

THE TTEAM BODY-WRAP

by Robyn Hood

The TTEAM Body-wrap is a tool for influencing a horse's behavior, increasing awareness and improving his performance. The body-wrap is composed of two elastic bandages secured together (Ace or Tensor are brands that maintain their elasticity). It is tied in a figure-eight around the horse. Slight variations in the placement elicit different responses (see accompanying illustrations). The wrap maintains a constant connection with the body because it moves with the horse. This is particularly significant for horses with neurologic deficits because this continual sensory input encourages the rebuilding of the neural pathways.



Interestingly, the body-wrap was first used with dogs. In the beginning we tied a rope, in a figure-eight pattern, on horses, but a rope did not stay on dogs very well. Out of necessity, Janice Fron, TTEAM Practitioner-2, tried a horse's leg-wrap on one of her dogs, Alex, who was very shy. The effect was so dramatic and long-lasting that we started experimenting with elastic bandages on dogs, too. After seeing the results that the wrap had on dogs, we realized they were another way of "chunking down" the body ropes for horses.

Most horses also accept the body-wrap with little preparation. Here are some considerations to keep in mind when putting a Body Rope or wrap on your horse for the first time.



- Before tying the wrap back to itself, start by holding the end of the wrap while you are standing just behind the horse's shoulder. Have a helper lead the horse forward a few steps and stop. Repeat. If the horse seems comfortable and accepting of the wrap go ahead and tie it.
- If the horse has very tight hindquarters or tail, start by holding the wrap over the horse's tail and repeat the walk-halt exercise before taking the wrap under the tail.
- If you are alone and your horse is comfortable about having his tail and hindquarters handled, you may be able to put the body-wrap on by yourself in a large stall or contained area.

The changes that occur with the body-wrap can be subtle or very dramatic. For instance, a strung-out horse or one who is camped under suddenly takes on a more balanced stance, having "a leg at each corner." Or a horse's topline may change so that he looks "rounder." You may see more movement and engagement in the hindquarters. If you have a horse that is unbalanced, reactive or strung-out on the lunge line, put of a body-wrap and you may see an immediate change.

The body-wrap also helps horses who are nervous about things behind them or who rush or are hesitant about moving through narrow spaces. It helps with spatial awareness by connecting the front and back end of the horse. If your horse has a tendency to freeze, the body-wrap can help him gain confidence and overcome this tendency.

The configuration of body-wraps is really only limited by your imagination. If you apply the principals that it should be snug enough to stay in place without over-stretching the wrap and it doesn't restrict the horse's movement then be creative.

In the booklet ("TTEAM as a Complement in the Rehabilitation of Horses with Neurologic Deficits") that TTEAM Instructor Carol Lang compiled, there are a variety of body-wraps that were found beneficial. Here are some of the usual and unusual wraps we have used.

Body-wraps:

Illustration 8 - **Figure-8 Body-wrap**: The wrap goes around the horse's neck, crosses over or behind the withers (you may add a twist) and the long end continues around the hindquarters and under the tail. It is then tied in a bow back to the short end.

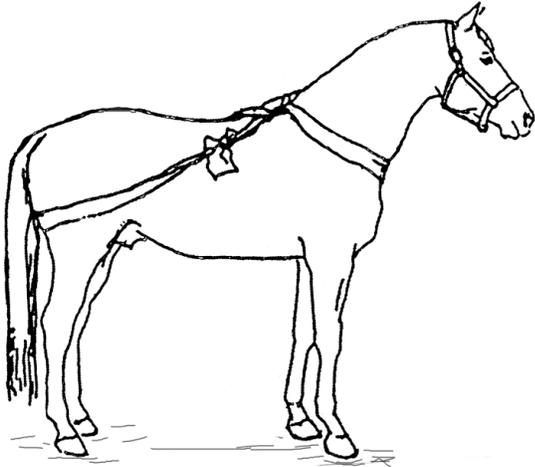


Illustration 9 - **The "bridge"**: Start with one wrap tied around the horse's neck and back to itself, leaving a tail. With a nervous horse, you might do some leading exercises with only this first wrap and still notice a change in the horse's posture. To complete the figure-8, tie a second wrap in a bow to the tail of the first wrap. Then take the second wrap around the horse's hindquarters and tie it to the wrap that's around the horse's neck. The idea is to have the wrap form a "bridge" over the horse's back just behind the withers.

