

Equine Hanna Somatics® - Part 4

Flexion and Extension of The Tail

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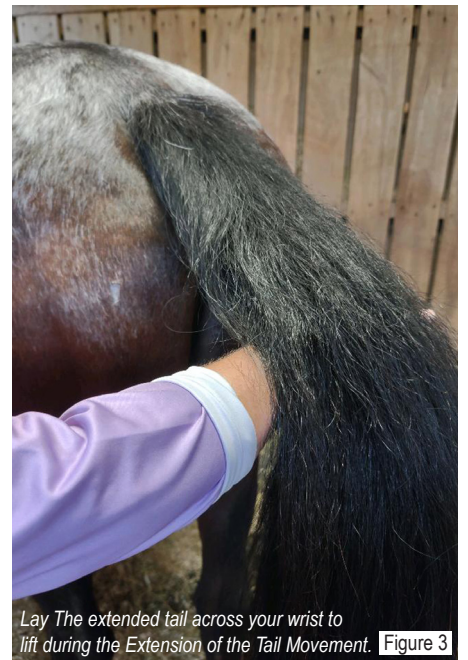
The fourth Equine Hanna Somatics® (EHS®) movement for you to do with your horse is a series of three movements extension, flexion and lateral flexion, of the tail. Always handle your horse's tail with gentle respect.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Lay The extended tail across your wrist to lift during the Extension of the Tail Movement. Figure 3

The tail sways with the hindquarters in the balanced movement of a healthy horse. As he bends into a turn, his tail follows in the same curve. The tail has an essential role in the horse's proprioception, the unconscious sense of position in space.

The 15 - 25 (18 is the average) caudal vertebrae of the tail play a role in the impulsion and propulsion of the horse. The powerful "hamstring" muscles attach to the first few tail vertebrae and the surrounding dorsal ligaments and fascia.

The tail is part of the nervous system through a bundle of spinal nerves from the end of the spinal cord through the sacrum into the caudal vertebrae (tail bones). The first caudal vertebra creates the first joint at the end of the sacrum.

Evaluate your horse's tail position by standing behind your horse, at a safe distance. Is it clamped, lifted or held to one side? Once you determine how your horse holds his tail, choose the first exercise that matches how the tail is held, before completing the remaining movements.

Some horses will not allow your fingers to be near the top of their tails. Do what you can from the location he accepts. EHS creates a space for the horse to participate in an action that is comfortable.

Flexions of the Tail release contractions affecting the muscles on the underside of the tailbone. Standing on the left side of your horse's hindquarters, gently place your right hand over the top portion of his tail. Slowly press his tail down toward the rectum. Release the light pressure to a count of 5, returning to the place of rest. Repeat two additional times. Figure 1

Extension of the Tail lengthens the muscles on the top and sides of the tail bone. Standing on the left side of the horse's hindquarters, place the fingertips of your right hand along the right side of your horse's tail slowly moving them down and under toward the center of the tail, being aware of your horse's response. Figure 2 Use your left hand to support his tail as you drape the tail bone over your right wrist, use your wrist to raise and lower the horse's tail. Gently and slowly, invite the tail to lift, only as far as the horse is comfortable, stop when you sense any amount of resistance. Slowly return the tail to its resting place to a count of 5. Repeat two more times. Figure 3

Lateral Flexion of the Tail (right and left) help release tension in the small muscles attached to each side of the individual caudal vertebra. These muscles allow the tail to be flexed to the right and left. Standing on the left side of the horse's hindquarters, place the fingertips of your right hand along the right side of your horse's tail slowly moving them down and under toward the center of the tail, being aware of your horse's response. Gently ask the tail to move toward your body. Figure 4

Some horses have very rigid tails, others can make a complete circle with their tail. Continue gently and slowly moving the tail in an arc as the long as the horse is comfortable and there is no resistance in the tail. Slowly return the tail to hanging straight. Repeat two more times. Move to the right side of the horse's hindquarters, invite the horse to flex his tail from left to right, three times as you did with the lateral flexions to the left. Figure 5

Continued...



Figure 4



Figure 5

The four sets of movements in this series show how to assist your horse to lengthen, relax and return elasticity and strength to muscles in the entire body. EHS asks the horse to shift from the cerebellum to use their (voluntary) motor cortex in the brain to change their body to a more comfortable posture.

The first movement is the Initial Pick-ups engaging up to fifteen muscles with each limb. (May/June '22 issue)
The second is the Lateral Neck Flexion, engaging seven muscles in the neck with connections to the head and into the chest. (July/August '22 issue)

The third is the ribcage using Kinetic Mirroring of the Intercostal muscles between each rib. (September/October '22 issue.)

Trish Hechter grew up riding and working with her mother in Maryland who was renowned for working with “problem” horses. In the mid 90’s Trish earned her Reiki 1 and 2 certificates becoming a Reiki Master in 2020. After meeting Ryan Moschell, a Certified Hanna Somatics Educator® (for humans), in 2015, Trish turned her focus to Equine Hanna Somatics® and will be a Certified Equine Hanna Somatics Educator in 2023.

For more information about Trish’s work and clinics to educate people how to improve their horse’s postures, please visit www.HechterEquineMobility.com. Trish Hechter and Ryan Moschell, CHSE have created a partnership working with equestrians and their horses. Dates are available for their workshops and clinics in 2022.

To contact Ryan Moschell and learn more about his work, please visit, www.GetOutOfShape.com. To purchase a video introduction of EHS please visit, www.HechterEquineMobility.com/video.

To learn more about Equine Hanna Somatics, and to find an equine educator near you, please visit www.EquineHannaSomatics.org.