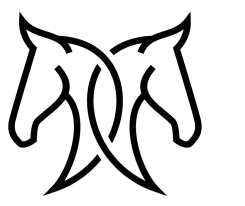
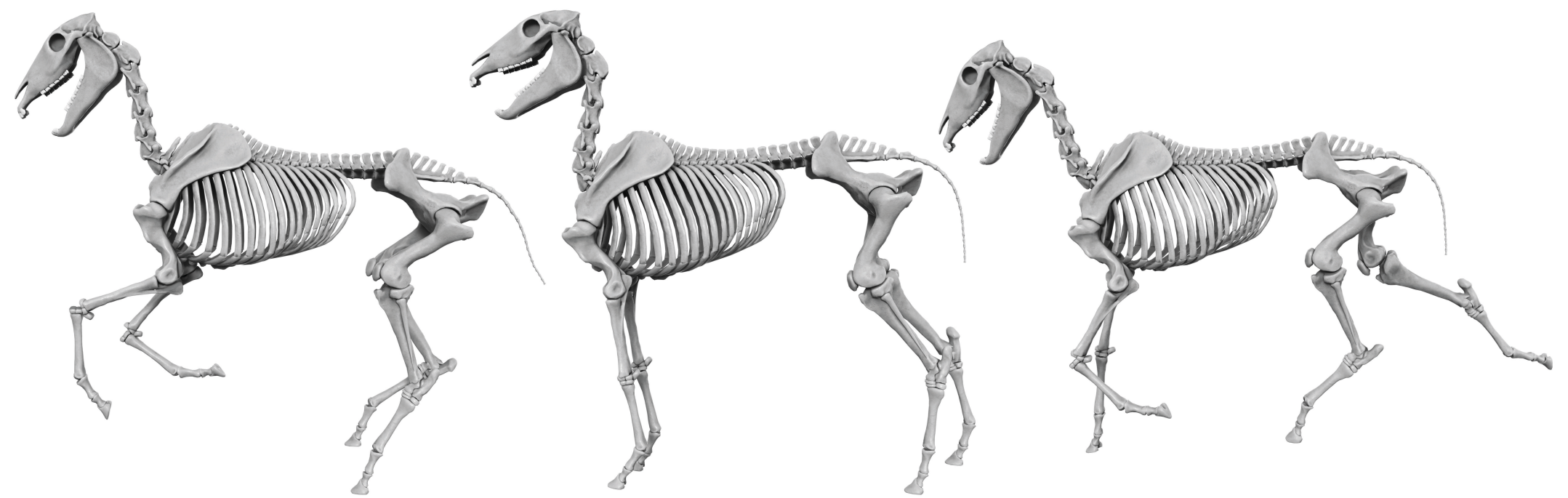


THE YOUNG HORSE GROWING AND WORKING: PREVENTION OF KISSING SPINES



BY MARC BEAUSSART, EQUINE PHYSIOTHERAPIST AND OSTEOPATH
DIP, PG DIP EO – MIAAT, MT MIRVAP, FEI PET

Kissing spines lead to back pain, associated with avoidance behavior and an inability to perform the intended sport. Kissing spines are the most common cause of back pain in horses. The risk of the horse developing kissing spines is present from a very young age. Currently, we have no scientific studies on the exact origin of kissing spines. But recent research highlights possible origins coming from poor riding practices and a genetic factor.



FACTS

- **Frequency:** 39% of horses (real problem on a small number)
- **Symptoms:** poor performance (including loss of performance from the hindquarters, failure to bend, lameness...), significant change in the behaviour (reaction to the saddle, reaction to grooming, acceptance of commands...)
- **Frequent location:** T13-L2 (most common site T15-T16)
- **Origin:** mostly unknown, but very recent research show a possible genetic factor
- **Risk factors:** breeds (Thoroughbreds, Arabians), practice (competitive jumping, dressage horses, horseball)

