



**Alberta**  
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND  
RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
4-H Branch

[www.4h.ab.ca](http://www.4h.ab.ca)

## ALBERTA 4-H PROJECT MANUAL



# Young Horse Project

MEMBER GUIDE



Title Sponsor - Equine Program

## The 4-H Motto

*"Learn to Do by Doing"*



## The 4-H Pledge

*I pledge*

*My **Head** to clearer thinking,*

*My **Heart** to greater loyalty,*

*My **Hands** to larger service,*

*My **Health** to better living,*

*For my club, my community, and my country.*

## The 4-H Grace

(Tune of Auld Lang Syne)

*We thank thee, Lord, for blessings great  
on this, our own fair land.*

*Teach us to serve thee joyfully,  
with head, heart, health and hand.*

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# INTRODUCTION

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## **Welcome to the 4-H Young Horse Project**

Congratulations on having successfully completed the mandatory Horsemanship Project Levels 1-3. You now have basics that will be important for the successful completion of the Young Horse Project. We hope you will have a fantastic year developing new skills and teaching your project horse new things as you continue to develop your horse knowledge and experience.

## **What is considered a 'young horse'?**

This project is here to help you teach and train the horse that has had no real 'schooling'. The young horse project is developed for a weanling, yearling or two to three year old animal. However, this project is not necessarily restricted to a certain 'age' of horse, rather it is the amount of training or handling that determines whether you are eligible to take part in the young horse project. If you have a horse that is five years old, but has never been handled, then the young horse project is for you. As well, if you have a weanling (a horse that has been separated from its mother), then the young horse project is for you.

This manual should guide your training of the young horse so that both you and your horse have a successful year.

## **Are there any considerations when selecting a young horse project?**

Project selection should be determined by the individual member's physical capabilities, horsemanship experience, leader recommendations, and parental consent. It is important that the member be comfortable handling horses in general before taking on a young horse project. It requires a sound understanding of general horsemanship in order to be successful teaching a young animal. Although it is not mandatory that you have previous experience with horsemanship levels 4-7 before attempting the young horse project, it would be recommended. This would ensure a good understanding of horses and horsemanship skills.

When working with horses that have not had any formal training, it is preferable to work with one that has never been touched than to attempt to 're-train' a horse that has not worked out for someone else. Horses have an amazing memory and will remember the 'bad' things that have happened to them much longer and persistently than they ever remember the 'good' stuff. It is sometimes important to know 'why' a horse is misbehaving in order to successfully 'fix' it. This is not always possible when you are working with a horse that someone else has wrecked.

## Clinics and resources

Each 4-H member is encouraged to get involved in clinics. The most useful clinics to you will be those geared toward teaching ground manners, round pen work or starting horses under saddle. It is also beneficial to read about or watch 'problem' horses being worked with by a knowledgeable horse person. Sometimes seeing someone 'fix' a problem a horse is having will prevent you from making the same mistakes.

Most problems with horses are 'man-made'. Horses learn what they are taught! There are a great number of books and videos geared toward training and starting horses. Choose those that have been recommended by knowledgeable horse people. Sometimes the non-resistance methods used by some horse people are too complex to be attempted by 4-H members with little experience. Be wary of 'quick fixes' and use the method that makes sense to you and your horse's situation.

### What about all the advice people want to offer?

If you take on a young horse project, everyone will want to give you advice about how to handle or train your horse. Some of the advice will make sense to you and some won't. Don't act on any advice unless it makes sense to you and fits your situation. Your ability and the sensitivity of your horse may vary. Be alert and rational with your actions so neither you or your horse will get hurt. Along with the information you acquire, the member must apply common sense since he or she is solely responsible for his or her own actions.

## Horse and rider assessment

The young horse project has been divided into seven levels. At each level there are a number of assessment tools that will be used in order to determine whether you have been successful.

Most of these will be straight forward and easy to determine.

Some of it will be theory that is important for a clearer understanding of horse training.

Some will involve practical hands-on skills. For example, if you can correctly pick up all four of your project horse's feet, then you have been successful in this area.

The method of assessing the member and the project horse is up to the club leader and member to determine.

There are some suggestions at the end of this manual to help guide the leader and member in the assessment of the young horse project.

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## OBJECTIVES

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The goal of the young horse project is to provide an opportunity for the 4-H member to:

- gain an understanding of how a horse learns and thinks.
- understand the relationship between the age of the horse and expectations in training.
- develop the skill to successfully teach a horse new things.
- develop the horse's ability to have respect and trust in people, to be able to focus on the work at hand and be willing to learn new things.
- understand the equipment necessary to work with the 'green' unbroke horse or weanling during various stages in its training.
- understand how to feed a young horse so that it reaches its growth and performance potential.
- enjoy working with an untrained horse of any age 'shaping' its behavior around people.

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## OVERVIEW OF THE **YOUNG HORSE PROJECT**

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The young horse project is exciting in that you have the opportunity to 'shape' a horse's way of behaving around people. You have the opportunity to determine how your horse will react to new things as you begin the training process.

Generally speaking, horses love to please, and want to do the right thing. However, it is important that you always teach it what you want before you expect it to know what to do. There is nothing more frustrating and frightening for a horse than to be asked to do something new and not knowing what to do, it tries to do what it thinks you want. If it then makes a mistake and you jerk on it, it will become very nervous about working with people. Sometimes you undo a lot of training that you have been working on when you treat a horse unfairly in this way.

Make the horse's experience with people a positive one. The success you have is based on your own thoughtfulness and understanding. Make sure your knowledge base is good enough to handle the situation. Be humble and ask for help when you need to. Be proud when your work pays off!

### **Requirements**

#### **What do I need once I have my horse?**

You will need a variety of equipment to train and work with your young or green horse. As well, you will need a safe area to do the work in.

The kinds of equipment that you will need will depend entirely on what age of horse you are working with and what you are teaching the horse at the time. For example, you will not need a saddle, bridle or lungeing cavesson for a weanling. A weanling will only need to be halter broke, handled for vaccinations, worming, trimming feet and general on-the-ground training.

As the horse gets older, more equipment for training is necessary. A three year old may be ready to ride at some point during the year of training and handling. In this case you would need a saddle, blanket and possibly a bridle with a snaffle bit.

## Equipment

The following is a brief outline of the types of equipment that may be necessary to have on hand at one time or another when teaching a young or green horse throughout the 4-H year.

- well fitting halter, either nylon or leather
- long (8-10 feet) sturdy cotton shank
- small whip (25-36 feet)
- soft lariat rope or nylon web lunge line
- inner tube from a tire
- solid post or tying ring
- saddle - preferably with back cinch
- saddle pad
- lungeing cavesson
- lungeing surcingle
- lunge whip
- side reins
- plastic bags, gunny sack, sacking blanket

## Proper Fit

The equipment used should fit the horse correctly. Sometimes a horse will be reacting to poorly fitting equipment when you think it is misbehaving. Training and teaching will go much more smoothly if the halter or bridle is adjusted properly, or the saddle fits correctly.

## Personal Attire

Anyone handling young or green horses should be properly dressed. Many unexpected things can occur that may cause some injury to the handler.

You should wear the following things when working with young horses:

- gloves
- boots (possibly steel toed work boots for ground work)
- helmet (approved ASTM/SEI)

## What type of area should I have to train my young horse?

The area that you will need to work with a young or green horse must be *safe* and *secure*. Often times unexpected things will happen where the horse may get away from the handler. It is important that the area be secure enough that the horse will not escape and hurt itself.

## Types of Areas

**Arena** - indoor or outdoor

**Round Pen** - wooden or steel panel

**Corral** - preferably planks

**Stall**- large

**Pasture** - safely fenced and familiar to horse

### **There are a number of things to keep in mind no matter what area you are working in.**

1. The exterior should be 'solid' looking. It is best not to work young or green horses in an area enclosed by wire, unless there is no other choice. If a horse panics, sometimes it will bolt and run through fences that do not appear to be strong and solid. A wooden fenced area is safest. A corral or round pen is preferable for some of the first lessons.
2. There should be no small corners that the horse could find themselves 'trapped' in during lessons. An open square or round area is best.
3. All gates should be secured before beginning work.
4. Distractions are important when the goal of the lesson is to teach the horse to 'focus' on the work at hand. Distractions at other times are not recommended. Other horses directly beside the working area or scary objects next to the area will only create problems that are not necessary. Try to use a quiet learning environment by working in an area without unusual distractions.
5. If you are working in a stall or smaller corral with a young or green horse, be sure that there is a quick escape route for yourself in case the horse becomes dangerous. Never lock yourself into an area that you cannot get out of easily.
6. If you are using steel panels to create a working area, be sure they are well secured so that they cannot be pushed over by a horse that accidentally hits them during the work.

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# PLANNING YOUR TRAINING SESSIONS

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## Goal Setting

The goals of your training program should be logical, considering your experience as the handler and the age and experience of the project horse. You will set both *long term* goals and *short term* goals.

## Long Term Goals

You would establish what you want the horse to be able to do at the end of the 4-H year.

There will be more than one long term goal that should be listed. It will take many sessions to achieve the long term goals.

**Example:** At the end of the 4-H year, my 3 year old quarter horse filly will learn to:

1. lead properly
2. be handled for vaccinations, worming and trimming feet
3. tie easily
4. load and unload from a trailer
5. lunge at walk, jog and lope in both directions
6. be saddled and bridled
7. ground drive in both directions
8. be mounted and unmounted
9. be ridden at a walk in both directions of the arena

## Short Term Goals

A short term goal would be one that would be set for each individual working session.

These goals are very specific and must be simple enough that the horse would be able to learn them after one session of work.

**Example:** The goal for my 3 year old filly today will be to learn how to move away from the pressure of my hand on her sides.

## GUIDE TO **SUCCESSFUL PLANNING:**

<b>Rule</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Comments</b>
The goals of a training program should be clear and simple.	I will teach my horse to move away from the pressure of my hand on its side while I work with it on the ground.	The horse should be comfortable being touched, handled and is preferably halter broke. Need an enclosed area, halter and shank.
The method to reach the goal should be understood by the handler.	Place hand on horse's body and apply pressure until the horse moves away from the pressure. Immediately release the pressure when the horse attempts the correct movement. Repeat this until the horse understands and quit when you are successful.	The handler will have a difficult time teaching a concept if the handler is confused about how to teach it successfully to the horse.
Horses learn best when being taught one thing at a time.	Do not teach a horse how to move away from pressure and how to back up in the same session.	The more simple and clear the lesson the more likely the horse will earn it well. Too much in one lesson will make for a confused horse. Try to make everything as "black and white" as possible.
Begin a session with something that reviews what the horse already does well and then begin teaching the horse the new behavior or skill.	When teaching a horse to move away from pressure, the previous lesson may have been "leading". Begin this lesson with a short review of leading the horse around in both directions. Then begin teaching the new concept to the horse.	Horses like to do things correctly. Give them a positive moment by asking them to do something they already know. It is a great way to begin a learning session with a green horse.
Quit when you are ahead.	The horse has moved easily away from the gentle pressure of your hand. It does this easily in both directions. Quit!	Don't ask for too much in the beginning. Over 2 or 3 lessons you can increase the demand. A horse will be more likely to learn the skill well if it is not asked for too much at a time. Learn to be patient.

## **Adjustments to the goals**

Sometimes the goals of a single lesson or the long term goals must be changed because of unforeseen circumstances.

For example, a horse learns very quickly and is easy to teach. You might end up also riding the horse at a jog and a lope by the end of the 4-H year, even though your goal was to only walk the horse.

A lesson where you want to teach the horse to move away from pressure might have to be changed to 'sacking out', when you discover the horse is very scared of things touching it's sides.

*Don't be afraid to change the plans if the horse requires it!*

*Be sensitive to the horse's needs!!*

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## HOW DO HORSES LEARN?

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Understanding how a horse learns best will guide you in your actions while you teach the horse in a positive manner. It would be useless, for example, to carry on a conversation with someone that doesn't understand the English language.

We should try to 'talk' to our horses in a way that they understand.

Forcing horses to do what we want might work temporarily, depending on the temperament of the horse, but to have a willing partner will make for a longer lasting and more successful training process.

### **Horses are creatures of instinct.**

They are what we call 'flight' animals. In the herd, if something scares them, they instantly run! If they can't run and are cornered, then they fight! If this is their instinctual behavior when they are scared or worried, then it is important to understand and work with horses in a manner that promotes a level of trust between you and the horse so they don't run or kick when being worked around.

### **Horses are herd animals.**

Horses feel safest when in the company of other horses. Horses in a herd establish a 'pecking order'. This means that one will be the 'boss' while each one below is dominant over another. This is apparent if you have ever watched a group of horses that are fed grain in a pasture. Each of them tries to get to the piles of grain, with ears laid back, heads lowered, tails swishing, legs raised in warning of a kick, bodies being pushed around, until they all eventually find their own pile of grain. Some horses in the group move willingly away as others come toward them. Other horses might put up a bit of a fight before they move away from the grain pile. Each time a horse is 'pushed' around it shows the pecking order of the group. The 'boss' of the herd is able to push any of the horses.

If you have watched a group of horses that doesn't seem to fight as they find their own grain piles, this will demonstrate that there is an understood pecking order that does not have to be 'discussed' among them. Each knows his position and willingly moves about until the herd is settled.

As a handler of your horse, it is important that you establish yourself as the 'boss' of the 'herd'. This will make all of your training that much easier.

