

April 2010 Beyond the Basics

Colt to Horsemanship Series – Part II

It all starts on the Ground!

As we embark on this series of articles discussing the principles and exercises for bringing along a young horse and truly developing a life-long partner, there will be no more important segment than this subject regarding groundwork. When you boil down the over-arching goals we hope to achieve when training a colt* they might be filtered to: Respect & Positive Attitude, Prepared Movement, which lead to Willing Communication. If we can set it up using tools and exercises to achieve these goals, then we will ultimately create an environment of safety and good leadership for the human and for the horse. It all begins on the ground!

Basic Sequence for Ground Work:

1) Establishing Leadership in the Human & Positive Attitude in the Horse

a) Liberty Work: If possible, I will begin my relationship with the colt on the ground in an area that allows for work / movement at liberty. Quite frankly, if I can not connect to the horse at liberty...with no stings attached...then I am fooling myself about the quality of relationship I can build in this moment or in the future. If the only way you can get the attention of your colt is through force, employed by pulling and resisting on the lead rope or lariat, then the foundation you are using to build upon is a very one-sided house! Take the time to reach the goals achieved through proper and mindful liberty work, to develop a partner that is 'wanting' to follow your leadership and be 'with' you.

Articles to review regarding Liberty Work: www.tnhorsemanship.com/articles:

November 2008 – Training Your Own Horse – Part 5 – Liberty Work

April 2006 – Establishing Leadership

2005 – Clinic #5 – Round Pen Logic

b) On the Lead Rope: Once you have a positive, willing relationship at liberty, the use of the lead rope (at least 11 ft.) with a horseman's halter can enhance the movement, and begin to establish rhythm and timing. I never want the colt to realize that he is stronger than I am, so I have to be aware, with timing, to re-direct his energy and attention *before* the brace starts and the tug-o-war begins. I want him to follow a 'feel' - not brace against it!

Articles to Review:

2005 Clinic #1 – Ground School Maneuvers

2005 Clinic # 2 – Attitude and Movement

2005 Clinic #3 – Developing the Dance

2006 April - Ground Work Establishing Leadership

2006 May – Beginning the Dance

2006 June – Relating Ground School to Riding

2006 November – Developing a Horseman's Protocol

c) Use of Specific Tools – Surcingle, Sideriens, and Training Caveson: There are some tools used more commonly in the dressage world of training, that can greatly benefit our ground school, when applied correctly, lightly, and with the proper vision for the goals. These include the employment of the a surcingle, with or without light sidereins, and a training caveson that allows for attachment of long lead rope or lunge line on the nose rather than under the chin. (Note: The design of the Horseman's halter, with two additional rose knots on the noseband, can allow for use as a training caveson.) Proper use of these pieces of equipment can foster in the colt a beginning knowledge of self-carriage, with the freedom of movement found in liberty work, or on the end of the lunge or 22 ft. ring rope.

2008 – Mindful Liberty Work

(*Please Note: I will be referring to the horse that you may be starting or re-starting – be it stud, filly, mare, or gelding - as "the colt". Furthermore, please also note that there may be some differences in how I approach training a stallion from a gelding or filly, and in some cases, I will approach situations differently given specific characteristics of the colt. Examples: naturally carrying themselves with a higher pole and closed throatlatch, or horses with sloping shoulders, etc.. In these cases, you need to examine the possible deficit, and act accordingly in an attempt to not re-enforce structural or breeding confirmation traits in a negative manner.)

d) Developing Self-Carriage and Self-Confidence from the Beginning: Part of our job as being good leaders for our horse is to prepare for what might happen *before* it happens! In so doing, we also condition the colt to handle the unexpected. This in no way should be considered as “Desensitizing” exercises, but rather a series of opportunities to set it up for your horse to become “Sensitive” to following your leadership. I want to prepare my colt to be ‘responsive’, rather than ‘reactionary’. The best way I can do that is to present to my colt a number of situations, using the flag, lariat, cavelletti, and work-in-hand positioning to help him develop self-carriage, along with self-confidence.

2005 Clinic #7 – *Use of the Lariat*

2008 – *Training Your Horse Part 3, 4, 5, & 6*

2009 – 2010 *Use of the Cavelletti Part 1-2-3 from the ground*

Eclectic Horseman – 2009 Work in Hand from the Very Beginning

2005 Clinic #5 – *Work in Hand*

2005 Clinic #8 – *Driving on the Long Lines*

Ground work is an essential component of any training schedule no matter the discipline you will be pursuing with your horse. The advice and many articles I have suggested for review are indicative of the depth of knowledge that can be achieved by both the colt and the human in dedicating significant time to ground school. It is not easy to become proficient at these maneuvers and the skills needed to perfect them for most humans. I can only attest to the tremendous success you will achieve if you simply take the time to present them to your colt. The foundation you build here...on the ground...will serve for the remainder of your relationship. It all begins on the ground!

Planning for 2010 With Alice Trindle

Invest in education and fun in 2010!

Check-out the schedule of clinics, and vacation packages at: www.tnthorsemanship.com

April 16 – 18, Western Idaho Horse Expo – Nampa, ID – Come Ride with Alice

April 20 – 24, Colt to Horsemanship Clinic at T&T Ranch – Haines, OR

April 26 – 30, Five-Day Work in Hand Clinic, T&T Ranch

May 1 & 2, Preparing for Use of the Lariat, T&T Ranch

May 8 & 9, Trainers Workshop, T&T Ranch

May 14-16, Riding Clinic, Emmett, Idaho

May 29-31, Memorial Day in Idaho, Riding Clinic, McKay, Idaho

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