

McTimoney Therapy Explained

What is McTimoney therapy?

Like people, animals suffer from back, neck, pelvic and musculoskeletal problems and they can benefit from McTimoney treatment.

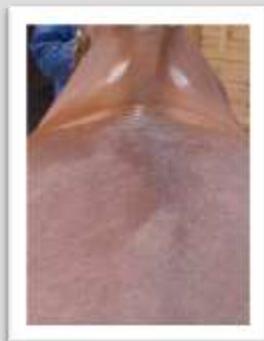
McTimoney is a non-invasive gentle chiropractic technique that works to realign and balance the animal's musculoskeletal system, restoring health and movement, soundness and performance. John McTimoney developed the treatment in the 1950s, modifying his human chiropractic techniques to apply specifically to animals. Today, the McTimoney Masters Degree in Animal Manipulation is the only university-validated course of its kind in Europe.



Why might my horse need McTimoney treatment?

Horses evolved to be herd dwelling flight animals and by their nature they do not demonstrate pain in the same way as we humans do. In their original wild environment a horse outwardly showing pain or weakness would be an easy target for predators. Our domesticated horses haven't changed markedly from their wild counterparts; in fact their genetic makeup is virtually identical. This is a vital factor to consider when evaluating pain in the horse. Just because the horse isn't outwardly showing pain through obvious lameness doesn't mean to say they aren't in pain. The signs of pain are very much more subtle than that and can be difficult to interpret. The range of behavioural changes that could indicate pain is vast and often complicated to understand. .

After an injury, either sudden or longstanding, due to its nature the horse may compensate by moving to alleviate and probably cover up pain. Muscles tighten, often on a diagonal, and can pull a joint in the spine or pelvis out of line with its neighbours. Any repetitive movements of an asymmetric nature can also cause horses to become imbalanced, for example, coping with an unbalanced rider or avoiding discomfort from a badly fitting saddle. In addition, horses coping



with poor conformation, poor foot balance or underlying musculoskeletal issues will often have poor posture or secondary problems elsewhere in the body due to their innate ability to adapt and carry on regardless of pain.

What does McTimoney treatment involve?

Firstly, a detailed case history is taken to determine if there are any relevant historical problems, veterinary or training issues. History taking is also vital to help rule out any reasons why McTimoney chiropractic techniques might be contraindicated, for example if a horse has an unexplained lameness undiagnosed by the vet. The horse is then observed both at rest and whilst walking and trotting up and often it is necessary to observe it being lunged or ridden. Gait evaluation is a vital part of the session as it can help the practitioner assess for any asymmetry or contraindications. Then the spine, pelvis and any other relevant joints are examined for any misalignments or spasm in the associated muscles. The problem areas are then treated with very precise and rapid adjustments to correct the misalignment, restore full range of joint motion and reduce any muscle spasm. The treatment is performed entirely by hand with no machines or drugs involved. This is in order to give the lightest treatment possible and to enable the practitioner to detect subtle changes in the alignment of the skeleton and the temperature and tone of the surrounding muscles. Most horses readily accept the treatment and owners often find their horse prefers to have a relaxing sleep! Aftercare advice may involve rest or limited exercise for a few days in order to maximise the benefits of treatment. The horse may require several treatments, depending on the nature of the problem. Regular check-ups are advisable to help maintain optimum performance and health.



When to seek help?

Most owners will recognise when their horse is behaving uncharacteristically, or showing reduced performance. As a guide, owners should consider seeking McTimoney treatment if their horse displays any of the following signs:

- Unlevelness, especially behind
- Uneven wear of shoes
- Sore or cold backs, uneven pressure from saddles or the saddle slipping to one side
- Unexplained deterioration in usual performance
- Asymmetry, such as stiffness on one rein, or a disunited canter
- Unexplained resistances, such as napping, rearing, refusing, bucking, etc.
- Uneven muscle development or atrophy



Veterinary consent

McTimoney practitioners work closely with veterinary surgeons and other healthcare professionals. Prior to treatment, consent from the relevant veterinary surgeon is a requirement of the Veterinary Surgeons Act and all practitioners of any treatment complementary to veterinary medicine must seek veterinary consent before treatment commences. This is in order to protect animals from unqualified practitioners and to provide the most appropriate level of care possible.

Chiropractic terminology explained

Under current legislation, the General Chiropractic Council (GCC) regulates the chiropractic treatment of humans. Only practitioners that are registered with the GCC can legally call themselves Chiropractors and treat members of the public. Animal practitioners are not able to join the GCC as it is only concerned with human treatment. This is why McTimoney Animal Practitioners, who have chosen to specialise in animal and not human chiropractic techniques, do not refer to themselves as Chiropractors.

About the McTimoney Animal Association

The McTimoney Animal Association (MAA) is the professional association for McTimoney Animal Practitioners. All MAA members have completed the Post Graduate Diploma or MSc in Animal Manipulation from the McTimoney Chiropractic College. It is currently one of only four associations recognised by the British Equine Veterinary Association as Allied Professionals

<http://www.beva.org.uk/useful-info/Directories/Musculo-Skeletal-Paras>



The MAA is responsible for setting professional standards for its members and for maintaining a professional code of conduct and code ethics. All members are required carry full indemnity insurance and are required to maintain their level of expertise by undertaking continuing professional development after they have qualified. You can find your nearest McTimoney Animal Practitioner on their website www.mctimoney-animal.org.uk

About the author

Helen Jacks-Hewett is a McTimoney practitioner and sports massage therapist for horses and small animals. She also has a degree in Equine Science and her undergraduate thesis, which examined the effects of road nails on hoof balance, was awarded the Eequalan Thesis of the Year 2001 and was subsequently presented at the National Equine Forum at the RCVS. Helen, a past Chair of the McTimoney Animal Association, runs her busy therapy practice in the Bristol/Bath area, and has more recently been a practical tutor at the McTimoney College of Chiropractic. She is a firm follower of classical dressage techniques implemented through bitless riding, and she keeps her own horses bitless (and sometimes bridleless!) and barefoot too. More information about Helen's practice can be found at www.horse-back.co.uk

