



CHAPTER 8: GROOMING

Grooming and care

Regular grooming of your horse will:

- give it a clean, shiny coat and skin;
- stimulate muscle tone;
- gentle most horses; and
- provide an opportunity to examine the horse closely.

Basic grooming tools include a rubber currycomb or rubber groom-mitt, a coarse-bristle dandy brush, a fine-bristle body brush, a wool cloth or cotton towel rub rag, a hoof pick, electric clippers, a coarse-toothed mane and tail comb, and a shedding or scrape stick. Metal spring, or bar-type currycombs, are not recommended for show horses because they pull and break the hair. The shedding blade, bent double with the two ends fastened, is a handy tool to use during the spring when the horse sheds its winter hair. It can be turned over and used as a sweat scraper in the summer. A sponge can be used to clean muddy legs and other dirty areas. Keep your tools clean. Remembering how you use the tools, not their quality, determines the results.

Groom your horse before and after you ride. If you follow a definite system, you will thoroughly clean the horse each time, and it will require less work. Comb in the direction of hair growth. Begin brushing the horse with a rubber curry comb or rubber groom-mitt at the head and work back on the near side including the legs; then go to the off side and work back from head to tail. Don't neglect the head (be gentle here) and the area around the tail. Do not use a metal curry comb around the head or below the knees and hocks. There is no fat or muscle in these areas to cushion the comb's hard edges. Use a wet sponge or soft brush to remove dirt from the horse's head, knees or hocks. Use a rubber curry comb to remove caked dirt from below the knees and hocks.

When brushing, start with the coarse-bristle dandy brush and brush in short, brisk strokes. Flick the bristle up at the end of each stroke so it throws dirt away from the hair. Brush with the lay of the hair. It changes direction at different points on the body, so watch for these changes. Use the dandy brush on the body and legs, but not the head.

Use the fine-bristle body brush on the head, body and legs. Again, brush in the direction the hair grows. Rub the horse from head to tail with a wool cloth or cotton towel rub rag to remove dust.

Many old-time grooms use their hands and fingers to rub and massage hair and muscles. When training a young foal, use your hands to rub, scratch and massage every part of its body.

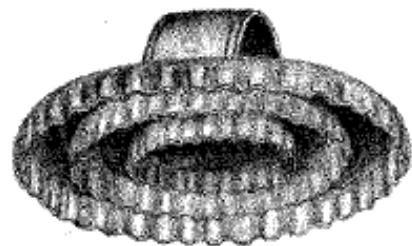


Figure 22. Curry comb.



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Trimming and clipping

Clippers and shears are additional tools used for grooming. Use clippers for cutting bridle paths and leg hair to trim around the head, ears and lower jaw, and to remove whiskers from the muzzle. Use shears in place of clippers for horses that are clipper shy. Clipping a horse can be dangerous; always have experienced people around to provide assistance.

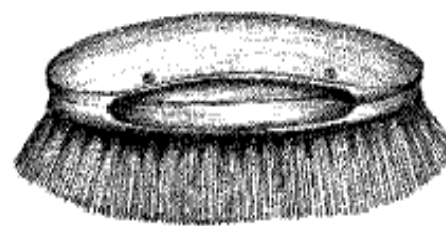


Figure 23. Dandy brush.

Mane and tail styles vary with breed preferences. Contact your breed association for grooming styles.

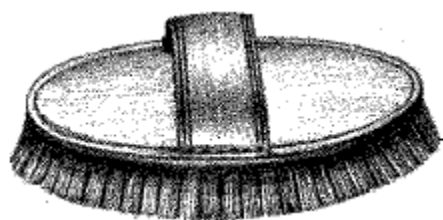


Figure 24. Body brush.

Regardless of style, keep the foretop, mane and tail neat. Work out tangles in the mane and tail with your fingers and brush with a dandy brush. Use caution when using a comb. Over a period of time, a coarse-toothed comb or currycomb will pull out hair and leave it thin. Never try to pull tangles out; they just become tighter. Pick at them to loosen snarls. Watch for burrs and sticks caught in the mane and tail; remove them carefully. When grooming the tail, stand at the horse's side and never directly behind the rear of the horse.