TO “START” A YOUNG HORSE AND THE POSSIBLE RISKS OF KISSING SPINES

- **Vertebrae age of fusion:**
Dorsal Process **4-5 years** / Accessory Processes **3-5 years** / Anterior Physis **3-5 years** / Posterior Physis **5+ years**
- Structural damage to the horse's back from early riding is somewhat easier to produce than structural damage to his legs.
- Recent research shows that the musculoskeletal system is prepared from an early age for activity and load. Exercises for the young horse have a positive rather than a negative effect. However, adding the rider's weight to the back of a young horse places non-physiological pressure on bone tissue that is still insufficiently mature and exposes the horse to premature health problems. It is necessary to observe conformation and posture beforehand, and analyze the risk factors. Every horse is different. The young horse must be physically prepared to receive the weight of the rider appropriately, well before work dedicated to a specific discipline.

GYMNASTIC AND PREVENTION: EXERCICES

There is no precise age to start training young horses. But there are steps to take, from basic training to scheduled work, to avoid the risks of kissing spines. Horse welfare is not about too much exercise too soon but too little too late. However, a limitation in our understanding is the lack of knowledge about the correct exercise dose to optimize the musculoskeletal system:

- **Ground exercises**
- **Proprioception** (linked to pole work)
- **Pole work** (books on horse gymnastics or software: EQ Active)
- **Hill work**
- **Long reining**
- **Lunging long and low** (lunging right equipment, right surface)
- **Elastic resistance bands / Equiband** (tool to increase proprioception and roundness of the back)

A certain amount of exercise is essential to ensure optimal development of musculoskeletal tissues before starting to ride the horse:

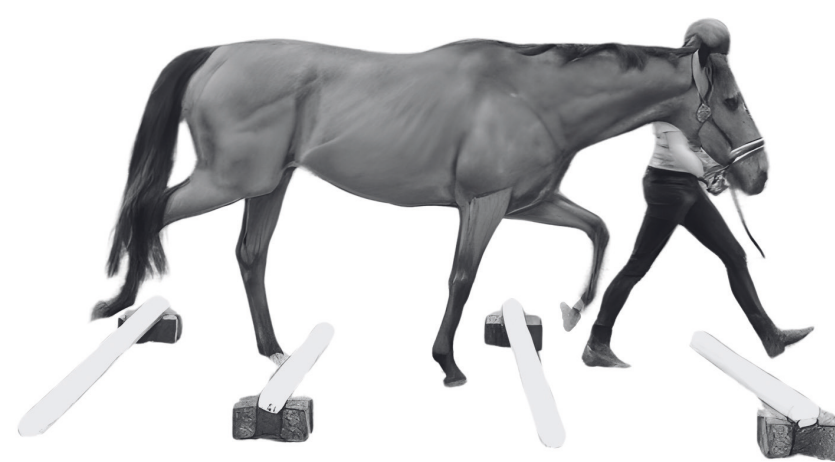
- The young horse, unaccustomed to work or being poorly ridden, tends to raise his neck while hollowing his back. The spinous processes converge and rub against each other. Also as a result we obtain a contraction of the musculature, this contraction will result in a narrowing of the intervertebral spaces.
- The young horse needs to understand and be able to maintain a balance dedicated to the practice of riding. This is achieved by working according to gymnastic work in relation to the anatomical capacities of the horse.
- The young horse is not able to protect its body naturally when carrying a rider.



EQ ACTIVE
BY EQUIMOTION



EQ ACTIVE
BY EQUIMOTION



EQ ACTIVE
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The art of horsemanship is the art of preparation. This consists of the horse supporting the rider's weight by stretching its upper line and not having to support this weight by arching its back. The back is a suspension bridge and the direct link between the horse's limbs. In addition, the back and the limbs have important reciprocal links.

Steinbrecht said “The training of the horse is based on gymnastic exercises according to the laws of nature through which the horse's whole muscular system is being conditioned and put into direction, which will be useful to the rider.” There is one therapy that is superior to all others, this therapy is prevention. And this prevention is particularly important for young horses, growing horses and horses with genetic risk factors of kissing spines. Cornille said “Competent equitation is the best therapy”.