

A day with Phil Radloff, Equine Dentist, based out of Tuscon, Arizona.

June 2, 2012

I had never met Phil Radloff but was excited to meet him. He teaches at Michigan State University, does studies with Dr. Bowker and is quite well known. He used to work with Spencer LaFlur and has some of his own instructors and students.

I met him to work on teeth and feet on 12 horses of one of my new clients. Some of the horses I had already done once about ten days prior, some still needed to be done. He pointed out the correlation between teeth and feet and showed me how the flares often times relate to the shape or to hooks in the mouth and the shape of the incisors often times correlates with the shape of the toes. Sometimes it is just a problem of the hoof itself but mostly it does relate to the teeth. I am not sure exactly which teeth relate to what exactly on the hoof but I could certainly see what he pointed out to me, after a dozen horses I certainly had a feel for what he was talking about. It is really pretty visible.

He said it was important the horses incisors meet and there are no hooks anywhere. The molars also have to meet and not be too sharp but a certain “wavyness” was o.k. so the horse could chew properly. The horse needs to have a sideways movement but also a front back movement range. He was listening for the chewing sound they made before he did their teeth and afterwards. It does depend on how the horse chews by ground feeding or feeder feeding and will effect the teeth and their shape. Feeding on the ground was of course preferred since this is how they normally graze. It depends on the breed of the horse of how the mouth is and needs to be done. Mules and donkeys are quite different from the horse’s mouth and he likes to work with those since they don’t let him go until he has done his job well.

Phil explained also that there is a neurological pathway between the teeth and feet. However he mostly looks at the front feet. He explained about the TMJ and how to feel if something is stuck. He personally does not really release the TMJ, he said if the teeth are done right, the horse will adjust themselves and there is no need for him adjusting the TMJ. He pointed out the importance of the teeth being correct since there can be big problems if the TMJ is stuck so to speak. It has an effect on the ligaments and muscles in the TMJ, neck, shoulders, front legs and back. He sees the horse as a whole not as parts which very much made sense to me.

He also showed me how to release the sesamoid by playing with the fetlock and how far the horse should be able to bend the joints. He said that was important for the hoof – teeth correlation. He pointed out that the horse can only find true balance by landing heel first, touching the ground with the heel and frog since this gives the horse the perception, a pair of second eyes so to speak. He had done before and after experiments by

blindfolding the horse and walking and trotting it and has seen incredible differences after the teeth were done.

We talked about acupuncture and meridians and how those flow from the teeth to the feet. This made total sense to me since I have a little background in acupuncture. The Ting or “end” points are all at the end of the feet... I asked so many questions and Phil was so patient to explain everything in detail. I learned so much. He would work on a horse’s mouth and then I did its feet. Phil also pointed out that he does not work on horses that are in pain because they will usually clinch their teeth and the problem will be back within 8 – 12 weeks. He would rather wait until the pain issue was resolved before he makes a change.

To set a horse’s mouth up correctly sometimes takes a bit more work but to maintain them was easy since the horse mainly wants to maintain its own teeth. Phil had done all of these horses one year prior and had done a lot of work on them. None of the horses he worked on that day needed tranquilizers. Phil works very calmly, just goes in the pasture or wherever they are, talks with them and looks into their mouth, feels it and then before the horse even realizes it does his adjustments. I was very impressed. None of the horses really minded the procedure at all or gave him any kind of trouble.

He was so kind to come out to my place to check on my horses which had not been done in two years due to my move and other personal life changes I had plus the fact that I did not know a great equine dentist in New Mexico. He looked at all three of them, and said I would be wasting my money. Their teeth are good, good hoof care pays off. My 26 year old mare has one loose tooth which he did not want to remove. He said he could make a great mess but it was better to let it just fall out. The fourth tooth on the left was not loose enough to be taken out. If it had not fallen out by late fall, he would remove it then.

Phil even had two pair of Renegade boots in his car – I guess he had just done their horses – to show to clients to point out that barefoot was healthier then wearing shoes.

He told me about some of the research Dr. Bowker had done and how Phil had made him aware of these hoof – teeth correlations. They are working on this together and he thought that really only maybe 10 percent of the horse had yet been discovered or researched scientifically. Most of the studies are coming from the U.K. and Germany. He offered if I had any questions about horses teeth I was working on or in general I could call him.

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