Hoof care

Proper cleaning of hooves requires you to pick up each hoof. Teach every foal to allow its feet to be picked up and handled. Begin when it is young so it gets accustomed to the feel of your hands. If you trim the foal's feet as it grows, you should have no trouble when the horse becomes full grown. Figures 25-28 shows how to properly pick up your horse's feet.

Clean the hoof from heel to toe. Pay particular attention to the area around the frog. Clean the depressions thoroughly between the frog and the bars to prevent thrush and other foot infections. Watch for rocks, nails, injuries and loose shoes. Check the growth of the hoof periodically; trim and change shoes when necessary.

Proper hoof trimming is very important because it keeps your horse standing squarely and moving straight. Trim hooves every six to eight weeks, depending on the rate of growth. The hooves of young horses should be watched closely as they grow. Keep feet trimmed regularly so that the muscles and bones of the feet and legs will develop correctly. A healthy hoof grows about 3/8 to 1/2 inch a month and the fastest growth is at the toe of the hoof. Do not let hooves grow long during winter months or when you are not using your horse. *Keep hooves trimmed.* If your horse is idle during winter months, it should be left unshod so its hooves have a chance to expand without being limited by shoes. This will prevent contracted heels.



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Corrective trimming and shoeing on some horses improves or corrects inherited faults in conformation. The work should be done only by a person fully experienced in the structure of the foot and leg who has the knowledge of corrective measures. Ask your farrier for the shoe size your horse wears on the front and back, and if he did corrective work on your horse. If so, ask what correction was needed and exactly what was done. Learn the basic points of proper shoeing so you will know when your horse is shod correctly. A poor job of shoeing can cripple your horse for long periods of time. Know what is correct and insist the job be done right.

The hooves of a horse will dry out rapidly in a dry climate and soils of the west. Keep your horse's hooves moist. A dry hoof will become brittle and crack; the frog will lose its elasticity. If a hoof is left dry too long, the frog will shrink and the heel will contract. Hoof dressing may be applied. One of the best preventions is to have some moist ground, possibly around the watering facilities, where the horse will stand long enough for moisture to go into the hooves. However, do not keep the hooves too moist because thrush infections grow in wet, manure-packed feet. If your horse gets thrush, apply a commercial germicidal preparation or a 7 percent iodine solution to the frog area of the hoof.

Fitting and training for show

Competition when showing horses, either halter or saddle, is keen. If you intend to compete, you must plan on spending many months training and fitting your horse.

Proper fitting is time-consuming and requires a good worming program, proper feeding, a balanced exercise schedule, grooming and training. You cannot fit a horse properly in a day, a week or a month. Start early.

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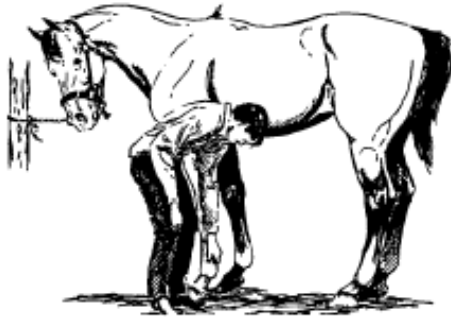


Figure 25. Near forefoot: Slide your left hand down the cannon to the fetlock. Lean with your left shoulder against the horse's shoulder. Reverse for picking up the off forefoot. When the horse shifts weight and relaxes on the foot, pick it up.



Figure 26. For a quick cleaning, hold the hoof in your free hand. When shoeing or during a long cleaning job, it will help to place the horse's foreleg between your legs. Hold your knees together to help support the weight of the horse's leg.



Figure 27. Near hindfoot: Stand forward of the hindquarter and stroke with your right hand from the point of the hip down the hip and leg to the middle of the cannon. As you move the right hand down, place the left hand on the hip and press to force the horse's weight to the opposite leg. Grasp the hock and lift the leg forward slightly, slide your hand down to the fetlock and lift the foot forward.



