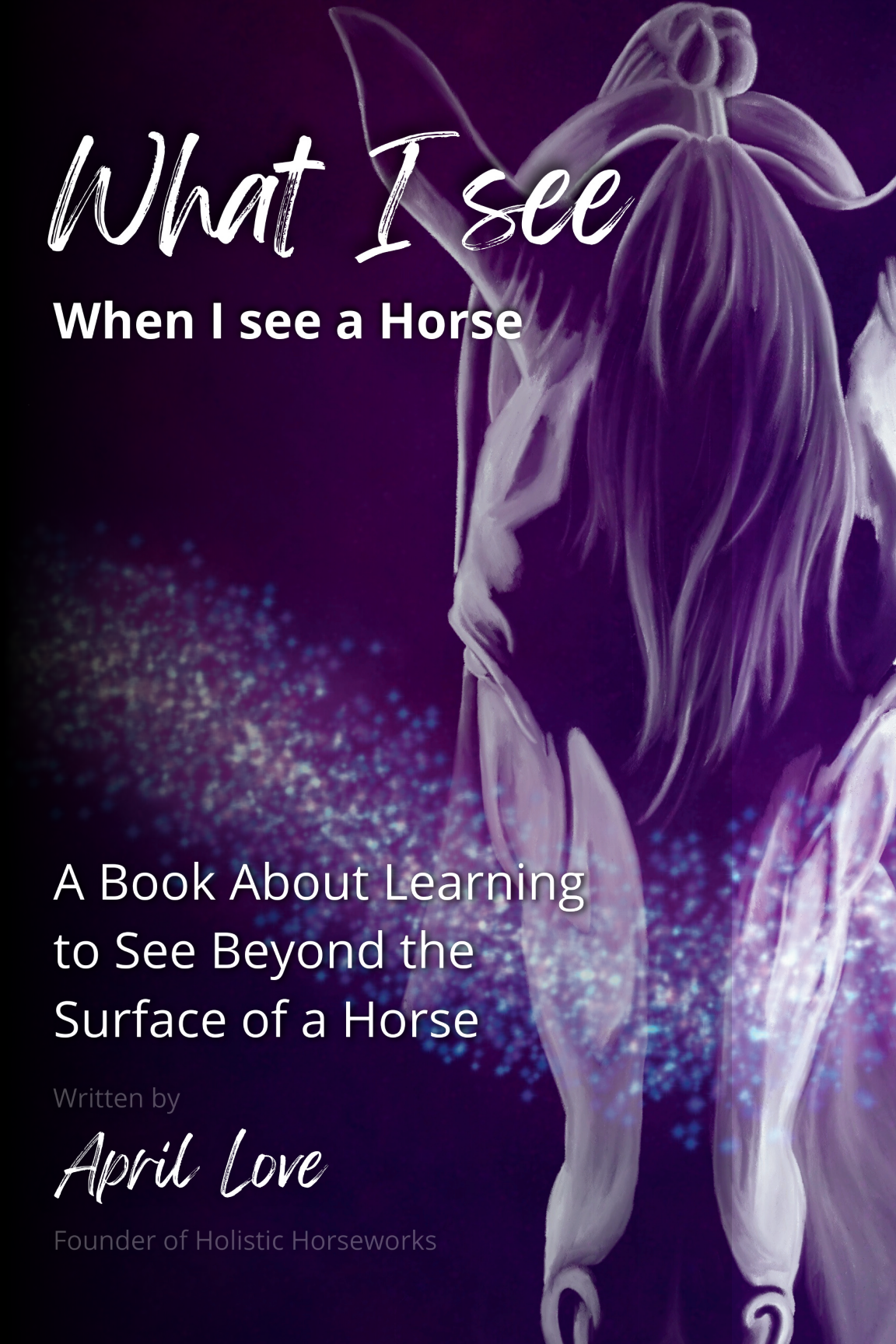




What I see

When I see a Horse

A Book About Learning
to See Beyond the
Surface of a Horse

Written by

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WHAT I SEE WHEN I SEE A HORSE

*A Book About Learning to See Beyond the Surface of a
Horse*

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Introduction

After reading this book, you will never look at horses the same way again. In the equine world there exists a language beyond words, a silent conversation that transcends neighs, whinnies, and nickers. It's a dialogue of balance, symmetry, and vitality coursing through every meridian, muscle, and bone. In these pages, you will learn how to look at your horse through the lens of an expert that has worked in the equine industry as a rider, trainer, and bodyworker for decades.

As you journey through these chapters, you'll witness the transformation that comes from learning to see beyond the symptoms, to discern the subtle non-verbal cues that horses offer, and to decipher the stories their bodies tell. This isn't just about hoof angles or muscle development, although that's part of it. It's about peering into the heart of a horse, understanding their whispers of pain or discomfort, and unlocking a pathway to long lasting wellness.

Each chapter holds a revelation that could mean the difference between your horse merely getting by, or your horse absolutely thriving into their thirties. From the graceful arch of a neck to the solid foundation of the hooves, every detail speaks volumes. You just have to know where to look. As you read, you'll be empowered to discern these nuances, to spot the hidden imbalances, and begin your journey towards a healthier, happier, and more willing equine companion.

