

Amazing Anatomy Lab at Tufts

In late April 2007, I spent 3 days at a most extraordinary anatomy seminar. This seminar is sponsored yearly by Mike Scott, L.M.T., C.E.M.T. Most of the group were equine massage therapists, so I was the anomaly in the group, as the only dressage trainer and instructor. The first day was an all day lecture about the basics of neuromuscular theory given by John Sharkey, a movement specialist (equine & human) from Ireland. My favorite quote from him: "The biggest postural problem in humans of the 21st Century is the carrying of the head and neck forward". I couldn't agree more - I see it so profoundly in the general population and most riders struggle with this - even the head and neck a tiny bit forward creates postural distortion of the entire spine.

The next two days at the Tufts Vet School anatomy lab involved the complete dissection of a horse. It was fascinating and answered many lingering anatomical questions that I have been struggling to see more clearly. After my trip to Germany, I have been trying to elucidate more simply and correctly how the horse physiologically elevates the forehand in advanced dressage work. I had gotten it all pretty well worked out from books and reading, but there's nothing like seeing the actual tissues and listening to top professionals explain all the complex connections between the back muscles and the bones of the forehand & neck.

It was a lovely group of people at this intense weekend - dedicated, friendly and inquisitive. Dr. Nancy Thompson, our fearless leader, was so very thorough, but at the same time kept it light and really had a terrific sense of humor. Tufts has a superb horse skeleton - in some ways better than the one I saw in Warendorf, Germany. Through a personal connection to a research vet at Tufts, I was able to return in the summer to photograph it more extensively.

Another grand adventure!



Here is an interesting structural convergence that Mike Scott set up for us to photograph. It is the tree of a saddle too far forward with the rails of the tree about to interfere with the cartilage at the top of the shoulder blade. Aside from the interference with the scapula, the saddle would also be too high in the front, which would shift the rider's pelvis & spine out of balance and further impede the motion of the horse's back.