

THE EQUINE TOUCH



Have you heard about Equine Touch? Georgie McBurney explains how it has helped members of the therapy herd.

## EQUINE REWILDING MEETS THE EQUINE TOUCH

The Paintedhorse herd are now an eclectic mix of seven mares and five geldings of all shapes, sizes, colours, attitudes, and health needs. Late summer we invited fellow Equine Therapy Practitioners to Homeway Farm near Glastonbury to experience Equine ReWilding, the art of being 'not doing', and a chance to just be in the moment with our herd and allow what is within to emerge. This group would also be introduced to a body balancing technique for their own horses' health called The Equine Touch (ET) as taught by UK instructor Lyn Palmer, who owns the farm. After this day of sharing good practice, a lot of Practitioners signed up to learn ET as its benefits were clear. Lyn also invited a group of ET Practitioners for their Professional Development in ET and also to experience Equine ReWilding with us to enhance their awareness of energetic fields, which is helpful to ET.

Our Welsh pony Jac, for example, once refused a physical adjustment on his leg by an ET student; but he allowed Lyn to do the adjustment about a hand's width away from his leg in his energetic field. Jac then stretched his leg out as if it had been physically adjusted, much to the student's amazement. Jac, a one time Junior Affiliated jumper, is now a veteran who suffers with stiffness in his back legs. With regular ET, he now often caprioles in the field when the herd has a run around.

### ET Success With Our Laminitic Pony

In our first week of taking ownership of Epona, a Dartmoor Hillie, she showed laminitic symptoms and we took the usual well-documented safety precautions. Our holistic vet advised us not to withdraw grass from her diet and recommended certain herbs to support her liver. Epsom salts were invaluable and she would self select as needed from a

separate water bucket. We had to get her moving more to lose some weight, but slowly so as not to cause hyperlipaemia. We have no track system on the farm, but had use of a round pen and an ideal straw-like field, so we worked with what we had.

We removed the grazing muzzle she came with so she was able to forage in the mature hedgerows, self selecting various herbage to balance and neutralise her diet. We had a goal of putting her in with our main herd who lived out 24/7 on meadows. We put her in the field next door and she bonded quickly with our two young Dartmoors, who we let in to play with her from time to time.

Epona stopped overeating when she realised she wasn't going into a stable for sixteen hours and began establishing other herd behaviours which matched the others. My business partner, Livvy,

also offered Epona daily Equine Touch to help her balance her own body systems. We only realised how effective that had been when Livvy went off to Glastonbury Festival for several days. I could not do ET myself but everything else remained the same. I had to bring her off the grass within 48 hours. Livvy returned, resumed ET, and Epona was back out a day later. It was then obvious that I needed to get ET trained. Nowadays she lives out with the main herd 24/7 with the odd night here and there off the grass if we notice any breathing changes (which is her first laminitic sign). More often than not Epona will approach for a body balance before this occurs and it feels she is quite empowered with having this choice. Winter on the levels may change our routine slightly but she remains with the main herd thanks to ET.

### What is The Equine Touch?

ET is now one of the largest Equine Bodywork disciplines taught and practised in the UK. A basic body balance is non-diagnostic and non-invasive. It involves a specific bodywork technique on the muscular-skeletal system, which includes acupressure points which work on energy / meridian lines - therefore helping the body holistically. It was modified for equines from a Vibromuscular Harmonization Technique (VHT) for humans, developed by the late Jock (John) Ruddock. In 1997 Jock started to study the results of his VHT on the Equine muscular-skeletal system, noting the effects, improvements and releases both physical and emotional. A year later he was invited to Prague by a leading Veterinary Surgeon to work on Cipisek, the Czech Republic's famous winner of National Steeplechase Championship ('97). Cipisek was so badly twisted after a fall at a jump which involved three other horses landing on him that he was to be euthanised. After the first session with Jock he was walking with his neck and tail up, his body aligned, and his pain greatly reduced. Jock was then invited to teach at the National Veterinary University to teach European vets his technique for equines. With his wife, Dr Ivana Ruddock, a vet and lecturer in anatomy, they developed their ET technique further

to address lymphatic drainage, energy releasing torque moves, limb elongation and gentle soft tissue manipulation. By 2001 regular clinics were held by Lyn at Homeway Farm, and after an ET demonstration at a Parelli Conference a year later, the demand from horse owners to learn ET was explosive so more instructors were trained. ET is now taught to all, so horse carers like Livvy and I can offer our horses a higher, healthier and pain-free quality of life.

### Equine Touch on Humans

My back first collapsed about eleven years ago, while hanging out laundry one morning. I was a student at the time and most of my friends were still in bed, so I lay on the floor for several hours not wanting to bother an ambulance. It took twelve weeks of chiropractic treatment for me to be able to sit down properly. Having relocated a few times during teacher training, I noticed that chiropractic care does vary. I was between chiropractors when my back went again in front of a Year Eight class at school. I finally found a chiropractor at Aquae Sulis in Dorset who was talented and intuitive, and have been fine since. He was responsible for helping my niece walk again after she was paralysed by either Transverse Myelitis or a spinal stroke.

When I relocated to Glastonbury, finding a chiropractor was on my list of things to do, but my back went after I carelessly lifted up a stubborn gate before I had found one. Cue Lyn, who gave me ET, or VHT for humans. The technique was gentle and thorough, with rests between work and it lasted about an hour. I took it easy the following day, and the one after that I was able to carry water buckets as if nothing had happened, which even I found incredible. Not too long after my back episode, I got Repetitive Strain Injury in my hands from daily wheelbarrow runs clearing up all our horse poo. I could not grip properly and was starting to lose the ability to lift the kettle up, open jars and packets and so on. I returned to see Lyn who did several VHT sessions which has now reversed the effects and I can use my hands properly again. I have even learnt a few techniques I can do myself.

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Left: Jac having Equine Touch. Top: Epona, our laminitic, living out 24/7 on grass without muzzle. Middle: Davvy having a roll as Practitioners spend time in the field. Bottom: Lyn Palmer demonstrating Equine Touch on Cue.

Georgie and Livvy run PaintedHorse, a Community Interest Company offering Equine ReWilding and experimental / facilitated learning to both children and adults in Somerset. For more info, please visit [PaintedHorse.org.uk](http://PaintedHorse.org.uk)