

Kinesio Taping: A Growing Trend In Horse Community

Ellen Rosenberg • January 28, 2011

I think there must be some cosmic Murphy's law that states, in part, that if something can go wrong with a horse, it will.

It might be something as straightforward as a horse getting cut running through a fence, or stepping on a stray nail and becoming lame. But sometimes, it's something a little harder to diagnose; the horse is suddenly acting odd or refusing to canter, or he's sort of off but you can't say exactly where or why. Soft tissue ailments, such as sprains or strains, can be difficult to diagnose and treat. I recently became aware of a new treatment option for horses (though it has been in use on humans since 1973) when I got a call from an old acquaintance.

Dr. Beverly Gordon, both a licensed human chiropractor and certified animal chiropractor, told me about this new technique which helps horses heal more quickly and perform better. Kinesio Taping became popular after the Seoul Olympics, where some athletes were seen wearing it. Its use in the sports world is becoming increasingly widespread. While its effectiveness is evidenced in human athletics, its use on horses is something entirely new.



Dr. Gordon, who practices in Oyster Bay, N.Y., and Wellington, turned to treating horses exclusively after selling her human chiropractic practice in 1997. Her current practice is unique due to her diverse background and education, which centers on biomechanics of movement.

Gordon taught clinical sciences at New York Chiropractic College and was the director of the NYCC outpatient facility. In addition, she has a master's degree in exercise physiology and writes a regular article in Sidelines magazine called "The Horse In Motion," which focuses on understanding and improving equine performance. Gordon is also a certified Kinesio Taping practitioner.

"People automatically think of sports taping as a brace, such as that on a knee or an ankle, which uses compression to support the area," she explained. "But Kinesio Taping is very different. It's actually the opposite of compression taping. Kinesio Tape works by decompressing the tissue, allowing full range of motion, and increases circulation and blood flow, thereby increasing the body's ability to heal. It works more like a massage that supports while the muscles are in use."

Kinesio Tape has the same elasticity as skin. It can relax or strengthen muscles, support ligaments, stimulate circulation and decrease inflammation, depending upon how and where it's applied.

"Even though the taping looks easy, determining the proper application can be complicated," Gordon said. "That's why it is advisable to consult a knowledgeable,



certified and licensed professional."

Dr. Gordon said it's a great aid in training and that there can be single or multiple applications. She can apply it to a rider's knee or a horse's back. Applications take anywhere from 10 minutes to a half-hour and can last one to five days. Although horses aren't allowed to perform in a show with the tape on, Gordon said it's a great benefit during training sessions.

"I watch how the horse moves and determine what could help facilitate that work," she explained. "Sometimes the taping will relax a tight muscle; sometimes it will support a joint. Because it increases circulation, bringing more oxygen to the working muscle, it ultimately strengthens muscles by allowing them to work harder and become stronger with less fatigue. This consequently reduces the chances of sprains or strains."



Dr. Pam Corey, a veterinarian and board member of an equine welfare organization in New York, is a fan of Gordon's use of Kinesio Taping. She has worked with Dr. Gordon in the past and recently called on her services again.

"Our rescue organization had gotten in a four-year-old Thoroughbred mare off the track," Corey recalled. "This horse had no experience with being turned out freely in a paddock — she'd only been used to standing in stalls and running on a track. Unfortunately, she overdid it, running, rearing and jumping around, and became extremely lame.

"I asked Bev to come and examine her. I really admire Bev's ability to palpate and examine the whole horse and pinpoint the exact area of injury," Corey said. "She doesn't just treat an obvious spot; she does a careful evaluation."

Gordon found that the hip and sacral area were sore and applied Kinesio Taping to that region.

"I personally had had a good experience with Kinesio Taping one time when I'd been injured — the swelling was greatly diminished," Corey said. "When the mare was taped, you could see she was immediately more comfortable, and when the tape was removed a few days later, she was greatly improved. I would recommend Kinesio Taping in instances, like strains and sprains, as long as it's applied by a trained, knowledgeable and experienced practitioner."

Dr. Gordon's practice focuses on practical applications of scientific methods. She said that although Kinesio Taping is based on a simple theory, the taping methods use sound scientific principles and show success in its application.

"The horse community tends to be traditional," Gordon said. "They're leery of trying new things until they see that a new treatment is successful — then everyone jumps on the bandwagon. A lot of treatments now used with horses started out being used on humans — chiropractic, therapeutic ultrasound and acupuncture are a few examples. I believe that Kinesio Taping will become more recognized as a viable modality and aid to training the performance horse. It is a useful tool that can really

help horses and riders — when it is applied correctly by knowledgeable professionals trained in Kinesio Taping methods.”



Dr. Gordon with Tamino

For more information, call Dr. Beverly Gordon at (516) 606-4141 or visit [wwwTheHorseInMotion.com](http://www.TheHorseInMotion.com).