

The Hyoid Complex

The structures around the equine jaw are interesting us at the moment! In particular our focus has been on the hyoid apparatus (see images) and its role. The hyoid apparatus consists of several hyoid bones that are fused together and suspend from the base of the skull by ligaments off the temporal bone. This structure has many roles to play and is an attachment (either directly or indirectly) for the base of the tongue, ventral neck muscles and has close association with the trachea.

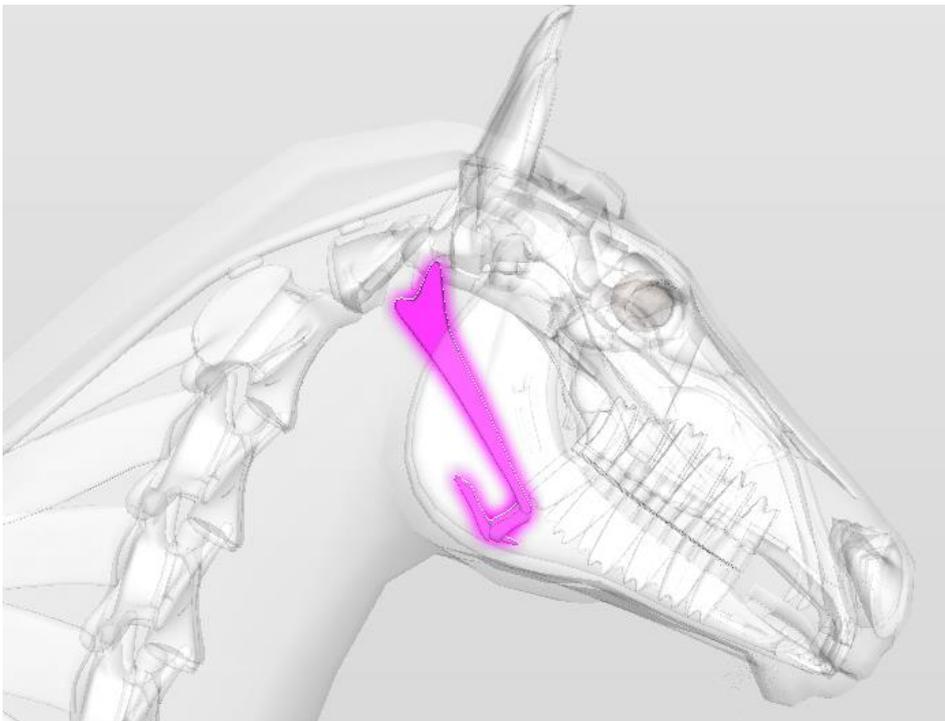
We frequently identify areas of dysfunction in this area which may have arisen because of tension in the neck muscles, a forelimb lameness, discomfort in the mouth, poorly fitting tack or may even be tracked as far back as the hind limbs.

