

July 2010 Beyond the Basics

Colt to Horsemanship Series – Part V

First Ride...No Fear...No Hassle...No Dust!

There is no doubt that the first ride on a young horse is truly magical. To imagine that this amazing creature will allow us to sit upon his back and take directions to accomplish all the things he does so naturally and follow our slightest suggests, is to imagine a rare gift. The first ride also calls us to the highest of responsibilities to provide leadership without creating fear, intimidation, or brace in either the colt or the human! With mindful preparation, the first ride should be without hassle, no dust, and a true joy.



We have been talking the past few months about the preparation for work under saddle. A quick review would envision your colt ready to handle and accomplish the following:

- Possessing a positive attitude that is *willing to yield* in a *respectful* manner
- He should be able to softly follow you suggestions on the ground to move forward, backwards, sideways, and disengage or cross his hind quarters
- Ropes, flags, and obstacles should be able to come in and out of his vision without fear, while the colt maintains consistent rhythm moving forward on a circle
- He should be able to be touched on all parts of his body (neck, shoulders, girth-area, flank, haunches, stifle, fetlock, under the tail, with the lariat with movement
- You should be able to ground ride the colt while swinging the stirrup, hanging on to his tail, and accomplish circles and stops
- You should be able to work from above the colt, both off another horse, or from the fence, and the colt should be easily bringing the saddle to the fence, as if you were going to mount

There are plenty of other exercises we discussed, but if you do not have these basics working for you, then you are stealing the first ride, and most likely the hole you have created will show up later in the progression with you horse. Take the time it takes, and in the end, it will take less time.

Mounting with the Assistance of a Schooled Horse

My personal favorite method of developing a great first ride is with the aid of a schooled horse and rider that can give confidence to both the colt, and the colt's human! (Articles to Review: www.tnthorsemanship.com/articles 2008 Working from A Top) After the schooled horse and rider team has worked the saddled colt with some 'turn-on-center' and 'following the leader' warm-up, then the sequence of preparing to put weight in the saddle is as follows:

- 1) Check the girth, and put your helmet on!
- 2) Flap the stirrup, jump up and down, reach over the top of the colt, if you can, and lift the fender of the stirrup on the opposite side;
- 3) (Mounting from the left side...) Put the tip of your left toe in the stirrup, your right hand on the saddle horn, and your left hand thumb-up holding on to the mane
- 4) It's important to keep your torso turned towards the ears of the horse, and your right leg underneath your right shoulder blade
- 5) The idea is to propel yourself straight up, off your right leg...not pull yourself into the saddle!
- 6) After a few bounces, push off your right leg, and lay your right ribcage in the saddle seat, with your eyes and bellybutton facing the ears of the colt; Pet and praise, then step back down



- 7) Try the entire sequence over again, and if the colt is standing well after the 'half-halt' or 'pause' with your ribcage in the saddle, then go ahead and throw your leg over, while keeping your eyes on the ears of the horse; Pet, praise, and breathe! If you have a night-latch, you may want to find it with your right hand.
- 8) Once you are in the saddle, keep talking and praising, pet with your legs, and prepare to move out, following the schooled horse; (Note: This sequence is illustrated at: <http://picasaweb.google.com/atrindle/> - March 2010 Colt Starting)
- 9) As the colt starts to move, remember to keep talking (i.e. breathing), and stay relaxed
- 10) Picture yourself as a warm bag of rice, with legs that caress, and hands that rub!

Mounting without a Schooling Horse:

The sequence above works the same when you do not have the help of a schooling horse and skilled horseman. You may have to spend more time getting the colt to balance and prepare for your weight. Pull and push a bit on the saddle until his feet are under him. Don't try to get on with his feet moving! Also keep his nose slightly tipped towards you by placing the left rein in your left hand, along with a handful of mane.

Take your time, and fully enjoy this 'first ride'! It is magical, no matter how many colts you may have the privilege to start. Breathe, smile, and laugh...You are a lucky person experiencing this magic!

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

July 2-4, Three-Day 4th of July Vacation Package, T&T Ranch

July 20 – 25, Horsemanship Clinics, Fort Bragg, CA

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

August 16 – 21, Six-Day 'End of Summer' Retreat, Haines, Orego

August 27 – 29, Three-Day 'Horse Swim & Mts' Clinic, Haines



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