

Keeping Horses Sound

“Recognising Early Symptoms”



Dianne Jenkins

www.jent.net.au

Endurance Riding

“A discipline many horses can cope with and still have a few issues because....”

- Long distances in straight lines
- Regular exercise
- Minimal training aids
- Freedom of the neck
- Adopt a style of gait that suits them

Common Beliefs

Are these True? Or are they no longer True....?

- *Horses are only in pain when they are lame*
- *A good horse will push itself through the pain barrier*
- *Horses 'put on' bridle lameness to get out of work*
- *One lazy leg? 'It's just their way of going'*
- *Lazy horses rub off hind toes*
- *Sacroiliac issues are common*

Take a Fresh Look at your Horse

- Stand back and review at a standstill
- Watch in action
- What has changed over time?
- Nothing remains static with horses
- Small issues impact the whole body
- Changes can creep in without lameness
- Constant vigilance is necessary to prevent damage

Postural Conformation

The horses preferred posture tells a story

- Uneven weight distribution causes....
- muscular symmetry which impacts on the skeleton
- ***“Bones will only do what muscles allow them to”*** Dr Kerry Ridgway DVM
- Uneven weight distribution, for ANY reason will cause muscular asymmetry and premature joint wear & tear



Side View

*Compare the height of the wither
to the peak of the rump*

**Remember: NO breed is naturally lower
in front, so there will be a reason!!**

- Front feet
- Leg joints
- Pain in muscles of chest, shoulders & neck
- Saddle fit



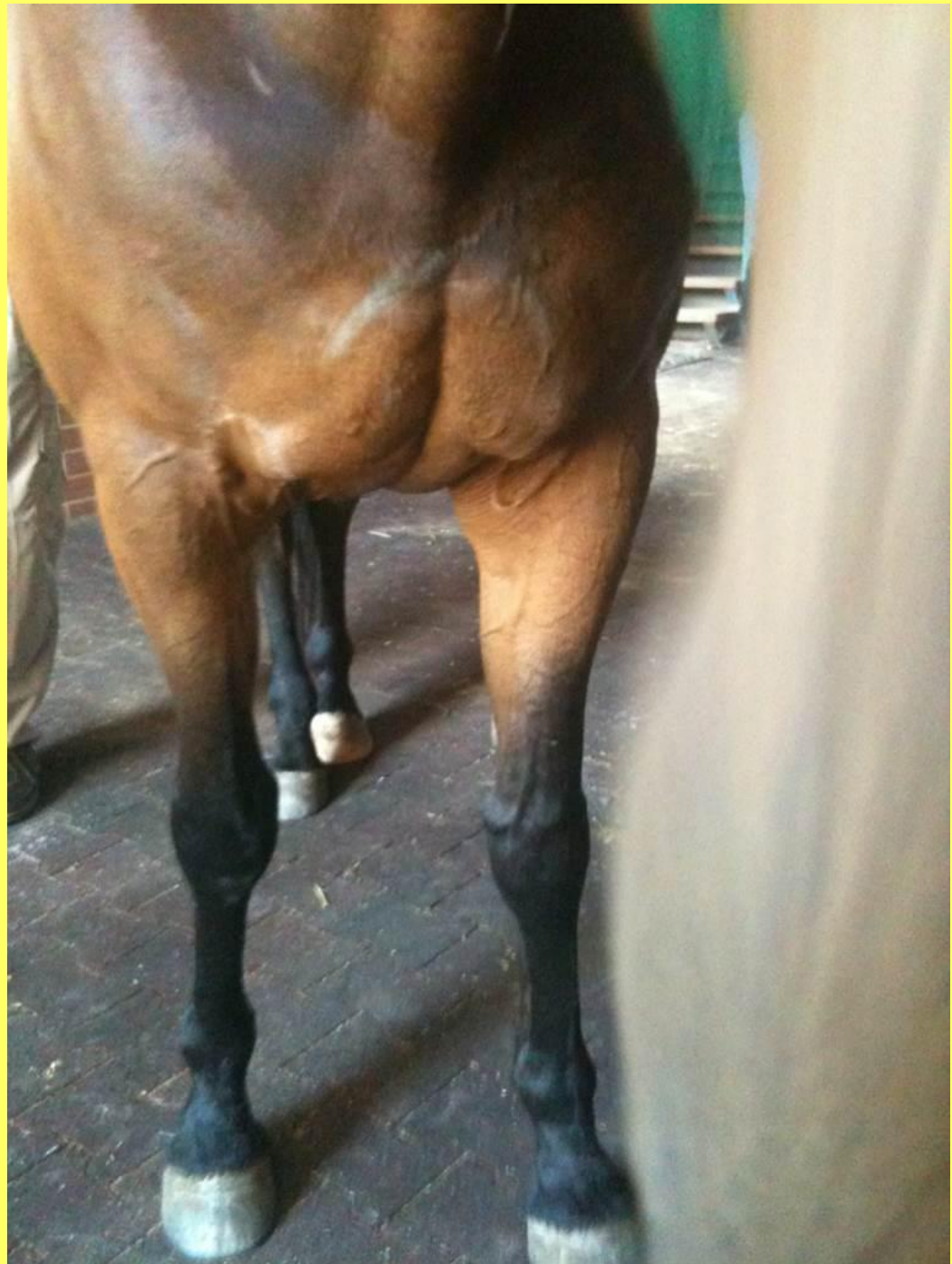
Front View

- Happy to stand with head and neck straight?
- Compare muscles of neck & shoulders
- Loading a leg?
- Look at the chest muscles to tell