### **Horses learn from consistent handling.**

Horses are animals of routine. You will notice that horses that are fed at the same time each day, will be found 'waiting' for their meal at those times. Horses that are handled in a routine manner will learn quickly. Horses appreciate routine and consistency. As well, if you are consistent in allowing bad behavior, a horse will also learn to behave poorly, not

necessarily because they want to, but because you have allowed or taught them that it is okay. If you are teaching your horse something new, it is important not to expect perfection on the first day. It is through repetition that the horse will soon learn what is expected of him and look forward to doing the correct thing. Nothing is more frustrating to a horse than inconsistent aids. If, for example, you don't want your horse to bolt when you turn to ride towards home, then you must always walk home.

## **Training Good Horse Behavior**

If you understand how a horse 'thinks' and 'learns' best, then it will make it much easier for you to work with your horse. There are four areas that are important to your training program.

## **Guidelines For General Horsemanship**

Your horse must learn to:

- respect you
- trust you
- focus on you
- be willing to work with you

## **Developing respect**

Respect from your horse means that your horse doesn't push into your space when you are working around it and is obedient to your commands.

A horse that respects you will pay attention to your position at all times and is careful not to move into you.

Have you ever walked with your horse, and, when they see something that frightens them, they bump into you as they move away from what scares them?

This is typical behavior for a horse that does not believe that their handler is the 'boss' and someone to be respected.

A horse in the pasture would never accidentally 'bump' into the herd boss! They should be more worried about you than they are about things around them. In fact they should see you as someone that they can rely on in times of apparent danger.

A horse that has developed respect for their handler, does not step on them, bump or push into them.

In order to be successful, you must develop respect from your horse throughout the training program.

Respect for your horse means that you are aware of how a horse 'thinks' and learns.

This allows you to teach your horse in a manner that it can understand.

You shouldn't expect your horse to think like a 'human' and 'know better'.

For example, if every time you mount your horse, you allow it move off right away, don't expect it to stand still on a certain day just because you now want it to.

A horse generally wants to do the right thing and if you find your horse is not doing as you have asked it, then respect for your animal should result in you looking at yourself first. Did you teach the horse how to do what you are now expecting? Did you ask the horse in a clear manner that could not be misinterpreted?

If you are consistent in your teaching and handling of your horse, the respect that each of you develops for the other will pay off!

### **How do I develop respect from my horse?**

Respect from your horse is only developed if you consistently demand it. You must first clearly understand what types of actions and behaviors from your horse show disrespect, so that you can be clear and consistent in teaching your horse that you are someone to be respected.

You are the boss, the leader of the 'herd', and with consistent handling your horse will quickly understand this.

### **Where to begin?**

Handling your horse on the ground is the first place to develop such respect.

If your horse doesn't move away from your hand pressure on its side when you work with him on the ground, how can you expect him to step away from your leg when you are riding him?

Don't expect your horse to do something you haven't taught him. Be consistent.

Treat your horse in a manner that he understands. Remember to 'speak' his language.

### **Guidelines to establish respect**

The following is a list of possible goals or ways of assessing the level of respect that your horse currently has for you.

Each of these desired behaviors should be taught first, then consistently demanded by the handler while working around your horse.

This does not mean that we will not make mistakes and miss correcting some of these misbehaviors, but the majority of our horse's actions around us should show respect.

**Your horse:**

- stands quietly while being haltered, bridled or saddled.
- faces you as you approach it in a pasture or stall.
- walks beside you (not on top of you!) as you lead it.
- keeps its head in its own space when you work around it.
- does not step on your toes.(Believe it or not, horses are very aware of where each of their feet are!)
- is respectful of the lead rope or lunge line when working.
- waits for you to direct it before doing its 'own thing'.

**Developing Respect - Training suggestions:**

1. Understand what is acceptable and not acceptable from your horse. Use the previous guidelines as examples.
2. Prepare yourself mentally so that your response to your horse's bad behavior comes easily and quickly, without having to 'think' about it for too long. Horse's need to be told 'immediately' after good or bad behavior that it is either correct or wrong. You cannot come back after five minutes and punish your horse for something he did wrong. He will not make the connection.
3. Carry a small whip or have the end of the lead shank available to 'bite' the horse's body part that is pushing into you. The 'bite' will simply be a quick and sharp touch with the whip on the area of the horse that has moved into your space.

For example, if your horse walks into you with its shoulder as you are leading it, you should tap the horse's shoulder until it moves away.

Horses understand these 'bites' and quickly learn to respect you if you are clear and consistent. If your horse tends to move his head into your space, for example, then you simply hold your hand or whip up so as to 'block' the unwanted movement of his head. This way you haven't done anything to the horse, it simply has bumped into you.

*Make the right thing easy and the wrong thing difficult. Stand your ground!*

4. Do not pull on your horse's head when your horse misbehaves or moves into you. Horse's do not herd each other around by their heads, so make sure that you 'talk' to the horse in the language they understand - body language. Whatever part of the horse moves into you, (shoulder, for example), this is part of the horse that needs to be 'bitten' by the lead shank, hand, or whip. This does not mean that you 'beat' on your horse when you ask them to move their body out of your space.

Horse's are generally very sensitive (think of what a horse does when they feel a fly land on them). You must use only enough force so that the horse responds.

Even if they don't respond totally right the first time, but at least make an attempt to move away, for example, then you must lighten up on the pressure from the 'bite' so that you are always teaching, not forcing or scaring.

*Horses do not learn when they are fearful.*

*The key is to create a relaxed horse so they can 'think' about what is being taught.*

5. If you want your horse to respect you, don't put your horse into a 'bad' situation. Respect is earned by showing the horse that you are the 'smarter horse'. Don't make the horse to do something that it is not ready for. For example, if you know that your horse is scared of a tarp in your yard, unless you are prepared to teach him not to be worried about it, don't make him go near it. Horses need to gain confidence in themselves and their handlers through success in each situation they are presented with. Set your lessons up so that there is always a chance for success.
6. Be consistent in your handling. Don't demand that your horse keep his distance from you as you lead him into the barn one day and let him run you over the next. Horses learn respect with your consistent treatment of them and learn to 'resent' you if they have inconsistent 'rules'.

## **Developing Trust**

A rider that has developed a level of trust with their horse will be able to bring the horse to a new situation, teach them a new movement or take them to new places without the horse worrying and refusing.

Trust with horses is gained from always treating them fairly.

Don't expect them to know how to do something that you have never taught them to do, then punish them for doing it wrong.

Horses don't stand around deciding to be 'bad'. Their brains don't think in a logical fashion. If your horse is acting confused about you wanting it to 'move sideways' for example, chances are it is confused. You may need to re-teach what you expect your horse to do when you place pressure on its side.

Horse's that are constantly pulling at the bit, may not 'trust' the rider's hands, as they have been 'jabbed' in the mouth countless times while being ridden.

Developing trust in the rider will be a great reward as your horse will attempt new movements and be able to ride forward to scary things as you continue with training.

You need to let them know that you are always on duty, you are there to take care of them so that they can rely on you as the 'boss'.

## **Developing the ability to focus on the work**

Focus from the horse is important when handling or riding a horse.

When a horse focuses on you, it is aware of your position and waits for instruction.

You can't teach a horse something if they are focusing on the other horses in the field beside them.

They need to stay attentive to you as you handle them on the ground or ride them.

### **How do you teach a horse to focus on you?**

First of all, you should stay focused on your horse, so that you are aware of when its attention is 'leaving' the work at hand. Only then can you react properly to its inattentiveness.

As you feel the horse's attention drift away while working it, (keep your eyes on your horse's ear position) you can nudge or give them a cue to do something to gain back their attention. Make them jog more quickly, turn, stop or change direction. Once you have their focus back then resume riding or handling the horse.

Horses focus on the 'boss' of the herd, and if you make the horse move forward, then they focus on you as the boss. You demand attention by asking a horse to move. However, if a horse is moving too much and is fidgeting, then don't stop it, make it move around you. As the horse begins to tire, it will be happy to pay attention to what you want when you ask it to stand still.

### **Do you expect the same focus from all horses?**

Don't expect a young horse to be able to stay focused in the lesson for a long period of time.

If you demand this focus, the horse may become balky, resentful or bored and then begin spooking at things that it normally isn't scared of.

Use good judgment when training.

### **How do you develop a willingness to work?**

A horse that is willing to do what you wish, will make your job as a handler or rider much easier. There isn't a fight to get the horse to go through a gate or over a stream. The horse will look forward to the rides.

After all, you really can't force an 1100 lb horse to do something against its will. Everything in our training must develop a willing attitude.

If you keep the work interesting by changing directions, doing transitions or by riding on the trail and changing patterns, the horse will find pleasure with the rides.

Horses that are rewarded for doing the right thing, are taught in a consistent manner, and are treated fairly are going to develop a willingness to work with you.

A willing horse is one that comes to you when you go to get him from the pasture.

A willing horse has an attitude that says 'What do we do next?'

A willing horse attempts new things with a fresh attitude.

*If your horse is willing to work with you then you will be more successful as a 'team'.*

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# WORKING WITH YOUNG HORSES

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## The Weanling

### What is a 'weanling'?

A weanling is a foal that has been weaned (taken away) from its mother and less than one year old. Normally foals are weaned between four and six months of age. Hopefully, your weanling has been weaned with other foals so that the process didn't put a great deal of stress on it. It is best to wait until the weanling has settled into the life of living without its' mother before beginning to work with it. A freshly weaned foal will not be capable of focusing on a handler as all they can think about is how to get back to their mother. It should be eating hay and grain and drinking water well on its own for a period of time before you make any attempt to begin working with it.

### Where did it come from?

Up until now most of a weanling's training has come directly from the 'herd'. The herd might have consisted of only its mother, but may also have included other foals, mares and horses that were being kept together. People may also have been a part of the foals upbringing if the mare had been handled on a regular basis.

This information might be important to you as a handler. A weanling that has been kept with other horses is more likely to have been taught good strong lessons of 'horse' etiquette. For example, young foals learn very quickly which horse in the pasture is the 'boss', and they become very aware of the signs of when to stay away and when it is okay to get close. Because of this first education, a young foal will already have developed a sense of its own space and that everyone else's is also important. Foals learn many lessons of how to behave from their mothers. For example, if the mother of a foal is difficult to catch and work with, the foal will learn that people are somewhat 'scary' and be more wary around them. Easy going mothers will make for a foal that is usually easy to handle.

## Tips for working with young horses

1. Keep the lessons short - the attention span of a weanling will not be very long. 10 minutes is lots. You might work with your weanling three or four times during the day with these shorter lessons.
2. Don't expect perfection immediately. Horses learn through repetition and consistent handling so expect the weanling to learn over a period of time.
3. Expect the young horse to 'fall back' in its learning once in a while. This is a normal process of learning for horses. They sometimes take one step back for every two steps ahead while learning new things. Don't get frustrated, maintain consistent handling and it will pay off.
4. Work in a safe area. A large stall or small corral is a good place to begin working. When you move out of those areas, be sure that you are still in an enclosed space - even if it

is a pasture. You do not want the horse to 'escape' from you and be free to run where it may injure itself.

5. Make sure that someone is always aware that you are out working with your horse. If they are not right there helping and watching to be sure that all is going well, they at least realize where you are in case something happens. (For example, if you get kicked and are hurt in a stall they will know where to come looking for you.)

## Handling the weanling that has never been touched

### First Touch

Begin handling a weanling simply by hanging around in a small area with it. (A stall or corral is good). Don't ever go in with a weanling that you know has habit of kicking without first reading the section on teaching a weanling not to kick.

Park yourself somewhere in the vicinity of the foal and watch what happens. Soon the weanling will be curious and come up to you. It will be attempting to establish where you belong in the 'pecking order'. Horses always think in terms of 'horses', so it will consider you 'one of the herd'.

As you begin to get close to the weanling and make attempts to touch it, keep the 'blind spot' of a horse in mind. It may not feel secure as you reach toward its head, but if you reach to its wither and begin scratching it (as horses do to each other when they are 'grooming'), then it may begin to relax and accept you touching it. In the beginning, you simply want the weanling to accept you touching it by making it feel comfortable with what you are doing. Weanlings usually like to be scratched and rubbed so begin establishing the relationship in this manner. Soon you will be able to touch it everywhere. Head, neck, body and legs. Be aware of what the weanling is 'thinking' as you move around it and touch it. Watch the eyes, ears and movement of the hind end. A foal learns quickly in the herd to 'kick' out if it feel threatened, so this is an action that may occur.

Establish a level of respect right from the start. Do not let the weanling bite or push you around. A quick tap with your hand should be enough to get it to understand that you are the 'boss' and you have a 'space' around you that should be respected. Try not to back out of the way if the weanling is attempting to move into your space - this will be a sign of 'weakness' for you and it will difficult to establish the 'boss' relationship you will need to have with your weanling. Stand your ground while maintaining a safe position with the weanling and soon it will understand that you are to be respected.

### Kicking and Biting

Foals have a natural tendency to nip and nibble at all sorts of things. This sometimes will include people. It is important to teach your weanling that biting is *not* acceptable. This is one of the only times that you can slap a horse in the mouth and have it make sense to the horse. If you are working around your weanling (actually this is true for a horse of any age) and it bites or attempts to bite, you must immediately slap its mouth with your hand. The

horse will understand after a few times (sometimes less, depending on the personality of the horse and how much it has been let away with the nipping behavior) that biting is not a good thing to do. It does not create a head shy horse because your actions are:

1. immediate and
2. non threatening and
3. done as a response to the horse's bad behaviour. It will make sense to the horse.