Figure 28. When the horse is settled, move to the rear, keeping the leg straight and swing your left leg underneath the fetlock to help support the horse's leg. Never pull the foot to the side - your horse will resist. Reverse sides for picking up the off leg.



CHAPTER 9: TRAINING

Good, consistent training is essential for your 4-H horse project. Every time you handle your horse, you are training it and reinforcing its previous experiences. All 4-H horse project members should take lessons, attend clinics and carefully observe other horse owners. Developing yourself into a competent horseman requires a dedicated and concerted effort.

Training methods vary with the trainer and the individual horse. A good trainer knows many methods and when to use them. This takes experience as you never stop learning. Do not attempt to handle and train a foal or yearling until you are old enough, large enough and have the maturity and experience to properly manage all situations.

The secret is to make what you want the horse to do easy for him to do, while at the same time making undesirable behavior difficult. The horse learns good behavior and responds to cues through repetition. Some learn faster than others, but in either case you, as a trainer, must know - what you want and ask for it in exactly the same way each time. Reward and stopping a cue at the correct moment is as important as giving the correct cue. Be patient, and remember one of your best aids is your voice. Talk to your horse with a soft, reassuring tone. Don't confuse your horse by asking too much too soon. Start out slow and be consistent with your training and commands.

Separate training into two parts, ground training and saddle training. This manual covers basic ground training. Saddle training requires experience and knowledge beyond the beginner or intermediate 4-H skill level, therefore only ground work is discussed here.

An untrained or improperly trained horse is a nuisance at the least, and some behavior can be dangerous. The cute little tricks a foal learns will soon become bad habits, and even dangerous ones, when the foal grows up. Don't "baby" your horse, young or old. Be firm about what you want it to do. Use discipline when needed, but don't be harsh or cruel.

Ground work refers to working with the horse while the handler is on the ground. Ground work is best started when the horse is still very young. Halter the foal when it is a few days old and begin to train it to lead and stand quietly tied. These lessons should be short and frequent. The foal must learn to respect this equipment and the handler. This is important since you will use a lead rope, tie-ropes and reins to communicate with your horse for the rest of its life. Use large diameter cotton rope (3/8- or 7/16-inch diameter) during early training. This rope is soft and will not give rope burns to your horse. This size is much easier to grip and hold.

Many trainers tie the haltered foal near its dam for short periods of time. Others halter-break by leading the foal separately when the dam is led. Still others will tie the foal to a stout fence or pole for a short time and let it learn to respect the halter and tie. To prevent injury to neck muscles, tie a nonslip loop around the foal's body immediately behind the withers and elbows, with the end between the front legs. Tie the end through the halter ring and back to the post, or wrap it around the post, and run it back through the halter ring. When the foal pulls back, the pressure of the body loop will increase and the foal will stop.

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This is not cruel as long as you watch the foal to ensure that it does not become entangled and injure itself. A good trainer will keep watch but will leave the foal alone to learn by itself. The foal must learn to respect the rope and halter if you want control and obedience later.

The foal should be taught to respond willingly to the lead rope. This is easier if it has learned to respect the halter. A good practice is to make a loop with your lariat and drop the loop over the rump of the foal (see figure 30). The loop should lie just ahead of the point of the hip and drop back to the rump under the buttocks. The rest of the lariat is held so a slight pull will give pressure at the loop if the foal holds back. Never jerk or pull at the head if the foal balks. This will cause the foal to fight back harder. Take it easy, and pet the foal when it responds correctly.

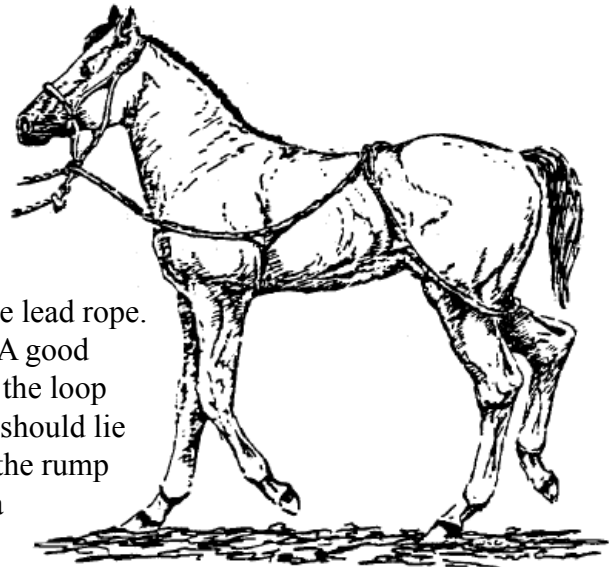


Figure 30. Loop lariat over foal's rump.

