Equine Rolfing®

It was a beautiful June morning not too hot or too cold. The Spanish station was playing on the barn radio. The smell of horse manure and that peculiar smell of urine from Alfalfa fed horses filled the barn. The flies were biting but still lazy in the morning coolness. The horse I was Rolfing was owned by a man named Rolf who made me promise not to tell people that the horse was getting Rolfed, it was his competitive advantage. I was enjoying myself too much I told my self. I needed to get with the program because I had to go to work that day. Then it dawned on me, I was at work! I laughed so hard that I fell off the stool I was standing on. Luckily the horse, a big Warm Blood, just looked at me concerned like a friend and perhaps luckier for me; the stall had already been cleaned of manure. This article is to introduce you to the world of Rolfing horses; I hope that it will help you in some small way.

In 1997 during my advanced training's anatomy course, the Anatomy Teacher Tom Myers and I went out for a beer one night when he asked me to explain "… how one Rolfs a horse…" As I recall it he drank his beer while I explained my theory of Equine Rolfing. After listening he encouraged me to write about my theory. As things would happen this is the year when I've been pulled on to write by both the IASI Journal and now the Rolf Institute. In the IASI article I wrote about the "shell" of the work I do with horses. In this article I'll look at some points in more detail.

Before you can start to work with horses you need to understand how they are used by their owner. The majority of the horses you'll work with are ridden horses and you are being asked to help improve their performance under saddle. Some will have a behavioral problem that is related to soreness, rarely from mistreatment, although you'll hear lots of stories about how the horse was *rescued* from some abusive situation. This alls fits in that category of bodywork we deride as Rolfers, *fix it work.*

Working with any athlete it's important that we have some understanding of the stresses their athletic pursuits put them through. In the case of the horse it's important to understand how their body is or is not suited to the sport we have them in. For instance horses don't bend laterally very well, so Barrel Racing (they don't actually race the barrels they just run around them) is not a sport that is *friendly* to the horse's structure and not many horses can excel at it. Watching a horse barrel race is an excellent way to "see" how they adapt to the need to bend.

When you are working with a horse you are working with two clients, the one you are touching and the one who called you to work with the horse and will be paying you. To do this work well you'll have to be able to converse with both of these clients. You'll have to know when your work has benefited the animal and when it has benefited the human. You'll have to learn to seamlessly fit in to a two animal *herd,* and just as seamlessly leave it intact when you leave. The human client can tell you if they feel good or not about what you've done; you're used to that from your human practice. The horse will tell you as well, but you'll have to learn to *see* this.

The Nature of horses

On a continuum of predator to prey the horse falls as far to the prey end as possible. This is both a product of its inherent nature and the domestication of man. The former because only the inherently docile ones could be caught to domesticate, while the really wild ones were probably hunted and eaten, and the later through culling the caught herd for the more docile animals to work with and allowing them to breed and pass on their genes. So, even that *wild animal* you are confronting at the local dressage barn is really not that bad compared to what our ancestors met on the hunting trail.

Having evolved primarily on the plains, flight is the horse's best reaction to threat. On the plains there aren't many obstacles to run into and running straight ahead as fast as you can as an escape strategy is very viable. Where we humans get into trouble with this inherent strategy is when we restrict the horse in its ability to run away. Then it has to switch to its backup strategy of fight, which could be fighting us and come on us completely un-expected. *It is really important that you understand that working with horses is inherently dangerous.*

The openness of the plains provided the horse with an un-obstructed view of its herd mates. With this un-obstructed view the horse evolved a visual rather than a vocal communication medium. The fascinating body language of horses is very complex and mixed with a herd hierarchy and learned behavior, like we humans have. The learned behavior of the domesticated horse can come from any of its previous owners and living situations. The domesticated animal does not have the benefit of a natural horse school that turns out some defined product, anymore than we humans do. The horse you are working with may be an "inner city" toughie. Suffice it to say that if you approach a horse with the aggressive body language of a predator you can evoke the fight or flight response. As mentioned above if the horse feels like it can't run away from you it may fight you.

