



ACCURACY IN OUR EQUINE TOUCH

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For Equine Touch students and Practitioners, knowing when **NOT** to do Equine Touch is just as important as doing it well. The circumstances when Equine Touch (a particular Move, or a whole Procedure) should not be done are times when Equine Touch is “contraindicated.”

There can be confusion about just what a contraindication is, and when and why an Equine Touch Procedure could be called “contraindicated.”

In the medical and veterinary worlds, a contraindication (pronounced as contra-indication) is a condition or factor that increases the risks involved in using a particular drug, carrying out a procedure, or engaging in a particular activity.

Some contraindications are *absolute*, meaning that there are no reasonable circumstances for undertaking a course of action. Other contraindications are *relative*, meaning that the patient/client is at higher risk of complications, but that these risks may be outweighed by other considerations or mitigated by other measures.

In our world of Equine Touch, Canine Touch and VHT we talk of some contraindications and precautions against using certain Moves and Procedures in certain situations with certain clients.

Precautions.

There are times when we should avoid any bodywork for the sake of the animal's enjoyment and benefit. For example, at feed times and around work time if adrenalin is high. Let the animal feed, digest and/or calm down. After all would you be able to relax and enjoy bodywork as you tried to have your tea? Listen to the horse, and do not force them to accept the work.

Generally accepted contraindications for bodywork.

You should seek veterinary or medical opinion prior to using bodywork whenever the following contraindications could possibly or do occur: post-operative rehabilitation; cancerous conditions; chronic heart, liver or kidney failure; diabetes; immune system problems (hypersensitivity or immunosuppression); pregnancy; any condition, injury, or illness for which the horse has been seen by a veterinarian. The veterinarian should give you the green light for doing soft tissue bodywork in general, and Equine Touch in particular, before you do anything with the horse. This is true whether or not the horse is yours, as your veterinarian should always be kept in the loop when an issue involves your horse's health and well-being. Once Equine Touch is approved for use, the veterinarian should give you guidance as to whether there are any local contraindications involved.



Local contraindications exist when we should avoid addressing a particular area on the body with Equine Touch, but can work with the rest of the body. Such local contraindications can include: open wounds, sites of infection, fungal skin conditions, burns, recent surgical incisions/stiches, acute trauma (hematomas, bruises, sprains and strains).

Specific Equine Touch contraindications.

The Equine Touch Foundation has issued an absolute contraindication for use of the Logan Basic (Level Three) move on horses with acute EPM¹. It has been found that this move, which works the sacrotuberous ligament (STL), can worsen symptoms. Other moves that work the STL also shouldn't be performed on horses with acute EPM: Coccyx (Level One) and Sacrum Pump (Level Two).

Specific Equine Touch Precautions

The same moves on the STL that are absolutely contraindicated for EPM are relatively contraindicated in other cases. The Procedures involving the STL should be approached with caution for mares in season. Granted, some love them at this time but many others will not appreciate these moves, so for your safety don't perform them.

The sacrum pump (Level Two) has been found useful in situations where a mare has retained the placenta after foaling. This procedure has resulted in a successful restart of contractions which assist in delivery of the placenta. This specific Equine Touch Procedure is therefore contraindicated for pregnant mares: in fact, it is best to avoid all the Procedures which involve the STL in this case.



VHT specific contraindications / precautions.

If a client has had hip or knee replacements, or has deep vein thrombosis, steps of or entire VHT Procedures should not be done. Ask your VHT Instructor for more information on specific contraindications for VHT. As for Equine Touch, relative contraindications can apply to VHT. Listen to your Clients, their needs and concerns, and adjust your move and procedures accordingly.

¹ Equine Protozoal Myeloencephalitis (EPM) is a disease caused by a protozoal infection of the central nervous system of horses. EPM is caused by the parasite *Sarcocystis neurona* and is primarily found in North America. The opossum is the definitive host of the disease and horses most commonly contract EPM from grazing or watering in areas where an opossum has recently defecated. However, horses cannot pass the disease among themselves. i.e. one horse cannot contract the disease from another infected horse: the horse is therefore considered a 'dead-end' host of the disease. The neurologic signs that EPM causes are most commonly asymmetric incoordination (ataxia), weakness and spasticity, although they may mimic almost any neurologic disorder. Clinical signs among horses with EPM include a wide array of symptoms that may result from primary or secondary problems: lameness, airway abnormalities, focal muscle atrophy, generalised muscle atrophy, back soreness. This disease is curable if caught soon enough and treated with antiprotozoal drugs. Control of this disease includes a recently released vaccine against the parasite. However, the vaccine has only been conditionally approved by the USDA until efficacy tests are available.