

EQUI-BOW Results speak for themselves

by Simone Usselman-Tod, Cheryl Gibson and Linda Agnew

It's hard to understand how a horse's body could change so dramatically in just one hour.

A first level Equi-Bow student provided very basic Equi-Bow work on the chestnut mare pictured below. The student was amazed at the changes she observed. These photographs were taken approximately 4 hours apart and the startling results are undeniable.



Before the Equi-Bow session



After the Equi-Bow session

What is Equi-Bow?

Equi-Bow (www.equi-bowcanada.com) is a complimentary, non-invasive, hands-on, gentle bodywork technique applied to horses to promote healing of the body. A number of methods and techniques such as massage, acupressure, acupuncture, and chiropractic also aim to promote healing and "rebalance" the body. Equi-Bow accomplishes healing and rebalancing with a very gentle approach, little or no discomfort and less physical effort than some of the other traditional techniques available.

Due to the gentle approach used to apply the Equi-Bow technique, horses tend to be receptive and engage physically and emotionally with the practitioner. Our students often comment on the connection they feel with the horse during the learning process and are surprised by the results of their work.

Although a gentle touch technique, the long-term effects of Equi-Bow bodywork are more than skin deep. Equi-Bow practitioners regularly observe the physical response of horses to an Equi-Bow session. We get excited when we apply Equi-Bow and observe changes such as plumping of muscles, postural changes and relaxation because they indicate physiological changes in the horse's body. Behavioural changes and activities such as yawning, chewing, slowing of respiration, blowing through nose, closing eyes, relaxation of ears, and stretching seem to indicate changes in the body's nervous system as it transitions from sympathetic state (the fight/flight response) towards a parasympathetic state (rest/digest response).

The body continues to repair and regenerate itself on a cellular level every minute of every day. When tissue is asymmetrical, damaged, overworked, strained or unbalanced, the body must work harder to compensate and repair that tissue in an attempt to bring the body back to balance.

It is a fascinating experience to watch the horse change physically and behaviourally as restrictions and discomfort release and the body rebalances itself physiologically. Since Equi-Bow moves interconnect with each other, the entire body is stimulated to rebalance, increasing cellular activity and circulation while encouraging the body to self-heal.

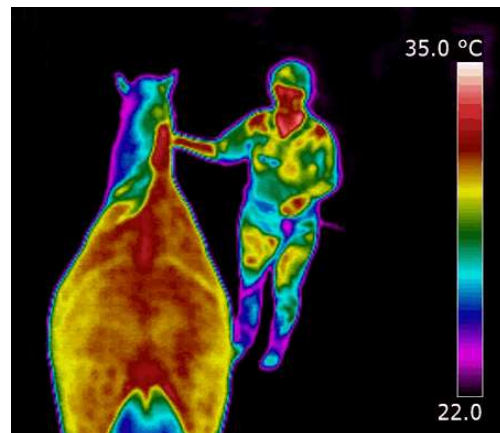
Other benefits of Equi-Bow include improved blood flow, efficient removal of cellular waste from tissues and muscles, removal of toxins from the body and improvement of body function.

As professional Equi-Bow practitioners, we are always looking for accurate ways to record actual changes that are occurring within our equine clients. We were looking for a method to show that an Equi-Bow session promotes circulatory changes in the soft tissue of the body, resulting in changes in muscles and tendons as well as fascia and skin.

Infrared Thermal Imaging

The professional team of Ann Ashby and Terri Lynn Hughes from Equine Wellness Canada (<http://www.equinewellnesscanada.ca>) suggested the use of thermography to prove our theory. Thermal imaging offers a non-invasive, inexpensive, efficient method of identifying inflammation and circulatory changes related to soft tissue and bone injuries and allows for the visualization and measurable changes in the surface temperature of the skin.

Thermography records heat from infra red waves emitted from the surface of the horse, detecting temperature differences of as little as one tenth of a degree. These temperature variations are converted into coloured images visible to the human eye. In this example of a horse taken from above, the mane and tail of the horse are primarily purple and blue, indicating areas of cooler temperatures. The areas of yellow and red down the spine indicate an area of higher body temperature.



