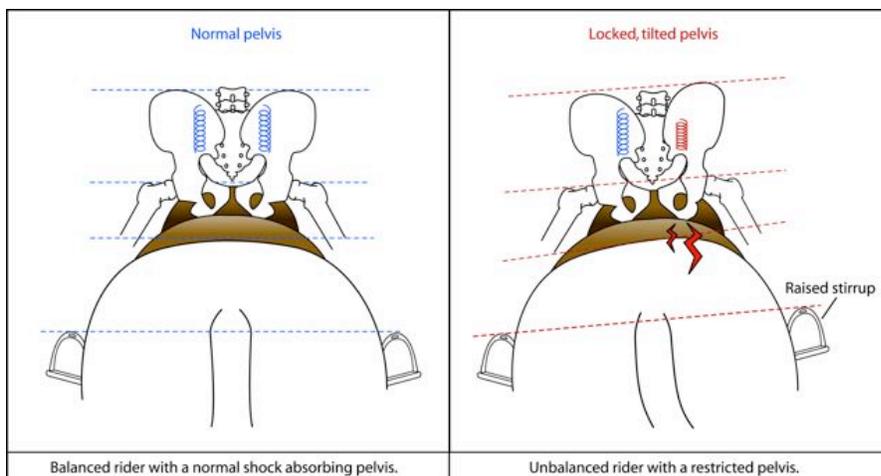


Human Spine to Equine Spine: What the horse feels.  
by Mark L Metus Chiropractor

Some say the connection between a horse and rider is almost a spiritual experience. However you describe it, the need to be one with your horse is essential for optimal command, response and ultimately, performance.

You may enjoy watching horses in the early spring as they prance around the paddock with cadence, balance, confidence and composure. They look great, perhaps even expensive as they show off to one another. They have rounded their necks, their deportment is controlled and their movement is flowing. In reality these horses are engaging slow twitch postural muscles to maximize and demonstrate their conformation. At the same time, the fast twitch locomotor muscles contract and release quickly providing speed and directional changes. Experts recommend training horses to engage the postural muscles first, otherwise there will be consequences. Inadvertently allowing locomotor muscle to play a postural role will result in injury. Complex? Not really, as correct posture allows for good musculoskeletal performance.

I like watching people. It's a habit resulting from years of treating patients with spinal faults. After awhile I was able to see what was wrong with them as they walked down the hall to my office and sat down. Human posture and locomotion gives away many secrets to the trained eye. Muscles move joints, but the nervous system tells the muscles when to contract or relax. Whether you consider the horse or the rider, the means by which good posture is maintained is based on a feed back mechanism from joints and muscles to the brain. We inherently know the position of all our limbs without looking. Behind the scenes our nervous system is communicating with our joints to maintain that position. This is known as proprioceptive feedback. It is effortless and automatic. Step barefooted on a single pebble and immediately you will shift your weight to avoid the pain. The nerves in your foot tell your brain to re-weight. Constantly walking with a pebble in your right shoe would eventually result in you having an asymmetrical gait. This is what I find wrong with the human frame every day in practice. Our body will always take the path of least resistance. It is the consequence of



mechanical faults in the spine, pelvis and often the feet. The result is that many patients have a restricted and/or twisted pelvis, usually on one side. They will have a short leg on the same side as the pelvic restriction because the brain tells the pelvic girdle muscles to contract

the hip into the socket. They may have neck and shoulder stiffness as well. The restricted sacroiliac joint feels hard and unforgiving to hand pressure while the other is soft and mobile. If this patient is a rider, the seat is compromised and the stirrup lengths will feel unequal.

The restricted sacroiliac joint will not absorb the shock against the saddle so they will inadvertently list on to the opposite sitting bone. If a horse's nervous system will allow it to feel a fly on its backside, what must its proprioceptive response be to a 150 pound rider listing sideways. If you think you have a lower back problem consult a Chiropractor and make sure your spine and pelvis are functioning correctly. It could make all the difference to how your horse interprets your commands.

Addressing issues like this is only part of the overall vision of Ron Lubinski, owner of Y-Not Farms, Tel. 519-538-0510, an equine facility with a Rider Development Program



dedicated to enhancing the connection between the horse and rider. Dr Mark Metus, a Chiropractor near Collingwood Ontario is studying the effects of treating the malfunctioning human spine and pelvis on the horse's ability to respond to the rider's commands.

**"One of the keys to successful relationships is to treat everyone like your dog treats you." .....Think about it.**