Foals and young horses will naturally have an instinct to kick if they feel threatened or surprised unexpectedly. Be aware of this and don't stand in a position where the horse or foal may kick you. If a foal or horse kicks as a bad habit, you should get help from an experienced horse person rather than attempting to solve the problem on your own. *Safety* is number one!

## **Cradling the foal**

Depending on the size of the weanling, (or how big you are) you may be able to wrap your arms around its front and back end while standing beside it. This is often termed 'cradling' the foal. With this position you can begin controlling the movement of the weanling and teach it how to move away from pressure.

### **Position of handler**

1. Stand facing the foal, lined up with its barrel.
2. Bend forward slightly, wrapping your one arm under the neck and around the front of the chest. Wrap the other arm around the buttocks, just above the hock area on the hind end of the foal.
3. Do not bend so that your head is in alignment with the foals head if it rears up.
4. Do not apply heavy pressure to both the front and back of the foal at the same time - it will cause a 'panic' reaction in some foals if they feel they are cornered and can not escape.
5. You can begin by simply placing your arms lightly around the foal and move with it as it moves around the stall or corral. Talk gently to it and encourage it to accept your touch and 'cradle'.

## Instinct of foals

Foals when born, naturally from instinct, move towards pressure. For the first three to five days, a foal's eyesight is very poor. They can make out large shadows, but not details of things around them. In case of danger, the foal must be able to get to their feet quickly, align their bodies up with their mother's, and instinctually move into that pressure. This will ensure that they do not 'lose' their mother as she moves around.

As a handler of a foal you must teach them to develop a 'new' reaction to pressure.

### First lesson in pressure!

We need to teach horses to move *away* from pressure! This can be easily established in the '*cradle*' position.

Apply pressure to the front end of the weanling and the instant it begins to step backwards away from the pressure, *release* the pressure on the front end by taking your arm away slightly from the chest area.

Do the same to the hind end. Place pressure on the hind end with your arm wrapped around the buttocks and the moment the attempt is made by the weanling to step forward, *release* the pressure.

Soon the foal will learn to step forward and back, away from the pressure.

*This is the beginning of the most important lesson a horse can learn!*

Now you can teach it to move sideways from the pressure of your hand by placing your hand on its side or on its hip and applying pressure for it to step sideways.

As it attempts to step sideways away from this pressure - immediately release the pressure (take your hand away).

Soon, you should be able to move the weanling sideways from the pressure of your hand in both directions.

These first lessons in a foal's life with people are important to establishing its attitude and willingness to be around people. Make it positive!

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# HALTERING, LEADING AND TYING

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## Haltering

### Safety

1. *Never* leave a halter on a horse that will be left alone.
2. Leather halters are safer than nylon halters in that they are more likely to break if the horse is accidentally hung up on something by the halter.
3. Halters should fit tight enough that they cannot stick a foot through it and loose enough that breathing and eating is not impaired.
4. Remove all things from the area the horse is in when leaving a halter on the horse for a period of time if you must do so.

### Putting a halter on

Weanlings should be introduced to the halter early in their life. Most people place halters on young foals as early as three days old. If this has already happened to your weanling then it will make the first haltering very easy. If your weanling has never had a halter on, you will want to get it used to having a rope on its body and head before you place the halter on it.

### Preparation for the first haltering

1. Use a light rope (a cotton shank for example) and touch the foal with the rope over its entire body. Do not scare it, but simply get it to accept having something placed on its body, especially the head area.
2. Wrap the rope around different parts of the head getting the foal used to the pressure around the muzzle, jaw area and behind the ears. *Never* tie the rope anywhere on the weanling. This first introduction to the rope should be done so that the foal accepts and relaxes when touched with the rope.
3. If the weanling moves around as you are placing the rope on its body, just quietly move with it and continue touching it with the rope. If you have been successful in your 'cradling' you should have no problem with this.
4. If your weanling was too large to cradle, you will have to teach it to move away from the pressure of your hands after the halter has been placed on it. But remember, at this point the weanling does not know what the halter means to it, so this will be the first lesson.

### Placing the halter on the weanling

1. With the halter in your hand, opened so that it can easily be placed over the nose, stand beside the weanling's near (left) shoulder, and stand facing towards the front.
2. Place the halter in your left hand, reach your right hand around the neck and take the other side of the halter with that hand so that the muzzle opening is held open with both hands.

3. Slide the halter over the muzzle of the foal, moving 'with' the foal quietly if the foal backs up or moves ahead as the halter is coming over its muzzle. Your calm attitude will help calm a worried foal - talk to it in a soothing voice.
4. Place the halter piece behind the poll of the weanling and latch it closed.
5. Once the halter is secured, step back and allow the weanling some time to get used to it. It may shake its head, hold it high or low and try to get it off. Some foals don't have a problem with the constriction of a halter and accept easily.

### **Halter breaking**

When teaching a horse to lead for the first time, it is preferable that you do so in a small area such as a large stall or small corral.

Use a strong halter and lead shank. If the weanling breaks loose from you, it will try to do it again when you try to lead it. Training will take you longer than if you had started with the proper equipment.

The following methods can be used on weanlings as well as more mature horses.

### **Moving towards you by putting pressure on the halter and body**

1. Once the weanling/horse has accepted the halter on its head, you can begin teaching it to 'give' to the pressure of the halter.
2. Stand beside the weanling/horse head, facing it with one hand on the shank but close to the halter. Your other hand is available to touch its body if you need to.
3. Begin by putting pressure on the halter with one hand for the weanling to step towards you, using your other hand to push the hindquarter away. Every time it makes the attempt to step in towards you, release the pressure on the halter immediately (but still maintain a hold on the shank).
4. Using this method, the weanling eventually will step sideways, towards and away from you by using the pressure and release method.
5. Be sure to work from both sides of the weanling. You do not want to get it one-sided. After all horses see two different things from each of their eyes so they must experience life from both sides.

### **Leading the horse forward**

Once the weanling has become used to wearing the halter for a period of time, and is giving to the pressure on the halter, you should teach it to *lead* with forward steps.

There are a number of methods that may be used to do this. You choose the method that makes sense to you and is successful. If one way does not work well, try another.

### Method 1: The Butt Rope

1. After the halter is on the horse, snap a long cotton shank to the halter.
2. Using a long rope or lariat, make a loop. Lay this loop over the hips, around the hindquarter and under the tail.
3. Pull the loose end of the butt-rope forward and through the halter.
4. Stand in leading position (between the head and the shoulder), cluck with your tongue, and gently pull on the lead shank, followed by a firm pull on the butt-rope.
5. To escape the pressure, the weanling should move forward. The most important part of this training is that all pressure is *released* immediately as soon as the weanling makes the attempt to step.
6. Do not expect perfection in the beginning. Your goal is to move the weanling around by the pressure and release of the halter and butt-rope. Soon it will understand that the release of pressure comes from a step forward.
7. The butt-rope is only a temporary means of teaching the correct response to the forward pressure on the halter. As soon as the weanling understands how to move forward from your voice, your body position and the pressure on the halter you can quit using a butt-rope.

### Method 2: The Whip

1. Place a halter and shank on the weanling.
2. Stand facing the near side of the weanling lined up with its hip, facing slightly forward. (In a lungeing position.)
3. With the left hand on the lead shank and the right hand with the whip, (25-36 inches long) use your voice to cluck to it, then tap its hindquarter with the whip until it steps forward.
4. The moment it attempts to step forward, remove all pressures - voice, halter and whip by discontinuing the aids.
5. At first it might kick out at the whip, stand its ground or back up when you apply the taps of the whip - but position your body safely and continue tapping (sometimes it might need to be quite strong) and eventually it will move forward and you will release the pressure. If the weanling bolts forward when you tap it on the hindquarter, allow it to go forward, trying not to pull hard on the halter - your goal was to go forward so you do not want to punish it just because it was a bit too energetic. You will eventually use pressure on the halter to control how quickly forward it will go.
6. When you have used this method of halter breaking, the horse will understand how to move forward from pressure from the hindquarters rather than being pulled around by the halter. This is a more natural way for a horse to learn to lead in that they tend to push each other around in the pasture by pressuring the hindquarters, not by putting pressure on the head.

7. Once it begins to move forward you can simply put it on a very small circle and practice stopping, then moving forward.
8. Repeat this method for the other side.
9. Once the horse has learned to step forward just by listening to the clucking of your voice, you don't need to apply the whip any more, just stand in leading position and cluck as you step forward. The weanling should step forward with you.
10. You can carry a longer whip with you in case you need to reach behind as you are leading to encourage the weanling to continue forward. Just seeing the whip approach the hindquarter should be enough for the weanling to step ahead.

## **Tying for the first time**

### **Safety guidelines**

1. No horse should be tied until it knows how to respond correctly to the pressure on the halter.
2. Always tie a horse to a strong, solid object. Do not tie to the planks on a fence as they may come loose if the horse struggles.
3. Use a strong halter and lead shank. You do not want either to break if the horse struggles and pulls back.
4. Tie with a quick release knot.
5. Tie the rope short enough that it will not get its feet over it and long enough that it has some room to move.
6. Tie the rope at wither level of the horse. Tying higher is preferable to tying lower.
7. Tying a weanling in a stall or small area that they are familiar with would be safer than out in the open where they may be worried about more than just being tied up.
8. Weanlings are often more reactive than older horses. Care should be taken when tying them for the first time. Test their reaction to being tied first by putting a single wrap around a post and hold the shank yourself while the weanling figures out it cannot go anywhere. This may save it from serious injury to its neck if it begins to panic and pulls back frantically.

You must always teach the horse the correct response to pressure before expecting it to naturally move away from it or give to it.

If you have done this, tying a horse for the first time should not be a problem.

They will try to walk away, feel the pressure and give to it by walking back towards it.

Do not try to 'spook' the horse or tie it to a place where it might be worried.

Have a safe and quiet place to teach the horse to tie.

Do not leave the horse tied for too long in the beginning. Depending on the attention span (and age) of the horse you could start with 10 minutes and increase it to half an hour or more.

The experience should be pleasant and you may begin brushing the horse while they are tied.

### **Using an inner tube**

Horses that are tied 'hard and fast' and have not been taught to move forward to the pressure on the halter, will often go into a frenzied panic when they feel there is no 'give' on the shank.

This why an inner tube is often used for teaching horses to tie for the first time.

The inner tube has enough give in it that the horse should not panic when it feels the pressure because it is a 'giving' pressure.

The horse is less likely to strain its neck if it does pull against the pressure as well.

### **Method**

1. Place the inner tube around the post or object that you are using to tie to.
2. Tie the shank through the loop of the inner tube.
3. If the horse pulls against the tube, there is a bit of 'give' so the horse should not 'panic'.

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## PICKING UP THE FEET

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### **How old should a horse be?**

All horses should be taught how to pick all four feet up.

It is important for proper care of the feet that they be comfortable having them cleaned, trimmed and possibly shod in the future.

Even young foals should be exposed to having their feet picked up, however, be careful if they struggle. Move with them and don't force the leg into position if they are trying to get away. You could cause some damage to the joints because you are able to 'out-muscle' the foal.

Remember, you want the horse to be relaxed and quiet about being handled and having the feet picked up, so be patient and act accordingly.

Sometimes picking the foot up can cause fear in a horse as it has lost its ability to run if in danger. Knowing this can help you have more patience and understanding as you teach the horse to accept having one foot taken off the ground. Young horses sometimes panic so be ready to move quickly and carefully.

Begin teaching this in an enclosed area that will not allow the horse to bolt freely away if they try to. However, be sure that you always have the ability to step well out of the way if a horse has a wreck. For example, sometimes horses will panic if they are tied and you pick up a foot - you will need room to step back until they are calm again. For this reason, it is sometimes recommended to simply hold onto the horse for the first lesson, rather than tying them up.

*Use your common sense and know your horse well enough to decide which is best.*

### **What if they try to kick?**

If you do hold onto them, hold their head high if they are attempting to kick with the back feet. When a horse has their head held high, they cannot easily kick out.

The method used to teach a horse to pick up its feet for the first time would be the same whether you are handling a weanling or an older horse.

### **First Lessons in picking up the feet**

#### **Touching the legs**

The goal of the first lesson is to have the horse comfortable with you touching the legs. With a halter and shank on your horse, stand facing the horse's hindquarter while holding onto the shank in the hand nearest to the horse. If your horse ties well, you may do this while it is tied. Simply run your other hand down the length of each leg, talking to it in a

calm voice. This will get the horse used to being touched on its legs.

### **Is there a specific order?**

If you always pick the feet up in a certain order, a horse will become accustomed to the routine and will practically lift their own feet for you as you go around the horse, giving it the cues to pick its feet up. Often a farrier will trim in a particular order. Near front, near hind, off hind and off front. Sometimes they will work on the front feet then the back feet. You decide which order you want to teach and then follow the routine each time you work with the feet.