Sierra Pacific Innovations, a leader in custom military grade thermal infrared solutions for government agencies in the United States says, *"Infrared cameras are being used to identify and show changes in blood flow circulation. This thermal image shows an increase in temperature and blood flow in the back muscles of the subject after massage therapy. Increases in muscular performance result in increased blood flow and can be imaged by an infrared camera, making infrared a valuable tool for verifying the results of exercise regimens or therapeutic massage. Thermal imaging can be used to document and verify circulation hypotheses."* *"Infrared technology allows us to see clearly the subtle temperature differences at the skin surface. The presence of heat and cold can provide a good indication of what is occurring in underlying structures as the body responds and adapts to stressors."* (<http://www.x26.com/medical.htm>)

When used for comparing soft tissue over time intervals, healing and changes in the tissues can be monitored. We agreed that thermal imaging may be a perfect modality to test our theory and

prove that Equi-Bow initiates physiological change and increases blood circulation, which has been proven to help promote healing.

Our Goal

Our goal was to demonstrate that Equi-Bow increases blood circulation and that physiological and circulatory changes occur in the soft tissues of the horse following the application of Equi-Bow moves. Although we regularly observe the anecdotal results of Equi-Bow, we wanted to demonstrate that we could actually record a change in the surface temperature of the horse's body following an Equi-Bow session, supporting the changes we observe in the horse during and after a session.

Our Method

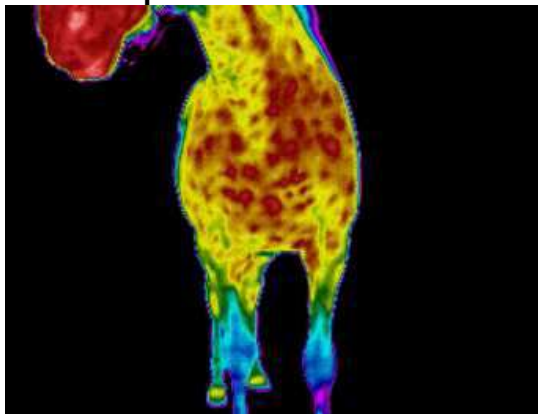
We used two horses for our study, a 15 year old Andalusian gelding and a 13 year old New Forest pony. Both horses were brushed lightly and remained in their stalls before, during and after the Equi-Bow session to minimize physical activity and to provide a consistent environment with minimal external temperature change.

Practitioners for the day were Simone Usselman-Tod and Cheryl Gibson, Senior Equi-Bow Instructors & Practitioners. Ann Ashby, Certified Equine Thermographer, and Terri-Lynn Hughes from Equine Wellness Canada provided the expertise and photography for the imaging.

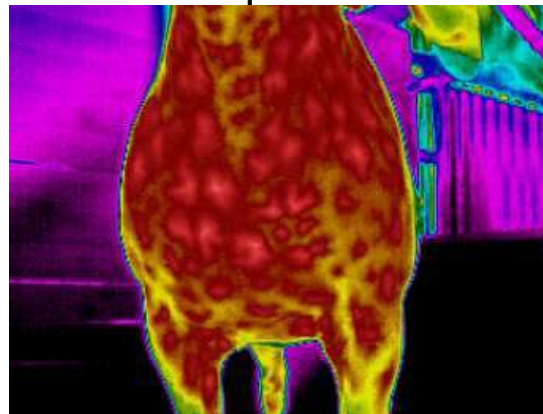
Thermal images were taken of the left and right sides, front, back and dorsal aspect of both horses in three stages: prior to the Equi-Bow session, immediately following the session and again one hour after the session was finished. The Equi-Bow sessions followed a set protocol of moves made over the hind end, shoulder, back and neck. During the session, we observed the usual signs of relaxation in both horses. I think you will agree, the results were astounding!

Case Study: Andalusian Gelding

Prior to Equi-Bow



One hour after Equi-Bow

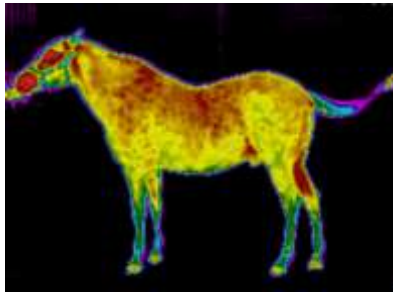


These images show an incredible increase in circulation in the chest of the horse one hour after the Equi-Bow session.

