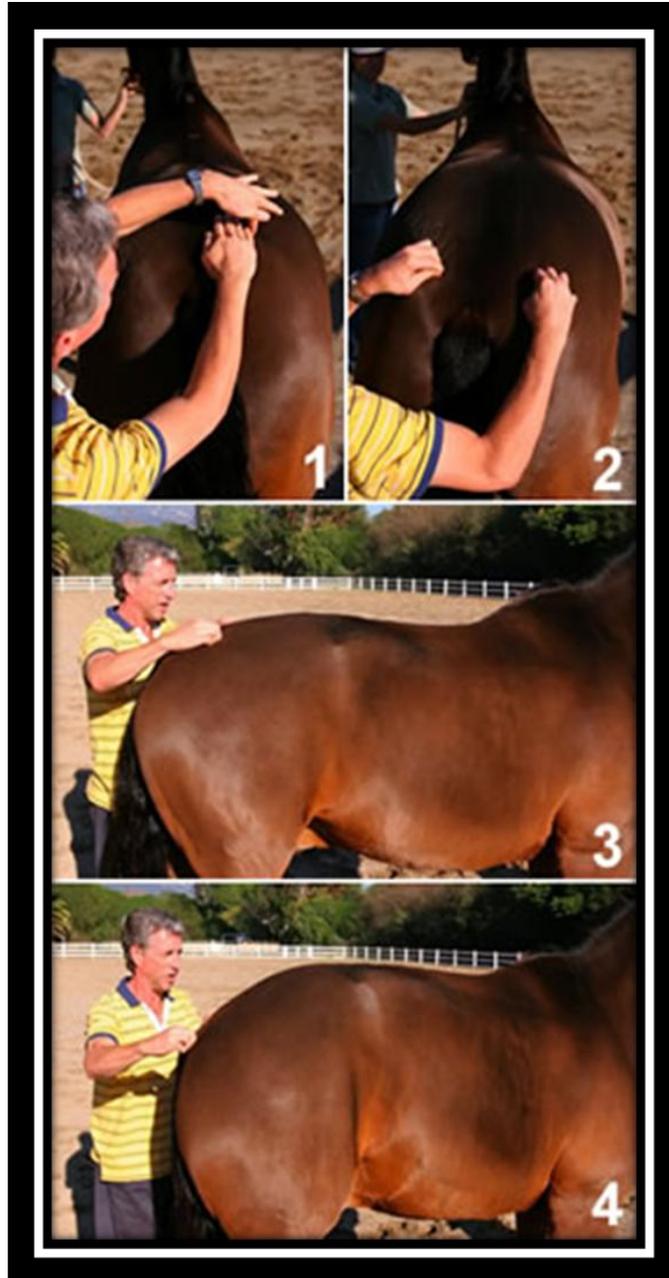


Back/Hip Stretches #1



By “scratching” the area over the rump area of the horse, the hips will be tucked under and the lower back will lift in an upward or flexed position. Stand to the side of your horse's back leg or thigh then scratch with both hands in the muscular groove about four inches to the side of the tail. Apply pressure with your fingers until the back lifts. Hold pressure for 20 to 30 seconds. Be careful when doing this and judge the safety of doing this before starting.

Back/Hip Stretches #2



Belly lifts are great for increasing abdominal muscle tone and stretching back muscles in the horse, and they are much like a person doing sit-ups. The idea behind a belly lift is that the stomach muscles will contract then the back will lift which has the effect of stretching the back muscles thus causing them to relax.

To get your horse to do a belly lift, "tickle" your horse at the ventral sternum (near where the girth lies) on the midline. Apply firm pressure with your fingertips or fingernails, or scratch lightly back and forth until the horse elevates his withers, says Kevin Haussler, DVM, PhD, DC. Hold the position for five to 10 seconds. As pressure is applied to the belly area move back with it you will see your horse raise his topline into the lower back area.

Neck Stretches – Carrot Stretches

(Lateral)



In this exercise the horse is asked to bend or flex the neck towards you. While the neck is being flexed to the left, the neck on the right side is being stretched as is the back. Using a treat such as a carrot or handful of grain may be enough to encourage your horse to do these stretches. They should be done in both directions. Moving the treat diagonally from the girth area then across the rib cage will use different neck muscles and improve rotation.

Neck Stretches – Carrot Stretches

(Ventral)



Not every horse will have this amount of flexibility. At least stretching down to the feet or fetlocks in exchange for a treat is helpful. Going beyond the fetlocks encourages even more neck flexion while simultaneously lifting the withers and back.

Leg Extensions/Flexions



In this picture an example of stretching the forelimb is being demonstrated. The goal is to lift the cannon area and bring it slowly forward. While doing this the shoulder will be stretched. Some horses will permit this to a point then either resist or put their foot down abruptly. If your horse does not resist then try to extend the forearm so it will be parallel to the ground. Not only does it help to loosen the shoulders and upper limb, but it will also help to move the shoulder blade and benefit horses with tightness in the withers.



In this picture a hind leg stretch is being demonstrated. As with the forelimb stretch it will be important to do this slowly and not force it beyond what the horse is comfortable doing. If your horse has difficulty holding up a hind foot to have the hoof picked out then it may be inadvisable to do this procedure. If you are unsure check with your Veterinarian first.

I generally try to get the gaskin area parallel to the ground while keeping the cannon perpendicular.