### **Steps to pick up the foot**

1. Position yourself near the leg to be picked up. Face the hindquarter of the horse. Run your hand down the length of the leg starting at the top of the forearm/gaskin. When you reach the fetlock area, pinch just above the fetlock at the base of the back of the cannon bone. As you pinch, lean your shoulder into the horse's upper leg and body to take the weight off that leg. You might say 'foot' or cluck to your horse as an added cue that you want them to pick the foot up.
2. As the horse makes the attempt to lift the foot, use the other hand to help move it into a bent position.
3. Allow the horse to move the front leg slightly forward as it picks it up, as it is almost impossible to bend the knee without allowing for that forward motion.
4. Hold the foot quietly for just a few seconds at first, then gently set the foot down.
5. Move on to the next foot and continue with this until you have picked up each foot and held it for a few seconds.
6. Go around the horse again, picking up the feet. Hold them for a longer period of time. You may even use a hoof pick to begin picking out the foot.
7. As you feel the horse start to fidget or pull away, hold on for just a moment more, then put it down. Soon the horse will learn that there is nothing to holding the foot up for as long as you need it. They learn to balance themselves on the other three legs.

### **Position of the leg**

Hold the leg in a comfortable position for the horse. Not too far away from the body. The forearm of the front leg should be perpendicular to the ground. The hind leg should be held well behind the horse, not tucked up under the belly when picking it up.

### **Setting the foot down**

Do not 'drop' the foot when you are ready to let the foot down. This might actually cause some pain and not be a very positive learning experience for your horse. Gently place the foot on the ground. A horse will often try to snatch the foot away as you place it. Try to hold on as you allow it to step down to the ground. Be sure your fingers are out of the way.

## Problems with picking up the feet

If a horse moves and tries to take its foot away while you are holding it, consider the following:

1. You may be asking it to hold it up for too long. Smaller periods of time may make the horse more successful in the end.
2. Most horses don't try to step down while you hold the knee or hock firmly in a bent position. However, they may move the leg forward or backward in an attempt to get it away. Simply cup your hands around the hoof and move with the horse, putting pressure on the leg to move it back into the desired position. As soon as the leg is where it should be, then release the pressure and simply hold it in position.
3. Words of praise often encourage a horse to stay relaxed and help them to realize when they are correct.
4. If a horse is leaning on you as you hold the foot (you realize that you are holding a lot of its front or back end weight), then take just the toe of the foot and hold it so that the weight of the horse is actually causing the joints of the leg to hold this weight. This should cause enough discomfort to the horse that it regains its own balance on the other three legs that are on the ground.

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## GROUND MANNERS

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When working around the young green horse you have the opportunity to establish the kind of 'ground manners' you want the horse to have.

Ground manners include the way the horse behaves while you are handling it on the ground and not in the saddle riding.

The following are ground manners that should be taught to all horses.

### **The horse respects the handler's space by not stepping into the handler**

- Always be prepared to tap (with your hand, lead shank or whip) the horse's body part that is coming into your space so that it moves away from it.
- Horses should not walk on top of the handler. For example, if you are leading a horse and it is crowding you as you walk, you should use your hand, whip or elbow to make the horse move away from your space.
- Do not use large movements and yell at the horse, just quietly but sharply make the horse respond by stepping away.
- Once the horse is in the proper position, resume a pressure free position yourself.

### **The horse stands quietly while being worked with**

- Teach horses patience in standing quietly.
- Start by asking for only a small amount of time (especially for the young horse) and gradually increase the amount of time you ask your horse to stand.
- You might groom the horse while it is standing as this is something that most horses enjoy.
- If a horse has a lot of energy you cannot expect it to stand still for a long period of time.
- Exercise it first by leading it around or lungeing it, then begin the lesson to teach it to stand still.
- You may also begin teaching it to 'square' up as it is standing.
- Allow the hind feet to stop in a natural position and teach the horse to move one front foot at a time by applying pressure on the halter with a slight sideways pull.
- Once the horse begins shifting one foot at a time you can start to work at getting all the feet squarely placed under them.
- This is great preparation for a halter or showmanship class and is also important once you begin riding the horse.
- Horses that place their feet squarely under them are balanced and able to be mounted more easily.

## Building confidence and yielding to pressure

Young horses are often in need of confidence building. Even an older one that is nervous or appears scared of things all the time will likely need to be handled in a method that will allow it to feel more secure with its surroundings, its handler and itself.

Understanding 'where' its feet are, help a nervous horse gain confidence.

Knowing how to react to the pressures applied to it, give the horse even more confidence.

All of this work can and should be done from the ground with all horses.

1. Using the halter and lead shank, and pressure from your hands, move your horse around. Front end around hind end, hind end around front and lots of backing up. Teaching a horse 'where' its legs are as they maneuver around will build confidence in it. Having a horse 'yield' to the pressure will gain respect and add to that confidence.
2. Teach your horse to move one step at a time. In the beginning you just want movement. Then you want a specific movement of the legs. The final goal is to have the horse respond to the lightest pressure possible, one step at a time.
3. Make sure that the legs are moving correctly. When moving it sideways, either front or back end, watch that it is crossing one leg over and in front of the other as it moves.

This is a sure sign of a horse that is 'supple' and 'yielding' to the pressure of the handler. Horses that step into the other leg as they move sideways or step behind that leg are actually not yielding, but bracing against the movement.

## Backing up on the ground

1. When teaching a horse to back up, stand facing the horse's shoulder from either side.
2. Put a light pressure on the halter for it to step back and say '*baack*'.
3. As soon as it makes the slightest attempt to step backwards, immediately release the pressure.
4. Once the horse understands how to 'yield' back to the slightest pressure then teach it to step back for more and more steps, each time releasing between each step.
5. Teach it to back up in a straight line first. Then you might have it move sideways as it backs up as you apply pressure on the halter and the body with your hands.

Continue these exercises (break it into small lessons) until your horse responds correctly with only a very 'light' feel on the halter.

When you do a good job of the ground work, the effort when in the saddle is made so much easier as the horse understands so much about 'yielding' to the pressures put on it.

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# LUNGEING THE YOUNG HORSE

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Lungeing is a common way to both train a young horse or to exercise a schooled horse. When training a young horse, lungeing allows the handler to introduce many new things to the horse without having to be on its back. You would start out with no equipment on except for the halter or lunge cavesson and progress to where the horse would be lunged with the saddle, bridle and possibly side reins.

## How old does a horse have to be?

Lungeing may be taught as early as six months of age, but most horses are not started until they are at least one or two years old. Unless a weanling is being conditioned for halter competition, lungeing is not necessary and may in fact produce some strain on the joints and tendons. Free exercise is better for exercising a young horse. A young horse can get hurt doing too much work, too soon, since excessive lungeing can be hard on the legs.

## The goal of lungeing

The goal of lungeing, should be to 'move the horse forward into the bridle or halter with upward and downward transitions in all three gaits, with the horse responding in a relaxed manner to the voice and body aids'. Lungeing improves a horse's balance in both directions and teaches contact with the bit or halter.

Lungeing can also be a safe way to exercise an injured horse that needs to move. Lungeing prepares the horse for being ridden for the first time and can help to introduce the horse to the lines used in ground driving.

Lungeing is used to teach a horse skills that will be needed for manners and balance. This training helps the horse respect the handler. Lungeing taught before ground driving and riding teaches the horse to perform specific skills. The horse learns to associate physical and verbal cues from the handler with their own movement.

## How much time do I spend lungeing?

Lungeing for training and manners may be done for 20 to 30 minutes per session. The length of time you work will depend on the amount of energy the horse has and the length of its attention span. Your best results will come from working two to five consecutive days. Working the horse irregularly will be of not much benefit.

## Equipment for lungeing

- A strong well fitted halter or lungeing cavesson
- Lunge line or rope (at least 6-8 meters in length) Nylon web lunge lines are lighter and easier to hold than a rope.
- Lunge whip (total length including lash should be at least 3 meters long)

- Splint boots, bell boots or leg wraps for the horse are sometimes used to protect the legs of the horse. When learning a new skill like lungeing often there is a lack of coordination that results in injuries to the legs.

## Where do I lunge?

When teaching a horse to lunge for the first time you should use an enclosed area where the size will help the horse to establish a proper lunge circle. You may also position poles or bales to give your horse some boundaries. Do not use objects where the lunge line could become caught if the horse went on the wrong side of the object. Do not lunge a horse in a very small circle as it could cause some strain on its legs and muscles. The circle should be at least 15 meters in diameter, and preferably 18 to 20 meters. A round pen is ideal for lungeing a horse. In fact you could begin by training the horse to move to the commands given without even using a lunge line if you had access to a good round pen.

The footing where you are working the horse is also important. Deep footing or footing that gets slippery when wet, can lead to stress related injuries like bowed tendons or sore muscles. It is easier for the horse to work if the ground is soft, but not deep. The horse can slip if the surface is hard and has little traction.

## Position of hands on the lunge line and whip

Allow the lunge line to come from the attachment at the horse's head through your hand in the same manner as you would position a rein if you were riding. The line should come up from the bottom of your hand and out through the top, with your thumb holding on top. The excess lunge line will be held in large folds in the other hand.

When lungeing a horse to the left, you should hold the lunge line that comes from the horse's head in your left hand, with the excess line that is not being used, held in your right hand with the lunge whip. As the horse moves out on the circle you will drop the loops from your right hand and allow the line to slip through the fingers on your left hand. If the horse comes in on the circle, you can then use both hands to loop the excess line onto your right hand.

If you are lungeing to the right, the right hand will control the lunge line as it goes out to the horse, with the excess line being held in your left hand.

This method of holding the lunge line in two hands allows for easier adjustment of length of line, as the horse moves in and out of the circle. It is especially important when teaching a horse to lunge for the first time. Most horses will not feel comfortable moving around you at a steady distance and will change the size of the circle all of the time. You need to get good at coiling the lunge line in and letting it go out so the horse does not become tangled or pulled around. You might practice by getting a friend to pretend they are the horse as you 'lunge' them.

## Position of body and whip

The position of your body and whip is very important to the success of a horse's first and future lunge lessons. Your body and shoulders should face the horse's hindquarters as if to drive the horse forward. The whip, held in the same hand as the extra loops of lunge line should point toward the heels of the horse, and be moved upward (but not touching the horse) if you need the horse to step more forward. As soon as the horse responds by stepping forward, you should release the pressure of the whip. Lower it to the ground again.

Be sure that you step forward not backward as you ask the horse to move around you. This is a common problem when teaching a horse to move out in a circle around you. *Step forward!*

If the horse wants to turn and face you as you ask it to move out and away from you, use your leading hand, (the one that holds the line closest to the horse) as a 'block' to prevent the horse from turning in. You should only need to raise it up towards the horse's head as you step toward the hindquarters and cluck to the horse or tell it to 'get up' as you raise the whip.

It is important that pressure from the whip, your body and hand are released momentarily when the horse makes an attempt to do the correct thing. This way the horse will want to be where the pressure is not, and will find it uncomfortable to be wrong.

If the horse trots out on the lunge when first learning, allow it to do this. Moving forward is much better than stopping. Once it relaxes then you can move your body and step more in line with the front end of the horse to get it to slow down as you use a gentle tone of voice and say 'easy'.

It takes patience and consistency to teach a horse to lunge, but horses are quick learners once they understand what is desired. Once the horse has walked around the circle on the lunge, you can attempt to halt it.

## Halting a horse on the lunge for the first time

When you teach the horse to halt on the lunge, first, take advantage of a time that the horse wants to stop anyway. If you can tell that the horse is ready to halt, you can simply lower the whip to the ground, step more in line with the head of the horse and say in a low soothing voice 'whoa'. If the horse halts, let it relax for a few moments, and if it turns and faces you, praise it with your voice as you walk slowly toward its nearest shoulder as you fold the excess line in your hand. The whip should be tucked under your armpit so that you have both hands free.

## Using a fence

You may also use a fence or some barrier to help you get the horse to halt by walking slowly toward that natural obstacle (fence) with the horse.

While you are asking the horse to halt, you will use gentle tugs and releases on the lunge line, while saying 'whoa' in a deep voice. You might also slowly fold the excess lunge line in as you walk closer and closer to the horse, all the time asking it to 'whoa'. Once halted you should praise the horse with your voice, walk up slowly, rub its wither, then let it settle for a while before either changing direction or asking it to move out again.

## **Changing direction**

When changing direction on the lunge for the first time, a horse will likely be quite confused. They may have seemingly mastered lungeing in the first direction, but now they have to relearn the method in the new direction.

Continue to 'teach' the horse as you did with the first direction. Be patient and reward any correct movement. Before changing direction, and with the horse halted out on the circle, change the position of your hands on the lunge line and whip. Snap the lunge line onto the opposite side of the cavesson or side of the halter that it is closest to you on the new direction of circle. Get everything organized first so that the loops drop off your hand easily. Nothing should get tangled as the horse attempts to move out. It takes practice to get efficient and smooth in the use of the lunge line and whip, and is important to successful lungeing lessons.

## **How much tension on the lunge line?**

The amount of tension on the lunge line is important. Once the horse understands where it should be positioned on the circle around you, you should teach the horse to accept a certain amount of contact either through the halter, or through the ring on the bit, once it is well schooled in lungeing. Be sure to 'hold', then 'release' to teach the horse the kind of contact that you want. Just pulling all the time will make for a heavy contact, and a loose line will not teach the horse what contact is. Be sure to push the horse forward into your hand contact by using your body and whip. Keep your hand soft and giving, but firm enough to keep the size of the circle correct to your liking.