Besides the potential for the horse to want to escape or fight you, there's another reason why we don't want to have our predator thing on when we are working with horses, don't forget that humans *hunt* other animals we *eat* horses, well at least the

One determining structural feature of prey vs predator is the placement of the eyes. Prey animals have their eyes on the sides of the head, to allow a wider field of vision to see predators.
Predators have their eyes in the front of their heads, with a more concentrated vision. Approach a horse with those predator eyes and you may find you've stimulated its fight or flight response.
I have a horse that is very docile, once you catch him; he's skittish about being caught. The other night I wanted to put an ointment in the ears of my horses to give them some relief from the fly bites they had. Zen, the docile horse, became a very threatened animal when I approached him with my intense eyes looking into his ears, reaching up with the ointment in my hands. The fact that I had him trapped in a stall made things worse. When I saw the situation I had created I changed from ear predator to horseman and dropped the project. Then the next night I had to become a trainer again, when the horse wouldn't let me catch him. Here's the moral: It's not ok to create these kinds of situations for our clients, be conscious of how you are ***training*** *the horse you are working on.*

French do. In the presence of a predator the prey animal will try to mask any loco motor problems it has. It's the prey animal that has a movement aberration that causes it to get the most attention from the predator. Prey that's easier to catch increases the energy profit, on the investment required to catch it. (If you have an opportunity to watch a horse moving freely, like in an arena or round pen, turn your predator attention on and see if the horse's body changes.) We all understand this as Rolfers, from our training, standing in front of the class in our underwear and from working with our clients. If you have your intense predator eyes on the client will hide their *aberrations* from you.

In a natural setting the horse is part of an intact herd made up of sexually viable members. They learn a social order from the Alpha Mare who is the leader of the herd. Young horses are taught respect and are part of a natural herd hierarchy. The Alpha Stallion is in charge of security. The alpha stallion is the alpha stallion because of his ability to discriminate threats to the herd from non threats; he has the most *discriminating awareness.* With awareness being the determining factor of herd hierarchy it is very easy for a human to be moved up or down in the horse/human herd based on our ability to maintain our awareness in the horse's presence. Recognizing the horse body language that is displayed as you, the horse and the owner/handler move up or down in the hierarchy is very important, it's the difference in being safe or not. Just as important, the therapeutic environment/relationship is changing with these changes in the herd hierarchy and we need to be aware of that to make the proper intervention. Bringing your *tiger claws* out is fine as long as the horse respects you as a protector, very dangerous if the horse sees you lower in the pecking order.

In the domesticated situation the horses are taken away from their mothers when they can be weaned, to allow the mare to be bred again. This practice of weaning is prevalent even though the mare may not be re-bred. This takes the young horse away from the learning environment of the herd and puts them in with other youngsters until they are old enough to be physically secure with the older horses. This is a body growth measure not a mental growth measure. What we encounter when we work with the majority of domestic horses is ones that are immature in their horsiness and often not very well mannered. Couple this with an owner that's not that *horsy* and you've got a recipe for trouble. It's important for your own safety that you spend some time with new clients watching how they and their horses interact, to assure that the horse and owner respect each other and if not that you are aware of them both and for you to stay aware. Remember, the intention of awareness will put you at the top of the herd, in the horse's mind, and that's what matters since the human usually doesn't kick.

This is an important point to remember when working with horses; what people describe as aggression in a horse is defensive in nature. A horse that is truly aggressive, in the predator sense of the word, is a very confused and rare animal. At this point in my work with horses, these are the ones I truly love to work with.

