



Veterinary Holistics  
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## **Equine Hanna Somatics: An Alternative Approach to Your Horse's Overall Wellness**

Posted on [July 23, 2014](#) by [Dr. Jessie](#)

Equine Hanna Somatics was introduced in 1997, after being adapted from the human practice of Hanna Somatics, and the documented response of horses that have undergone its therapy has been profound.

### **Sources of Discomfort in Horses**

Horses, like humans and any other vertebrate animal, develop chronically contracted muscles as a way of adapting to long-term duress. As a result, we see the onset of lingering muscle dysfunction, full-body tension, and general discomfort. In horses, this response is especially pronounced and manifests as an overall decline in the animal's demeanor and level of physical performance.

This prolonged tension and anxiety can be thought of as a protracted version of the "fight-or-flight" response, which is a state of hyperarousal experienced by an animal that feels that its chances of survival are being threatened. When the animal undergoes what it perceives to be a harmful event or potential attack, a hormonal cascade is produced, resulting in an abundance of the

catecholamines commonly known as adrenaline and noradrenaline.

## How Does Equine Hanna Somatics Work?

In order to address these issues, Equine Hanna Somatics practitioners train the horse to recognize these areas of tension and release the contracted muscles. This is accomplished by teaching the



*Gloria Hester uses Equine Hanna Somatics with Amigo.*

animal to employ the frontal lobe of the brain in the control of his body's musculature and execute a series of voluntary contractions. It's a way of reminding the horse of his body's own self-nurturing abilities.

Gloria Hester, a practitioner, educator, and consultant in the area of Equine Hanna Somatics, states that this therapy is especially beneficial for horses that are under extreme and consistent duress (such as race horses, for example), and she feels that it should be included as part of the regular care protocol for these high performance animals. "I want to make this work so accessible that they can't keep it out of the barns that need it," Gloria explains. Her program teaches horses how to be better athletes, both mentally and physically, lengthening their careers and increasing their wellbeing. While high performance horses are Gloria's primary focus, Equine Hanna Somatics is an advantageous practice for horses of any breed, at any age, and at any level of performance. [Click here](#) to watch a video of Gloria's work.

## **Benefits of Equine Hanna Somatics**

The most obvious benefit of Equine Hanna Somatics is the increased level of comfort for the horse. Owners of horses who have undergone this therapy have reported an almost instantaneous positive shift in disposition and overall level of physical performance. Other benefits include improved circulation throughout the body, improved gait and confirmation, better function of the joints, and a horse that is generally more confident in receiving direction. Equine Hanna Somatics is also an outstanding method of addressing many of the painful conditions that are a normal result of the aging process.

Equine Hanna Somatics, like its human practice counterpart, is an all-natural hands-on approach to complete mental and physical well-being. If you own or handle horses regularly, this is absolutely a practice with which you should familiarize yourself. As with most alternative therapies, you'll want to speak with your equine veterinarian about using this as part of an overall integrative approach to the animal's medical care. Make sure that your veterinarian is very familiar with the issues your horse is having, and introduce him or her to your somatics practitioner. Whether for horse or human, this therapy should only be practiced by those who are certified in Hanna Somatics. If you are interested in finding a qualified practitioner who provides services in your area, you can start by visiting [Yogic Wisdom for Horse and Human™](#).