## **What if the horse wants to leave the circle as you lunge?**

If necessary, use the weight of your whole body weight to firmly pull the horse back onto the track if it is attempting to leave the circle. Do not 'jerk' the horse's head. Once it comes in, release the tension on the line to let the horse know that this is where you want it. Sometimes placing poles on the ground on the open side of a circle (if your using one end of an enclosed area) will help the horse stay on the lunge 'track'. There is a correct timing to applying pressure on the horse's head to bring it in. Watch the movement of the horse's front legs. A horse will move its head to balance so that it is over the front foot that is on the ground. If a horse is leaving the circle and its head is trying to pull away you must apply the pressure when the outside front leg is on the ground. This causes a slight upset in the balance of the horse and it is discouraged from leaving the circle.

## **What if the horse wants to come in on the circle?**

If a horse wants to come in to you and make the circle smaller all the time, then you will use your body language and the whip to 'push' it out onto the circle. Step forward towards the barrel of your horse with your shoulders square to the horse's side as you say 'get out'. You may need to point with the whip at the girth area to encourage the horse to step away and out. Any time the horse makes the correct movement out of the circle, you should momentarily release the pressure of your body and whip to ensure it is rewarded for moving correctly. Resume the use of pressure and release until the horse is out on the circle where you want it. Sometimes moving a horse in a more forward gait will help it go out on the circle. You should avoid actually hitting the horse with the lunge whip as most horses will respond to simply lowering and raising the whip. If a horse is particularly lazy or unwilling to go forward you may use the lash of the whip on the heels of your horse. They will usually respond favorably to this by stepping more forward. Remember to release that pressure when the horse does respond. This will ensure continued success as you teach the horse to lunge correctly.

## **Should your horse face you when it halts?**

In the beginning, when a horse faces you it is a sign of respect and is desired. If you have used any round pen methods of training, this is important. However, as you begin lunging the horse, it should eventually be taught to halt facing the direction that it was traveling. This is necessary if you are going to 'ground drive' your horse. Remember however, that this change should be developed over time. Give a signal to the horse so it understands to stay facing straight rather than step in towards you. Use the fence as a guide and bring your hand up to the horse as it tries to step in. This will help guide the horse to the desired position at the halt. Be patient and realize that the halt asked for in the ground driving will also be aided with the use of the bit, so you can control the movement of the horse somewhat through rein pressure.

## **Voice commands and lunging**

You should teach walk, trot and canter on the lunge. For upward transitions use voice commands that increase in pitch a tone. Voice commands for the downward transitions decrease in tone and settle the horse in their movement. Speak loudly enough for the horse to hear you and firmly reinforce your voice with body and whip to teach the horse to eventually respond only to the the voice commands. Be sure each command is different from the other so that the horse does not get confused. For example 'walk' and 'whoa' are similar enough that it might be confusing to a horse. You might say 'easy' for walk and 'whoa' for halt. Remember however, that it is the tone of your voice that is really important during the upward and downward transitions. Some examples of voice commands that can be easily taught to horses when lunging.

## Voice Commands

### Upward transitions - increase the tone of the syllable (bold)

Walk from halt      Get - up!

Trot from walk      Ter - rot!

Canter from walk    Can - ter!

('lope' sounds to close to 'whoa' for a horse)

### Downward transitions - decrease the tone of the syllable (bold)

Trot from canter      ter - rot

walk from trot      eas - y

halt from any gait    whoa or 'ho'

## Progression of lungeing

### 1. Halter and lead rope or lunge line

Teach horse to move around you in a circle in both directions, maintaining contact with the halter at a walk.

### 2. Halter/cavesson/lunge line

Teach horse to move out on a larger circle at walk and trot in both directions maintaining light contact with horse. Teach horse to halt.

### 3. Halter/cavesson/lunge line

Teach horse to respond to voice commands for walk, trot and halt. Horse becomes steady and rhythmic in each gait. Begin teaching horse to stay balanced in the canter. Don't stay in canter for too long. Take your time to work up to doing 5 or so canter circles at one time. Horse does not try to leave the circle or come in.

### 4. Halter/cavesson/saddle/lunge line

Teach horse to accept movement of saddle as it moves at walk and trot around circle in both directions. Don't expect the horse to necessarily listen to you if it is preoccupied with figuring out what a saddle it. Just keep it under control and soothe it with your voice.

### 5. Halter/cavesson/saddle/lunge line

Teach horse to move to voice commands at walk / trot / canter maintaining a steady rhythm and focus on you as the handler. Start getting horse to listen to voice commands only - lessen the use of the whip. Canter work will be likely rushed and unbalanced in beginning. Do not overdo it - remember that a horse needs time to be conditioned and regain balance when there is a saddle on its back.

## 6. Saddle/bridle/lunge line

Horse has been 'bitted up' (become accustomed to the bridle and bit - is relaxed wearing it and knows how to give to the pressure on the bit).

### Attaching the lunge line to the bridle

The lunge line may be attached to the bit in various ways, depending on the sensitivity of the horse's mouth and the handlers hands.

1. Snapped directly to the bit
2. Through the bit ring on the inside, over the poll behind the ears and snapped onto the bit on the outside.
3. Snapped on the cinch ring on the inside through the snaffle ring on the bit on the inside and out to the hand.

When attaching the lunge line to the bit when lungeing, it is very important that the horse already understands how to give to the pressure on the bit. Otherwise you will surprise it and possibly damage the horse's mouth if you need to apply some pressure to control the size of the circle or the speed of the gait.

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# SACKING THE HORSE

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## **Sacking out**

The term 'sacking out' is used when you teach the horse to accept things being placed on its body.

Originally a 'sack' was used, but you can use a variety of items that will increase your horse's ability to handle anything and become more 'spook proof'.

A saddle blanket, feed sack, or jacket are common items used. A plastic bag tied to the end of a whip can also be used to sack a horse.

Because the bag makes a sound as it is being rubbed over the body, it is often more frightening for a horse.

However, after being sacked with a blanket, the whip and bag would be an important part of total sacking.

The goal of the process is have the horse accept having an item such as a sack or blanket touched over its entire body, including the face and legs.

Do not make your horse frightened with the method, simply teach it that it can handle a variety of sensations over its entire body.

It must develop trust in you as a handler and an acceptance of these things being used to sack it out.

## **Two methods of sacking out**

You will have a choice to make before you begin sacking your horse.

One method requires the horse to be held either by the handler, another person or to be tied while it is being sacked out. This method means the horse is not free to get away from the sack.

The other method allows the horse to move freely around an enclosed area while being introduced to the 'sacking out'.

*The method you choose may depend on the amount of experience you have as a handler and/or the type of area you have to use.*

## Method 1: Horse held securely

To sack a horse using this method you should still work in a large stall or small corral. The horse should be tied securely.

1. Allow the horse to smell the blanket. Do not shove it in the horse's face but gently move it so that it can smell it.
2. Start to rub the horse with the blanket in a way that it will not scare the horse but allow it to be comfortable with it. Start at the shoulder and move over the entire body as you talk to the horse. Work up the neck and over the head as well. Do this on both sides of the horse.
3. If the horse wants to move around, allow it to step. but quit sacking if it is getting frantic. Begin again by allowing the horse to smell the blanket.
4. Once the horse allows you to rub the blanket over its entire body, then you can begin 'flapping' it onto the body. This should be done in a gentle motion that does not scare the horse, but teaches it to accept the blanket. Gradually move further away from the horse as you swing the blanket onto its body.
5. By paying attention to the horse's body language while you are sacking, you can determine how it feels about the process. You can identify 'tickly' spots that need more sacking and the areas where the horse is really comfortable.

A well sacked horse will look as follows while being sacked:

- head position will be level
- the ears pricked forward or relaxed,
- eyes quiet
- body still

If the horse is high headed, with worried look in the eyes, ears laid back showing discomfort and fidgeting, you should continue sacking until it is relaxed. Depending on the attention span of the horse, sack the horse for a short period of time, take a break and begin again.

This process should be repeated for a period of time before attempting to saddle the horse for the first time to ensure the horse is ready.

## Method 2: Non resistance sacking

Horses will develop greater confidence if they can follow or move towards things that scare them.

Because a horse's natural instinct is to 'run' if something is frightening, this method gives the horse a level of trust in the handler.

During the sacking process it is never 'forced' to stand still.

Try this with unusual things like plastic patio chairs, plastic bags and any item you can easily carry around.

1. Let the horse loose in an enclosed pen. Round pens are best because they don't allow horses to 'hide' in the corners
2. Walk in with the item (blanket) that you want your horse to be sacked with.
3. Show the horse the item, then walk away, allowing the horse to see the item as you walk. As you walk away the horse will usually follow you in an attempt to get close and smell the item if they are nervous about it.
4. When the horse walks towards the item you are carrying, walk backwards letting the horse smell it as you move. Change direction, stop and move again, the whole time letting the horse smell the item.
5. As soon as the horse stands still and seems slightly bored with the item you can begin touching the horse with it over its entire body. Do this in the same order as mentioned previously in Method 1.
6. Any time the horse gets nervous and wants to move away, allow it to move as you walk away with the item. The horse will begin to stand for longer periods of time as it realizes that it will not be confined and forced to stand still. Because it is always free to move away, it will willingly chooses to stand while being sacked.
7. Repeat the process until the horse is comfortable standing still while you touch its whole body with the item.

This method of 'resistance free' sacking will encourage the horse to be 'brave' and remain focused on you as a handler while developing trust and respect. It may be more time consuming, but this method will reward you in the end, with a horse that develops respect, trust, focus and willingness to be with you.

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## GIRTHING THE HORSE

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Horses will often be quite sensitive in the girth area. Some even begin bucking when they feel the confinement around their girths during their first saddling. To prevent any wrecks and to properly prepare the horse for saddling you can use the following method of 'girthing' your horse.

1. Use a long soft cotton rope (lead shank).
2. Standing at the side of the horse, place the end of the rope over the horse's back right behind the wither, allowing the end to hang freely on the far side of the horse.
3. Reach under the horse to grab the loose end. Pull it around until it is half way up the horse's girth area on the near side. This allows you to stand straight while you go through the girthing process.
4. Pull gently on both ends, increasing the tension of the rope around the girth.
5. If the horse begins to tense, release the pressure and begin again. Once the horse accepts the pressure begin increasing the tension until it is as tight as it might be if you were doing a saddle up. Never tie the rope onto the horse - just use your hands to tighten and release the tension.
6. The horse should eventually accept the tightening of the rope around its girth area. Now you can move the rope along the horse's barrel and repeat the process until it is completely accepting of the tension all the way to the back cinch area of the barrel.
7. Work from both sides of the horse in this manner.

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## SADDLING THE HORSE FOR THE FIRST TIME

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Use the same method to introduce your horse to a saddle as you did when you were sacking the horse. If you used the non-resistance method, you would place a halter and shank on the horse so that you would have some control for safety.

1. Begin by letting the horse smell the saddle as you stand at the side near its head. Do this on both sides.
2. Walk around the horse carrying the saddle. It should feel comfortable allowing you to do this. If it does not, work at it until the horse will stand still and stay relaxed.
3. If the saddle is light enough for you to manage, you can even 'sack' the horse with it by touching a part of the saddle over its entire body (don't 'hit' the horse hard with it, simply touch the saddle to the horse's body). This will let you know whether the horse is ready for its first saddle.
4. Stand on the near side of the horse.
5. Place the off side stirrup over the saddle horn and the cinch over the seat of the saddle to keep it out of the way so it won't fall and hit the side of the horse as you place the saddle on its back.
6. Gently lift the saddle onto the horse's back. You may or may not have a blanket on. Sometimes for the first saddling, the blanket just gets in the way if your horse is tall or you are too short to lift the saddle well onto its back.
7. Once the saddle is placed onto the back, do not let go of it, but wiggle and move it a bit to get the horse used to the new feeling before you do it up. If the horse bolts, pull the saddle off as it moves away. If the horse simply steps away then move with the horse while holding the saddle in place until it stops again.
8. If you have someone holding the horse, be sure they are not standing in the way, they should always take up a safe position to the same side of the horse as you are working on.
9. Once the horse accepts the saddle on its back, move around the horse and let the cinch and stirrup down on the off side. Again, hold onto the saddle from this side, and wiggle and move it to ensure the horse is comfortable.
11. Move back to the near side. Put the near stirrup out of the way, over the horn, and reach under to get the cinch.
12. Place the latigo through the cinch and gently tighten the cinch. Be sure you have at least three wraps so that if the horse begins to lunge with the saddle, the cinch latigo would probably stay in place without having been done up completely. Do not over-tighten in the beginning, but make sure that it is tight enough that the saddle would remain on the horse if it jumped or moved quickly. You might take a minute or so to gradually tighten the cinch to where it is tight enough.
13. Once the saddle is tightened on (back cinch included, but not done up as tightly as the front), allow the horse to move around, preferably in a small familiar corral. You can

undo the lead shank and let it go on its own. Do not get in its way while it is getting used to the saddle - it may run, buck, or simply trot around. Most horses become uncomfortable once they start moving. It is important that you make the horse move around.

14. Once the horse is relaxed while moving with the saddle around the enclosed area you can catch it and remove the saddle reversing the steps to put it on.

Repeat the process of saddling the horse using the same cautions until the horse is very comfortable with saddling/unsaddling.

