

## WHAT IS MASSAGE?

Massage therapy is the manipulation of the soft tissues of the body which aims to promote relaxation, drainage, stimulation, or the release of muscle-related problems such as trigger and stress points. It contributes to the overall functioning of the body by improving circulation and promoting the efficient supply of oxygen and nutrients to the muscles.

Massage therapy relaxes the nervous system, reduces stress, and assists in recovery from injury, increases strength, flexibility and agility. It helps to dispel toxins and increase oxygenation. It also helps to soften sharp character traits, and increases the bonding between human and horses (especially young horses) which helps them to relax and accept being handled by humans.

## HISTORY OF MASSAGE:

The word “massage” is derived from the Arabic language, meaning “to press”. Forms of equine massage therapy were practiced in ancient Chinese and Roman times, and diagrams exist from as early as 100BC, which show areas of the horse to be massaged for different effects on the digestive, respiratory, circulatory and muscular systems. More recently, equine massage therapy has been practiced among the Hopi Indians in the USA.

## WHAT IS SPORTS MASSAGE?

**Sports massage aims to increase or restore the range and freedom of movement by reducing resistance to motion.**

Performance horses work extremely hard to achieve the very best result. Strong emphasis is usually placed on the training, nutrition, health and hoof care to help them reach their highest potential; to run faster, jump higher, stop harder or pirouette perfectly. Such a high level of performance often results in more injuries as the horse's physical structures are stretched to their limits, commonly resulting in pain, stress and prematurely ‘worn-out’ horses.

Although strong drugs are generally promoted as the answer, they often provide short-term relief and sometimes include detrimental side-effects. If the factors responsible for the problem (whether they are

postural, musculoskeletal, habitual or emotional) are not addressed, treating the symptoms never provides more than short-term relief.

Sports massage concentrates on specific muscles which are experiencing contraction or spasm, and cannot secure their own release. Sometimes, muscle sensitivity is a secondary result of injury or illness, while at other times; overuse or overstretching of a muscle is the primary cause of discomfort or pain.

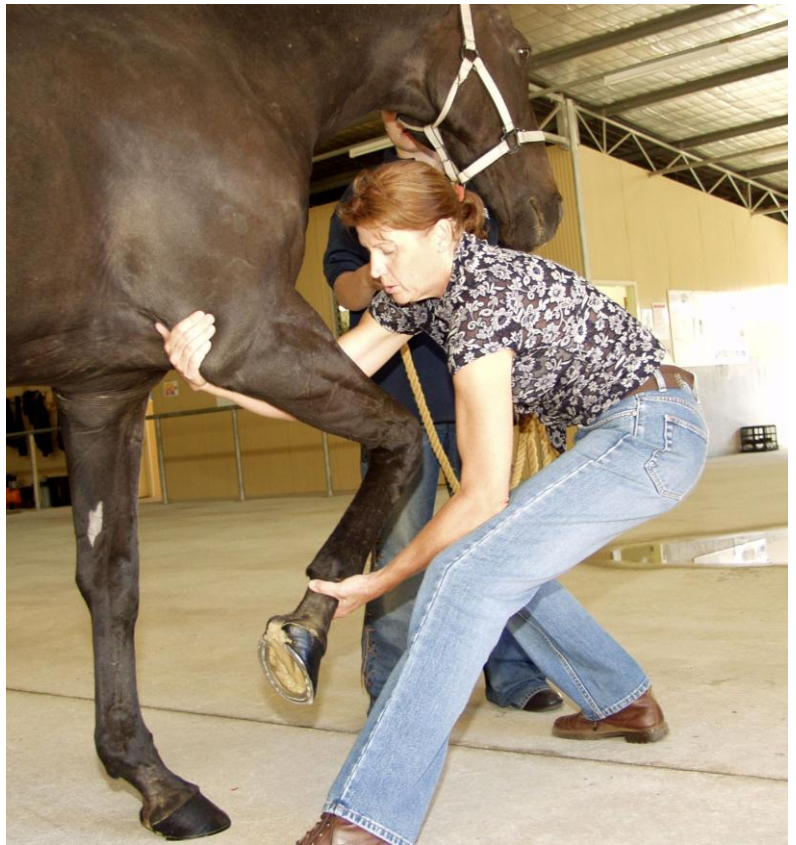
### **BENEFITS OF SPORTS MASSAGE:**

Sports massage therapy aims to:-

- Increase the range of motion
- Improve stamina
- Improve the disposition
- Provide pain relief from muscle injuries
- Enhance performance and quality of gait
- Improve circulation
- Reduce tactile defence
- Enable assessment of physical condition

### **Massage therapy consists of several steps:**

- Take a complete history of the horse including movement, conformation, training, dental treatments, saddle fits etc
- Isolate and soften each muscle using effleurage, followed by petrissage and tapotement
- Apply direct pressure to stress and trigger points and work across fibre on scar tissue and adhesions
- Finish all areas with effleurage



- Apply appropriate stretches