A horse taught to lead properly will move with you in any direction and at any speed. It will keep its head about even with your shoulder, or slightly in front, so you are about halfway between its head and shoulder. The horse should not crowd you or stay far away. It should keep a moderate distance away from you and work on a loose lead line. When you wish to stop, apply a slight resistance on the lead rope by making your hand passive, but do not pull back. The horse should stop when it feels this resistance. When it stops, it should stand straight and quietly, again on a loose lead. These points are very important for correct halter showing.

Don't forget to praise your horse with your voice and give him a pat when he responds correctly to training. While teaching a horse to lead, you should also teach the horse to respect your space and to move away from pressure. Your horse should quietly and immediately be willing to move any part of its body away from or toward the handler. A step or two at first is good enough. Later on, you can ask for more steps. Practice your ground work on both sides to keep your horse flexible and responsive.

Lunge line (ground training)

Many trainers use a lunge line for both training and conditioning horses. You will find a lunge line useful, especially for early training of young horses and exercising older horses.

A lunge line may be a lariat of light nylon or cotton rope at least 25-feet long. Fasten one end to a well fitted halter or lunging cavesson. The rest of the lunge line is held in the hand. Stand in a small area and drive the horse in a circle around you. Walk forward in a small circle as your horse moves in a larger circle. Keep the lunge line loose, but not dangling. A tight lunge line can spoil a natural gait. Do not attempt to use small diameter ropes since they do not coil properly and tangle. This is dangerous.



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It takes patience to teach a horse to work on a lunge line. Up to this time, your horse was trained to walk by your shoulder. Start to train your horse to circle by teaching it to walk in a small circle around you. As the horse learns and responds, increase the size of the circle by increasing the amount of line you let out. A long, light whip may be used as an extension of your hand to make your horse move out, but never strike hard. The snap of the whip behind its fetlock, or a touch of the whip or light flick on its hindquarters will give all the signal needed. Soon you will not need the whip.

Figure 31 shows your position to keep the horse moving around you in a circle. It is possible to train your horse to stop when you step forward from this position.

After your horse has learned to circle freely at a walk and stop when you step forward and say “whoa,” you can begin training it to trot and canter slowly. Always circle both directions equally so your horse will develop muscles and skill to work in both directions of the circle. This is an excellent way for your horse to learn and use the correct leads at the canter and develop its natural balance and grace without the weight of a rider.

Do not work the horse at excessive speed for a long length of time in small circles. This can cause stress and lameness in your horse’s legs. Keep the circle large; a tight circle is hard on a young horse’s joints.

Always use the same voice commands. Soon your horse will respond to these words.

Use a lunge line for regular exercise and training periods. Also, this is a good way to exercise your horse at a show. Both young and older horses should be trained to respond to the lunge line. In addition to lunging, you can ground drive your horse. This prepares a young horse for direct reining when put under saddle.

You’ll find that it is fun to train and work your horse from the ground. You will experience a difference in the way your horse responds when you ride.

Breaking a horse to saddle and saddle training is beyond the scope of this manual. Reference material about saddle breaking is available elsewhere.

