

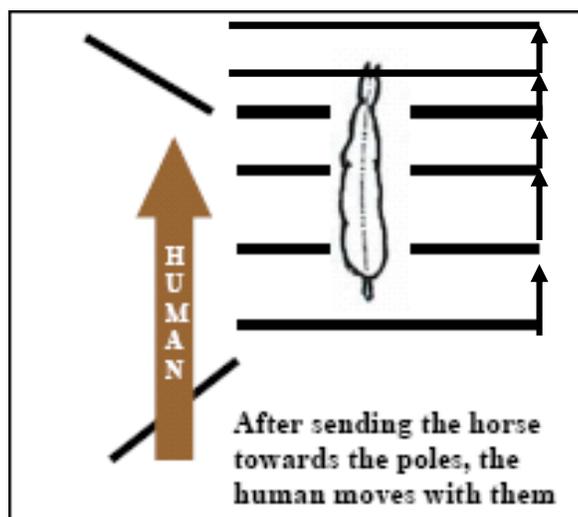
## January 2010 Beyond the Basics

### *Use of Ground Poles and the Cavalletti – Part III*

Here we go again. 2010 will mark another year of opportunity to grow together in our horsemanship skills and knowledge through the pages of Northwest Horse Source. I am excited! We have a great progression to explore, starting with the final two articles regarding the use of ground poles and cavalletti, and then we move into a ten-month exploration of starting and bringing a young horse along. Step-by-Step...Examining the execution of skills and exercises that will ultimately aid the human in developing a life-long solid foundation with their horse. The theme for T&T Horsemanship clinics in 2010 is "Observing with Integrity", and I hope to share some of those observations the horses have shared with me over the years, in a manner that is based on honesty and sincerity. The way it was presented to me...by the horse!

#### **Continuing with the Cavalletti**

I hope you have been able to utilize the circle and hallway corner exercises over the ground poles, as described in the past two issues. (Remember: There is always more on-line at: [www.tnthorsemanship.com/articles](http://www.tnthorsemanship.com/articles)) You should be experiencing a new confidence in your horse, and a lightness in his step from picking up his feet, becoming more balanced, and a freedom in moving all four corners of the horse. This month, add this new ground pole exercise to your bag of tricks to help you in focusing, and gain balance with the beginnings of engagement in your horse. No matter the discipline you are ultimately pursuing with your horse, this 'cattle guard' exercise will help!



#### **Progressive 'Cattle Guard' Poles**

The first three poles are approx. 4.5' to 5 ft. apart, with the last three pole progressively getting closer, to a final distance of approx. 2.8 ft apart. This is trotting exercise. Be sure to give horse room to complete the exercise over the poles on a straight line, and not too close to the opposing wall or fence, as you approach and depart the poles..

#### **Progressive Cattle Guard Poles**

Purpose - Sending or riding your horse over the 'Cattle Guard' poles will help to promote:

- Attentiveness from the horse in the placement of his feet
- Focus for both horse & rider
- Effective use of your aids, without intimidation
- Stretching over the top line, as the horse looks where he is going
- Eventual gathered softness and the beginnings of engagement, and rhythmic picking up of the feet

