

Round Penning & Longeing

By Nettie Barr | Canadian Natural Horsemanship Inc. | www.canadiannaturalhorsemanship.com



After we teach the principle of circling or longeing, we put purpose to these principles and can send a horse while doing as little as possible, "asking" this horse to go to the left or the right around us.



When we put purpose to circling, we may ask the horse to go around us to the left or the right over a barrel, over a tarp, or even through water.



Advanced circling - sending over barrels

Round penning and longeing are both very popular techniques in horsemanship. When used effectively, you create an understanding between both horse and handler at different gaits, and distances challenging the relationship. Unfortunately, like many techniques it has been over-used and abused. To determine if a technique is benefiting a horse, we must determine if it is building mind in the horse or just endurance. Many people round pen or longe to take the edge off of their horse running them "mindlessly". The problem being that if you longe your horse for 10 minutes this week "mindlessly", next week you must do this for 20 minutes, the week after 40, then 80 minutes, etc., building only endurance in your horse rather than mind and understanding. So let's take a look at

both techniques and their purpose when used properly.

Round Penning

The purpose of round penning is to allow the horse to learn his/her responsibilities in a safe environment, without a mixed message from the handler pulling on the lead shank creating pressure on the halter. The first objective of round penning is to obtain control over the horse's feet. If we cannot control the feet, we cannot effectively build mind and understanding with the horse. We obtain this control by causing the horse to go left, right, changing directions and gait. When we have this understanding, we then create a "draw" where the horse faces us and comes in for a rest. This creates an understanding that we are the safe, comfortable place to be.

Horses base everything on 2 critical things: Things to run away from, and

things not to run away from. It really is that simple, due to the fact that a horse is a flight animal, but will fight if pushed too far. So, if we create the understanding that we are the safe, comfortable place to be, the horse will find relaxation and the desire to remain with us. We want to establish that we are the "lead" horse, rather than the "dominant" horse. Think about this term. In your line of work would you like to be referred to as the "dominant" person in your office or the "lead" person in your office. My point is that leadership is based on good positive, progressive interactions where we may be required to be assertive, but not aggressive. Dominance can at times have a negative connotation, meaning we are not being a leader but controlling, maybe through fear or intimidation. This is not a solid foundation for respect with any man or beast. Longeing, also referred to as circling on line, when used effectively helps the horse

Nettie Barr is a passionate force in the horse industry. As owner and founder of Canadian Natural Horsemanship Inc., Nettie has been conducting clinics since 1999 and has developed her own philosophy, style and teaching methodologies. Nettie is well known for her personal approach to setting up both horse and handler for success with lasting results. Nettie is a member of the many horse associations, a former board member of the Alberta Equestrian Federation; a Registered Paint Horse and Azteca Breeder; and a member of several curricular focus groups for N.A.I.T. (Northern Alberta Institute of Technology), Grande Prairie Regional College Fairview and the Green Certificate Program. Nettie is a recognized Horse Specialist that has served as a program developer, consultant, clinician, and a guest speaker for various clubs, businesses, organizations, colleges and universities. Nettie has a gift for reaching people of all ages with her positive, passionate approach that empowers students, instructors, professionals, and horse enthusiasts with a deeper knowledge of the equine. Nettie is expanding into the area of motivation and leadership presentations drawing parallels between natural horsemanship and leadership in the work force.



understand his/her responsibilities when “attached” to me. It also teaches the horse to respond to a feel, learning to give to pressure, finding the end of the line. Also, it helps me check out the horse in movement under saddle to ensure that all is well prior to mounting. We must obtain this understanding on both the left and right side of the horse. When circling on line, I do not use this technique to run the horse to take the edge off. Rather I use it as a means of communicating by “asking” the horse to go left and right, yield and face me, at walk/trot and canter in the form of a conversation. I want to check out if the horse is “tuned in” to me or just running around in a reactive way. I evaluate the send, the movement and return, based on whether the horse is responding or reacting to me. Is the horse focused on me or distracted? I want the horse focused in on me. I also want to check if the horse is softening rather than leaning, creating a soft feel. Think about training as having a conversation through body language rather than just moving their feet and running around in a reactive way. We want the horse to become focused on us in a responsive manner.

In summary, our objective with horses is to build mind. “Build mind and the body will follow”, is a saying that I often use. There is no mystery to good horsemanship. The “secret” to good horsemanship is the ability to control the movement of the horse and reward the slightest try. We want to develop respect, confidence and leadership with our horses. Our basis for training should follow the principles of having a conversation rather than using force; being assertive rather than aggressive. There should be building blocks to bring the horse to the level of understanding that you are building towards. It should be based on principles of safety, for both you and the horse, building to responses and acceptance.

Horsemanship is often portrayed as something mystical. My goal is to take the “mystery” out of horsemanship replacing it with more “common sense” strategies. Good horsemanship principles should be based on how horses communicate with one another. Take into consideration that the horse also has a confidence and dignity level. We do not want to take the try out of the horse.

To quote Theodore Roosevelt, “*Horses don't care how much you know, till they know how much you care*”.

I wish you many enjoyable and safe encounters with horses. 🐾

Pets Leave Carbon Paw Prints

A New Zealand study reports that more than two acres of land are needed to provide the meat and grain necessary to sustain a medium-sized dog for its lifetime. The researchers from Victoria University of Wellington also showed other findings about our pets' impact on the planet:

- Cats kill a lot of wildlife. Worldwide estimates put yearly kitty-induced death tolls into the billions.
- Along the California coast, sea otters are experiencing an epidemic caused by the bacteria *Toxoplasma gondii*, found in cat feces. Cat owners flushing stool and litter down the toilet has created a situation where *T. gondii* is collecting in rivers and estuaries. (*firstline.com*) 🐾



An Indian tiger looks on from a camouflaged cover of strawgrass in Ranthambhore National Park near Rajasthan, India. (J. Scott Applewhite/AP)

Tiger Census Yields Good News, and a Warning

India's latest tiger census shows an increase in the numbers of the endangered big cat, but threats to their roaming territory could reverse those gains. The census counted at least 1,706 tigers in forests across the country, about 300 more than four years ago. The increase is good news but caution is necessary against any complacency in efforts to save the iconic animal from extinction. Wildlife experts who conducted the census said tiger corridors, which are the routes frequently used by the big cats to move from one reserve to another, had declined sharply as huge power projects, mining and roads cut into their habitats. But with India pushing ahead with its economic agenda, the threat to the tiger increases as the government tries to juggle the competing claims of development and wildlife conservation. Unlike earlier tiger estimates, when pugmarks [footprints] of individual tigers were counted, this time round conservationists used hidden cameras and DNA tests to count the cats in 17 Indian states where tigers live in the wild. A century ago, about 100,000 tigers roamed India's forests. Shrinking habitats have brought the wild cats into conflict with farmers who live near tiger reserves and poachers who kill them for pelts and body parts. The release of the latest tiger census results coincided with the start of a three-day international conference to follow up on progress made at the 2010 St. Petersburg summit of 13 countries that are home to wild tigers. At the New Delhi meeting, countries presented strategies to implement the Global Tiger Recovery Program adopted in St. Petersburg which includes plans to double the tiger population by 2022, crack down on poaching and on trading in illicit tiger pelts and body parts. (*Associated Press*) 🐾