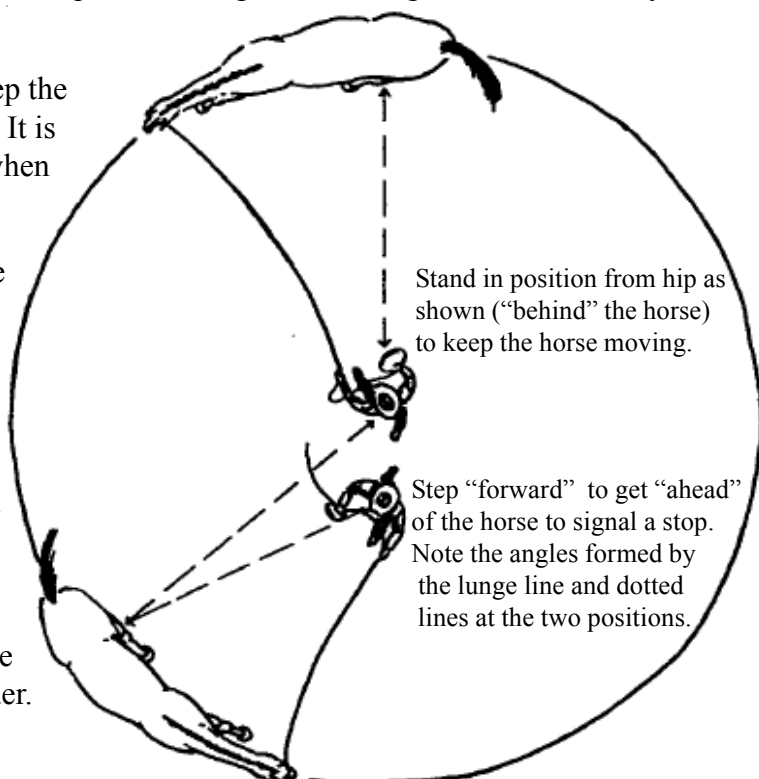


Figure 31. Lunge line or ground training.

CHAPTER 10: SHOWMANSHIP AT HALTER



Showmanship

The presentation of your horse to a judge is known as showmanship, and this presentation follows a pattern. A pattern is a written description of a group of maneuvers that the judge wishes to see and how he scores you on your skill in performing this pattern. A single maneuver is known as *walk, or trot, or back, or pivot*. A typical pattern for showmanship is to lead, walk, trot, back, set up or pivot the horse, in any combination. See the *NH 4-H Horse Rulebook* for suggested patterns, rules and explanation of scoring.

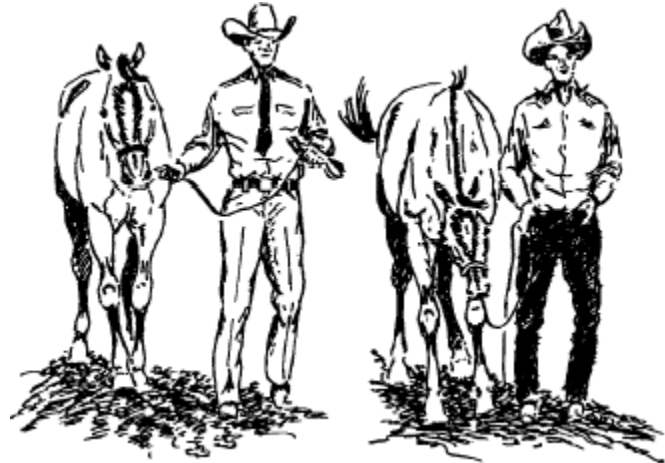


Figure 32. Note the clean, well-fitted horse and competitor on the left.

Presentation of the horse has two parts.

Part one is the appearance of the

exhibitor and condition and grooming of the horse. The exhibitor should be dressed in clean, fitted clothes, with polished boots and a brushed hat. The exhibitor's hair should be neatly arranged away from his or her face. The horse is required to be clean and brushed, with a combed mane and tail. Hair that has been clipped or trimmed should have a neat, tidy appearance. The halter and lead should fit well, and be clean and in good repair (see figure 32).

The second part of presentation is the actual performing of the pattern. The exhibitor should display confidence and poise when showing. The horse needs to be responsive to the exhibitor's cues when performing the pattern.

In the Show Ring

Be on time when the class is called. If an individual pattern is used, the show management will normally post the pattern. If no pattern is posted, enter the ring at the direction of the ring steward and watch the ring steward for instructions on where to go. Remember, even though the ring officials may be checking entries, the judge may be sizing up contestants as they come in, so stay awake.