### **Some things you might try while the horse is saddled**

1. Sack the horse with the saddle on its back.
2. Lunge the horse at walk, trot and canter.
3. In a round pen, loop a rope on the horn and let it drag as the horse moves around the pen at walk, jog and lope.
4. Tie a plastic bag to a whip, sack the horse with the whip and bag first, then attach the whip to the saddle so the bag is in the air as the horse moves. (This is a great way to introduce the horse to the feeling of having a rider sitting on its back.)
5. Ground drive the horse as a method of introducing the horse to the aids for turning and stopping before actually being ridden.

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# GROUND DRIVING

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## What is it?

When you ground drive a horse you are positioned (at a safe distance) on the ground, behind a saddled horse while steering and controlling the horse with long reins attached to the sides of the halter or snaffle bit and run through the stirrups to your hands.

## Why do it?

Ground driving teaches the basic skills needed when you start riding the horse.

## When do you start?

This can be started as early as two years of age when the horse has been started in its training. The attention span of an older horse is longer and so training takes less time. The horse does not necessarily need to be bridled at this time, but it does need to be saddled.

## Where do you ground drive?

All of the work for ground driving is done in an enclosed area. This will ensure that the horse is under control and safe in the event that it gets away from the handler.

## What preparations are necessary before ground driving your horse?

1. Your horse must be able to carry a saddle in a relaxed manner. It should be comfortable being lunged with the saddle at a walk, jog and lope.
2. Your horse can be ground driven with a bridle (snaffle bit) or well fitted halter.
3. Tie the stirrups together under the horse's girth with a string (bale) or other suitable material. This is to prevent the stirrups from coming away from the horse as you turn. Be sure it is tied tight enough with no sagging for a foot to get caught in.
4. You must have two long ropes, either driving lines or lunge lines that can be attached to the sides of the halter or to the rings on the snaffle bit. These should be long enough to reach from the front of the horse to at least a full horse length or more behind the horse.
5. Your horse should be comfortable having the driving reins lay against its sides, hips and hind legs. Prepare the horse for this by looping each of the driving lines over the saddle horn and running them down each side and through the stirrup, letting them drag on either side behind the horse. Let the horse get used to the dragging the lines by doing this daily in an enclosed area until it accepts them.

## Steps to ground drive

### 1. Preparation

Saddle and bridle your horse (or with halter). Lunge the horse until it is working quietly. Let the horse move with the driving lines dragging behind for a while.

The lines are fastened to either side of the halter or to the rings of the snaffle bit if the horse is bridled. They are each run through the same side stirrup (which are tied together under the horse) and back behind the horse on either side of its hindquarter.

It is useful to have a helper at first to teach the horse to walk forward with you behind it. You will be holding onto the long lines as you would hold reins while you ride.

### 2. Walking forward

With a voice command asking for the horse to walk, and a slight movement of the long lines on the hips of the horse ask the horse to step forward into a walk.

As the horse walks, apply a soft contact with your hands, and keep at a distance that allows for a slight contact at all times.

This is probably the most difficult part of ground driving. Appropriate contact should be kept so that there are no big loops with loose contact or the contact is too tight.

### 3. Turning the horse

When teaching the horse in the beginning, simply ask it to walk and allow it to move where it wants.

As it begins turning, use your hands to direct the turn by applying pressure to the inside rein and giving on the outside rein to allow the head and neck to bend in the direction of the turn.

As soon as the horse moves in the direction of the turn, release the pressure and apply it again as you continue asking for more turn.

Use your voice to praise the horse as it makes attempts to do the right thing.

Don't expect the horse to be perfect in the beginning. It takes quite some time for a horse to learn to be controlled through the reins and voice commands.

### 4. Using a helper

It is important that the horse walks forward and doesn't stop and turn around to face you. This is why you keep the horse moving and why you might use a helper in the beginning.

The helper should only walk beside the horse and try to stay out of the way of the horse as it wanders about.

Soon the horse will begin responding to your pressure on the lines as you ask it turn at a particular point.

## 5. Halting

When you ask the horse to halt, use a voice command such as 'whoa', (it already is familiar with this because of lungeing) and apply a firm pressure to the bit with your hands on the reins.

If the horse does not halt after a short moment of this pressure, release the pressure and try again.

It is important that you do not use a steady pressure as a horse will often lean heavily into the bit if you don't release that pressure.

When the horse does halt, release the pressure immediately, praise it verbally and stand quietly for a few moments before asking the horse to move off into a good strong walk again.

As soon as the horse understands that you are controlling its direction and gait and is responsive to you the helper can gradually walk away, leaving just you and your horse in the enclosed area.

## 6. Backing up

You can also teach your horse to back up using ground driving.

This is quite a difficult movement for a horse, so start with a helper at the front, pressing the chest with their hands as you use the voice command, 'back', and firm pressure on both reins followed by a release as soon as the horse makes a step backwards.

Don't ask for too much at one time.

One or two steps done well is better than four or five done poorly.

If you are consistent and give immediate rewards (releasing the pressure) a horse will very quickly learn to back up.

## **Should I jog my horse while ground driving?**

Some people jog their horses while ground driving, but this is a difficult thing for the handler to do.

You must keep up with the horse while not pulling on the reins.

Sometimes the jogging motion of the handler will scare the horse and cause so much forward motion that the handler cannot keep up with the horse.

When you are ground driving, do not teach the horse a new skill unless the horse knows it from earlier lessons. You can teach a horse to move around obstacles for example, but work the horse in hand around the obstacles first.

Acceptance of the bit pressure in making the horse turn and stop are the basic goals of ground driving.

Once the horse moves easily around with you directing its motion then it is likely ready to be ridden.

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## BRIDLING THE YOUNG HORSE

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After the horse has been lunged and ground driven with the halter, you can start bridling the horse. When bridling a young horse, you need to be gentle. Rough or incorrect handling will make the horse hard to bridle. You must be careful of the ears, eyes and mouth as you bridle and unbridle.

### Equipment

To keep from damaging the horse's mouth and to enable you to use two hands while teaching the horse, use a large diameter loose ring, D-ring or eggbutt snaffle bit.

Some people prefer to use a hackamore for early training so that the mouth is not damaged before the horse learns to respond to seat, leg and rein pressure.

### Before Bridling

You can prepare the horse for the bridle by standing beside the horse's head facing forward on the near side.

1. Slide each of your fingers into the corners of the horse's mouth. It must be able to accept you doing this before you can expect the horse to take the bit and hold it in the mouth. They have no teeth at this part of the jaws so it is safe for you to move the fingers into the mouth and get the horse to open its mouth as if it is taking the bit in.
2. You can also take a lead shank and drape it behind the horse's ears, stand in front of the horse holding on to either end of the shank and position the shank on either side of the horse's face in the place that the bridle or bosal would lay.
3. Walk backwards and keep the horse's head between the sides of the shank as you move around an enclosed area. If a horse will not accept the pressure of the shank on either side of the head, then it is not ready to be bridled. Do this until the horse calmly follows you around keeping its head level and between the shank.

### Bridling the horse for the first time

1. Lengthen the headstall so that it is bigger, rather than too small to fit the horse's head. Remove the reins.
2. Stand beside the head, on the left side (near) facing forward.
3. Hold the headstall in your left hand.
4. Reach between the ears of the horse with your right hand and grasp the top of the headstall or the headstall may also be held over the bridge of the nose with your right hand by reaching under the jaw and around the head.
5. Support the bit with your left hand and press the bars of the mouth with the thumb and forefinger of the same hand (palm under the jaw) to open the mouth.
6. Balance the headstall so that the bit does not bang against the teeth as it goes into the

mouth.

7. As you pull the bridle on be careful around the eyes so that the headstall does not rub them.
8. Slip the headstall over the ears, bringing each ear forward one at a time. Pulling them back is not natural and can hurt, making the horse hard to bridle.
9. Adjust the headstall so the bit rests on the bars and is high enough that the horse can not get its tongue over the bit.
10. Leave the bit on for at least one hour per day for a few days. The horse may be turned loose in a stall and even fed with the bridle (no reins) during this time. This will give the horse time to get used to carrying the bit in its mouth.

### **Safety Tip**

*Do not leave the horse unattended. Be sure there is nothing the horse could hook the bit on if it were to begin rubbing.*

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# BITTING THE HORSE

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## Preparation

The horse moves around the lunge circle at a walk, trot and canter in both directions. It has had a bit in its mouth and is comfortable with the saddle on its back.

## Method

1. You can add 'bitting reins' or 'side reins' to your equipment if you want to begin strengthening the horse's muscles over its back and on the abdomen.
2. Either method will help to position the neck and head of the horse so they travel in a 'rounded' frame, moving into the bit, rather than with their head high in the air with no contact.
3. The reins also teach the horse to move 'into' the contact of the bit. These reins should be used very loosely in the beginning and only be adjusted more tightly if the horse needs it and can handle it.
4. A horse should never be made to bring the head in behind the vertical and so low that it has trouble moving freely forward.

## Method 1: Bitting reins

1. Use heavy split leather or long lines that are least 8 feet long. (Preferably without a snap that attaches them to the bit. Metal on metal can be very irritating to a horse as it is moving.)
2. With each rein attached to each of the snaffle rings, place the rein between the horse's front legs. The off side rein goes behind the off side elbow and the near side behind the near side elbow. Each rein is then brought up to the top of the seat of the saddle.
3. Adjust the length (loose in the beginning) and tie a square knot that will rest freely on top of the seat of the saddle.
4. As the horse moves in any gait with this method of attachment, they will naturally soften to the contact that is created by their own movement.
5. Done properly, this method will encourage a very soft light contact that you will enjoy once you are in the saddle.

## Method 2: Side reins

1. Side reins are often used to help 'position' a horse's head. They are used for the same purpose as the above method. However, a horse will sometimes get 'heavy' in the bridle and brace against the side reins.
2. Side reins are made of either leather or nylon webbing and have a rubber ring attached at a point nearest to the attachment to the bit. This ring allows a some 'give' when the pressure is applied.
3. Each of the side reins should be attached from ring on the bit to a position on the saddle so that the head and neck of the horse is brought to an near level position. Don't attach them too high to the saddle or they will not be effective.
4. Start with them adjusted quite loose, then gradually shorten the length of the side reins (evenly) so that the horse carries its head near the vertical (or slightly in front of the vertical). The horse should move into the contact of the bit as it gets used to the pressure applied from the side reins.

## Fitting and use of the hackamore

A hackamore is made up of a bosal, fiador, headstall and mecate or reins.

The most common bosal is made of braided rawhide or leather.

The thickness and stiffness will vary.

A soft and thick bosal is gentle while a stiff hard one will be more severe in its action.

The bosal should be placed near the soft cartilage of the nose.

It should be short enough that lifting the heel knot with the reins puts pressure on the cheeks before the knot touches the chin.

The bosal should not slip up under the nose in order to make contact.

## The horse responds to three different pressures from the bosal

1. direct pressure on the nose and chin from an even pull on both reins.
2. lateral (sideways) pressure applied to the nose by the direct rein.
3. pressure of the rein against the neck (bearing or neck rein).

Pressure is only used with a hackamore or bit when the rider is asking for a specific response. Direct pressure is only used long enough to get a response, then the reins are released. It is used to turn or circle the horse. The bearing or neck rein is then used as training continues to enable the rider to eventually ride with one hand on the reins.

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## RIDING THE GREEN HORSE **FOR THE FIRST TIME**

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Before attempting to mount your horse it should have the following training and experience:

1. ground manners and sacked out
2. saddled, bridled
3. lunged at walk jog and lope both directions
4. ground driven

From the above training, the horse will already be very familiar with a number of cues needed to be ridden. It will already respect you, trust you, be able to focus on the work at hand, as well as being willing to work with you. You will know that your horse is ready for mounting if it happily accepts the work that it is doing to this point.

### **Some added preparations for mounting**

1. Walk beside your horse near the stirrup of the saddle. Move your horse forward by putting pressure on its side at the girth area while using the stirrup to tap the horse until it responds. Let the horse wander around at a walk as you touch the horse with your body as it moves. You can lay your arm over the saddle and lean some weight onto the saddle as you walk as well. Repeat this for the other side.
2. With the horse standing still, pull on the stirrups and lean on them (with your hands) Flap them against the sides of the horse. Holding the saddle horn shift the saddle back and forth to help 'ground' your horse's legs. Do these things for several days prior to mounting.
3. Use a safe stool, mounting block or chair and stand beside your horse on it. Touch the saddle, lay your weight on its back and get it used to standing quietly while you do this from both sides.

### **Mounting for the first time**

1. Saddle and bridle the horse as usual.
2. In an enclosed area, lunge the horse, then drive the horse as you have already been doing.
3. Have a helper hold the horse either by the halter and shank or by the reins, close to the bit.
4. Stand beside the horse on the near side and gather the reins to the wither with the left hand.
5. At the same time, take the stirrup in the right hand and lean sharply on the stirrup several times. If your horse stands quietly for this then proceed to place your left foot in the stirrup.

6. Without pushing your toe into your horse's side, stand up in the stirrup placing your weight over the saddle by leaning slightly forward, but do not swing your leg over. Step down.
7. Repeat these steps a couple of times. Stroke the horse's neck and talk to the horse when you are up in the stirrup.
8. If the horse is still quiet after this is repeated, slowly swing your leg over the saddle and lower yourself gently into it. Take care not to accidentally bump the horse with your leg as you do this. Praise the horse.
9. Wiggle and move your weight back and forth in the saddle.
10. Step down from the saddle the same way.
11. If you are coordinated enough, it is a good idea to repeat this process from the right side as well.

