

September 2008 Beyond the Basics *Training Your Horse – Part III of series* *The Lariat...A Great Tool for Every Discipline*

In writing this article I am returning from Celebrate the Horse Expo that was held in Puyallup, Washington, an event that took place back in July. It was a wonderful gathering of horse folks. Most attended because they try to adhere to the importance of developing a great relationship with their horses. Many people seemed to recognize the importance of continuing education for both horse and rider. However, I was struck by some of the misconceptions that seem to be placed within the horse world simply by semantics and costumes. To see Steve Rother ride his Friesian in a western saddle or me performing with the garrocha without the traditional Doma Vaquera Spanish regalia may have seemed WRONG to some people! Somehow the reality of the soft, willing, flowing picture and partnership was overlooked. The people that truly understood the demonstrations were those that simply enjoyed the beautiful picture they were witnessing. They were there to enhance their understandings and find new ways to have fun with their horses, while providing good leadership.

This month as we work on ‘training’ our horses, I’d like to challenge you to pick up an aid that may well be new to you and a fresh addition to your “look”! The tool is the lariat. I have not found another device that so effectively teaches me to develop my ‘feel’, learn to multi-task, and just plain have fun – all without needing to know how to build a loop or having any intention of actually roping something. I have written previously in NWHS about the benefits of using a lariat (2005 ‘Use of the Lariat’ Clinic #7 www.tnthorsemanship.com/articles), and in the three years that have transpired I have developed an even greater admiration for the positive attributes of this horseman’s tool.

To begin, I highly recommend that you go back and review the information found within the 2005 Clinic #7. That way we can treat this article as a continuation, and simply add some additional exercises for using the lariat to ‘sensitize’ your horse to your smallest of intentions. In particular, please review the prerequisites for use of the lariat PRIOR to your preparations, in order to keep you and your horse safe. Please keep in mind that we are trying to heighten your ability to relay your picture. In other words, clearly communicate your requests to the horse so that he might seek your leadership in any situation. We are preparing him for the ‘unexpected’ by simulating situations that can happen on the trail, in the arena, or even on the dressage court. Things coming in and out of his vision; Items touching all parts of his body; Yielding to pressure, rather than pulling against it. These are all important understandings to have cemented into your schooling in order to keep everyone safe.

Here are some additional great exercises to establish with your horse, no matter what the discipline, which use the lariat and will ultimately enhance your relationship:

Prerequisite Preparation Reminders

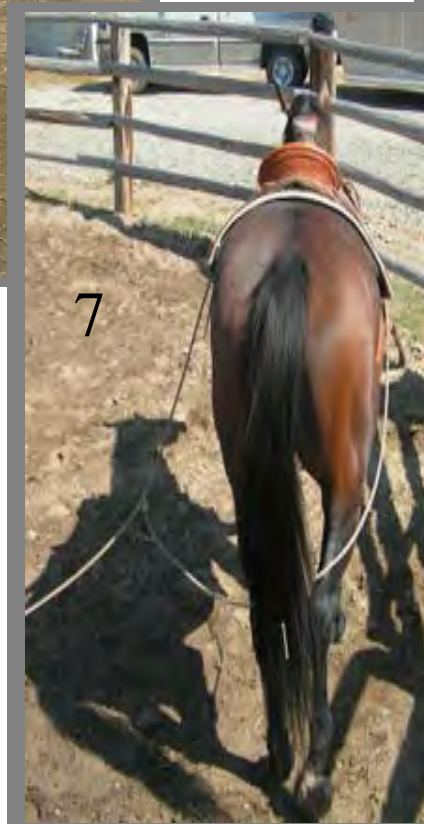
- 1) Prepare yourself to comfortably toss, coil, swing the lariat
- 2) Prepare your horse to accept ropes around, under, between all parts of this body and to yield to their pressure
- 3) Find a good teacher who is experienced in using a horseman’s lariat to give you guidance & practice on a schooled horse
- 4) Double-check your environment that it is horse-safe, and that you can extend the lariat the entire distance across the pen



Resting on the Hind Legs and Under the Tail

Often times the area around and between the horse's hind legs is what you might call a "Ya But!" spot. The horse may be saying, "You can touch me there, *but* I won't like it and if you add movement to the equations I just might get quite upset and scared". It is our job as good leaders for our horses to prepare them for ropes, bushes, and maybe even cruppers so that they react positively to those tickling and claustrophobic circumstances. Our mission is to set it up so that the horse can experience these feelings and situations, begin to search out an answer that includes thinking and yielding, and that we humans recognize and reward that effort. The ring rope and lariat allow us to create a situation where we control the release of the pressure when the horse tries to find it.

