

Kylie Kay Franklin  
*Walk It Out*

Equine massage therapy is a technique used to release tension and promote muscle growth. This process is done by a certified equine massage therapist, thoroughly massaging superficial muscles. Being a certified equine massage therapist, with a future in veterinary medicine, I wanted to find out if this was a real benefit. My main question was, “Does massage therapy work for lengthening a horse’ stride?” A horse’ stride is the distance from the back hoof to the front hoof at a walk, and can lead towards better athletic ability. I assume that the horses' stride will lengthen by one hoof length after 15 minutes rest, post massage. I began my project by choosing five horses that hadn't been ridden in a month. I haltered a horse, measured height, hoof length, sex, age, breed, and amount of previous massages. After collecting data, I took one full walking stride with the horse and measured the stride. I then measured the length of one lunging stride. Following the initial stride measurements, I massaged the horse. Fifteen minutes post massage I repeated the walk in hand and lunging. After the first massage set; all horses had increased their stride length between 4 -12 cm. All of the horses received their second massage one week later. At the end of the experiment the average stride had increased by 60cm. The goal of future experiments would be to extend research on multiple breeds of different size and muscular structure, to determine how massage lengthens stride.