

August 2010 Beyond the Basics

Colt to Horsemanship Series – Part VI

Beginning Directions with Finesse

At this point in the progression in bringing along a young horse you are probably incapable of NOT smiling! You have clearly and consistently presented the ground schooling to your colt, politely accomplished the first ride, and are now ready to continue your leadership while on board. You are balancing on the bicycle with training wheels, and now it is time to take them off, give some clear direction, and develop some finesse.

It seems that at this point, we humans often lose our goal of riding with a softness, feeling for the horse, and quickly things can get into a tug-a-war match. So let's go back and review a few items that really make a difference to the horse, and in the end, to you having a light, soft, and willing partner.

Every Step – Review the Horseman's Protocol : You have heard the Master Horsemen say it constantly – “Prepare to a position for a transition” or “Reward every try” or “Ask little and reward often”. This is sage advice that boils down to remembering to apply the steps of the Horseman's Protocol before every step you take. (Review NWHS article 06 November at: www.tnhorsemanship.com/articles)

- *Be present and breathe*
- *Think, visualize & focus*
- *Set it up & allow it to happen with a smile & a 'Please'*
- *Reward, release, and praise with a 'Thank You'*



Start with Finesse: It may seem like you have to paint a BIG picture for your colt, but in reality they rarely need it! Set up your requests almost as if you were riding a bridle horse, and then refine your “ask” with progressively larger movements until the colt gets the picture. If he can understand your request with a whisper, why start with a shout?

Building in a 'Soft Feel' with Self-Carriage: Here is where I find great advantage in schooling the 'Work-in-Hand' at quite an early stage in the progression. The colt learns how to carry the bit, relax his jaw, and lift his poll, while also gaining strength, flexibility, and balance. Once on

board, it is our responsibility to maintain this softness. Ask for just a step or two with the colt yielding in his jaw area, raising his poll, and yielding to the bit...then quickly reward by releasing your ring-finger on the rein. (Review: NWHS 05 Work in Hand, 09 Use of the Bit series, & Eclectic Horseman 09 Work in Hand articles)

Importance of Focus: This such an important step in applying your 'Horseman's Protocol'. By creating a clear picture in your mind of the right answer, and then focusing your 'Horseman's Eyes' where you want the horse to go, it automatically prepares your posture to be in the right place. Try to set up your request with this sequence:

- 1) Focus, which prepares your body and balance (seat aids)
- 2) Leg, which helps shape the horse, give direction, and provide the “GO”
- 3) Hands, to fix, refine, adjust
- 4) Reward, Release, and say “Thank You”!

Horseman's Eyes

Thirteen EYES that help give directions to your horse...

- *Your two real eyes*
- *One near your bellybutton*
- *Two on the front of your shoulders*
- *One on each set of your knuckles*
- *One on each of your little toes*
- *One in the small of your back*
- *Your horse's two eyes*
- *And the most important...Your mind's eye!*

Exercises for Success: It is very easy to ask too much of your colt in these early rides. Take it easy and utilize lesson plans that build on the foundation of the basic movements. The better they go forward, backwards, sideways, and rhythmically cross their hind quarters, the better they will accomplish everything you will ask of them. Spend these early rides working on a flow in the four basic movements, and concentrate on a willingness to go forward at a walk and a trot. Don't be too quick to force the canter...just allow it to happen with relaxation, breathing, and a smile from you! If at all

possible, get your colt out into a bigger environment, perhaps along with a confident schooling horse, to allow him to begin to learn to balance with you on his back, while watching where his feet are in an environment other than the arena or round pen.

Come Ride with Us: At our ranch in eastern Oregon, and during clinics on the road, we take pride in helping people to bring their horses along in their individual horsemanship journeys. People enjoy the atmosphere created, that allows small groups to focus on individual goals that ultimately lead horse and human teams deeper into understanding and communication.

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

August 6 – 8, Cows & Mountains, Haines, Oregon

August 16 – 21, Six-Day ‘End of Summer’ Retreat, Haines, OR

August 27 – 29, Three-Day ‘Trails & Obstacle’, Arlington, WA

September 5 – 10, Six-Day ‘All Women’s Retreat’, Haines, OR

**September 15 – 18, Pendleton Round Up ‘100 Years’ 3-Day
Vacation Package**



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