A little about structure

The horse's foot evolved from having three toes (with 3 phalanges each) to having one toe (with 3 phalanges). The second and fourth meta-carpal-tarsal bones are still present as the *splint bones* and can be palpated on the side of the third meta-carpal-tarsal bone. The horse's hoof is akin to our finger nail and is continually growing. As a rule of thumb a completely new hoof takes about a year to grow, to account for the wearing down it experiences as the horse moves over abrasive surfaces. The walls, the outside of the horses hoof, will grow at a rate that accommodates the pressure put on that wall by the structures above it. In other words, if the horse's weight is distributed to the outside of the hoof, rather than down the center, then the outside will grow faster than the inside to accommodate for the increased wear on the outside of the hoof. The weight transfer through the foot will also affect its overall size, the smaller foot will be the one that consistently carries less weight and may be associated with a preference for the side that carries more weight, handedness, similar to a human. With the human's usage of the horse, the hoof can not always grow as fast as it is worn, so the metal *shoe* was developed. Originally the shoe was held on by string, the *Hippo Sandal*, later, when they were invented, the strings were re-placed with nails.

Given all this, when you encounter a horse with shoes, you can tell quite a lot about how they transfer weight through their leg by looking at the wear pattern of the bottom of the shoe. Are the nails worn more on one side or the other? Is the shoe worn in the front center or off to one side? Is the foot balanced? I'll leave it up to you to determine what the answers to these questions are and what that tells you.

The front of the horse, shoulders and legs, are not attached to the rest of the body through a bone since the horse does not have a clavicle. This allows for a separation of the movement of the *front* from the rest of the body, similar to an off road vehicle's independent suspension system. As shown in Figure 1.

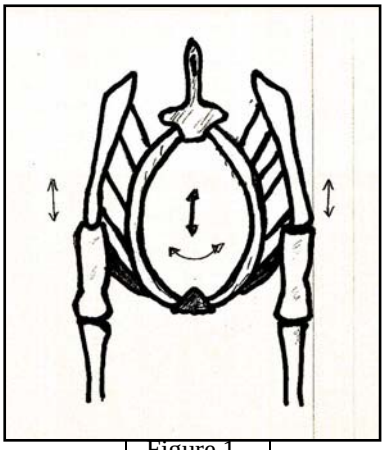

Figure 1.

The *body* of the horse is suspended from the scapulae and legs by the pectoral muscles and the serratus ventralis and cervicalis. This allows the body to rotate and elevate without disturbing the front legs as well as allowing the legs to move without disturbing the body, within soft tissue limits.

As you can see, from Fig. 1 any holding in the pectorals or serrati can show up as a rotation in the body. This can be reflected through the spine to affect the rear of the horse, but more often the horse will develop a compensatory strategy in the opposite leg. Rotation can be determined by the relative position of the sternum to the humerus.

You can also predict, from Fig. 1 that in order for the body to raise between the legs the scapula will have to move laterally to provide a mechanical advantage. We'll look at this in more detail later.

The front legs hang from the body and neck by the brachiocephalicus, rhomboids, lattisimus dorsi and trapezius.

The rear of the horse can be thought of as the engine or drive train. It's from the rear that the horse pushes the body forward with a minimum amount of *pulling* from the front that occurs due to friction on the front feet in retraction. (Some horses pull from the front when they move, this is un-desirable and an indication of tight shoulders which prevents a transfer of weight to the rear.) There is a continuity of soft tissue and bone from the head to the rear feet allowing energy to move from the rear to the head. The sinusoidal wave of energy from the rear to the head has to proceed without barrier to produce the most efficient movement. Barriers to this movement will set up *reflected waves* which can more easily be seen in the rider of the horse more than in the horse. (When looking at an efficiently moving horse being ridden the rider should look like a cork rhythmically bobbing on the ocean.)

Collection

Collection is the term that riders use to describe the movement of the horse's center of gravity from the front to the rear. This involves a shifting of the weight of the horse from the front towards the rear. The horse, in general, carries up to 60% of its body weight over the front legs; add to this the weight of a rider and tack and it becomes more. Without being able to compensate for this added weight by changing the center of gravity you will be riding a *plow*.

