

## Horses must move forward freely for pleasurable ride

Controlled forward motion is essential for a pleasant horseback ride.

While that may sound like a philosophical description of riding a horse, careful analysis of the words yields meaning. A horse must move in the direction and at the speed requested and stop when asked, or the ride is not fun.

Most horses do ride readily and are controllable upon command, but there are a few that refuse to advance in a straight line and pick up speed on

request. Typically, these are young horses which haven't learned how to move yet or they're lazy, stubborn and resistant. It can also occur with older, seasoned horses which have become tired of, or soured at, their job, whether it be barrel racing, steer roping or even competition pleasure riding.

What can be done to get that desired controlled forward motion from a resisting horse?

"Getting horses to move out can definitely be a

problem sometimes. Older horses can get silly on you too," said Mark Gratny, longtime Leavenworth horse trainer.

Every horse is different and each situation requires a unique technique. "On young horses that don't want to go, I continue riding them with a snaffle bit in a round pen," Gratny explained. "I have my assistant in the center to help me get the horse moving, and I ride until the horse starts giving, bending and flexing."

The first inclination of a

rider might be to kick hard on the horse to get movement. "A lot of those kind of horses will just stop when you kick them," Gratny said. "I just take my spurs off and try to use my lower legs and squeeze as much as possible."

Some riders want to whip the sulking horse. "I have paddled 'em on the rear, but that doesn't always work either. Certain ones will turn into buckers. I'd just as soon not do that," Gratny said.

Riding with or following another horse will get some horses to move out freer. "It's a trial and error thing sometimes," he added.

Leading with another horse will work as a solution in certain situations. "I will pony a balking horse with another horse, and it's best to have a third rider behind to drive," described Tim Davidson, Emporia rancher and rope horse trainer.

"I've had horses that just don't want to go. If I continue ponying them,

they'll usually come around and ride right up beside me," Davidson said.

Riding a colt in a small pen with no head tack was suggested as a method to get one started moving in the beginning. "The last thing you want to do is scare him at the head," he acknowledged.

"I've found that riding a colt in a round pen without a bridle or halter and having another person drive him works well," the trainer recognized. "All the horse really needs to do in the beginning is take one step and then reward him. The main thing is to keep

him as quiet and calm as you can."

Praise and reward are essential to keep progressing on the movement. "Once the horse moves out, just let him go anywhere he wants and at any speed, and when he stops, let him rest and then start over again," Davidson said.

"It might take a couple of days and maybe even a little switch," the cowboy admitted. "When the horse does what you want, be sure to praise him, then put him up and start again the next day."

Line driving from the  
*Continued on page 11*

ground was also recommended. "I drive horses in my 40-foot covered round pen. I can control them from the ground without being abusive," said Bill James, veteran Abilene trainer of world champions and internationally acclaimed judge.

"Horses that sulk up and balk will get freed up and learn to move out when I drive them from the ground," continued James, who uses a rope hackamore made out of a lariat, and strings the driving ropes through the stirrups.

"I use the same cues on the ground that I do when I'm on their back," James noted. "Sometimes it takes a lot of patience. When the horse stops, I rub his neck

and let him relax before he takes off again.

"Don't get in a hurry. The more time it takes, often the better it is," James contended.

Gratny agreed, "I drive everything from the ground. I teach them that a kiss means to move out, and then when I get on their backs, they'll usually go right on that cue."

A reining horse specialist, Gratny finds that all basic maneuvers: the stop, back, turn, roll back and sidepass are best trained starting from the ground.

"I drive all my horses. It can really help an old horse sometimes, too," Davidson noted.

In a seminar last summer, Texas clinician Buster McLaury suggested "over

and under" pressure with reins or halter rope to get movement from a resistant mount. He also recommended riding horses back toward the barn when asking for freer action and a pick up in speed.

Ranch day worker and cattle horse trainer, Paul Blair of Allen works sulking horses in the round pen with a snaffle bit using the "over and under" technique, after he's confident the horse doesn't want to buck.

"Once the horse starts freeing up in the pen though, he needs to get out in the open, and he will usually move out pretty good," Blair recognized.

Laying horses down can help certain resistant horses, but is definitely not a

sure cure-all. Both James and Gratny do lay horses down sometimes, but do not recommend it on a regular basis, especially by novice owners.

While breeding and bloodlines can sometimes have an effect, the problem of resisting forward motion would not typically be due to genetics of the horse in Gratny's opinion.

