

Hey JW,

I thought you might be interested in this. There's a thing called "body work" for horses that's sort of somewhere between a massage and a chiropractic session. A couple of years ago, a friend-of-a-friend-of-a-friend was looking for a barn with a lot of horses to use for a clinic for practitioners of the Masterson Method, a body working style. I set it up with our barn owner and they came to our barn and it was a great success – the people were nice and the horses were happy. Since then, they've come back to our barn twice.

Anyhow, this time there was a clinic at a different barn, but they wanted to use Sunny as a demo horse, so we went over this morning. They start at the head/poll/neck, then do the front legs, then to the rear. When the horse is relaxed front and rear, they go in and work on the middle, where the ribs are. Sunny's done it enough now so that when the routine starts, she totally relaxes, which she shows by yawning, sticking out her tongue, and doing these sloooooow blinks.

One of the recurring things they do is sort of shake the horse's head really gently, bracing the poll and rocking from the bottom of the head (picture 1. And there are photos on both sides of the page). Another thing they do after the horse is relaxed, is reach in and hold onto the tongue. They don't pull it or anything, but they let the horse sort of move around it. Evidently, the tongue is attached to muscles that hold the poll in place and once the horse realizes that they can stretch themselves, they pull against the tongue to release tension at the poll (picture 2).

Then they work the legs, forward, backward and sideways (picture 3). Then they move onto the rear of the horse. That said, by that time, Sunny was about asleep (picture 4).

We're riding with a friend tomorrow and I'm really looking forward to it. Last time she was worked on, we went out with a couple of friends who ride endurance – their mares are tall, leggy, off-track Arabs. We rode at Mt Madonna, which has some pretty steep hills. Sunny just killed them; she walked away from them going downhill, at 4.5 mph and uphill at about 5.5. So I guess the body stuff works.

Hope you don't mind hearing about our activities – they are just so different from what you've done. I love hearing your stories, so I hope you'll love hearing ours.

Donna and Sunny