

HORSE & HOUND

UPDATED: 3 Apr 2013 **MARTHA TERRY**

What is Kinesio taping and how does it work?

Commonly used by athletes, despite a dearth of supporting science, Kinesio taping is increasingly used on horses and riders too.

British endurance team physiotherapist Lee Clark is convinced it has huge benefits for horses, despite the lack of any official study.

“It’s a case of following what we know works with humans and watching the results with horses,” says Lee, one of the equine physiotherapists at London 2012.

Its health benefits seem magical, with some marketing literature claiming it can help foals with severely elongated tendons, kissing spines, lymphangitis and more.

How **does it work?**

Elastic kinesiology tape (EKT) is supposed to act on five major physiological compartments of the body: skin, fascia (connective tissue), muscles, joints and the lymphatic system.

The technique used to apply the tape depends on what therapeutic effect you want to achieve.

It can compress an area if applied at more than 50% tension, or decompress to lift the skin if applied less tightly.

It can be used to activate muscles that need to work harder, or inhibit muscles that need to back off.

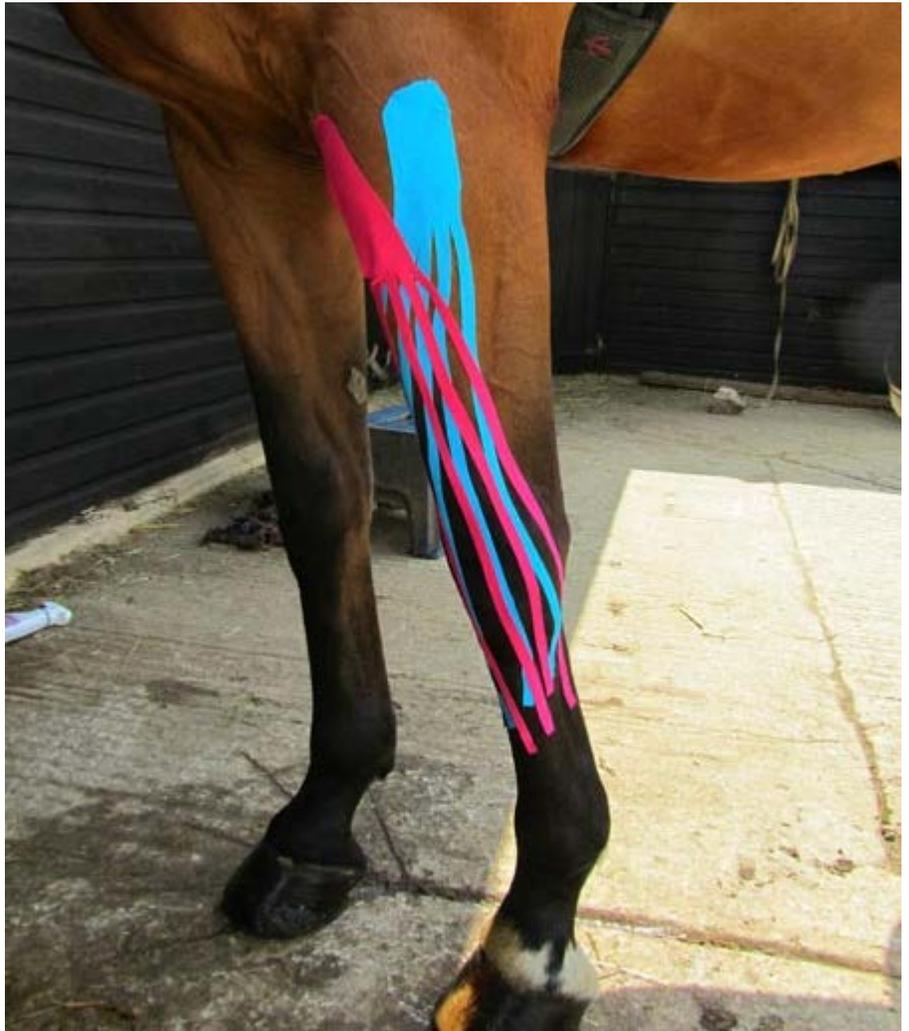


Unlike standard strapping, this elasticated cotton tape is designed to mimic the skin, allowing normal movement.

Proponents claim that it can prevent injury, re-educate the neuromuscular system and reduce pain with 1,200 conditions identified as suitable for treatment by EKT. The theory is that, as the tape is stretched over the skin, it creates convolutions (skin wrinkles), which allow the lymphatic system to work more efficiently — reducing inflammation and clearing waste.

Additionally, practitioners believe that the tape can stimulate touch receptors in the nervous system, blocking out transmission from pain receptors.

Rebecka Blenntoft, a manual lymphatic drainage (MLD) specialist who uses the tape, says: “It works like a TENS machine [which uses electrical currents to ease pain], or rubbing a bump on your head; it does make the pain feel better. The horse is then in the frame of mind to relax and restore.”



To read the full article about Kinesio taping, and whether it can be used to help keep your horse sound, see the current bumper show issue of H&H (28 February 2013)

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