

A Little Goes A Long Way

Many people think they don't have time to do TTEAM work with their horses. Even five minutes of TTEAM work before mounting provides a warm-up and can make your ride more pleasant for both you and your horse.



Photo 1: Use about 30 seconds of ear strokes as a way of lowering the head to relax the topline. One hand is on the nose band of the halter as the other hand strokes from the base to the tip of each ear.



Photo 2: Circle the forelock and gently press your hand on the forehead directing the focus towards the horse's tail and then gently bring the focus forward. This affects the poll, neck and back.



Photo 3: With one hand supporting the chin and the other hand on the crest, invite the nose to come forward and open the throatlatch. Remember less is more.



Photo 4: One hand on the nose and the other does a few circles along the neck vertebrae as you ask his head to bend in each direction. Ideally the head should come back without just tipping the nose.

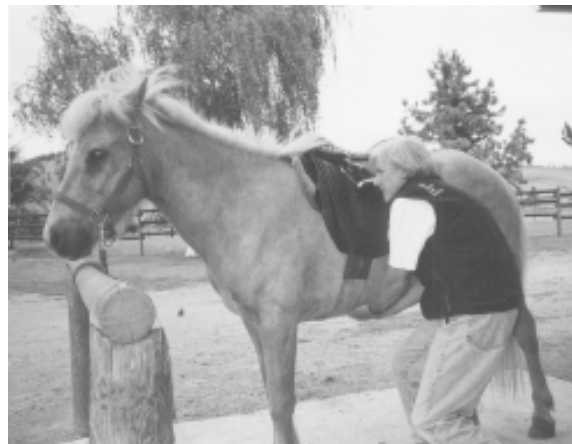


Photo 5: With the saddle on ask the horse to raise his back and withers. Do this first without a saddle and check for sensitivity with a wand or your hand stroking. Ask with a press/ release using the fingertips on the midline of the belly or on either side.



Photo 6: Leg exercises can be done during hoof cleaning or once the saddle is on. Support the fetlock joint with your inside hand and the hoof with the outside hand. Move the leg, in towards the other front leg, back, out to the side and forward several times in each direction at various heights. This will free the shoulder and back.



Photo 7: The inside hand supports the cannon bone and the outside hand supports the hoof. Circle the hind legs, several times in each direction, even with the other hind leg, at whatever height is comfortable



Photo 8: To help increase range of motion you can bring the hind leg forward - support the leg up with the inside hand on the underside of the fetlock joint and the other hand on the bottom of the hoof. Circle the leg in both directions without "stretching" the leg - move within the comfortable range of motion. Take care of your back by supporting your outside elbow on your upper leg as you move from your feet to make the circle rather than from your arms.



Photo 9: Make a curve in the tail with one hand under the tail, lifting up, and the other hand on the outside of the tail. Circle in both directions.



Photo 10: Pelvic tilt: place a hand on the buttocks on either side of the tail. Moving from your feet, press gently into the buttocks, pause and then slowly release. This helps move the sacrum and round the back. Move your hands down the buttocks a few inches and repeat. Watch for your horse's response and do less or from just one side if your horse shows concern or moves.



Photo 11: Rib releases help to extend the ribs on the opposite side from where you are standing and encourage lateral flexibility. With one hand on the tailbone place the other hand on the ribs. Think of doing a slight lift of the skin diagonally towards the ribs as you bring the hindquarters in your direction with the tail. Pause and then slowly release. It is on the release that you will notice there has been a slight flex. Repeat on the other side.

You may choose to do some or all of these exercises before riding. Notice if there are any differences in your horse's behavior or warm-up time after you mount.

It doesn't have to take much time and a little goes a long way for the mental and physical well-being of your horse.

Keep in touch with your horse!!!

Robyn Hood