

Training Horses

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stepping out to a corner in front of the horse and hold the lead line taut.

"As soon as the horse steps to you, release the pressure," he said. "It is like saying 'thank you for doing the right thing.'"

"In everything you ask a horse to do, you must first say please and give it direction to where you want it to go."

Apply pressure, said Egan, then as soon as they move stop asking, stop pressure, "and that becomes 'thank you.'"

"Make the right way easy and the wrong thing difficult so they chose to do the right thing," he said.

Graduating to the lunge line uses the same system. First Egan teaches the horse to move away by putting pressure on the horse's head by gently pulling the lunge line with his left hand, then stepping toward the horse's flank and tapping on its hip.

"I consider this to be just an extension of the lead rope," he

said. The lunge line is simply a lead from 30 feet, he explained. Egan used the lunge whip "not as a whip, since we want them to be accepting of

the whip, but as an extension of my arm, just like reaching out and tapping the horse," he said.

When the horse began circling Egan at the full distance of the line, "notice I am not walking," he said. "I keep my left foot in a relatively stable location and pivot."

"His (the horse's) job is to stay at the end of the line," said Egan. "If I'm walking all over the place, how does he know where the end of the line is?"

If a horse attempts to come in toward the trainer, Egan simply taps it with the lunge whip in the mid-neck area.

To encourage the animal to go faster, Egan tapped the

horse with the lunge whip on the animals' rib cage, "where the rider's legs would normally be," he said. At all times Egan kept his shoulders parallel to the line, facing the same direction as the horse's forward movement.

If the horse drops in toward

"People get in a hurry," he said. "You need to give your horse time to learn and absorb information."

To prepare the animal for a rider, "time on the ground leads to manners. He may act up but it doesn't take long to learn that all he has to do is

mediate stop from the animal. "If we want a horse to stop, we don't ever think stop. We think slow down," he said. "Stop is an extreme slow down."

At Penn State, the horses are first ridden in a 12 foot by 12 foot stall in the barn, an area where the horses are already comfortable. Next they graduate to being ridden in a 12-foot-wide, 18-foot-long hallway.

In his demonstration Egan slowly put his foot in the stirrup, waited, and returned to the ground before repeating the process and resting his weight across the animals' back. He then mounted and rested in the saddle for a moment.

"The best thing to do when you get on a horse for the first time is get off," he said. The animal is already anxious, he said, so a rider reinforces that being ridden is a trap to the horse if they stay mounted too long, he said.

“In everything you ask a horse to do, you must first say ‘please’ and give it direction to where you want it to go.”

Brian Egan
Penn State

stop" for the saddle to stop tightening.

Egan lunged the quarter horse with the stirrups tied together

er to let the animal get used to the feel of the saddle.

By attaching long lines to the horse's bridle and walking behind the horse, Egan further readied the horse for riding by teaching it to turn, stop, and back with pressure in the animal's mouth through the long lines.

Egan didn't expect an im-

the trainer, "step out toward them and send them toward the end of that line. Don't pull the line up," he said. The horse will quickly learn that it, not the trainer, is in charge of the workout if they find they can drop in toward their trainer, he said.

Lunging a horse not only takes off their edge of energy

but also communicates to the horse that the trainer will "not to let it do what he wants, but what I ask him to do," said Egan. "A horse that starts to breathe heavy starts to think clearer."


The third reason to lunge a horse is not only to teach it manners but also to ride. "Everything we do on the ground correlates to under-saddle work," he said.

To stop the horse, Egan puts a backward "V" in the line. However "we don't necessarily want him to come in. Send them back out so they don't come in each time they stop," he said.

Working with horses requires patience and time, according to Egan.

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