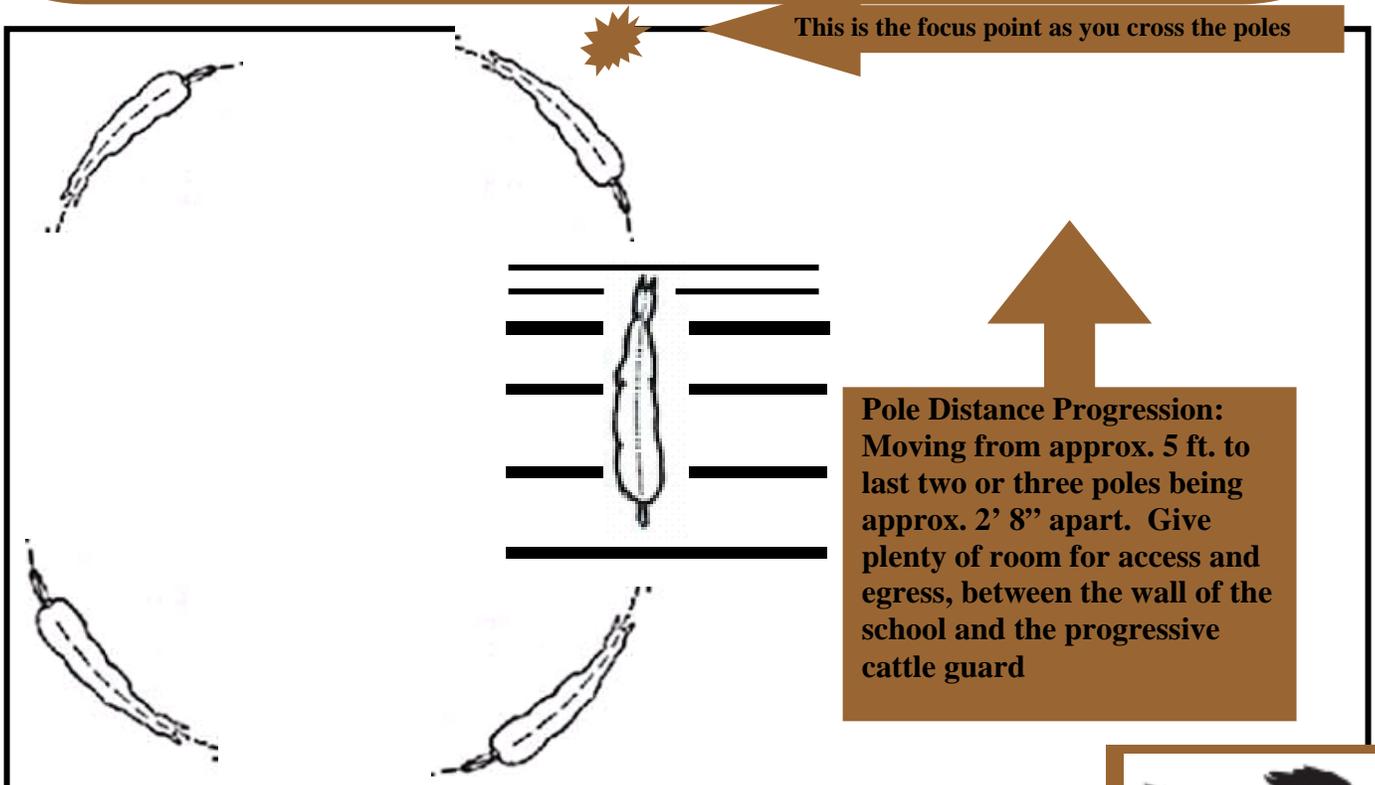
Equipment Need - 6 to 8 ground poles, about 6' to 8' in length; Horseman's halter and lead; When riding use a snaffle or bosal to begin; Patience, focus, and clear picture of the correct movement!

Preparation - Lay out the poles in the design and dimensions as diagramed, in an area with good footing

### Set-up for Using the Progressive Cattle Guard:

**Ground work:** (Note: Your horse should easily follow suggestions and positioning of your body, as you send them over ground poles at the walk, and trot.) Position yourself out from the shoulder of the horse, in a 'ground riding' posture. Start by practicing your walk to trot transitions, perhaps along the wall, so that the horse is marking well with your body posture and intentions. From the trot, in 'ground riding' position, focus your energy across the poles set-up in the Progressive Cattle Guard. It may help for you to mimic the horse in the shortening of his stride, by doing the same in your stride, as the horse crosses the progression. You are looking for the energy to be 'gathered' up, the horse lifting his feet, and a slowing of forward progression. Practice both directions, and once they have made several trips over the cattle guard without touching a pole...quit and reward!

**Riding Aids:** (Note: If you have a competent human partner, who understands the purpose and procedure of the ground work, you may want to begin your riding over the progressive cattle guard by having your human friend take control of the lunge line!) From a nice, rhythmic working trot, pick-up the outside track of the school – the arena. As you approach the cattle guard ground poles, come off the track in a sitting trot, focusing your eyes and core towards the center of the poles. Once you and the horse are lined up with the center of the poles, your focus should be past the cattle guard, at a spot located at your eye level. Feel the feet over the poles, letting the horse primarily find his way to picking up his feet in shortening strides. Your balance should be pretty much in the middle of the horse, with shoulder blade weight over your seat bones. Don't hold your breath! As you progress, and the horse begins to pick his feet up rhythmically, think of a slight 'half-halt' as you enter the cattle guard, with the feel of taking the energy a bit back and up. You can experiment at this point with a slight lifting of the reins, and a feeling of exchanging the energy through the horse's rib cage between your calves. These are just slight caresses in your calf muscles that ask the horse to lift his shoulders and drop his hips. Continue a 'trotting' feeling in the small of your back. As you depart the cattle guard, focus right or left, and pick up a raising/posting trot. Remember to REWARD! This exercise feels really good when you and your horse get it. Don't drive it into the ground, or you will risk going backwards in the benefits!



**Pole Distance Progression:**  
Moving from approx. 5 ft. to last two or three poles being approx. 2' 8" apart. Give plenty of room for access and egress, between the wall of the school and the progressive cattle guard

Planning for 2010 *With* Alice Trindle

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