Much more than just a book, this is an invitation to completely open and transform your mindset. By the final page, you'll be equipped with more than just knowledge; you'll possess a new lens through which to view your own horse and every other horse you see. You'll stand before them, not

solely as an owner, but as a horse listener, attuned to their every need physically, emotionally and spiritually. This is my gift to you.

Welcome to a journey that will change your relationship with horses forever. You are now part of the global movement to help horses, holistically!

UNVEILING THE HIDDEN ISSUES IN HORSES

Chapter One

In my decades of experience in the horse industry, one thing has become clear; many people tend to focus on specific issues or behaviors in their horses without considering the bigger picture. They might notice their horse bucking at the canter, being hard to catch, refusing to load in the trailer, or acting up during farrier visits. However, what they often fail to ask is, *why* these things are happening. Understanding the *why*, and the root, underlying cause of a horse's behavior is essential to their wellbeing, and it usually comes down to some pain or fear that the horse is experiencing. This is the core of my teachings at Holistic Horsecworks available through hands-on clinics, home study programs, and other empowering resources for horse owners. In this book, I will share my insights and teach you how to look at horses as whole, beautiful, spiritual, and sentient beings.

When I first approach a horse, I start by observing several key aspects in order to gain insight into their physical and emotional well-being. Looking at the shape of the hooves when at rest and when working tells me a story about how the body is loading the hoof, and what issues are occurring higher up in the horse's body that need to be addressed. I look at the balance of the head, the cranial bones, and the eyes. Then I look at the health, texture, and shine of their coat. I pay attention to how much movement the skin has over the skull when I touch their forehead. All of these observations and more tell a story. Within just ninety seconds of observation, I can understand a lot about the horse's health and pinpoint any potential issues they may be experiencing.

In this book, I'll teach you how to see what I see, and how such observations can lead you to determine the underlying cause of the pain, fear, or behavior issue your horse is experiencing and what you can do about it. With no prior horse care or anatomy experience needed!

Over the years, I've noticed the same common recurring issues and behaviors across many of the horse's I've worked with. Let me share some of them with you: When someone tells me their horse runs barrels, I can often predict how well they will perform solely based on the presentation of their posture and muscling. For instance, if the horse excels turning two barrels to the right but struggles on turning the left barrel, I can pinpoint the root of the problem to a misalignment of the first rib on the right side. This is indicated by thicker muscling around the neck and shoulder on the right side, as well as examining the shape and growth of the hooves. This all shows me that the horse can turn well to the right, but they can't get the right shoulder around to turn to the left. Now, this is where the issue starts, but there may be other issues like sore stifles or hocks that result from overcompensating for all this. Remember that these are just the *symptoms* and not the *cause*.

For a cross-country horse facing difficulty clearing jumps or achieving faster race times, I usually start by asking if they knock into jumps with the hind legs, and the answer is often yes. The reason behind this issue often lies in the hind end of the horse, specifically in a sore sacroiliac joint, a psoas muscle in spasm, and a misaligned pelvis (see appendix 1.4). All of this is indicated by the horse's posture and excess calcifications sticking up in the horse's lower back and croup, commonly referred to as "roach back" or "hunter's bump." These visible issues are glaring signs that the horse's hind legs can't actually lift and tuck up for clearing jumps, resulting in a lack of push and drive from the hind end.

When assessing a one hundred mile endurance horse, I can observe its standing posture and foresee limited performance going up or down hill depending on its muscling. If the horse appears over-muscled in the front end and exhibits a "roach back" or "hunter's bump" in the back, that indicates a long-standing pelvis misalignment. This misalignment affects

the horse's ability to *push* uphill from the back end, forcing them to rely upon and *pull* uphill from the front end, which causes the overdevelopment. This also results in a strain on the front legs, specifically in the suspensory ligament and tendons and as such is accompanied by additional tightness which are visually evident.

Some horses present a “downhill” posture, meaning that the withers are lower than the hind end/croup area. This posture causes issues with saddle placement and girth positioning, restricting the horse's reach and stride, as well as causing girth sores. The reason behind this conformation often involves a misaligned first rib on one or both sides of the horse which restricts shoulder movement. Consequently, the horse will rely on neck instead of shoulder muscles to bring the shoulders up and forward, which is what leads to the tight frame and that signature “downhill” appearance. The owner might also notice a choppy or rough trot when riding.

Even a shiny, healthy-looking horse can have underlying health issues. After intuiting the vitality of the horse, if it's between twenty-five percent and forty percent I then ask the horse owner if their horse has allergies or auto-immune problems, and they always say, “Yes how did you know?” I can determine this by using applied kinesiology and by examining the head of the horse, noting cranial bone symmetry (or lack thereof) and over-developed head muscles all which reveal signs of head trauma. I find that head trauma is often caused by knotted rope halters with no give that cause extensive damage if a horse pulls back when tied to an immovable object. On a young foal in halter training with soft cranial bones, much damage is also done when they get in fight or flight mode and pull back on the handler. Head trauma leads to cranial compression, impaired brain function, and nuchal ligament damage. Impaired brain function, especially, can lead to immune-related symptoms, because it is ultimately the brain that controls these processes.

