**Joint Flexion Test**

The purpose of the flexion test is to aid in identifying the approximate location and source of a lameness. But a flexion test merely points to a general area that is painful at that moment and is rather nonspecific. It is impossible to affect only one joint when doing a flexion test, and the test itself places stress on the joint capsule and associated ligaments and tendons. It also can place stress on cartilage and bone, causing pain related to existing arthritic changes in the joint. For these reasons, a positive flexion test will not produce an absolute identity or cause of lameness.

The test is not unlike what you might experience if someone asked you to sit in a crouch for sixty seconds and then run right off. Usually, you can run off just fine, but occasionally, you might experience some soreness or pain in the joint when you first try to run; you might even limp for a few steps. Of course, if you had a bad knee, you probably wouldn’t do very well at all on this sort of a test. In horses, as in you, an abnormal response to a flexion test might occur even if the examined limb is normal, or it could indicate a problem.

**Forelimb**

In a forelimb flexion test, various joints and soft tissue structures of the lower limb are stretched and/or compressed for a brief period of time by bending the limb. Afterward, the horse is immediately trotted off and observed for signs of lameness.

In performing the tests, a veterinarian will likely pick up the horse’s leg and bend it, with the bending force centering around the fetlock joint. He or she will hold the leg for a period of 30 seconds to 60 seconds, in the forelimb – often longer in the hindlimb - and then let go, asking the horse to trot off immediately.

**Hindlimb**

Initially the entire hindlimb is held in flexion and then individual distal limb flexion and proximal limb flexion tests are performed. We attempt to stress the stifle independently of the tarsus by holding the distal tibia upward and behind the horse for 60 seconds. This test can also elicit pain from the lumbosacral and sacroiliac joint regions. These flexion tests are not specific, but they may increase the index of suspicion in a certain area.