

Tracy Porter

Article

Horses That Buck & Riding On Hills

By Me, Tracy Porter

If your horse bucks not only is he **NOT** giving his jaw to the bit but he isn't giving his hip to the bit. To put it bluntly, we don't have control of our horse not even one tiny, teeny, piece of a body part. When horses buck, they have their hips totally engaged. Riding bucking horses is not safe and if one bucks, I know that I better solve the problem before getting back on. PERIOD.

The horse needs to be soft with every stride. Actually, we should be riding every stride of the horse anyway, not just when we want something or are going out of control. If we have this concept in mind, then we can do something as soon as we recognize that something is stiff. If we fail to feel this, we can look for some visible signs that eminent danger is lurking around the corner. Then we can disengage the hips as soon as we feel the horse stiffen and/or nod his head.

Rushing up hill is also an out of control issue. When horses rush up and down hills, we have a lack of speed control and directional control of the feet. The horse may also be lacking fundamental balance and confidence.

Where do we begin? For the bucking problem on the ground. It is very important that we understand why, how and when to move the horse's hips. It is also important to understand if our horse is giving his jaw and how well. We can see if our horse can give the jaw while giving the hip. Then, we need to not only continue to practice but to move to different training areas to practice. Teaching this at other gaits and speeds, too.

To solve rushing up hills, we don't need a huge hill. In most cases, starting in a flat arena is the best starting place. Later, we can use any kind of incline as a small pop quiz to see if we are on the right track in our training. A ditch or small incline works well to practice stopping while walking up and down. Take a step forward, one back, until you are able to walk up a couple of steps and back down the couple of steps up and down. Most problems are with going up...since most people let the horse go at his own speed. Going down can be just as tricky, the horse needs to learn to reposition his weight to gain his balance. Basically, he learns to crawl down the hill with his rear acting as a brake. When horses rush down a hill, they are carrying most of the weight on their forehead. When we get control of the hips, we are developing our horses set of brakes. He learns by baby steps that he can carry the weight on his rear, and still disengage his hips and come to a complete stop while in the middle of a descent. If you want to know how it feels for your horse to take you down a hill, try walking down a steep hill with your shoulders in front of your feet. If you remain in control during the descent let your legs move forward (in other words, don't try to slow down) you will feel gravity pulling you. If you don't have an incline, **picture** yourself holding on to the back of a pickup truck while it is in drive. As the vehicle begins to accelerate, we lose control of **OUR** leg speed. They begin to move faster and faster in order to keep them under us but if the vehicle goes too fast, or we trip we will do a face plant on the gravel. Your horse feels the same way when he's hauling you down a hill.

Really good control results in the horse disengaging under himself versus moving the hip to the side. But we can't start here. As in the bucking problem, we must begin getting control of that hip first on the ground next to the horse. While still on the ground, we can expand the level of confidence in both ourselves and our horses by gaining control of the hip not only at the walk, but the trot, canter or the respective gaits our horse is capable of performing. Depending upon the previous training of the horse you may find that you need to spend anywhere from an eternity to a few minutes learning

and teaching this basic act of safety to yourself and your horse. Once you've accomplished the ground skills, we re-teach it on the back of the horse. I never would go out on a trail ride on any horse without checking its brakes. In your car, do you put your foot on the brake before you put it into drive? Would you recognize if the car crept forward with your foot still on the brake? Would you continue on your 20-mile trip to the hospital? (You may as well be headed that way as you will probably end up there anyway in the back of an ambulance.) If you answered yes to any of these questions please consider walking as your mode of transportation!

Once we master the hip we can practice it on a slope. Be careful your first time on a steeper grade as you could flip the horse over. I pick up the rein and move slowly feeling that the horse still has his feet. Please note...I don't have much problem as I really try to conquer the hips and shoulders before to going on something really steep. When I get there...I have it so ingrained in the training, that it is easy to help the horse find his balance.

How long will it take to train a horse to do this? It really doesn't take much time, but it does depend on how secure we are with what we are teaching. We all have different levels of understanding, our understanding changes and evolves as we grow in our learning life.

Training horses is process that not only takes TIME but time with a LESSON FRAMEWORK. When we use lesson plans, we AVOID teaching unwanted behavior. Then we don't have to go back to re-teach fundamental lessons, manners, re-gain confidence etc. Therefore, the efficiency of our training can't help but decrease the amount of time it will take us to get our horse to the point of riding into the sunset. When we have been able to understand and adopt these sound principles into our training practices we begin to realize and accept that training never ends. We are always at a level of learning or maintaining. The most important part of horse training is understanding basic principles and then learning how to apply them to the tools we have learned. When we have learned how, where and what tools we can use to solve a situation, we begin to see a door open that's the door that allows us to take our tools and apply them to situations previously we thought unsolvable. Sometimes, we have the tool, but haven't learned how handy it can be!

The journey to becoming a happy horse and owner begins with understanding and learning the effect of our actions on our horse. See you next time!



Have you Checked your brakes?? Caz is braking with his rear end set of brakes!.

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