**What can
you detect?**

‘Loading’

**Must be
repeatable**



Rear View

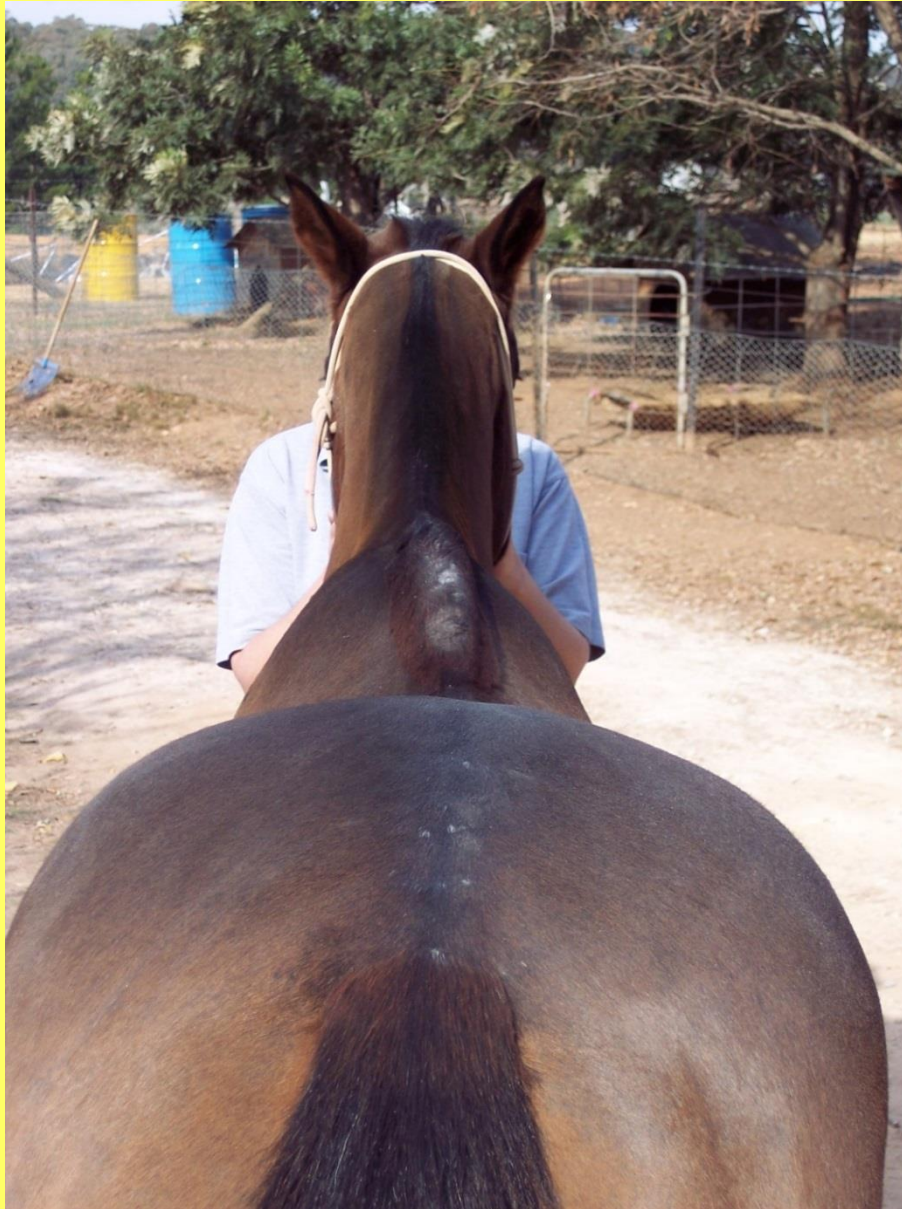
Learn to differentiate between the bones and the muscles when checking asymmetry

- **Pelvic skeletal** asymmetry – altered push off & uneven back muscles (effects saddle fit)
Don't try to straighten the twist in push off
- **Muscular** asymmetry Gluteals, Hamstrings & Gaskins

Asymmetry is caused by uneven movement



Straight Spine?



Pelvis and Sacrum = Sacro Iliac

- Pelvic skeletal landmarks must be level
- Sacroiliac Joint is **not** in the region of the SI pain indicator
- Maintenance imperative with correctly diagnosed SI issues

Watch your Horse Move

- More comfortable on one lead or diagonal?
- 2, 3 or 4 tracks?
- Head and neck straight?
- Landing patterns to judge stride evenness
- Flight patterns – change to minimise discomfort
- Hoof and shoe wear patterns

These issues are evidence of uneven weight bearing diagonal pairs which lead to asymmetry & joint dysfunction

One Diagonal Syndrome

Why? Comfort for horse....

- Easier to push off on stronger pair of legs
- Saving the other pair?
- Which pair will break down first?

Or comfort for the rider

- Rider balance –need symmetry check too
- Saddle fit

Check back for asymmetry

Value of Veterinary Diagnosis

Valuable to construct the base line of where the horse is at to compare against in the future

- Radiographs of front fetlocks down, and hocks
- MRI's are very revealing

“Why the fore legs and hocks?”

They are the joints most affected in all equine disciplines

Practical - Hands On

Viewers learn...

- Differences between acute & chronic
- Test joint range of motion (ROM) regularly
- Palpation SI9, wither pockets, GB 21, St 30
- Weakest link of Deep Digital Flexor
- Palpation of Suspensories
- Shoulder Restrictions
- Effective acupoints to apply red light or pressure . Bl 20 & 21, 40 & 60, LI 16, CV17, CV12