When instructed to line up, enter the line from the rear in the position indicated. Line up evenly with the others and stand up your horse. Stand your horse quickly, then watch the judge. Do not crowd the other horses. Allow room between your horse and those on either side. When the class is lined up or leading head to tail, do not crowd the horse in front. The horse should set up quickly, stand squarely and move forward or backward freely. Pose the horse according to your breed standards.



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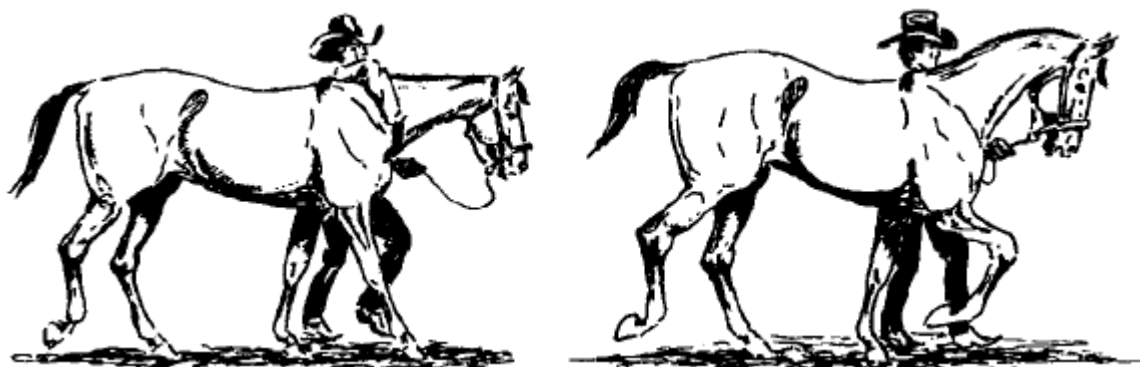


Figure 33. Be in control of your horse, hold the lead in your right hand and lead from the near (left) side. Note how the exhibitor on the left is not in control and the exhibitor on the right is clinching too tightly on the horse's head.

Training

There is never a substitute for training. No shiny halter, pretty new shirt or colorful hat will make you as competitive as the youth who has consistently schooled his or her horse. Training does not describe any particular way of teaching. As all horses think and act individually, training methods need to suit the individual's ability. A training method is generally acceptable as long as *safety rules* and *humane treatment* of the horse are practiced. See Chapter 16, *Horse Safety Guidelines*, for basic safety rules.

Three basic training rules

1. Patience
2. Consistency
3. Practice

Train at home until the signals you give are understood by the horse.

Note the safe zone areas in figure 34. These are the safe areas for someone who handles a strange or unschooled horse. When using the safe areas, you are out of the direct line of a sudden lunge, strike from the front legs or a kick from a back leg. Since a horse uses its head and neck to balance its body, the safe areas are the positions where maximum control can be exerted by pulling the horse's head to the side. This forces the horse off balance in hope of preventing further action if the horse becomes unruly.

Halter showing and showmanship customs today, especially in showmanship classes, encourage the exhibitor to move to either side of the horse. This is safe only if the horse is properly trained before entering the show ring. A horse acts independently on each side; therefore, you must train it to lead, stand and show from each side. Always handle a strange or untrained horse from the near (left) side since the majority of horses are started and handled from this side.



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As a trainer, you must give your horse the chance to do the work right. If you do not work your horse with patience and consistency, he can become confused. This often leads to a cranky, stubborn horse. *Practice makes you confident and the horse trustworthy.*