The key to a horse being able to collect, is the movement of the thorax dorsally, *Figure 1,* this shifts the weight of the thorax and rider towards the rear. The thorax rises through the contraction of the pectorals and serratus muscles, which attach from the thorax to the arm and scapula. The arm and scapula have to be able to translate laterally allowing the lift to occur. When the thorax rises, the sternum also rises, which brings the attachment of the rectus adominus more cephalad causing the pubic bone to move more cephalad, this in turn causes the hips to rotate under and the back to round. *Figure 2.*

Figure 2

It is this movement of rounding the rear end that gets confused by many people as collection when it's not. True collection is the upward movement of the thorax, with a secondary affect of the rounded back. The rider of a collected horse will feel the energy of the horse's movement in their seat/groin. It's really what makes riding horses so sexy or painful!

Horses will be collecting to greater or lesser degree of success naturally. The key to being able to move the weight to the rear rests in the freedom the horse has in its shoulders. The shoulders have to be free to assist the thorax rising. This shoulder freedom is the foundation of most early dressage work, where the horse is asked to do shoulder in/out movements. A horse that can not collect can not do upper level dressage work.

Since collection happens to some degree during all movement, the action of the neck could also be included in the description of it. I chose not to describe this since a horse can move its front limb without being truly collected.

Equine movement evaluation

One of the benefits I received from spending many years riding in distance events, Endurance Racing and Competitive Trail, was being able to watch horses being evaluated by experienced Veterinarians before and after the events. After checking my horse in with the Vet, I would join my friends in the *peanut and beer* gallery watching other competitors check their horses in. We would watch the horse move and give our peanut gallery evaluation of the horse, *grade one left front, slightly off right rear*… then we would hear the evaluation of the vet to confirm our diagnosis, it was a great way to learn to *see* movement aberrations or lameness. I would encourage anyone who is considering working with horses to volunteer their time, where you can, as a secretary to the ride Vets or to compete if you have a horse to ride.

I'm not going to attempt to write about a complete movement evaluation for a horse. What I want to write about is how to look at a horse moving such that we can develop a strategy for Rolfing the animal. I'm only going to mention lameness so you'll know when to walk away from the horse and refer the owner to a Veterinarian. There are five *grades* of lameness defined by the severity of the movement aberration, listed below:

Grade 1 - Difficult to observe; not consistently apparent regardless of circumstances (i.e., weight carrying, circling, inclines, hard surface, etc.)
Grade 2 - Difficult to observe at a walk or trotting straight line; consistently apparent under certain circumstances (i.e., weight carrying, circling, inclines, hard surface, etc.)
Grade 3 - Consistently observable at a trot under all circumstances
Grade 4 - Obvious lameness, marked nodding, hitching or shortened stride
Grade 5 - Minimal weight bearing in motion and/or at rest; inability to move

You'll have to decide for yourself if you want to work with a horse that is lame; I don't work with a horse above Grade 2 lameness unless I'm referred to the horse by a Veterinarian.

When you are evaluating a horse with a movement aberration/lameness there are some distinct characteristics to understand. First there are obviously two main components that could be involved in it, the bones (compression) and the soft tissue (suspension). The referral from the vet is going to come to you for the soft tissue problems, this isn't their area of expertise they can prescribe anti-inflammatories and rest but not much else, except Rolfing if they know about you.
When the horse is moving on a circle at a trot there are some simple rules to identifying lameness:

1. The horse **will** un-weight the painful part when it is being used. If this part is in the rear it will shift its weight forward by bobbing the head down when the painful part is weighted. If it is in the front it will raise the head when the part is weighted. The key here

is to first see the head movement associated with weight transfer and then to see how it is timed with the legs as they are being weighted. This is not something that is easy to learn from reading an article; **you have to look at a lot of horses under the direction of someone who knows what they are looking for.**

2. Because the horse does not bend easily when moving in a circle, remember the plains and all that evolution stuff, it will rotate its thorax in a circle. This translates to more weight being put on the structures on the inside of the circle and less on those on the outside. (Try this for yourself, get down on all fours and play horsy on a circle and see where your weight is). Knowing this helps you differentiate which part is hurting.

