

EMA

Equine Massage Academy Ltd

Therapy Education Research

What's Really Limiting Your Horse's Stride Length? (It's Not What You Think)



Most horse owners assume that if a horse has a short stride, the answer is simple: *more schooling, more impulsion, more work.*

But what if the real issue isn't training at all?

In reality, stride length is one of the clearest indicators of your horse's **comfort, biomechanics, and physical ability**. When it's reduced, something is often restricting your horse's ability to move freely.

The Key Factors That Affect Stride Length

1. Muscle Tension and Tightness

Tight muscles—especially through the shoulders, back, and hindquarters—can significantly shorten stride.

Common signs:

- Stiffness at the start of a session
- Reluctance to stretch forward and down
- Uneven or choppy movement

2. Joint Restrictions

If joints aren't moving freely, your horse physically *can't* lengthen their stride.

This can occur in:

- Shoulders (affecting reach)
- Pelvis (affecting power)
- Hocks (affecting engagement)

3. Poor Posture and Compensation Patterns

Horses are masters of compensation.

If something is uncomfortable, they will:

- Shift weight
- Hollow the back
- Avoid engagement
- Disguise they are sore because they are prey animals

Over time, this creates abnormal and compensatory movement patterns that limit stride length—even if the original issue is subtle.

4. Pain or Discomfort

Even low-grade discomfort can reduce stride.

Your horse may:

- Shorten steps to avoid impact
- Move unevenly
- Feel “lazy” or resistant

5. Saddle Fit and External Factors

A poorly fitting saddle can:

- Restrict shoulder movement
- Create back tension
- Prevent proper extension

Why This Matters?

A shortened stride isn't just about performance—it's often your horse's way of saying:

"I can't move comfortably."

Ignoring it can lead to:

- Reduced performance
- Behavioural issues
- Long-term physical problems that if left unaddressed can become permanent.

What You Can Do?

Start by observing your horse:

- Palpate them – have they any bodily tension?
- Do they track up evenly?
- Is one side different from the other?
- Do they improve or worsen during work?

Small changes in movement can tell you a lot.

Want to Understand This Properly?

This is just the surface.

Inside our bite size no work courses, we teach you how to:

- Precisely palpate a horse like a professional therapist
- Assess your horse's movement in detail
- Identify restrictions early
- Improve comfort, performance, and way of going by training correctly for the horse.

Because when your horse can move freely... everything changes!!

A little investment in our courses can save you thousands in the long run in money and downtime!

- Equine Massage for Horse Owners
<https://www.equinemassageacademy.com/copy-of-equine-massage-for-horse-ow>

- Training from an Anatomical Perspective
<https://www.equinemassageacademy.com/cpd-anatomical-perspective>
- Equine Conformation, Biomechanics and Beyond
<https://www.equinemassageacademy.com/cpd-conformation-beyond>

Now your horse is moving better and more freely!!

Our courses are approved by:

