

FEATURE HEALING

Always eager to learn more and understand what was more clearly becoming her life's work, she was drawn to two other intuitive healers, US horse whisperer Pat Parelli and Ray Morris, a saddler.

Pat showed her the great rewards to be gained from totally altering the traditional approach to training a horse. "Basically what he and others have done is taken horsemanship from lassoing and jumping on them and tying them down to make them submit to actually communicating with the horse, trying to become one of the herd. He would say, 'Let's consider what the horse feels about this'," Leah explains.

But, one senses it's Ray Morris, blind since 20 through glaucoma but still able to communicate with horses through touch and intuition, who has been the greatest influence on this highly receptive woman. Perhaps in compensation for his own loss of sight, he has, according to Leah, learned to a fine pitch the art of horse massage and developed almost a sixth sense in fitting a saddle. She tells of her own conversion to Ray's approach when he was able to restore her own horse to soundness after two months of extreme lameness which defied all conventional healing methods and made her consider putting him down. "And I mean that every time he took a step he almost fell to the ground. When I went to pick him up from Ray's and saw him walk out sound I just went 'Wow! What is it that you know because I want to learn?'"



"I realised that I'd actually like to save animals rather than breed them for testing."

"I became his student and we went on a journey together and he taught me everything he knew about saddle fitting and massage."

The journey, both literal and figurative, accustomed Leah to the realities of hours behind the wheel while she travels to treat another horse, or more likely several horses in the area, over a weekend. Now in business as a Bowen therapist to man and beast, she thinks nothing of notching up 400 or 500 km a week - it's part of the job and the joy of reaching so many more people.

But, more importantly, it has opened her eyes and her mind to the power of taking a holistic approach to treatment, a world away from her early scientific training and the cruel confines of the testing laboratory. Homoeopathy, herbal treatments, Bach flower essences, massage of

course, including trigger point therapy which pinpoints the point in a muscle taking most strain, all now play a role in her work with its primary focus on Bowen therapy. While her massage training was probably second to none, the effort involved in massaging an animal the size of a horse is starting to take its toll, confides Leah. "In the past I'd massage the whole animal all over, nose to tail, belly to top- and that can take up to two hours. Trigger point work helped me scale that time down to something more manageable and now I'll use Bowen as well at the end of a session because I find it resolves the issues very quickly."



Opening her own mind - and Leah herself uses the term 'open minded scepticism' to her first approach to incorporating Bowen therapy into her work - has made her far more sensitive to the suffering inflicted on horses even by the most well meaning of owners.

"I became aware how many horses are traumatised, and how fearful they are of people... and people are ignorantly innocent because they have no idea they are inflicting so much pain and trauma on animals they love. They have no idea they have to address feet and hoof problems, or that equipment they are putting on their horse can cause so much pain."

The move away from custom made saddles to the 'off the peg' variety is a major culprit, says Leah, simply because an ill fitting saddle can cause irritation rapidly building into severe pain every time it is put on the animal's back. Leah talks of badly fitting shoes and blisters that become more painful and severe complaints over time to make her point.

"At the end of my treatments, I always say 'I'm so sorry' because of the look on the owner's face when they realise what they've been doing to their animal. I say 'I'm really sorry that I've opened your eyes, but I'm not sorry for your horse and I'm not sorry for the partnership that you will now have'."

Leah's reputation has now spread beyond her home State - in January she's travelling to Canada to lecture 30 hoof care specialists in equine Bowen, another Australian export to an eager world. Meanwhile, the regular travel to WA country areas will keep her busy and deeply satisfied. "You just have to put your hands on an animal or see the change in people to know it's worth the journey. It's restoring harmony to their lives."