A corollary to this is that the bones are being weighted more on the inside of the circle and the soft tissue strained more on the outside. If you correlate a head bob with the outside leg it could be a soft tissue problem, if you have the horse trotted the other way and the problem goes away then it probably is soft tissue. I'd be thinking about violating my rule for this horse. This is where in the description of grade 2 lameness it says it's apparent under *certain* circumstances.

3. There are defined times during the stride, protraction, landing, support, retraction that put stress on different components of the structure. (I'll let those of you, who want to, determine what these are, you can contact me if you want to discuss it. Don't forget to include the neck and back in your analysis). Seeing and correlating when the un-weighting occurs helps determine what the problem may be.

4. Bones and joints are stressed more by hard surfaces and soft tissue is stressed more by soft surfaces. The rear end is strained more going uphill and front more going down. A grade one lameness workup may include using different surfaces to try and narrow the problem.

Quality of Gait

As mentioned above there are different phases of the stride that we can look at to determine a strategy for working with the horse. The quality of the gait is reviewed during these different phases. Let's look at an example of some the questions to ask during the trot:

Protraction

Front leg, is it moving forward in a straight line throughout this phase or deviating from side to side? How well does the leg fold? Does the head stay level as the front foot is moving forward? Does the shoulder move freely?

Rear leg, is it moving forward in a straight line, how much action is there in the hock? How far forward does the leg come before it stops? How much movement is from the leg at the hip and how much from the rounding of the back? Does the head stay level as the rear leg is moving forward?

Do the angulations of the front and rear leg at the end of protraction appear to be the same?

Landing

On landing does the foot touch down toe first, heel first or flat? Does the rear foot track into the front foot's footprint, in front of it or behind it? Is the rear foot landing off to one side of the front foot's print? Does the head stay level as the feet land? Do the front and rear feet land at the same time, in a trot?

Support

Does the leg come back into full extension, both front and rear? Is there excessive wobble as the bones come together? Does the head stay level through the support phase? How far is the downward migration of the fetlock? Is there excessive screw home in the rear leg? Is the shoulder free?

Retraction

Front leg, does it fold up completely and evenly? Does the shoulder move freely? How long does the leg stay in extension?

Rear leg, is there a smooth transition? Is there excessive hock action? Does the leg fold evenly?

For both the front and rear legs we want to see equal movement in protraction and retraction. Like a pendulum swinging.

A Horse Rolfing series

I propose that our series for working with a horse has to be based on shifting the center of gravity from the front to the rear and facilitating collection. Anything you do that helps this, helps the ridden horse, 99% of the horses you work with will be used for riding.

Here's the series that I came up with, from studying Dr. Rolf's 10 series:

1. Open the superficial, neck, back, front, rear. (A stand alone session)
2. Free the shoulders, neck and back. (Should be done with 3)
3. Free the rear, neck and back. (They can stop here)
4. Head, neck and back (They can stop here)
5. Integrate

Evaluating the horse in a five series context

Before I touch a horse at all, I want to see that horse moving. I use video to allow me to look at the horse later.

Before the first session I will evaluate the horse in movement and in standing.