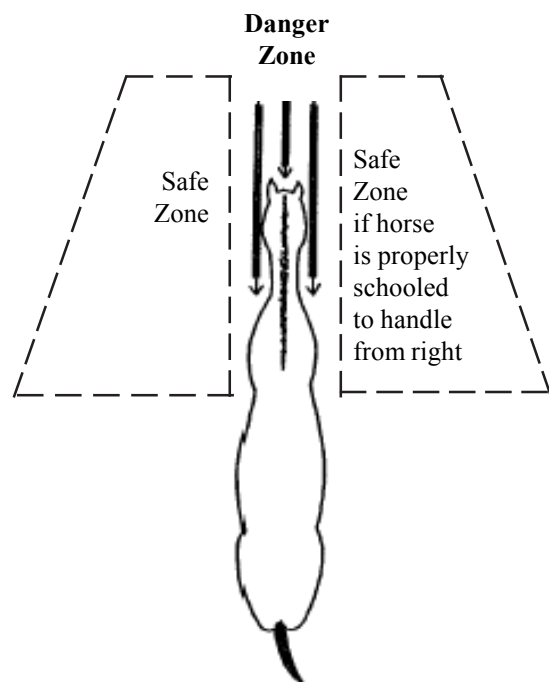
To begin training for showmanship, your horse must do two things: lead willingly and stand quietly.

The most important part of any showmanship pattern is the set up for inspection. The *set up* is a posed position of the horse for inspection by the judge. To achieve this pose, the exhibitor must teach the horse to stand squarely on each leg and stay posed until asked to change.

Bring your horse into the set up with the foot fall of the *right hind foot*. When you bring your horse from a walk to halt, the right hind becomes the base of your set up. *Do not move that foot.* Next is the placement of the left hind foot. Setting the hind feet is generally the most difficult chore in the beginning of training. Work only with the hind feet until you get a response. *Response* is movement of the foot or shift in weight when you pull or push on the lead shank. This beginning movement probably will not be correct in its placement, but once your horse understands he is to move a foot when you cue him, you can keep asking him to move his foot until he places it correctly, or anywhere you wish it to be. At first, you may have to pull very hard as the tendency of a standing horse is not to move. Once he moves, relax the lead. This is his reward.

The front feet are treated a little differently. The foot most out of position, or not square, is moved first. Moving the front feet is generally done with side to side motion of the lead, with the lead held under the chin. Again, when a front foot moves, release the tug. With patience, the

Figure 34. The shaded areas indicate safe zones for showing a horse from either side. Note the danger zone directly in front of the horse. Stand toward the front, not in the danger zone, and out of the direct line of action of a strike or lunge. It is permissible to cross the danger zone to get from one side of your horse to the other. Remaining in the danger zone is considered a fault. Use positions within the safe zones where both the horse and the judge can be observed.





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horse will become sensitive to any movement of the lead shank. In time, a slight tug on the lead will cause the horse to move a foot. Eventually, the horse will anticipate your cues and stand himself correctly.

To demonstrate your horse's natural movement and soundness, the judge often asks you to trot your horse. If your horse does not trot beside you, he must be taught to do so. Begin teaching the trot from the walk. Your body position at the walk and trot should be midway between the horse's head and shoulder. Once you and your horse can walk together in this position without any pulling on the lead shank, pick up the pace of the walk. Vary your speed at the walk to test your training. The horse should adjust his speed to match yours, if it does not, continue practicing the walk. When you ask for the trot, ask with the same sound or cue you use when riding or lunging. Walk briskly and cue him to trot just as you begin to trot yourself. If he does not trot, return to the brisk walk and ask again. Continue this routine until he trots. *Never pull or drag your horse.* Making your horse trot is a good test of your skill. Having a friend stand behind the horse and cluck or wave his arms is not.

Patterns quite often require a pivot or turn on the haunches. The pivot is usually described as a quarter or half turn, or 90 or 180 degree turn, and sometimes a full or 360 degree turn is asked for. The turn is always to the right or away from you when a quarter or more. To begin the training, you must start with the *right hind foot*. This is called the pivot foot. Position your left hand at the corner of the horse's mouth and your body midway between the head and shoulder. Holding the lead in your left hand, gently push against the face with your fingers while simultaneously pushing against the rib and shoulder with your right hand and stepping forward. The rib and shoulder must move before the head. If you turn the head or push too hard with your left hand, the horse will bend in the neck. To help move the rib and shoulders, cautiously use a crop or tapper. Try to keep the horse as straight as possible. This movement is difficult for the untrained horse. To move his rib and shoulder, begin the pivot. He must step around with his front legs and cross the left over the right, while keeping his right hind foot, the pivot foot, in place. He will most likely take a step back, or take a step out to the right with the pivot foot. If he does, simply pull him back around to the start position and begin again. When you begin your training, ask only for one step, and reward the horse by stopping. Training the pivot is a challenge, so one small step done correctly is great progress. You may need the help of a friend to keep track of the pivot foot's position, as it can be difficult to see when standing at the front of the horse.

