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Article

Giving: In the Beginning

Part 5 of The Basic Foundations Series

By Me, Tracy Porter

What exactly is a give? What happens when the horse gives? What does it feel like? When do I need my horse to give? If you can figure out these questions you may also be on the verge of understanding the meaning of life!

Unfortunately a give is just a term for the horse being soft and supple. But what exactly is that? To me it means that my horse is attentive without a brace in his body. This means that everything from his feet up feel light and are willing to move to my suggestion. Basically the horse is giving me his heart, trust and attention. But it isn't a one-way street I also have to give back to him.

What does a give feel like? Some words that describe it in my mind are energy in the direction of my suggestion with the absence of pull or resistance. But that really isn't all it is. To some they may be an absence of feeling. To me I would call this neutral, a place where nothing is happening. When a horse is giving, a lot is happening, but it should not feel like a lot. This is way too hard, lets see if I can first describe something easy like the color blue. Oh well, I guess you'll have to do that, I can't seem to come up with a good description for that either. Like blue, feel is very hard to describe, our perception is based on our personal experience. It is also important to note, that what we may perceive as a give could change as we grow in our experience with giving.

When does the horse need to give? Well that is easy. Before, during and after any maneuver for the rest of the horse's life. **IT IS THAT IMPORTANT!** Yes, I want that energy in the direction of my suggestion **WITHOUT** resistance while I am with my horse whether I am next to him or on his back.

In this lesson we are going to teach the horse to give his head to pressure by taking the slack out of the rein or lead rope. You can use a bridle or a halter. Keep in mind that when the horse gives, you need to reward the horse. To the horse, **RELEASE** is the **REWARD**. release the rein.

Begin by standing on the ground next to your horse. Slowly take the slack out of your rein. When the horse's nose moves toward your slack, release the rein. Repeat until your horse can consistently move his head following the direction of the rein around to the horse elbow. On your journey it is important **NOT** to pull your horse's head around to the elbow. **WAIT**. Each time let the horse take his head back forward, then begin again. If you take the slack out and the horse moves his feet while giving his head, do not release until the feet come to a stop and the horse is not pulling on the rein.

If you notice that the nose is leading the ears in other words the ears are not over the nose when he gives his head to the side. When this is happening the horse is not giving the muscle in his neck behind the ears. Slow down and only practice the horse giving to the point where his ears are over his nose and one inch past that. You need to not rush the horse and let him relax as he follows the rein.

The goal of this lesson is that your horse will give his head smoothly following the pressure of the rein and stop at any point on the way toward his elbow. When you relax the rein and give to him, he will softly hold his head there for a few

seconds before taking it back forward. During this exercise, his feet will not move, but he will be standing in a calm and relaxed manner. You should also be able to ask him to take his head in both directions from each side.

Good Luck and practice perfect! Thanks To Suz Spores, Gaited Valley Farm, Home of Rocky Mountain Horses for her photography and to Oreo the POA for his being photogenic!



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Horse's nose is leading the ears means you are asking too much too soon. Your horse is not relaxing the muscle behind his ears.



Do both sides then ask for give to both sides from each side.

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