



23120 Garrison Road • Corcoran • Minnesota • 55340-9106
Business (763) 498-6565 • Fax (763) 498-6565
mary@riderselite.com • www.riderselite.com

Published in *HORSE'N AROUND* • Safety First Series • February 2005

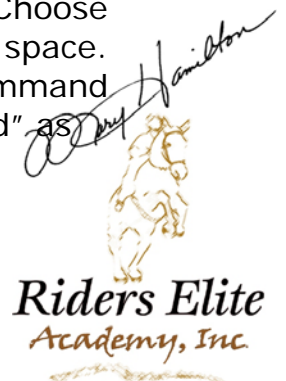
“Train your horse to stand”

This article teaches a training technique that will help promote safety for you and your horse. How to train him to stand on cue. Teaching our police horses to stand quietly is essential as you will see in the Police Story. Teaching your horse to stand makes everything you do around him safer; whether it's putting on a blanket, grooming, a visit from your veterinarian or ferrier. This makes their job safer and easier too.

Teaching your horse to stand isn't difficult. But it does require consistency, patience and plenty of repetition. This is not one of those training lessons you work on for twenty minutes and you're through with it. It's a lesson you do frequently for short periods of time. I like to finish my training session with it. It's easier for your horse to learn to stand at the end of a lesson than when he is fresh. After working hard, standing and resting becomes a reward. Then he gets turned out which is an even greater reward for standing.

Before training your horse to stand you need his yielding responses confirmed. That means your horse has learned to yield his head when he feels pressure on his halter not pull against it. This ground work is very important. It prevents a horse from feeling claustrophobic when tied. Failure to do this kind of ground work can result in a horse that pulls back when he feels the end of the lead rope instead of giving to the pressure. In a panic these horses can pull back breaking their halters. This could cause injury to you or your horse.

Begin training your horse to stand in an arena or round pen. Choose an area where if he walks off he is still safe in an enclosed space. Equip your horse with a halter and lead rope. Select a verbal command to use when you want your horse to stand. I like the word “stand” as





23120 Garrison Road • Corcoran • Minnesota • 55340-9106
Business (763) 498-6565 • Fax (763) 498-6565
mary@riderselite.com • www.riderselite.com

opposed to “whoa”. Whoa can get confusing to your horse if you give it multiple meanings. Does whoa mean slow down when your horse is going to fast? Does it mean stop or does it means stand quietly where I put you?

With the lead rope in one hand, give the verbal cue for “stand” and press directly down on the top of his withers with your free hand. I want to cue stand not only verbally but with my body. Eventually when I am riding all I need to do to cue him to stand is press my hand on his withers. If your horse stands quietly, praise him and rub him on the shoulder. If he takes a minor step, reposition him exactly where he was before and again give the verbal command “stand” and press down on his withers. If he isn’t paying attention to you or tries to jog off, detach the lead rope and send him out around the round pen at a trot. Do a series of changes of direction and gaits. Once you have his attention and focus bring him back to the center of the pen and ask for stand. He will get the message; standing is a lot easier than working. As you practice this, your horse should stand for longer and longer periods of time. Once he has learned the concept of stand, you should move around the arena as he stands. This teaches him his responsibility is to stand once you have given him the cue no matter where you are or what you are doing. Correct a small mistake by repositioning his body and repeating your stand cues. Correct a big mistake by sending him out around the pen until his is refocused on you. Finish your training session with a good standing effort. Use plenty of praise when he does it right. Train this lesson in short sessions so your horse doesn’t become bored or distracted and repeat it often.

Next month we will continue this lesson by teaching your horse to stand tied, while you mount and when you cue him while riding. By teaching your horse to stand quietly you both will be much safer. Tasks like grooming and putting your horse’s blanket on are so much easier when your horse stands quietly.





23120 Garrison Road • Corcoran • Minnesota • 55340-9106
Business (763) 498-6565 • Fax (763) 498-6565
mary@riderselite.com • www.riderselite.com

Police Story

Boomer is a big, bay quarter horse with a tendency to worry. Teaching him to stand was not an easy task because as soon as he would worry about that scary blowing plastic bag, his feet would move. Boomer had done well in his initial basic training as a police horse. Now it was my job to take him out on the street and teach him police work.

Our first few rides out in the real world, Boomer performed well. Though wide-eyed, Boomer was brave and he tried hard. And I got, shall we say "over confident". Things were going so well in fact, I thought I would try a few traffic stops. I picked my surveillance spot and waited for the next speeder. It didn't take long and I spotted one going twenty miles over the limit. "Bingo", I thought. Ticket book ready, I blew my whistle and signaled the car to pull over. I confidently rode to the driver's window and asked for his license and registration. I cued Boomer to stand by pressing on his withers then reached out to retrieve the driver's license. **BOOM!** My knee broke the mirror off the driver's door and it hung there dangling. Nervous from the traffic zipping by Boomer had trotted forward. Oh boy, what do I say now? I sincerely apologized, handed the driver my business card to send the repair bill to and said, "No ticket today". Luckily the driver was a kind hearted fellow horse owner and he was driving an 89 Ford Bronco not a Porsche.

Knee throbbing, I wrote up my accident report form. Explain that one to your chief. Boomer and I both received written letters of reprimand in our files from the safety review board. Lesson learned, stand is an important training component!!!

