. His sheath had blown up to the size of a grapefruit. His

ears were very bloody inside from the scaling skin. Laura couldn't even put his halter on him, as he was so sensitive to any touch. All parts of his body had these symptoms including his chest area. His coat was terrible and his skin and hair were just sloughing off. He was lethargic and very uncomfortable. The vet said he was basically "allergic to himself". "Frankie" was taking 'prednisone' to alleviate his symptoms. Laura had tried several treatments including acupuncture, acupressure and supplements. She tried all "western" and "eastern" treatments but nothing seemed to work.

Laura met Pam in February 2002 at the San Antonio Rodeo quite by chance. Pam was working for Comal Saddlery selling horse trailers, and Laura was trailer shopping. They began talking about horses. Pam told Laura she had finished her school for Equine Touch when Laura started telling Pam she had a very sick horse. Laura was willing to try anything to help "Frankie" at this point. Pam told her she had no previous experience with anything like this but Laura insisted that she try. She said Pam made sure she understood that she was not sure if Equine Touch would help at all. Pam started the first Equine Touch visit on March 5, 2002. She noticed that it took "Frankie" a long time to process each touch. He would get a "glazed" look as if in a trance after each touch. Pam and Laura saw a huge amount of reaction that day. The next day when "Frankie" was turned out, Laura noticed that he was running and playing and was so energized. She hadn't seen him do this for two years since his symptoms started!

Pam came out once a week for 5 weeks. "Frankie" would hear Pam's truck coming and would run to the fence to greet her. He would stand there for her without a halter while she worked! He knew he needed this Equine Touch! He showed enormous signs of processing the touches. He yawned a lot, licked his lips a lot and dropped his head. It was simply amazing to watch. After each Equine Touch visit, it took less and less time for him to process each touch. He was getting better and better each time. Per her vet, Laura started reducing the dosage of 'prednisone' which was very scary for her. But the sores on his body had started healing, his hair was growing back and his coat was shiny. She knew the Equine Touch was working!

Today, Laura said "Frankie" is off 'prednisone' and is now just taking an antihistamine. He will always have to take the antihistamine the rest of his life, his vet believes, but there are no more symptoms. Laura said the Equine Touch helped "Frankie" to break the cycle.

Teresa McLaughlin of Lockhart, Texas owns "Tess", a 4-year-old filly that had the Equine Touch done in Oct of 2001. The filly would turn her head and open her mouth to the left after each Equine Touch move. Teresa said she rode home that night without kicking in the trailer, which was unusual for "Tess". The week following, "Tess" would not take a bit so Teresa took her to her veterinarian who did an extensive teeth float. After the float the mare took a bit just fine. The veterinarian told her the filly had been carrying her jaw crooked for quite a while and that Pam had caused the jaw to return to the normal position with the TMJ (jaw) work! "Tess" still has not kicked in a trailer.

Teresa also had "Red Horse" worked on, a 12-year-old Dash for Cash gelding in May of 2002. He was "short striding" on the right rear and seemed sore to her in the hip area. "Red Horse" was already pre-entered in a big barrel race in San Antonio and Teresa has no substitution for him. He had started "blowing off" the barrels in a previous race and a veterinarian told her to keep exercising him and perhaps get some alternative work done on him to get him through this race. Teresa called Pam. "Red Horse" made a good consistent run with three good turns at the race after the Equine Touch work and the "short stride" had disappeared.



Pam and her appaloosa Solomon

There were so many testimonies from Pam's clients that I could not fit all of them in this article.

When I interviewed Pam about the Equine Touch she was quick to say that Equine Touch does not in any way take the place of veterinarian medicine and should never be substituted for veterinarian medicine. However, it can complement veterinarian medicine. Pam never attempts to diagnose a horse. Actually, she doesn't even need to hear where your horse is sore because Equine Touch addresses the "whole" horse and the horse will go to work on himself accordingly. She also stresses that horses can get out of sorts for a lot of different reasons such as needing their teeth floated, an ill-fitting saddle, unlevel hooves, or just not being in condition for their job. Owners need to address these things so that they don't keep seeing the same problems with their horses cropping up. Equine Touch is a new modality in the U.S. and consists of very gentle touches with the fingertips in very specific places on the horse. It's great for all breeds and all riding and show disciplines.

As for my own horses, I have two that I knew needed some help with soreness, "Dude" and "Tag". "Dude" is my 6-year-old gelding, still in training, and I was hauling him to barrel races to exhibition him. The last time I took him somewhere, he was nervous and wasn't concentrating. This was unusual for Dude, as he is pretty calm. He also did not want to break into a lope. When Pam did Equine Touch on him she explained the moves to me and asked me not to pet him. He went into what seemed like a trance with his head dropped and a glazed look in his eye. It really is neat to watch. Pam and I counted a total of 14 deep, heavy sighs! Pam said they all react differently and "Dude" was really "processing." When Pam worked on his TMJ (jaw area), "Dude" yawned a lot and started stretching out his neck. "Dude's" back was also very sore and Pam and I discovered a broken saddle tree to be the culprit. Ouch! Pam worked on him a second time on a different day and "Dude" was quick to recognize her by nudging her with his nose! A couple of days after that, "Dude" loped off smoothly when I rode - with a different saddle, of course.

"Tag" is my 17-year-old finished barrel horse and he also refused to break into a lope. His head was extremely high and off to one side. You guessed it, the saddle strikes again. While Pam was working on "Tag", "Dude" was trying his best to get Pam's attention by pounding his foot at the barn door! When that didn't work, he went around to the other side of my barn and started shaking his head at her! Don't

you just love them! We had a good laugh! Both horses are currently awaiting new custom fitted saddles and as of this writing are currently receiving another wonderful, soothing, muscle relaxing dose of Equine Touch!

Currently there are only 3 Certified Equine Touch Practitioners in Texas. If you would like to get in touch with Pam Cantwell, she can be reached at equinetouch@ev1.net, www.texasequinetouch.com, or 512-376-2965; or Janet Williamson at 512-303-4175, both near the Austin area, or Sandra Shiver at sandrashiver@hotmail.com near Dallas. 🐾🐾

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About the author:

Cheryl Sellers, born and raised in California, is a freelance writer now residing in McMahan, TX. She was a police officer for 10 years in CA, and now works full time as a business manager for a non-profit agency. She often writes about barrel racing events, and has three of her own horses that she barrel races.

Pam Cantwell lives in Red Rock, TX with her husband, Donald, her son, Craig, and their 7 horses. Formerly NBHA State Director 1998-99, Pam is now a full-time Equine Touch Practitioner, and a part-time sales rep for Comal Saddlery Horse Trailer Sales and Bretton Shell System Saddles and Pads. She barrel races when she can find the time.