### **The first step forward**

After mounting is successful and the horse has relaxed with you on its back while standing still, the horse should be made to move while being led with you on the back.

By having a handler control the first few steps you will save having your horse's mouth pulled on if it lunges or bucks. The handler will have a hold of the shank of the halter. This allows a safer method of control than to expect the horse to understand the use of the bit if it moves too quickly.

The handler on the ground can control the situation while you simply hold onto the horn and try to stay in the middle of the horse's back.

The handler will lead the horse in both directions and stop the horse. The rider will use voice commands and leg aids to encourage the horse to respond correctly.

Soon the handler can unsnap the lead shank (or loop it around the horn of the saddle) and walk beside you while you begin controlling the movement of the horse.

As soon as the horse is responding to your aids, the handler can walk away from its side.

*When riding a young horse remember this:*

*Ask a little - expect even less - praise a lot !*

## What if it begins to buck?

The first few steps might be unsettling for the horse and it may get excited. The following are some steps to take to prevent a horse from bucking and what to do if it does buck:

- Never, never sit completely still and do nothing on a green horse when riding it for the first few times. Riders sometimes get comfortable with a green horse that seems to be accepting everything easily. This is a dangerous thing to do. Always be moving in the saddle or doing something with it. A horse that is 'sleeping' may be watching you out of one eye, and then when it sees you with the other (when you change direction, or make it move after standing for a length of time) it may 'blow up'.
- Sit deeply in the saddle and lean slightly back.
- Keep your legs quietly at its sides, touching the horse, but not gripping the horse's barrel. Holding on with your legs will make an unsettled horse even more nervous.
- Your hands should be as still and quiet as possible - hold the horn for better security and to stay balanced in the center of the horse in case it bucks.
- It is best to use only one rein (let the other go slack) or a lead shank on one side of the halter to pull a bucking or lungeing horse's head up and to the side. If you use both reins, the horse will simply out-muscle you and lean into both reins while it bucks. By pulling up and to the side with one rein, you set the horse off balance and this enables you to push the horse's hindquarters sideways with your leg.
- Try to get the horse to move forward into a trot so that he cannot brace to buck or lunge.
- If a horse is braced against you and will not move forward, shorten the rein on one side, lift straight up from the horse's mouth and kick with the same side leg to move the horse's hip around. This is a good suppling exercise that should be done in both directions.

## Moving forward

By the fourth ride or so, the rider should have the horse moving forward at a walk and trot in both directions using leg and voice aids. Convincing a young horse to move forward is often difficult, therefore your early training and riding will concentrate on getting good forward movement and a rhythm at a walk and a trot.

All young horses feel rough for the first few rides. Their gait is uneven as they are not used to balancing with a rider and are uncertain about what is expected of them.

## How long do I trot for?

Don't ask the horse to maintain a trot for a long period of time in the beginning. If you do, the horse may begin to sour (be unwilling to work for you happily).

It is difficult work to balance with you on its back while moving forward.

Transitions from walk to trot and from trot to walk and halt will be important. These transitions will help the horse make a quick response to light aids while maintaining

balance with a rider.

## How much rein pressure?

During the early stages of riding, the horse is worked on a fairly loose rein. You need your horse to listen to your leg and seat aids more than your rein aids in the beginning.

If you try to develop a 'light feel' of your horse's mouth during all of your riding, your horse will gain confidence in your hands and easily accept the bit pressure.

Do not expect a horse to be soft in the mouth, if you are not soft with your hands.

Pressure and release, give and take is the key to a light feel of your horse's mouth.

## Turning your horse

Practice direction changes at a walk, using a direct rein to help steer the horse's head around. This is similar to the feeling the horse had when it was being ground driven, so it should be quite easy for the horse to do. This will be followed by your leg and seat aids to encourage the body of the horse to follow.

Before the turn you can apply a slight pressure at the girth with the inside leg (to begin bending the horse through the barrel) and bump slightly with the outside leg as the horse begins the turn.

Your seat, followed by your upper body, head and eyes will twist in the direction of the turn as you begin applying the rein pressure with your hands.

### The timing for the leg pressures on a turn are as follows:

1. inside leg is used when the horse's inside hind leg is off the ground. (The horse's barrel is naturally bent for the turn when at this position.)
2. outside leg is used in opposition with the inside, when the inside hind is on the ground. (This brings the forehead around to complete the turn.)

Once the horse begins turning more easily and is doing so with leg pressure and a small amount of rein pressure, then you can begin applying a neck rein to turn, in addition to the direct rein.

As the horse learns more, the hands are used closer together. Always use as little pressure on the bit as possible, so the mouth of the horse does not get damaged by heavy pulling. Rein pressure used for flexion should be avoided, except for cues to turn, slow down or stop, until after the horse has learned to move forward well and does not tighten its jaw against the bit.

## How long do I ride for?

Do not overwork your horse when you begin to ride. Stop riding when the horse does what you ask correctly. Praise it so it knows it is right.

A good reward for most young horses is to let them stand quietly for a few minutes before continuing work.

There should be little or no reason for punishment because the horse will not understand what it is being punished for.

If you do not get a response to a new cue, go back to a skill the horse knows. Progress is made only when the horse is ready.

## Shortening the reins

When the horse is going well, you can shorten the reins. They will be shortened until you have light contact with the bit when the horse holds its head in a natural position.

This gives the horse some support while it is moving forward or even when it is stopped.

If the horse tightens its lower jaw against the bit or flings its head around, give the reins more slack, slowly working toward shortening the reins again.

Always support the hand aid with the seat and leg aids. That is, use your legs to push your horse into a light contact.

If your horse is fidgeting with its head, bump it with your legs, not your hands.

## Lope or Canter

The lope or canter is not taught at the same time as the walk and trot.

Like a small child, the young horse often has a problem with balance and may have problems with coordination.

Adding the weight and bulk of a rider can make canter more difficult for the horse.

Lungeing your horse (riderless) is the easiest way to teach it to canter.

Asking for the canter or lope in a circle against a corner helps the horses pick up the correct lead from a trot.

If the horse takes the wrong lead or is cross-firing, slow to a trot, then ask for the canter again.

When the horse is traveling incorrectly, it is uncomfortable and the horse may get upset.

By correcting the horse this way, it learns what is correct and comfortable.

With work, the horse will slow down at this gait and relax as it moves forward in canter on the lunge.

After the horse has been working steadily at a walk and trot with a rider on and having light rein contact, you can begin to ride the canter or lope.

This is done much the same way as beginning to ride the horse.

Have a handler with the lunge line control the horse and give a verbal cue as it trots into a corner.

Sit deeply in the saddle, give the verbal command and bump the horse with your outside leg behind the girth.

As your horse comes off the rail to follow the circle, bump the horse again as you move toward the wall.

The rail is usually enough of an aid to form the other half of the circle.

Do this for several days before working without the lunge line. When the horse begins to canter, lean slightly forward, off the horse's back to allow it to move easily under you. Make it easy for the horse to continue cantering without too much pulling and pushing from the rider.

During the first few rides without the lunge rein, have your helper stand in the center while you both give the verbal command in a corner. The horse learns by association. Your reins should be loose except when using a direct rein to turn and leg aids are used to hold the horse on the turn or curve.

The horse will slow down and relax with continued work as it gets better balanced. Just sit up tall and try to ride balanced with the horse's movement without interfering with the legs, seat or reins.

When the horse is easy to control in a circle, you can begin to ride it on the rail. The canter cue should still be given while circling the horse.

If you are consistent with the cue to pick up one lead or the other, the horse will soon learn which lead you want when you cue the horse to canter on the straight away.

If the horse gets flustered, rushes or is unsettled during this work, you may need to ride it at walk, trot and back up until it is more settled.

Do not rush the process. Remember that all horses know how to canter naturally. It is a problem for some of them when a rider is on their back.

*Important tip:*

When your horse has problems with something, you look at what *you* are doing first, before assuming the horse is making a mistake.

**Backing the horse while mounted**

Backing your horse while mounted should be a review of what the horse already knows.

On the ground you have used 'voice' aids with pressure on the halter to have the horse step easily backwards.

A horse moving correctly backwards should move their legs in diagonal pairs in a two beat motion.

**Backing is important for the horse to learn the following:**

- giving to bit pressure
  - giving to leg pressure
  - getting the hind quarters under the body
1. Halt the horse and have it stand quietly with light contact on the reins.
  2. Squeeze lightly with your legs as if you want the horse to step forward but at the same time apply equal pressure to the horse's mouth with the reins.
  3. Lean forward slightly
  4. Shorten the reins and widen the hands while you apply pressure to the horse's mouth with the reins.
  5. Maintain this pressure until the horse gives and begins to step back.
  6. Immediately release the pressure and praise the horse.
  7. Ask for one or two more steps, praising the horse for each attempt.
  8. Do not ask for too much at first, a little each day will make the experience better and more relaxing for the horse.
  9. If the horse refuses to step backward, ride it forward, stop and try again. Finally if you are still not successful, have someone on the ground touch the horse on the chest as you apply the aids necessary to teach the horse to back. Soon the horse will understand what you want and will do so without a helper.

Backing a horse can help a horse to regain balance if they get feeling 'strung out' in any of the gaits.

Backing a horse a few steps before cantering often places the hindquarters under the body in a position that will make it easier for the horse to 'step' easily into canter or lope.

## Words of Wisdom

### **Make a young horse's riding experiences interesting.**

Don't always do the same thing each day. Add trail obstacles to your riding area and give the horse a 'job' to do. Ride out on the trail as often as you can. This will make the horse look forward to going for rides.

### **Don't expect more from your horse than you have taught it.**

If a horse is having a problem with something, it is likely it needs to be re-taught in order to do it successfully. For example, if you are trying to sidepass to open a gate and the horse is fidgeting and not moving off your leg correctly, you may need to teach it to stand quietly first, then 'one step' at a time ask it to move away from the pressure of your leg. Be sure that you are clear with your aids and not accidentally pressing the horse with your other leg as you ask the horse to step over.

### **Don't teach it more than one new thing at a time.**

Horses can only handle one new thing being taught at one time. Until it is well understood by your horse there is not much sense in introducing something else. Set yourself up for success when training your young horse.

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# NUTRITION

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## Horse management

Although horse people as a rule try to feed well, a lack of basic understanding often results in an improper diet for the young or growing horse.

Most novice horse owners and even many experienced producers do not appreciate and understand the importance of proper diets for growing horses.

## Feeding facts

Horses should be fed as individuals. There are some who are what we call 'hard keepers' and others 'easy keepers'. Adjustments in feed intake to compensate for this variation in digestive and metabolic systems should occur.

Horses have relatively small stomachs. Because of this, they should graze or eat a small amount at a time, but should do so on a rather continual basis throughout the day. If you watch horses in a pasture, they will graze for a while, then stop and rest, graze for a while etc. Because of this fact, if at all possible, horses should have access to feed throughout the day.

Horses are best fed on ground level. This allows for a more natural way of eating and allows any dust or mold ingested with the food to be sloughed out through the respiratory mucous.

Hay alone is not sufficient to meet the nutritional and energy demands of a young growing horse. Young growing horses cannot be fed the same as mature horses. Their growing bodies need extra protein and a correct balance of various minerals such as calcium and phosphorus.

Horses do not do well on moldy or dusty feed. Horses are very different from cattle in that they will suffer if they ingest mold and dust over a prolonged period of time. If hay is questionable, smell it to determine whether it has a good clean smell, or whether it is dusty or moldy. Do not feed moldy hay to horses!

A regular worming schedule for young horses is also an important part of good nutrition. Without worming, young horses lose the ability to maintain a healthy system in order to utilize the nutrients properly.

It is essential that horses have adequate supply of water. A horse's body has a water content of approximately 72% of the total weight. Young growing horses need even more water than older mature horses. Lack of water can lead to digestive disturbances such as colic and decrease the absorption of nutrients. If a horse is being fed dry matter (hay) instead of eating grass from a pasture, the need for water is even more important. If the weather is hotter, horses also need more water, just as horses that are working need more.

## Feeding mature horses

Feeding adult horses that have finished growing is different than when feeding a growing horse. The energy requirements of a mature horse is quite low and can be met by feeding a good quality forage (hay or pasture).

The only supplemental feed required will probably be salt and a balanced mineral supplement provided free choice.

## Feeding the foal

### Nursing foals

A foal that is still nursing from its mother should be supplemented in addition to receiving its mother's milk. By the time the foal reaches six weeks of age, the milk has lost most of its nutritional benefit. Most foals should begin nibbling grass/hay and grain along with its mother as early as 3 days old. If you know of a foal that is not nibbling on these foodstuffs after a week or two it is important that you 'teach' it to eat hay, grass or grain. It is important to the well being of a foal, as the mother's milk will not supply it with all the necessary vitamins, minerals and protein requirements that a growing foal will need.

### Foal ration

The best plan is to give the foal access to a foal ration that contains all the essential vitamins and minerals in a base with a greater percentage of protein than most hay would contain. Growing foals need more than 15 % protein in their feed to supply their bodies with the essential elements to grow properly.

There are many types of foal ration on the market today. The most palatable are the pelleted form. They range from 16% to 20% protein. If you are feeding the foal alfalfa hay (which is already high in protein) you would choose a foal ration with 16% protein. If you were feeding the foal grass hay (which is low in protein), you would choose a foal ration with 20% protein.