Your timing is critical to success. This is where having a knowledgeable aspiring horseman to guide you, along with a schooled horse, will help immensely. Horses will seek release as a reward and they enjoy using the right side of their brain. We just need to set it up and recognize the 'try' and release mille-seconds before the horse gives to the pressure.

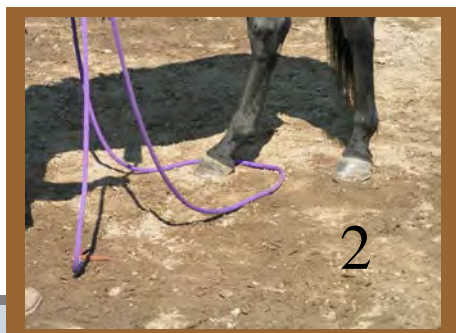


Preparation for Ropes

- No. 1** – Start by using a 22 ft. ring rope and remember to ask your horse to carry the rope with movement **FIRST!** Here I am tossing the rope, first with forward movement from the horse and then at a stand still.
- No. 2-3-4** – I have placed the rope in a loop, not run thru the end of the ring, around the hind leg, and am asking for a yielding of feet and legs with forward movement
- No. 5** - The rope is now thru the ring, and I ask for the same yields
- No. 6 & 7** – We have graduated to the lariat, and now I can position the lariat rope in many different places from under the tail to around the flank. Each time rewarding by releasing the slight pressure when the horse yields or even thinks about yielding!

Yielding All Four Feet

It is critical for proper hoof care that the horse be willing to give each of his feet without a pull or a push. There is no need for cross-ties, or restraining devices, when the human works with the horse to politely yield his feet. If by chance your horse gets caught in a piece of wire, or tangled in vines, or wrapped up in a rope, you will be mighty glad that you worked with him to yield to pressure rather than fighting. Again, the ring rope and lariat are excellent tools to help save you from expensive veterinarian bills and keep your horse away from a traumatic encounter.



Preparation for Yielding the Feet

No. 1 – Prepare first with a ring rope, your horse on a halter lead, and preferably practice with a schooled horse. Build the loop & place over the rump of the horse. Feed the slack out to make a big loop on the ground behind the horse.

No. 2 – Step the horse back, one-step, over the top of the rope. Next, draw the loop off the rump, and magically it will be around the inside hind foot!

No. 3 – Take the slack out of your loop, bringing the ring end snug around the fetlock.

No. 4 & 5 – Here's the next sequence with a non-schooled mule. I have sent him forward, just carrying the lariat. Note: I have already turned my coils from my driving right hand, into the left hand, in preparation for halt by putting pressure on the lariat lead.

No. 6 – Be ready to take the pull on the rope across your thighs, rather than trying to hold with your hand and arm strength.

No. 7 – I am waiting for the mule to yield the foot without tension – then give immediate reward by putting slack in the lariat. Next, we will work on a halt to a backup, to eventually being able to lead the mule forward, backwards, and sideways by his feet.

Note: If the mule had become very bothered, I would haltered him, and bring in a skilled human to assist the mule to get the right idea, by working the halter lead, while I handled the lariat.

Building a Horseman's Halter with the Lariat

At times, when you do not have the eyes and ears (i.e. attention & positive attitude) of the horse, it is helpful to use the lariat as a halter with a very long lead. Remember that this type of halter is quite severe over the top of the poll and across the nose. ***It is NOT something you use to tie your horse or if you feel your horse is going to violently pull back, this is not the right tool!*** Used improperly this halter set up can hurt and cut your horse. Use it with extreme 'feel'! (Note: This is not what is called a "war bridle". Only VERY knowledgeable people should use a true war bridle, and I do not recommend nor normally condone their use.)



Building a Horseman's Halter with the Lariat

No. 1 – Politely place the loop of the lariat over the mules head, being careful of his ears. Make a big picture window-loop for him to put his head through. (Of course, he should be fine with your hand, ropes, bridle-bands coming over his ears too!)

No. 2 – Kink the lariat and bring this kink from the side most close to his chest, between the loop around his neck, and feed between the neck and his jowls

No. 3 – Continue to place this kink over the nose; (Note: the metal hondo works well here, as it will swivel and allow the rope to lie flat.)

No. 4 – Adjust so that the initial loop is over the poll, and the second loop or kink is over the nose with the hondo at the back of the jowl; You may need to readjust if the initial loop comes close the eye.

Use this to help get your horse's eye and ears...Not as a reprimand or pulling/pressure device