Movement evaluation:

I have the handler move the horse at a walk while I "listen" to the footfalls and view the quality of the walk. Does the horse reach out, have over stride, is it dragging its toes? How does the horse carry its head? Is it moving freely? Is there an undulation in the back? Does the barrel swing side to side? Is the horse interested in what its doing or asleep? This is the time to also gauge the relationship the handler has with the horse. Will you be safe? Then I ask them to walk the horse and stop. I like them to do it at least 5 times, walk; stop, so I can see if a pattern emerges. The horse can stop in the following ways:

LF	RF	LF	RF	LF	RF
LR	RR		RR	LR	
		LR			RR

Square Left back Right Back

The horse standing with its head up will normally have its front feet squared with each other. If not this could indicate a problem in a front foot which causes the horse to un-weight that foot/leg while standing. When the horse stops from a walk the most efficient stance it can take is to stand with the rear feet/legs *square* and under its pelvis. The next best scenario is for the horse to stop randomly during the 5 tries, square, left back, right back… If the horse picks a left back or right back pattern most of the time, this would lead me to think that there is a problem in the pelvis.

Next I want to see the horse move in a 10 meter circle, or a normal lunge line length, at a minimum 3 times to the left and 3 to the right. At first at a walk, to evaluate the walk without the handler leading it, then at a trot to determine if the horse is lame.

In the circling trot we are looking for the same quality of motion indicators that we used at the walk. Foot flight, over reach, head position… We are also looking for how *engaged* the horse's movement is. Are the rear legs swinging equally to the front and rear? Like a pendulum. How much suspension, if any, is present? Does the rear end *piston* up and down or deviate laterally?

Once we have decided to work with the horse, that it's not lame, we want to evaluate it standing again. Have the handler simply hold the horse and let the horse pick its most comfortable stance. Do a general conformation analysis; you'll need to study this elsewhere. Does it weight all legs equally? Does the neck come out from the body cleanly? Is the neck centered? Is the body balanced in neck, thorax and rear end? Pick up a front foot and look at the bottom of the hoof. Is the *frog* in the center or off to one side? Hold the leg at the fetlock and look down at the foot. Is it balanced medial to

lateral? Holding the fetlock again, let the foot drop away and feel the balance in the joint, is it being pulled to one side? Rotate the foot in hand are there restrictions in the rotation? Look at the heels are there cuts, from overreaching? Look at the medial hairline of above the coronet, is the hair being cut, indicates a toed in flight pattern, which you saw while evaluating the conformation.

Look at the overall impression again. Are the hamstrings overly large, pushing into a restricted shoulder? Is there a tissue buildup in front of the shoulders, pulling from the restriction? *Over worked scalenes at a young age, due to using a bit too soon or heavy hands, will cause a "false" retinacula*[1] *in front of the shoulders.*

Once I am done with this I go to work. I usually start at the head and work my way backwards. The view of the first session is to open the superficial fascia. Superficial fascia on a horse is deep relative to a human; remember you have hair, and hide, adipose then fascia.

The horse will move while you are working with them, they'll even help you open an area. It's amazing that they normally move away from pressure, unlike dogs that pull against it, but they'll lean on you when you work. Remember never get between a horse and a hard spot! Watch the rear feet, not for a kick, to see if the stance changes to square, this is an indicator that you are freeing the shoulders.

Take time while working to step back and allow the horse to integrate what you just did. Don't get too intense, into your predator mode while you're watching the horse, it may hide from you. *Remember how you were standing in front of the class in your underwear!*

When you are done, no more than 45 min. of work, have the horse trotted on a circle again and see if anything has changed.

Session two

This session is dedicated to the shoulders. You don't have to do all of the evaluation of the first session; just watching them trot in a circle is good enough. Satisfy yourself that the horse isn't lame and look for the quality of the movement in the shoulders. The shoulders should move back and laterally as the leg swings through protraction, support and retraction, the diagonal feet should land at the same time. The canon bones of the diagonal legs should express the same amount of angulation as they move forward and back. As the leg is going forward the shoulder blade will be coming back and at the same time away, laterally, from the body. The head should be able to reach all the way to the ground while the horse is trotting. Is there a movement in the back that undulates? Does the rear end evenly move up and down? This indicates whether or not the rear legs are bearing the same proportion of the rear end weight. Imagine a "T" on the rear of the horse, the "T" should tilt evenly side to side as the legs are protracted, grounded, weighted and retracted. During protraction/retraction and a portion of the grounding, deviations may indicate a soft tissue problem. As the leg moves through grounding to weight bearing, the soft tissue, especially the ligaments are elongating and vibrating, especially in the front legs. Dampening this elongation and vibration are the "check" ligaments (superior and inferior) as well as the carpal retinacula.