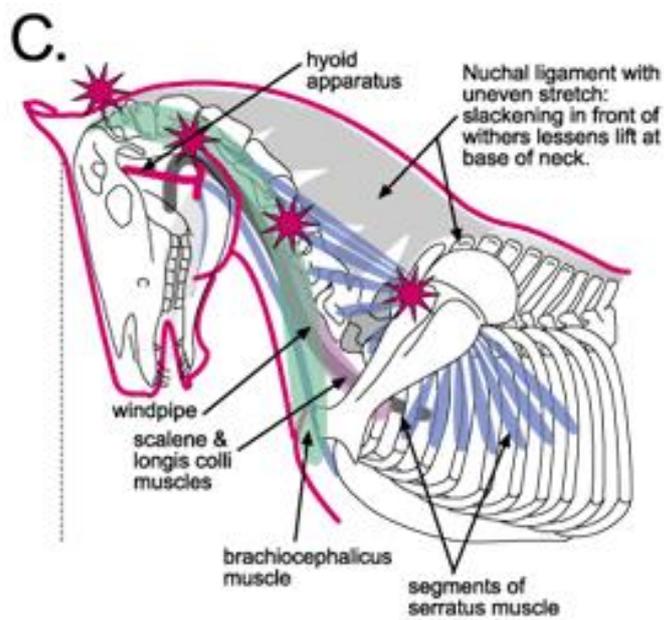
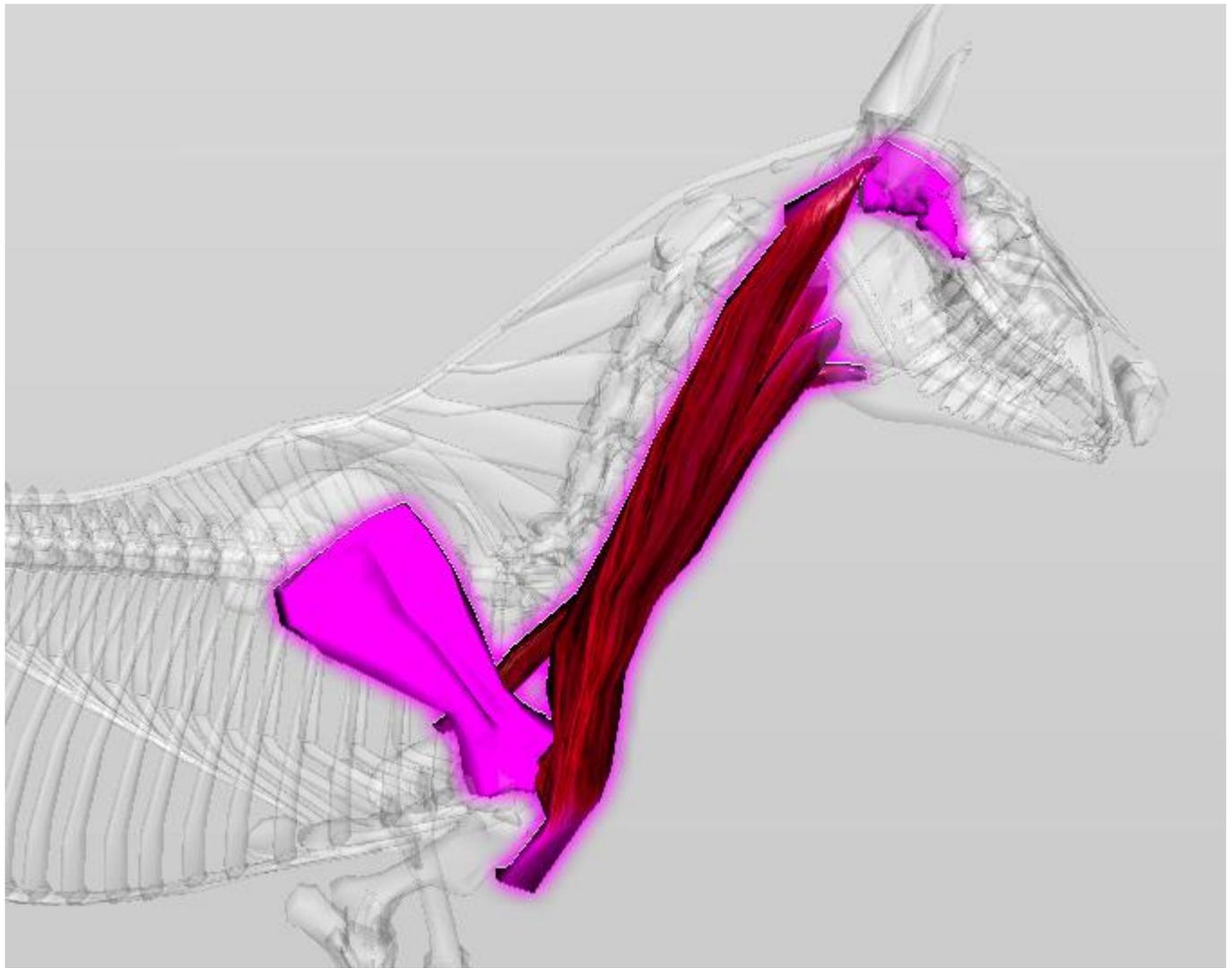
Release and treatment of the structures surrounding the hyoid can increase stride length, improve softness in the mouth, head carriage, reduce evasive behaviour and headshaking and may even ease breathing.

This is a highly sensitive and complex area which can have a profound effect on the horse and his way of going.

Simple management strategies can reduce the risk of discomfort:

- Ensuring adequate fit of tack; the bit, noseband and areas around the poll. Even the addition of a fly veil under the bridle can cause an increase in pressure and over time result in pain.
- Ensure teeth are checked regularly by an equine dentist or vet.
- During work ensure you take frequent breaks from the more collected movements and avoid extreme flexion or the horse moving behind the vertical.





Bradford's Veterinary Physiotherapists are well equipped to help guide you in all aspects of your horse's musculoskeletal health. We pay great attention to detail ensuring that nothing is missed, in this way you ensure the health and wellbeing of your horse and safe guard his health of the future.

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