### Creep feeding

A 'creep feed' is often given to foals soon after birth to ensure proper nutrition is maintained. It will allow the foal to eat the ration without interference from its mother. Foals that have been provided with a creep feed for a period of several weeks prior to weaning generally eat better after weaning and may be less susceptible to the stress of weaning.

### How do you creep feed a foal?

While the foal is at the mother's side you need to organize a feeder (called a creep feeder) that the foal has access to but the mother doesn't. The easiest way is to section off a corner of a corral, paddock or pasture by a safe means (a long rail) so that the foal can get under and go to the feeder but the mother cannot.

The creep feeder should be filled with fresh ration daily so that it does not get moldy or stale. Try to determine how much the foal eats through the day so that you can fill it accordingly.

### **Won't my foal eat too much?**

If you always had foal ration available for your foal by using a creep feeder, the foal will not eat too much. A foal that knows that the feed is always available will tend not to 'gorge' on the ration when it is placed out for it. It knows that it will never be short of food so it does not have a tendency to eat too much at once. Generally speaking, foals that are on a continual creep ration will eat more only when their bodies need extra nutrients during a growth spurt. Then there will be times when they do not seem to eat very much. Their bodies are satisfied by the grass, hay and mother's milk.

### **Won't it harm a foal or young horse to feed it too much if it is growing quickly?**

Too much, yes, but to stop feeding it what it is accustomed to eating or to cut back in its ration would be risking the foal being short of the proper balance of minerals, nutrients and protein needed for the proper bone and body growth that it is going through.

If you keep the foal or young horse on a balanced diet where it gets a steady amount of feed, rather than increasing and decreasing the amount as you try to judge its growth rate, you will find that the foal or young horse will grow to its potential in the proper amount of time.

### **Feeding a balanced diet**

The most critical part in feeding the young growing horse properly is to feed a balanced diet.

A balanced diet is one in which all the nutrients are supplied in adequate amounts. Just as important, they are supplied in correct amounts relative to each other.

It is believed that imbalances in nutrients may be the causative factor in a variety of developmental bone diseases in young horses.

Each year numerous foals are mismanaged to the extent that they never reach their full potential in terms of size and performance.

When a horse receives too much of a nutrient as well as too little there will be poor absorption or utilization of nutrients resulting in a number of problems if it goes on for a prolonged period of time.

Major foal feeding problems include contracted tendons, epiphysitis and deficiencies.

Horses that have been fed balanced diets since birth will tend to have a more stable metabolism and are able to digest and utilize nutrients more readily.

Full growth potential and performance will be an important result of good feed management.

## Minerals

Minerals are involved in a number of functions in the body. A horse will obtain most the necessary minerals from pasture, roughage and grain. The mineral content of feeds and the availability of minerals vary with

- soil mineral concentrations,
- plant species
- stage of maturity, and
- conditions of harvesting.

Those variations should be considered when deciding on how much or whether your horse needs a mineral supplement.

## Calcium

Calcium makes up about 35 percent of bone structure and is involved in many body functions of the horse. There are a number of factors affecting whether calcium is properly absorbed by the horse. Inadequate calcium taken in by the foal can lead to rickets, a disease characterized by enlarged joints and crooked long bones.

## Calcium Phosphorus Ratio

The correct calcium phosphorus ratio is very important for the well being of the growing horse. All feed supplements including minerals will give the percentage of calcium and phosphorus. Ratios of less than 1:1 (less calcium than phosphorus) may be detrimental to the absorption of calcium. Even if calcium requirements are met, excessive phosphorus intake will cause skeletal malformations. Ratios of calcium to phosphorus as high as 6:1 in diets for growing horses may not be detrimental if phosphorus intake is adequate. Alfalfa hay is generally rich in calcium and could be supplemented by a grain such as oats which is high in phosphorus. This would ensure a proper balance between the two minerals.

## Salt

All horse should have free access to salt. The sodium concentration of natural feeds such as grass or hay is often lower than 0.1 percent. Salt in the form of sodium chloride is often added to supplements. You can place free choice iodized salt blocks with horses as well.

## Signs of Deficiency

- decreased skin turgor
- tendency for horses to lick objects
- slowed rate of eating
- decreased water intake

## Copper

Copper is essential for several enzymes responsible for the formation of connective tissues in young growing horses, among other important things. It has been reported in recent studies that lack of copper in the diet is associated to the development of bone diseases such as osteochondrosis (OCD). Feed supplements usually contain a certain amount of this trace mineral. This is one good reason to feed a mineral supplement to young growing horses.

## Vitamins

Vitamin requirements, like those of other nutrients are affected by age, stage of production and the variety of stresses such as infections and intense exercise that horses may go through.

The need for supplemental vitamins depends on the type and quality of the diet, and the efficiency of the horse's system to absorb vitamins from its diet.

Horses grazing on high quality pastures are likely to need little to no vitamin supplementation because forages are a rich source for most fat and water soluble vitamins.

Most feed rations contain added vitamins as well as minerals. It would not be detrimental to the well being of a young growing horse to supplement its diet with added minerals and vitamins.

## Roughage

All diets for horses should contain adequate amounts of roughage. This roughage comes from forages.

Forages are those types of feeds that come from plants in the form of pasture or hay, most commonly.

## Feeding quality of different forage used by horses varies widely due to the

- type of plant
- soil fertility
- climatic effects
- stage of maturity at time of harvest

## Pasture feeding young horses

There are two types of pasture:

- Grasses
- Legumes

Pasture grasses are generally lower in protein, vitamins and minerals than legumes such as alfalfa.

Pasture mixtures of grasses and legumes are excellent and provide a number of advantages over grass alone, including superior nutrient value and longer growing seasons.

## Feeding hay to young horses

Depending of the type of hay you feed, you may need to supplement the diet with grain and minerals.

Alfalfa hay is generally highest in quality, being less stemmy and higher in protein and calcium content. Because of the imbalance in the calcium phosphorus ratio, alfalfa hay should not be fed alone to young growing horses. It should be fed carefully with the addition of grains or supplements such as oats or wheat bran that are higher in phosphorus.

Grass hay is lower in protein and should be supplemented by a ration that contains more protein with added vitamins and minerals.

You can vary the amount of hay you feed in relation to the amount of grain in order to meet all of the needs of the horse.

## Nutritional analysis of feed

Most feed, such as hay, is relatively easy to determine whether it contains enough nutrients to support a growing horse's system and body. It smells fresh is green in color and contains no dust or mold.

However, sometimes the hay being fed is questionable. It is not as green as it could be. The horses being fed are not gaining or maintaining their weight. Sometimes it is necessary to know the exact protein content of the hay in order to balance it with grains and supplements.

Rather than guess at the nutritional content of the hay or grain that you are feeding your young horse, you can send a sample of it away to be analyzed.

Only then will you accurately be able to supplement your horse according to the actual nutritional content of your feed.

Most large feed manufacturing plants will lend or rent you a 'probe' to gather samples from your hay. This gives you a more accurate reading than just pulling out part of one bale.

Once the sample is gathered, the feed company will send it to a lab where it is analyzed. The results will be printed and given to you for use in your feed program.

Understanding the importance of feeding young growing horses a balanced diet will ensure that your young horse will grow to its potential.

The future well-being of your horse depends on your knowledge of good feed management. Take it seriously!

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## REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

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4-H Horsemanship Manual

Bill Dorrance - True Horsemanship Through Feel

Pat Parelli - Naturla Horsemanship Video

Tom Dorrance - True Unity

Bryan Neubert - Video

Craig Cameron - Video

Mike Kevil - Starting Colts

Imprint Training - Robert Miller DVM

Horse Whispering Demystified - Video by Chris Irwin

See the 4-H web site at <http://www.4h.ab.ca> for an up-to-date listing of Internet sites devoted to the horse.

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## LEVEL ONE: UNMOUNTED ABILITIES

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### Assessment Tools

- Explain briefly what is meant by the “herd” instinct.
- Explain how to approach a young horse in an enclosed area.
- Explain what is meant by “flight” instinct.
- Demonstrate how to move a young horse around using pressure and release method.
- List five safety rules when working with a weanling or young horse.
- Describe a proper working environment for a young horse.
- Name three goals that you have for your project year.
- Explain what “quit while you are ahead” means when training a horse.
- Explain how a horse would show a handler respect.
- Explain how a handler would show a horse respect.
- What is meant by ground work?

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## LEVEL ONE: **GROUND WORK ABILITIES**

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### **Assessment Tools**

Safely approach and place a halter on your project horse.

- Demonstrate how to “cradle” a weanling (if your project horse is one).
- Demonstrate how to move the horse’s hindquarters around using the pressure and release method with the hand.
- Demonstrate how to back your horse.
- Demonstrate that your project horse is halter broke by leading it in both directions and halting.
- Brush and touch the entire body of your project horse.
- Demonstrate how to safely tie your horse.

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## LEVEL TWO: UNMOUNTED ABILITIES

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### Assessment Tools

- Explain the difference between short term and long-term goals.
- List four long term goals for your project horse.
- Explain the four areas of training that should be realized when working with horses.
- What pieces of equipment are necessary for halter breaking.
- Explain three safety rules related to the area you work a young horse in.
- Explain why you might use an inner tube to tie a horse?
- How old should a horse be to have the feet picked up?
- Explain how to teach a horse to pick up a front or back foot.
- What are two examples of ground manners you have established from your horse.
- Explain why you might lunge a horse.

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## LEVEL 2: **GROUND WORK ABILITIES**

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- Demonstrate your project horse moving away from pressure by moving the hindquarter, then the forehand in both directions.
  
- Lead your horse by the halter in both directions, halt, back up five steps and stand quietly for 1 to 2 minutes.
  
- Safely pick up and clean each of your project horse's feet.
  
- Demonstrate how you would introduce your project horse to its first lunge lesson.

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## LEVEL 3: UNMOUNTED ABILITIES

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- Explain what "sacking out" means.
- Explain two methods of sacking a horse.
- List the equipment necessary to lunge a horse.
- Explain why you need an enclosed area to lunge a horse.
- Explain what the "goal" of lungeing will be.
- Explain how the position of the handler and the position of the whip used for lungeing has an affect on the horse's reaction during lungeing.
- Explain what to do if the horse wants to come toward you on the lunge circle.
- Explain how to use voice commands during lungeing.

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## LEVEL 3: GROUND WORK ABILITIES

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- Demonstrate your horse's ability to remain calm and accept being sacked out by various items such as a blanket or plastic bag.
- Demonstrate proper handling of the lunge line and whip while lungeing your project horse.
- Demonstrate proper body position while lungeing your project horse.
- Demonstrate use of voice commands for walk, trot and halt while lungeing.
- Lunge your project horse in both directions at a walk and trot.
- Halt your project horse while lungeing.

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## LEVEL 4: UNMOUNTED ABILITIES

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- Explain what "girthing" your horse means.
- Describe the method used to saddle your horse for the first time.
- Explain why you should use a back cinch on a western saddle.
- Describe how to successfully bridle the horse for the first time.
- Describe the equipment needed to ground drive your horse.
- Explain why you might ground drive a horse before mounting it for the first time.
- What are three safety precautions to use during ground driving?

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## LEVEL 4: GROUND WORK ABILITIES

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- Demonstrate proper saddling of your horse.
- Demonstrate proper bridling of your horse.
- Demonstrate the correct preparation and equipment use for ground driving a horse.
- Ground drive your horse, demonstrating its abilities to turn in both directions and halt.

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## LEVEL 5: UNMOUNTED ABILITIES

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- Explain what your horse should be doing before you attempt to mount it for the first time.
- Describe the method used to mount the horse for the first time.
- Why is moving forward an important part of the first ride.
- Describe how much rein pressure you use when riding your horse for the first few times.
- Explain the aids for moving the horse's hindquarters.
- Explain the aids for halting a horse.
- Explain the aids necessary to turn a green horse.
- Explain how to use side reins.

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## LEVEL 5: MOUNTED ABILITIES

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- Demonstrate proper fit of saddle and bridle before mounting.
- Demonstrate your horse's ability to stand quietly while being mounted.
- Demonstrate riding your horse at a walk and trot.
- Demonstrate turning your horse in both directions.
- Halt your horse and stand quietly for 1 minute.
- Dismount your horse while it stands still.

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## LEVEL 6: MOUNTED ABILITIES

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- Demonstrate how to move your horse away from leg pressure in both directions (turn on forehand).
- Demonstrate how to move your horse's forehand around the haunches in both directions (only a few steps is necessary).
- Demonstrate your horse's ability to walk, jog and lope (on the correct lead) in both directions.
- Back your horse five steps.
- Ride your horse out of an enclosed area on the trail.

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## LEVEL 7: MOUNTED ABILITIES

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- Complete the mounted abilities from Level 3 of the Horsemanship Levels 1 - 3.

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# 4-H YOUNG HORSE PROJECT **EVALUATION**

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## **Your input is a valuable asset to the 4-H program!**

As you go through the project year, write your comments and suggestions about the project on this form. When you complete your project, mail this form to us. We want to hear from you!

## **Young Horse Project Evaluation**

4-H Branch  
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development  
7000 113 Street NW RM 200  
EDMONTON AB T6H 5T6

Evaluation date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Please tell us**

**Which techniques and skills did you learn and use for this project?**

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**What did you like best about completing this project?**

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**Are you pleased with your project?** \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

**Is there anything you would change if you were to do the project again?**

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**What are you going to do with your project?**

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**2005**