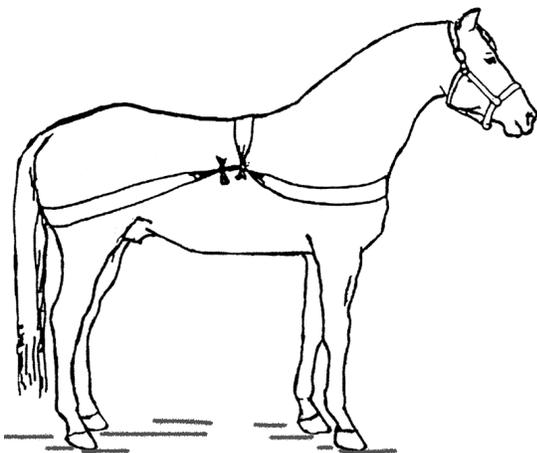
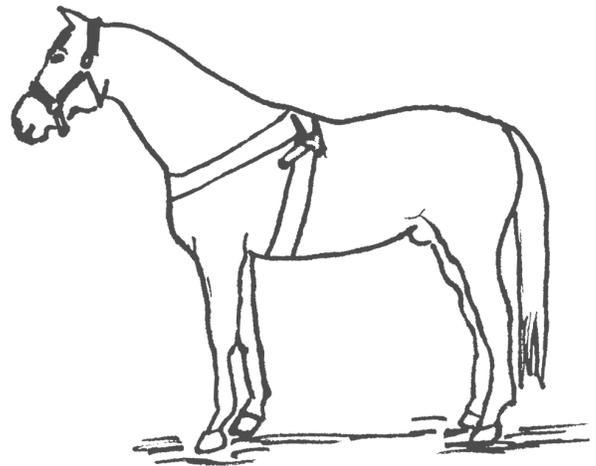


Illustration 10 - **Half-wrap**: This is a wrap that was first used with dogs. For horses it is helpful with preparing young horses for a girth or with trained horses who are cold-backed or girthy. Take one wrap around the horse's chest and cross it over the withers, attach a second wrap to one end and take it under the belly and tie to the other end of the first wrap.



From this wrap you can also add a third wrap around the hindquarters and attach to the front of the half-wrap.

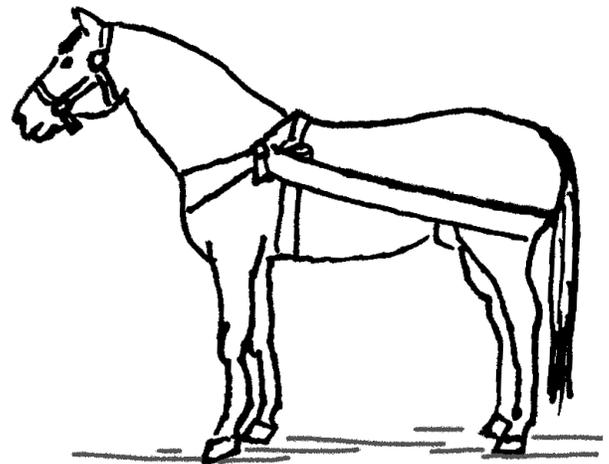
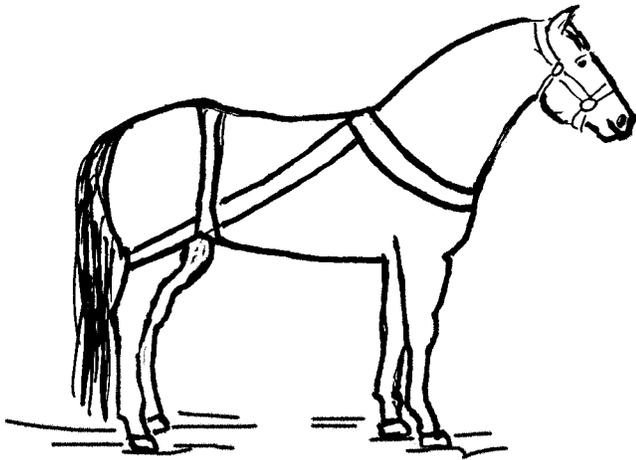


Illustration 11 - Hip-wrap: Another wrap taken from our work with dogs. I have used this with horses recovering from pelvic injuries. Start with one wrap across the chest and over the withers. Tie a second wrap to one end, take the wrap around the outside of the hind leg, bring it up on the inside of the same leg (like a leg strap on a horse blanket) and up over the top of the croup. Repeat the same with a third wrap on the other side. Be sure to prepare your horse for having the wrap around the stifle area of the hind leg.



Extra wrap around neck and upper forearms.



This wrap is adapted so that it goes around each hind leg and connects to the opposite leg. Two elastic bandages are tied together to achieve this.

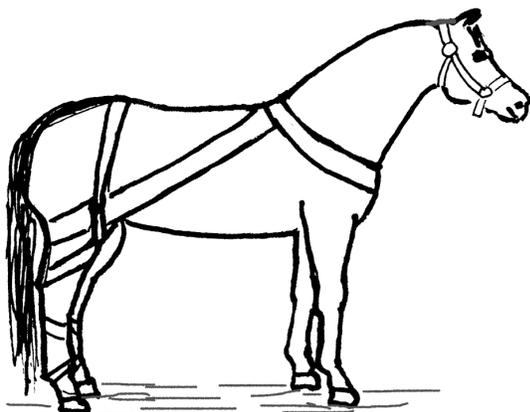


Illustration 12 - Leg-wraps added to body-wrap:

We have used wraps down the front and hind legs of horses - to help round them and give feedback about movement. Usually we would tie two wraps together and take them over the hips, or withers for the front legs. Wind the wraps around the original body-wrap to help keep it in place and then spiral the wraps down the legs. You can either tuck the end of the wrap back under itself or tie loosely depending on how much extra wrap you have.

