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**How To Use Leading Your Horse To Get Control And Response**

**By Andy Curry**

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I've been around many people who try to lead a horse by controlling their head with a lead rope. They end up pulling or jerking the lead rope and the horse will typically pull back or push around the person with the lead rope.

Ultimately, you want slack in the lead rope while leading your horse because you don't want to pull or jerk him. If your horse moves incorrectly while leading him then you can stop and correct him by making him move his body.

To really be successful in having control the secret is having control over your horse's body. How do you do that? By controlling his feet by making him move his rear end away from you. (Also known as "disengaging the hind quarters) Why this works so well is it alleviates stiffness and tension and almost magically forces your horse to focus on you.

There are few ways to get your horse to move his rear end away from you. Much of the time, you can stand facing his shoulder and point to his hip. If he doesn't move keep pointing and cluck at him. If he still doesn't move, twirl the end of your lead rope at his hip and cluck. If he still doesn't move tap him with the lead rope while clucking at him.

At any time he moves, take the pressure off him immediately. Give him a pat and a "good boy" and ask for another move. Repeat. Then ask for more steps. Remember to do this on both sides of the body too. It won't be long when you will simply point at his hip and he'll move them for you. Do this every day for a while to get it in his mind that you are in control.

Okay. Now that you moved him, turn your body to walk forward while holding your lead line. Something magical happens right here. Your horse suddenly focuses his attention on you. He's very aware of your movement and what you're doing. If he messes up because he was distracted or something scared him, all you have to do is move his rear end again. Eventually your horse will start gauging your pace

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and keep up with you at the same pace you move.

If your horse starts to get ahead of you while leading, move his hindquarters. If he's lagging behind you, move his hindquarters. If he goes off into La La Land, move his hindquarters.

Having good control leading your horse is perhaps the most basic training technique there is. But it is also the way we get horses in trailers, moving them around, bathing them, and even riding them. This will help teach your horse to be soft and responsive. And if you have a soft responsive horse while you are on the ground, then you will more likely have the same kind of horse while you're sitting in the saddle. And that is the ultimate goal.

Andy Curry is a nationally known horse trainer and author of several best selling horse training and horse care books. For information visit his website at

. He is also the

leading expert on Jesse Beery's horse training methods which can be seen at

.

## **Horse Racing Handicapping Tips**

**By Yuri Nikitin**

Horse racing handicapping should include analyzing the human element, especially in claiming races when a horse makes his first start for a new trainer. It's quite common among novices simply glance at a horse's speed indexes and final times when making their selections, but wise handicappers compare the records of the current and previous trainer. The several questions may arise: when is the right time to wager on a horse in a new barn, why does a horse suddenly improve or regress for a new trainer, what rules should we understand about a newly claimed horse?

We must first analyze the record of the former conditioner before we judge whether a trainer can improve his recently claimed horse, for instance, if high-percentage trainer claims a horse from a trainer with a poor winning percentage, we can assume the horse will improve in his new surroundings, and if a low-percentage trainer claims a horse from the track's leading trainer, we can conclude the animal won't improve – more than likely, he will regress.

Quite often, we are able to eliminate from consideration a betting underlay when the horse goes from a high- to a low-percentage barn. Indexes of a high recent speed horse for a leading trainer often has declining figures for a new outfit. This may result in betting overlay when a horse with dismal recent form for a low-percentage trainer hooks up with leading trainer in wins.

On the one hand, a claimed horse returned at or below its last claimed price used to be considered a negative but with higher purses nationally, a claimed horse can earn a sizable pot even if he is

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returned at the level he was purchased. More trainers are willing to risk possibly losing their newly claimed horse for the same or even a slightly lesser price because they would still earn a profit from the purse winnings.

It's easy to understand why some trainers are willing to run their newly claimed horses at or below their claimed price – they place their horses where they are most likely to win, and even if another trainer claims one of their horses, they will show a return on their investment if the horse wins or hits the board.

Always consider jockey and equipment changes – a horse claimed from a low percentage stable is likely to have a top rider for his new barn, and a leading jockey on a newly claimed horse would be a big improvement over his previous riders who might have a low win percentage.

For a successful analysis of a newly claimed horse, we must know as much about the new trainer as we do the horse. Remember, handicapping the horse and trainer separates the novice from the veteran.

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