Finally, after all the training and practice, it is time to meet the judge and perform the pattern. The function of showing with the quarter system is to allow the judge an unobstructed view of your horse to evaluate conformation, fitness and soundness. To keep the judge's view clear, the exhibitor must move from one side of the horse to the other. The showman chooses his side depending on the position of the judge. The following examples of the quarter system will explain the movements.

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The Quarter system

The four quarters can be visualized by an imaginary line drawn down the center of the horse's body extending from front and rear to divide the horse into left and right sides. Another line drawn across the horse at the base of the withers, extending out from both sides at right angles to the first line, divides the horse front and rear. This is shown by the dotted lines in figures 35 to 38. Visualize the judge moving in a clockwise direction around the horse or around the class of horses as you move from figure 35 through figure 38.

The exhibitor should stand angled toward the horse in a position between the horse's muzzle and eye, holding the lead with enough slack to allow movement under the chin as the handler changes position when the judge moves. The lead should be held flatly between the thumb and forefinger of the right hand, near the muzzle, but not touching the horse. The excess lead is held in the left hand in a manner comfortable for the exhibitor. Arms should be relaxed and the elbows slightly bent. Different positions are often required allowing for the height of the exhibitor.

A minimum number of steps should be taken when changing sides. You can limit your steps and make a smoother change by stepping off with the inside foot, placing it on the other side of the horse, turning on the foot as you place your other foot along side. The hand should follow the foot, moving quietly under the chin of the horse.

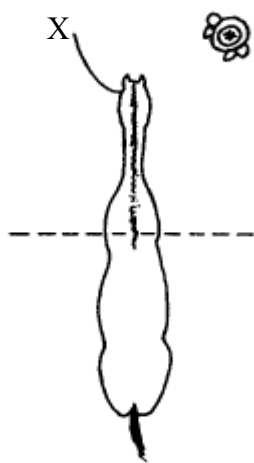


Figure 35. First, the exhibitor is in the basic position - safe zone at horse's left - and the judge at the horse's right front or in the right front quarter.

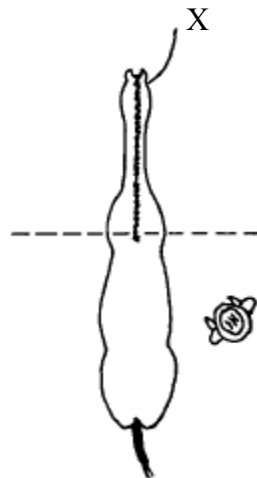


Figure 36. Second, as the judge moves across the imaginary line to the right rear quarter, the exhibitor steps across to the horse's right side.

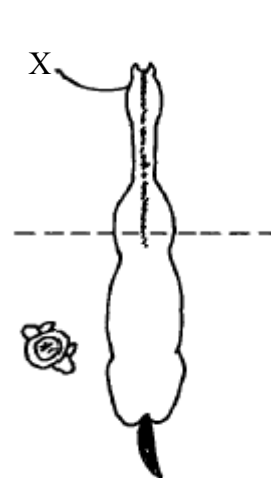


Figure 37. Third, the judge moves into the left rear quarter, and the exhibitor steps back to the left to be on the same side as the judge.

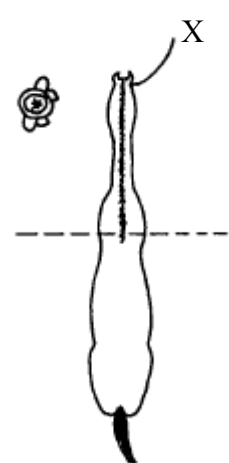


Figure 38. Fourth, as the judge moves to the left front, the exhibitor steps back to the right to avoid blocking the judge's view.

X = Exhibitor Position