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"The Million Dollar Move" with Dennis Reis

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Intermediate skills

The million dollar move

with Dennis Reis

I'd like to demonstrate round penning with no round pen and ground schooling with no halter or lead rope. I challenge a horse in this way because if he's hooked up to me sincerely in the round pen, he should be hooked up to me outside of the round pen, in my environment, and he should trust me. What is trust? Trust is softness and vulnerability. If he truly trusts me, he can be the most vulnerable outside of his environment, which is mine. If he's genuinely hooked up to me, I should be able to ask him to do the same moves outside the round pen as I do inside the round pen.

Ground school is a preparation for your horse to ride or an opportunity to have a connection with a horse that would elect you as a leader in that herd psychology. You're looking for a relationship where your horse is choosing you to be the leader, which he will do if he trusts you.

A halter and lead rope are used to fix, reinforce and refine. Fix your horse up and reinforce your leadership. Refinement is when you won't need to have your tool to fix or reinforce, he would be following your suggestion through body language. Horses learn at a release of pressure. When you can fix your horse up, prepare them to a position for transition through body language and clear communication, your halter and lead rope help you with this. Ultimately, you wouldn't need your lead rope, the horse would follow your suggestions through your body language. The halter should be an extension of your attitude, so I feel I should be able to do the same exercise without a halter and lead rope as well.

Key concepts in yourself

You're working toward the following: speaking impeccably, preparing to move to a position for transition, recognizing the smallest change and slightest try, releasing the pressure at that time and making the rest longer than the work so he appreciates his

job and wants to work for you.

It's your job to do less before instead of more later so your horse can learn to appreciate working for you rather than you just drilling on him.

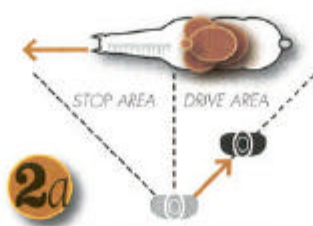
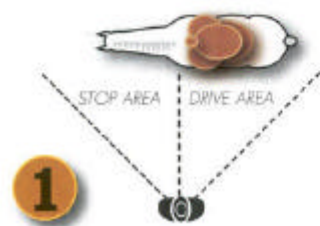
All these concepts of ground schooling without halter/lead rope and round penning without a round pen should be fun. It's about having your horse being hooked up to you and willingly follow you when the pressure rises. It's not a trick or a dancing bear idea, it's just showing that these horses will willingly follow you in the most adverse situations. You should have their best interests at heart, truly being stewards for them; they should follow your lead in the most vulnerable spots you can put them in.

Tools

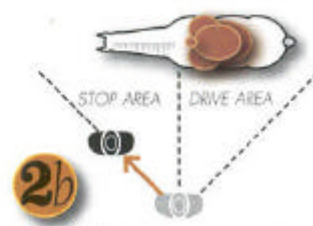
Your tools should be used as an extension of yourself. My first tool is my body; my second are my flags, one in each hand.



Dennis Reis talks through a few points at a recent demonstration



Drive horse by moving into the DRIVE AREA



Ask horse to stop by moving into the STOP AREA

Reis *continued*

3



The first step is for my horse to choose to look at me and stop. The second is that with my left hand, I want to take my horse's eye, with an imaginary string, and pull it toward me in a 180-degree turn.

4



He needs to disengage his weapons, or hindquarters.

5



When he crosses in front of me, I will stop him and let him rest with me.

Things to remember

The first key point is understanding and communicating with the horse's nature. Second, you need to prepare the horse and yourself to a place for transition. You're not going to change this horse, he's perfect. You have to change yourself. I had to change as well. In my background, I did a lot of things to horses I'll probably never be forgiven for. So I had to learn how to be a better leader and communicator and, frankly, the horse has helped me become a better person outside the arena.

You need to have safety first. Then, where knowledge ends, brutality begins. Horses learn on the release of pressure, their rest being longer than work. They're lazy, they're the ultimate couch potato. They eat, they sleep, they poop and they roll in it. But they love humans, though most don't respect them. If you can combine love and respect, you'll have your horse working with you rather than against you.





Position

Imagine drawing a line from the corner of his hip to me and from his eye to me. I'm on the corner of a triangle. My feet are hooked up to his. If you can touch the horse with your flags, you're too close.

Movement

The driveline is the saddle horn. I can position myself behind the driveline to move the horse forward or in front of the driveline to stop my horse.

The first step is to suggest. I will suggest for him to move forward by raising the stick toward his hindquarters. If I don't get a response, I will follow through with the promise of tapping him with the stick. Too often, riders cluck and cluck without a clear promise of what they will do if the horse does not respond.

Visual cues explain what's going on inside the horse through an outward expression:

Softness in the pasture, is there an ear on me? Look for his head to go down, saying I give, but I don't give up. I look for the eye to be on me. I look for licking and chewing, which says, "I'm digesting this thought or concept you're giving me."

If your horse doesn't look at you at all times, he's not hooked up to you. So what I want to demonstrate is something I call the "million-dollar move." I call it the million-dollar move because it opens up millions of opportunities to work with your horse.



Pull the horse's left eye toward you, and his feet will begin to move as his hindquarters disengage.



The horse now crosses in front of you...



...and allow your horse to rest there with you.

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