

Working In Hand

Turn on the Forehand & Turn on the Haunches

By Lynn Palm

When you teach your horse certain maneuvers on the ground, he will already be familiar with them when you are in the saddle. To teach these maneuvers, outfit your horse with leg protection and a properly fitting halter with a longe line attached to the lower side ring of the halter on the side where you are standing.

Turn on the Forehand

In a turn on the forehand, the horse's front legs remain more or less on the same spot, while his hind legs make a turn around the forehand. When the turn is completed, the horse is facing in the opposite direction.

To properly cue your horse for the turn on the forehand, your hand must be in the same position where you would give the cue with your leg when in the saddle. This "target area" is located on the lower half of the horse's barrel, approximately 10 inches behind his heart girth. This is the area where your lower leg contacts his lower barrel when your foot is in the stirrup. Be consistent where you apply this cue and use a cupped hand with pulsating pressure, rather than poking with your knuckles or fingers.

First, get your horse into position by asking him to stand square. It may help to stand between your horse and a fence line to help him stay straight. Position yourself close to his left side, with the excess longe line neatly coiled in your right hand. Gently stroke him with your right hand on his topline, gradually working down to the target area. Avoid the temptation to immediately go to the target area and give the cue. An abrupt cue may cause him to swing his hips away from you; or, if he does not understand what you are asking him to do, he may lean into you.

At the same time you are giving the cue, extend your left hand to lightly grasp the chin piece of the halter. Slightly move the horse's head to the left (toward you), which positions him to move his hindquarters to the right as you use a pulsating pressure on the target area.

If you need more response, give a "cluck" to reinforce your request. Stay relaxed and move with your horse as he moves his hindquarters. Keep your left hand extended to maintain his head in the proper position and do not bend his neck too far towards you.

Do not hold the halter tightly or steer the horse's head from the halter. Remember, this maneuver is done by asking the horse to move his hindquarters by moving off your right hand on the target area, not by cranking his head around!

For the first lessons, only ask him to pivot a few steps, then stop and praise him. Build up so that he can perform the maneuver to 90 degrees and then to a full 180 degrees or more. Teach the forehand turn from both sides of your horse.

Turn on the Haunches

In this maneuver, the horse bends in the direction of the turn and his forehand moves around his hindquarters. His forefeet and his outside hind foot move around his inside hind foot, which is picked up and put down slightly in front of the spot where it left the ground. When a turn on the haunches to the right is correctly executed, the horse's left foreleg crosses in front of his right as he pivots around in a small circle with his hind legs, and vice versa for a turn on the haunches to the left. This maneuver, like the forehand turn, teaches the horse to move away from pressure and is the basis of lateral work.

Before teaching this lesson, be sure your horse will consistently walk forward and halt on your command.

We will start with a turn on the haunches to the right. Position yourself between a wall (or a fence) and the horse's left side. The wall or fence will help keep his body straight as you start the turn, and block him from moving backward when you execute the turn.

Walk your horse forward along the fence, and ask him to stop, standing straight and square. Stand close to the horse facing his left side between his shoulder and neck. Hold the excess longe

line neatly coiled in your right hand. Place this hand on the point of his left shoulder, which is where you will give the cue for this command. If your horse is sensitive to this touch, you may need to gently stroke him from his withers down to his shoulder to get him accustomed to the contact.

With your left hand, lightly grasp the halter's side ring at the horse's jaw, with just enough contact to guide the head.

It is absolutely important to keep the horse's head and neck in straight alignment with his body and hindquarters. His head must not bend left while he is traveling to the right. He must stay forward and stepping sideways as he executes this maneuver. Use your eyes to read his body language and be ready to react with your hands and voice if he tries to evade the maneuver by walking out of it or backing up instead of moving sideways.

Once you are in position, give the horse the cue for the turn on the haunches by using a light pulsating pressure with your right hand on his shoulder as your left hand gently guides his head slightly to the right. At the same time give a "cluck" to encourage him to move away from you as you step towards him. The cue and your position at his shoulder will reinforce his reaction to move his forehand away from pressure. Maintain the cue as you step with him, guiding his forehand along a 180-degree arc. Continue moving with him to avoid pulling on his head and reinforce his response to move away. Make sure his left fore leg is crossing in front of his right fore leg and that his hind feet are pivoting.

Do this maneuver slowly... this is not an in-hand reining spin! Start with just a few steps to get the feel of the maneuver and ask him to "whoa." Rub the point of the shoulder where you cued him and praise him. Ask for a few more steps. When you are able to complete a 180-degree turn, stop giving the cues, and finish the lesson by walking forward out of the maneuver rather than stopping. Switch the end of the longe line coil back to your left hand to resume a leading position. This will reinforce to your horse that is a forward maneuver.

The most common problem is the horse moving backward or forward instead of sideways. If this happens, evaluate your position first. Make sure you are keeping the horse's body straight during this maneuver.

If your horse steps backward rather than sideways when you cue him to move away from you, then stop, walk out of the turn, and try again. If he does not immediately move his forehead when you give the cue again, "cluck" with more authority. Keep your hand on the halter and try a pulsating pressure to encourage him to move forward and sideways. If he still balks, he is telling you he does not understand. Go back and re-teach the basic ground commands until he can walk forward on cue.

If the horse walks forward rather than sideways or moves his head to the left, use a pulsating pressure with your left hand on the halter and say "easy," or "slow down." This reinforces the "move away from me" cue and redirects his movement to the right.

Change the lead and do the maneuver from the opposite side. Be sure to switch the longe line over his nose to the opposite side.

For more step-by-step instruction on these important lessons, check out my **Longevity Training** book and the section of my **Longevity Training Visual Series**, titled "**Working in Hand.**" They are available at www.lynnpalm.com along with other fine training products and information about our courses.



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