Case Study: New Forest Pony

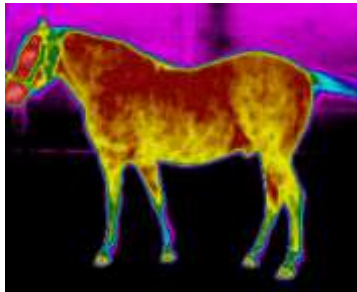
Prior to Equi-Bow session

This image taken before the Equi-Bow session shows the temperature of the body in a resting state. The areas of yellow and green show a lower body temperature than the areas in red.



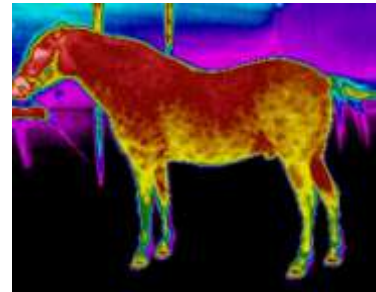
Immediately following the Equi-Bow session

This image taken immediately after the session shows a greater degree of red and less blue and green, indicating there has been an immediate increase in circulation and body temperature in those areas.



One hour after the Equi-Bow session

This image taken an hour after the Equi-Bow session was finished shows a greater area of red through the neck, back and hindquarters, indicating that the increase in circulation and body temperature continued even after the bodywork was finished.



All thermal images are courtesy of Equine Wellness Canada

Results

Comparison of the thermal images showed that the temperature of the surface and soft tissue in both equine subjects increased as a result of the application of the Equi-Bow technique.

Infrared thermal imaging demonstrated increased intensity of the colour red across a large area of the horse's body indicating a rise in temperature following the application of Equi-Bow moves. We were excited to see that these colours were more intense immediately following the Equi-Bow sessions. We were even more excited to see a greater temperature change over an even larger surface area in the images taken 60 minutes after the Equi-Bow session.

Meditherm, a market leader in clinical thermography states, "*Increased skin surface temperature correlates with an increase in blood circulation. Increased circulation indicates underlying physiological change.*" (http://www.meditherm.com/equine/equine_practice.htm)

Vetel Diagnostics states, "Thermography (or thermal imaging) is considered physiologic imaging because as the animal's metabolism changes, the circulatory pattern associated with it will express those changes in the form of temperature patterns." (<http://www.veteldiagnostics.com/thermalimaging/thermacamvet300.htm>)

The results provided by Equine Wellness Canada thermal imaging proved that the physiological changes we observe in the horse during and after an Equi-Bow session coincide with distinct changes in body temperature and that the effects continued to increase for at least an hour after the session.

In Conclusion

In conclusion, the thermal imaging results indicate that the Equi-Bow technique is an effective method of increasing circulation. This increase in circulation brings damaged muscles and other soft tissues such as tendons, fascia and skin, the oxygen rich blood they need to heal.

A sincere thank you to Anne Ashby and Terri-Lynn Hughes of Equine Wellness Canada (www.equinewellnesscanada.ca) for being involved in this study. Your support and patience is very much appreciated.

Equi-Bow Canada is a results-oriented training program that focuses on delivering high quality education to people who want to know how to improve their horse's behavior, posture, performance or health through hands-on bodywork. For more information please visit our website at www.equi-bowcanada.com or contact Cheryl Gibson or Simone Usselman-Tod at (905) 659-7223 or info@equi-bowcanada.com.

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Interesting Links regarding the use of Thermography for equines and people

Equine Wellness Canada: <http://www.equinewellnesscanada.ca>

Articles about Thermography, written by Dr. Joanna Robson, DVM, CVSMT, CMP, CVA, SFT, CIT:

- Horses in Colour: The Role of Thermal Imaging in the Equine Industry: http://www.equineir-nc.com/3_1_2010_robson.pdf
- Back to Reality: Infrared Thermography (IRT) as an Objectifier of Equine Back Pain and Saddle Fitting problems: www.irinfo.org/articles/4_1_2011_robson.html

University Pain Clinic: <http://www.theboweneffect.com/THERMOGRAPHY-AND-BOWEN-THERAPY.html>

Holistic Healing facebook page: http://www.facebook.com/pages/Bowen-HolisticHealing/166322393401229?sk=app_2309869772

Bowtech.com Research Papers:

<http://www.bowtech.com/WebsiteProj/Pages/Document/RecentArticles.aspx>

Information about the equine nervous system:

<http://www.eec-equine-therapy.com/Nervous-System.html>