Understanding the deeper reasons behind these common display symptoms can help you understand your horse and improve their well-being for the rest of their life. By paying attention to subtle signs and practicing such observation, you, too, can become attuned to your horse's needs and ensure a healthier and happier equine companion.

When I approach a horse, I start my assessment from the head and work my way back. I carefully observe the balance of the cheekbones and the nostrils, as well as the clarity of the eyes. Then, I move on to evaluate the entire body. Does the horse look symmetrical from front to back? Are there differences in muscle development between the front end, around the neck and shoulders, and the hind end, on the croup, buttocks, or stifle? Checking the shape of the hooves is equally important. Are there signs of high-low syndrome, medial-lateral flares, or any other imbalances? Are all four hooves different shapes and sizes? Are the hind legs standing too close together? Everything from nose to tail, from hoof to wither is interconnected. And it all matters for the health and longevity of your horse.

As I've traveled globally for over two decades teaching and speaking with horse owners, they often ask me if I notice any issues with their horses. I am always amazed at how such sensitive and sentient beings can still perform their duties, despite all the body issues they are experiencing. What I often see is a whole body—hooves, stance, and head—out of symmetry. When a horse is forced to perform out of symmetry, in spite of their discomfort, it's like asking a person to run with one flat shoe and one high-heeled shoe and expecting them to excel in a competition. The horse's body simply cannot function optimally without proper alignment, and this results in pain along with premature joint breakdown which shortens the horse's rideable years. In the long run, these imbalances can also cause premature arthritic conditions like sidebone, ringbone, and arthritic hocks, knees, and stifles. Additionally, issues like kissing spine, stringhalt, and equine shivers often stem from bad posture resulting from long standing misalignment and overcompensation.

Horses are incredibly accommodating creatures, and even if they experience discomfort, they will try their best to give us what we ask. Sadly, this can lead to more physical and emotional issues, often mislabeled as training and behavioral problems. I make it a point to relate my observations to horse owners as compassionately as I can, describing the limitations and behavioral issues the horse is likely to display due to prevailing pain from misalignments. In their ideal state, horses move with joy, ease, speed, and stamina while staying sound and healthy. Our ultimate goal as horse owners is to keep them this way for as often and as long as possible so that we can spend many blissful years together. I am passionate about teaching fellow horse owners how they can achieve this state for their horses on their own.

Unfortunately, what I've come to notice is that many horses suffer from long-standing imbalances and incorrect movement dating back to as early as six months of age. These imbalances usually stem from injuries like tumbles in the pasture, getting kicked by other horses, pulling back when tied, falling in the trailer while tied, or things that might happen when we're not there to witness them. After incidents like these, most people only treat the symptoms the horse presents, without getting to the root of the problem, and the deeper cause of the misalignment. In many instances, these imbalances are mislabeled as training or behavioral issues, when really the horse is just acting out because they are in pain.

Take, for example, a horse that struggles with taking the right lead canter. People might assume it's merely a weakness and have been told to make the horse canter more on that side to develop the strength, but closer examination would reveal that the right shoulder can't move correctly. Not only does this make it difficult for the horse to perform the canter, but it also leads to compensatory efforts where the horse will begin drawing strength from other areas of the body. In reality, we must realize that this

horse *cannot* take the right lead canter, and not that the horse *does not want* to take the right lead canter.

In my work, I can see a horse just standing there tied to a hitching rail, or in its stall, and provide valuable insights to the owner. I might say, "When you ride him, he spooks at things on the right." "With a bit, he's more resistant and heavier on the right rein." This often surprises the owner, who then asks, "How did you know?" It's because I know exactly what to look for. After further examination, I can also pinpoint other issues as we've discussed already such as difficulty taking the right lead canter, or performing well on barrels to the left. In fact, within just ninety seconds, I can provide a comprehensive evaluation, including potential autoimmune issues, allergies, or metabolic issues—details that are usually only obtained through expensive bloodwork. You might wonder how I can do this without seeing the horse move or even riding it. The secret lies in observing things like how the horse stands, the condition of their coat, the muscle development, and hoof balance. Just looking at these factors alone tells me a great deal about the horse's well-being.

In this book, I'll guide you through the process of being able to evaluate your horse, just like I do. We'll explore the intricacies of equine bodywork and supporting programs like "Equine Musculoskeletal Unwinding," "Cranio Sacral Unwinding & Advanced Applied Kinesiology," and "Equine Cranial Decompression." If you're eager to learn how to see horses in a whole new light and take a comprehensive approach to their care, this is the place to start. Together, we'll uncover the hidden issues beneath the surface that affect your horse's performance and well-being. We'll take it step-by-step, looking at easy things to identify in each area of the body. By the last chapter, you'll be equipped with the insight to see everything I've previously outlined and more.