Special Wraps:

One horse in the Neurological Deficit study was not bending in the turns and so wraps were tied to the halter. A third wrap was connected to the girth/belly section then wrapped around the neck and finally tied on the halter. The tail was then wrapped to complete the connection of head to hind. It greatly improved the horse's ability to successfully work in the TTEAM Labyrinth.



Horses with neurological deficits often have a stiff and inflexible posture. Wrapping the neck and connecting it to wraps on the body may help to lower the head and encourage more relaxed movement through the body as shown in the previous photo and in the next.

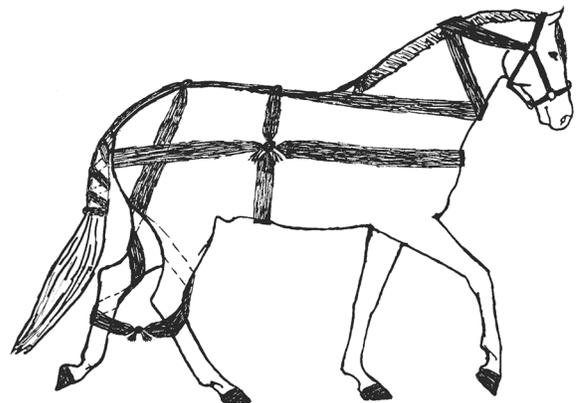
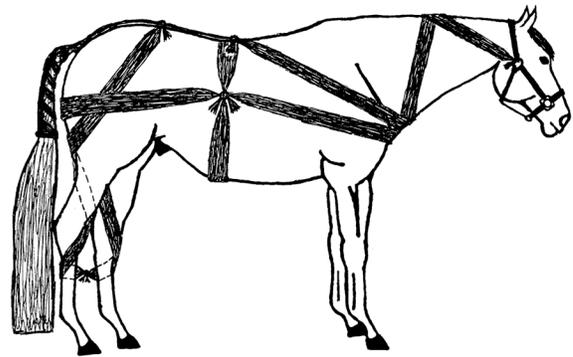


Wrapping the legs can help to ground a horse. When helping to improve neurological deficits some interesting varieties have been used. In the above photo, wrapping the fore legs encouraged this horse to pick up his forelegs. He then could negotiate ground poles without stumbling or hitting the poles.

The variation below shows the legs connected across the back of the cannons and just below the hocks. With some of the horses in the study this combination-wrap proved significant. The horses walked freely while negotiating patterns of poles and the tight circles of the neurological exam improved a great deal.



The following two illustrations show this same wrap of neck, body, tail and legs.



As you can see there are a variety of ways of using the wraps. You may not notice an immediate difference; but even if a change is not apparent to you, the horse's nervous system will still be getting information. In adapting body-wraps for horses with neurological deficits, it is helpful to be creative in order to get the horse to move more effectively and bring awareness to various body parts. Care must be taken to assure that the horse is working within his capabilities and is not concerned about the wraps.

Because of the constant connection of the body-wrap and the way it moves with the horse as he moves, it has been successful in making horses more aware of their movement and improving gait. The wraps give horses boundaries and seems to make them more secure.

Horses, like people, have a variety of learning styles. TTEAM includes four learning modalities: visual - wand; auditory - voice; tactile - touch; kinesthetic - movement. The Body-wrap gives tactile and kinesthetic feedback.

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Riding with the TTEAM Body-wrap by Linda Tellington-Jones

Another TTEAM tool for riding is a Promise Rope/Wrap that fits snugly around a horse's hindquarters. I use the word "promise" to describe this tool because it "promises" engagement. I've found that horses considered "lazy" behind generally get more impulsion with a Promise Rope. In contrast, nervous horses usually do better with the elastic Promise Wrap.

You can incorporate the Body Rope and body-wrap into your training sessions whether you're working from the ground or from the saddle. During ground work, the wrap can reassure horses who are nervous about things behind them or who rush through or are hesitant to go through doors or narrow spaces. These tools also encourage horses who freeze or are stiff when being led. Worn during a longeing session, a body-wrap helps engage the horse's hind end and elevate his withers without jamming or restricting his neck. Horses who act up on the longe line often settle when wearing the body-wrap.

There are benefits to riding while your horse is wearing a body-wrap. Prepare him by putting the wrap in place, then add the saddle. From the ground, lead him in a circle at the walk and then the trot. In just a few strides, you'll be able to tell if he is comfortable or if he needs more time to become accustomed to the sensation.

The first time you climb aboard you may want to enlist the aid of an assistant. In my experience, riding with a body-wrap benefits horses

- who swish their tails, drag their toes and are stiff through the body.
- who shy – particularly at a specific place in the ring or arena.
- who are afraid of things behind them.
- who are not using their hindquarters. It gives them a greater awareness of the connection between their front and back ends and prevents them from becoming strung out.

- who are overly sensitive to your leg aids or who seem insensitive or unresponsive to them.
- who were injured and now may have an uneven stride behind.

However you incorporate the body-wrap into your horse's training, I recommend using it as you would other tools depending on your horse's response. If you see a difference, use it for five to 10 sessions and then from time to time as needed or when teaching new exercises."

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