



## Are You Making Your Horse Lamé?

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**T**he body language with which you communicate with your horse when riding has everything to do with your ability to be at home in the saddle. Your ability to be at home in the saddle is compromised whenever you're tense. You're off balance and your horse feels it.

Injuries throw you off balance by causing you to tense up. Muscles contract in pain, your posture and movement change toward "off balance."

Apart from changing the message you're giving your horse, your injured state also, needless to say, changes the position of the burden your horse is carrying: you. That means that your injuries throw your horse off balance.

Let's take an example: a fall.

You land on your left shoulder. The muscles around that shoulder contract in pain. In the fall, your neck has suffered a whiplash injury, so your neck stiffens up. You get back on your horse, but your movements can no longer synchronize with his. He thinks something's wrong. He's getting mixed signals and doesn't know what you want him to do. He gets nervous.

You're injured. He's nervous. What a combination!

So you ride back to the barn. With your injury, you're pulled to one side, probably twisted, and stiffer on one side than the other. Now, your horse is off balance.

He steps in a hole. Because he's not used to being off balance, he's not able to recover as he might if he were in the paddock by himself and stepped in a hole. He stumbles, or at least his joints are stressed.

You can imagine the rest.

Why does your horse go lame so often? It might be because you've fallen in the past and not recovered fully from the injury. Your movements are off. You may even have gotten used to the pain and brave it out every time you ride.

People often spend more caring for their horses than they do caring for themselves. Perhaps, if they cared for themselves better, they wouldn't have to spend so much caring for their horses!

The usual approaches to injury are chiropractic, massage, and acupuncture. While chiropractic, massage and acupuncture often give relief, the relief they give is most often temporary and they don't change the muscular reactions that formed from your injury. You know that by the fact that you feel you have to guard your injury and that your pain returns.

To get lasting relief, you need to retrain your muscles, which is more than being manipulated by someone else. It's regaining your self-control, so when you ride, you move the way you want to. Your signals to your horse are clear!

This is a new concept for most people. But think it through. The usual methods of treatment for pain address the location of the pain, and the pain returns. Why? Because you've lost your good conformation! Your muscles and joints are under strain. You need some movement training.

A lame rider makes a horse lame. Your poor conformation makes a difference to your horse! Tend those injuries and save yourself – and your horse – some trouble.

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