[1] Read Louis Shultz and Rosemary Feitis' book "The Endless Web" for a description of "false retinacula". I first saw this idea in a Rolf Lines article.

As the weight moves over the leg, deviations are generally caused by a problem in the bones/joints.

Compare the impression of the inside legs to the outside legs as mentioned above.

Work to free the shoulders and then evaluate the horse again.

Session three

This session is about the rear end. Have the horse trotted in a circle. Look for the amount of over stride there is. Where are the rear feet landing relative to the front? Do they travel in a straight line, (determined by where the rear foot falls relative to the front feet)? Have the horse cantered on the circle. Does the rear end lumber coiling happen? Lumbar coiling is the extension of the spine that has to happen to "load" the lumbar Aponeurosis. Is the canter engaged or out of sequence/strung out? Is the tempo three beat or four beat?

Work to free the rear and then evaluate the horse's movement.

Session four

This session is about the head and neck. This is like a 7th, hour human session. The idea is to remove the restrictions and holding patterns that come from being ridden with a saddle and having a bit in the mouth.

I think it's a good idea to learn how bits work, so you'll be able to anticipate the animal's potential problems.

The movement evaluation is the same as the last two sessions, at a trot. Assure there's not some lameness issue that precludes continuing.

The standing evaluation includes a more detailed view of the horse's head, eyes, mandible balance, sternum relationship to shoulders, freedom of the AO…

Work in the mouth, to wake up the "bars" and tongue.

Re-evaluate the movement.

Session five

This session is about closure. If you followed my pattern you've now seen this horse for over a month. You've been able to see changes in how the animal moves, and as importantly forgotten what it looked like before you started.

The same standing and moving evaluation as in earlier sessions should be used. You may want to try some tracking to alleviate a leg swing issue. You may want to suggest some movement exercises, if you know how to train a horse, to help the horse further integrate. Movement over ground poles… There's no agenda. Enjoy it.

Figure 3.

Some people say that you should just go out and work with horses after your Rolfing training; you don't need any special training for it. I don't agree with that attitude, but that's probably because I have spent so much time around horses, riding and training and now Rolfing them that I understand how little I know.

I came to be a Rolfer through the intervention of Liz Gaggini, my Rolfer, and having Tessy Brungardt work on one of my endurance horses after we had a bad accident, a *wreck* in horseman's terms. I left my Engineering Management job at Hewlett Packard to become a Veterinarian, but because of the wreck I wasn't able to attend school when I was supposed to. The reason I'm re-counting this is simply because the entire time I was in auditing and practitioning I thought I was going to work with horses not people. While my classmates were taking notes for their human practices I was taking notes for my horse practice as well as my human one. I would leave the class at night and go out to the barn to work with the horses. By the time I was in my practitioning I realized I was going to work with both horses and people.

I spent my first year working with horses for free, actually for a donation to a charity and photo rights to the horses. I took videos of every horse I worked with and watched them to see what changes were made to the horse's *way of going*. I worked on my horses for specific issues and measured the time it took for the issue to come back e.g. tight hamstrings. Even though I had an extensive background with horses I still had to spend a lot of time learning how to apply Rolfing to a horse structure.

Do you need to train to work with horses? I guess you don't, but then you could probably also go out and do Visceral Manipulation without training.

I hope you got something from this article. Feel free to email me if you have any questions, about horses, not Visceral Manipulation.

Bio: Jim Pascucci is an Advanced Rolfer with both human and horse practices. His new book "Equine Structural Integration: Volume One Myofascial Release" as well as a list of his Equine courses are available through www.equinesi.com .