Teeth and mouth problems usually don't keep a horse from moving out either, Gratny evaluated. "I like to check a horse's teeth out to make sure they aren't hurting somewhere," Davidson said.

On older, soured horses, the trainers insisted: "Back up and start over. Go back to the basics."

All of the trainers indicated that with the variety of techniques suggested they could typically get sulling, lazy and soured horses to move out freer than when they started.

While many clinicians and even some trainers, as well as prejudiced owners, won't ever admit it, Gratny said, "Some horses realistically just aren't worth the time it takes to cure the problems of resisting forward motion."

Although the trainers

can get freer motion out of resistant horses, the problem often comes when the horses go back into the hands of lay and weekend riders. "The horses sometimes revert back to their old habits," Gratny said. These horses that stand around all week don't like the idea of going back to work on weekends. "It actually takes a number of days to get them in shape," Gratny said.

When a horse continues to be resistant, Gratny pointed out, "There is always another horse out there, and there are horses that are not a problem."

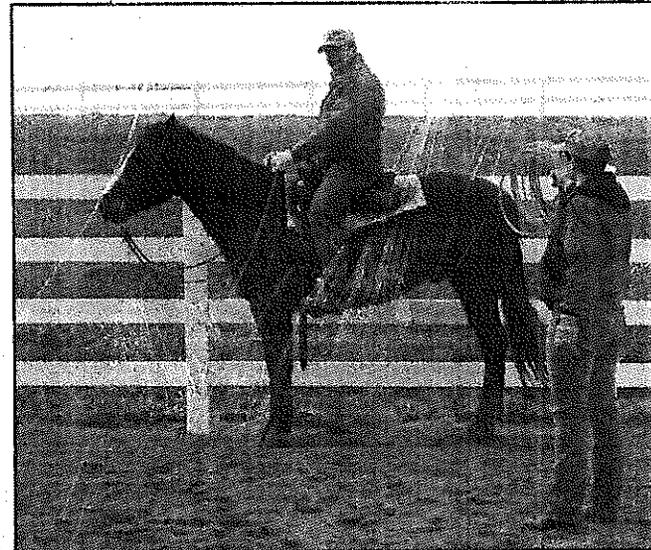
## Quarter Horseman Puncher Cooper dies in accident

The horse world lost a good friend and major breeder in the recent tragic death of Edgar V. "Puncher" Cooper, 74, in big bale-tractor accident at his Emporia ranch. Raising registered Quarter Horses for over 50 years, Cooper completed his 25th annual production sale last fall.

"There's no feeling like being up on a horse when the sun comes up in the morning," Cooper was quoted on the memorial at his service which drew an overflow attendance of more than 500.

"Give a youngster a horse and he will work, learn and love," Cooper

was recognized as stating indicative of beliefs. The first Kansan to compete in the National High School Rodeo when it was in New Mexico in the late '40s, Cooper's memorial goes to the Kansas High School Rodeo Association.



When Mark Gratny, Leavenworth trainer, has a difficult time getting a horse to move out, he goes back to the basics and rides the horse in the round pen as his assistant Georgia Shafer drives the horse to keep it moving. (Illustrates concepts discussed in "For the Love of Horse" found in section one.)

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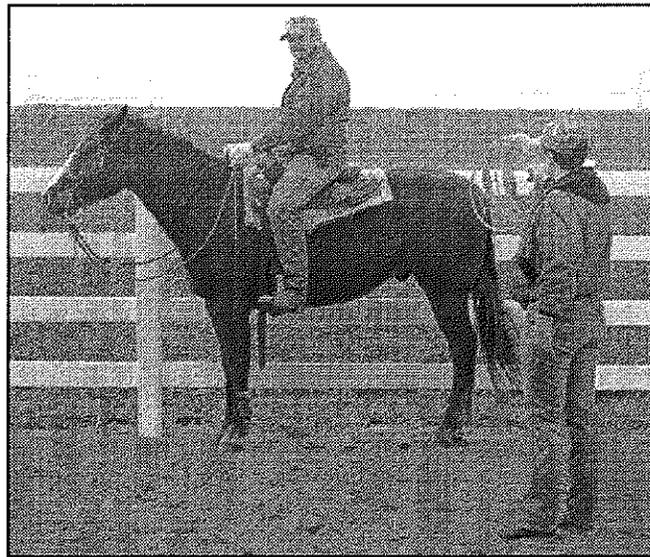
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