



Woodside & Woodside North Equine Clinic Equine Health Times

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What is our Staff up to?

Woodside North participated in the Horse Expo at the Virginia Expo Center

Dr. Hammond has a new assistant, Mallory! We're all very excited to have her join our team!

The Grey Zone

By: Dr. Scott Anderson

There is a gray zone between a horse that is perfectly comfortable in work and a lame horse. Riders often have an idea their horse is in this zone when it isn't willing or able to perform. In some of these cases we are asked to determine if the horse is misbehaving or in pain.

There are a number of physical problems to consider as causes when a horse is in the gray zone. The majority of problems we see affecting performance without an obvious lameness are in the upper body. This often includes the back or neck but other areas should be considered:

- The stomach (gastric ulcers)
- The mouth and temporomandibular joints
- Central nervous system (EPM, wobbler, Lyme disease)
- Tack
- A low grade lameness not obviously seen at the trot
- A lameness affecting both front or hind limbs making it hard to say either is obviously lame

One of the more common causes of poor performance is sacroiliac (SI)

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pain. The left and right sacroiliac joints are located where the pelvis (ilium) contacts the back (sacrum). The SI joint allows for flexibility at the contact point reducing the potential for injury that could occur if the interface was rigid. There can be a huge effect on propulsion if there is pain where the force from the hind end meets the trunk of the horse.

Pain in the sacroiliac area is usually worse on one side leading to asymmetric (the problem is usually worse in one direction or on one side) signs or performance problems. SI pain rarely causes lameness. Common complaints we hear with SI soreness are:

- Not as comfortable on one lead (not taking lead or doing lead change, switching off of lead)
- Stiffer through the body, not bending in one direction
- A lack of drive (flat tire) off of one hind leg.
- Jumping flat or without drive off of hind end.
- When riding feels sore just in front of the croup on one side
- Feel like on left or right stride behind I'm being bumped up out of the saddle.
- Signs of a sore back (when tacking, bathing or grooming, bucking)
- Wants to keep hind end to one direction (haunches to the inside of a circle)
- Falling out behind
- Interfering behind often with an abrasion on a hind fetlock from the opposite foot.
- Not want to have the farrier lift a hind leg.

SI soreness can be secondary to a lower limb problem such as compensating for a sore hock or stifle. It can also be a primary problem due to past trauma or injury.

Diagnosis of SI pain is made through palpation and manipulation of the back, observation in movement, ultrasound and bone scan. SI soreness can often be treated with chiropractic manipulation. More severe cases, chronic cases, cases that do not respond to chiropractic or horses in a high level of work may need the SI area injected. SI injection consists of ultrasounded injections of long-acting anti-inflammatory medication. Local anesthetic is used to prevent discomfort and the horse is sedated. Recovery consists of rest with gradual increases in work over a few weeks. Within one month a normal horse will return to normal performance.

It is easy to focus on the limbs when a horse has performance changes or problems but taking a broader look at the whole horse may be necessary to get to the root of the issue.

A peak into the life of a Woodside intern...

[Diaries of a Veterinary Intern](#)

Our practice devotes its charitable giving efforts to the AAEP foundation. The foundation is committed to supporting education, research and benevolent efforts for horses and their caretakers. If you'd like more information or to donate to the Foundation you can visit the website at [AAEP Foundation](#).



Sincerely,

Woodside & Woodside North Equine Clinic