

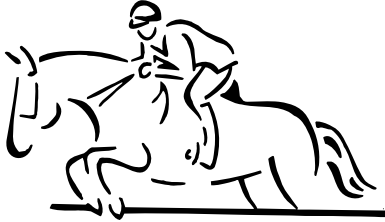
EQUINE REHAB AND THERAPY

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Back re-education exercise program

Adapted from Physical Therapy and massage for the horse, Jean-Pierre Pailloux

The back of any horse is the bridge that connects the propulsion with the turning ability, a sort of transmission if you will. It is also the weakest link in that connection and the place we as riders put pressure through our weight.

Global rules for correct back rehabilitation:

- 1) No abdominals, no back. High headed, hollow backed frames will have back and lumbar issues.
- 2) Counter the instinctive lifting of head and neck (i.e. work on the "bottom" line).
- 3) Engage the muscles involved in propulsion progressively and in stages
- 4) Engagement is the only way of exercising the horse without making it suffer.

EXERCISES

Daily for ____ days

- 1) Hand walk up incline 10 –15 yards, without raising head
- 2) Volte, in hand, at a walk, 5-10 each rein
- 3) Work on the lunge with incurvation and lowering of the neck, 10-meter circles with 4 poles on ground. (5-10 min.)
- 4) Canter on lunge, start slow, relaxed with neck low 2-3 min then lift neck and chest 3-5 minutes
- 5) Back, in hand, figure eight, 10 m circles

Mounted work; Day _____:

- 1) Start session with above exercises
- 2) Work on two tracks at the three gaits (5 min per gait)
- 3) Work on smooth up and down transitions (walk-trot-walk) without losing equilibrium
- 4) False or counter canter (3-5 min each rein)
- 5) Figure eight, half at a counter canter; develop engagement while executing the canter on the correct lead.
- 6) Back, 10-15 meters with head low and no resistance (4-5 times)

Importance of working with neck low for suppling and back issues

Working your horse with the neck low allows the back to open, with the neck and nuchal ligament stretching the spine. This is the opposite of the head high, hollow frame that causes so many back issues. Scientists have also found the proprioceptive nerves run outside the spinal cord along the back. When the back is braced and spasmed (hollow or inverted) it interferes with the transferring of information and affects coordination and athletic ability beyond just physical restriction. This frame also requires the building of the abdominal muscles, to support the horses' movement and it releases emotional sources of

muscle tension. But it also subtly transfers weight forward on the horse and is counter indicated in horses that have front joint disease or tendonitis.