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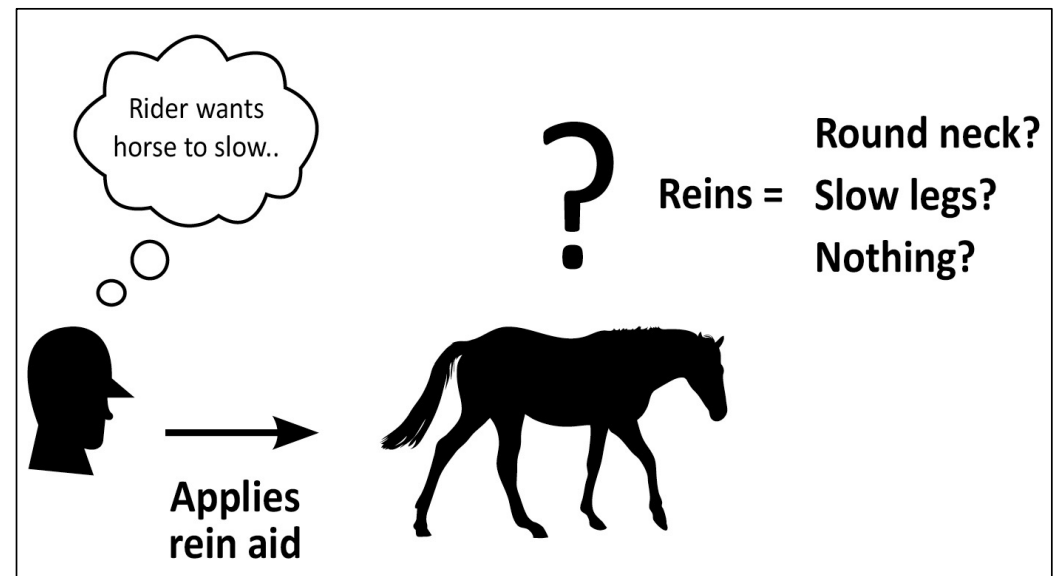


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# Mental security



- Essential for good outcomes in sport as well in the stable
- This means training needs to be clear and management should enable the horse to access his natural needs
- In this presentation:
  1. Training
  2. Management.



# Flight response

- Horses run forward when they are fearful
- Flight response: Escape learning: **how fast and how far**
- The faster and further he runs from the scary stimulus, the more embedded the fear
- It is unhealthy for anxious horses to run around the handler
- Therefore, if horses learn effective go and stop signals initially from rein pressures as well as to stand immobile (Park), fear diminishes.



Image supplied by Horses and People



# Training: Mental security



- Predictability and controllability:
  - When a signal always leads to a response: calm, confident
  - When a signal never leads to a response: calm, confident
  - When a signal only sometimes leads to a response: anxiety, escape, aggression, apathy
- Training should be clear both in-hand and under saddle
- “Operant conditioning **before** classical conditioning”
  - ☐ Operant Conditioning = lead rein pressures, rider's leg pressures, rein pressures
  - ☐ Classical Conditioning = voice, body postures, gestures.



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# In-hand: Training Go and Stop



- Clear behavioural boundaries provide mental security owing to predictability and controllability: Train the legs!
- To create clear boundaries, various levels of pressure should correspond with various levels of response
- The ultimate boundaries in-hand are effective *lead rein signals*
- Train forward and slowing from lead rein signals.



Train lightness in Go and Stop from lead rein pressures



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# In-hand: Training step-back



- Stepping backwards uses the same muscles as all slowing responses (pectorals and subclavius)
- This links the mental association of rein pressure and decelerating.



Train the horse to step backwards from rein pressures



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# Mental security: In-hand



- Training the horse to stay immobile (park) requires the equal effects of stop and go
- Training the horse to park until requested otherwise has a powerful calming effect
- Of all the things I'm talking about, stepping back and park are the most overlooked aspects of in-hand training.



Train the horse to stay immobile (Park)





# Mental security: In-hand



- Training the horse to lower his head from lead rail pressures also calms the horse
- This is a physiological effect as a result of baroreceptors switching on when the head is lowered to lower blood pressure and ultimately heart rate.



Train the horse to lower his head





# Under-saddle

During daily training:

- Transitions slowing and quickening
- Turns
- Lugging bits: why?
- Tongue ties: why?
- Whips: Phasing out
  - Increase stride frequency
  - Decrease stride length.



The lugging bit



Train the horse to turn

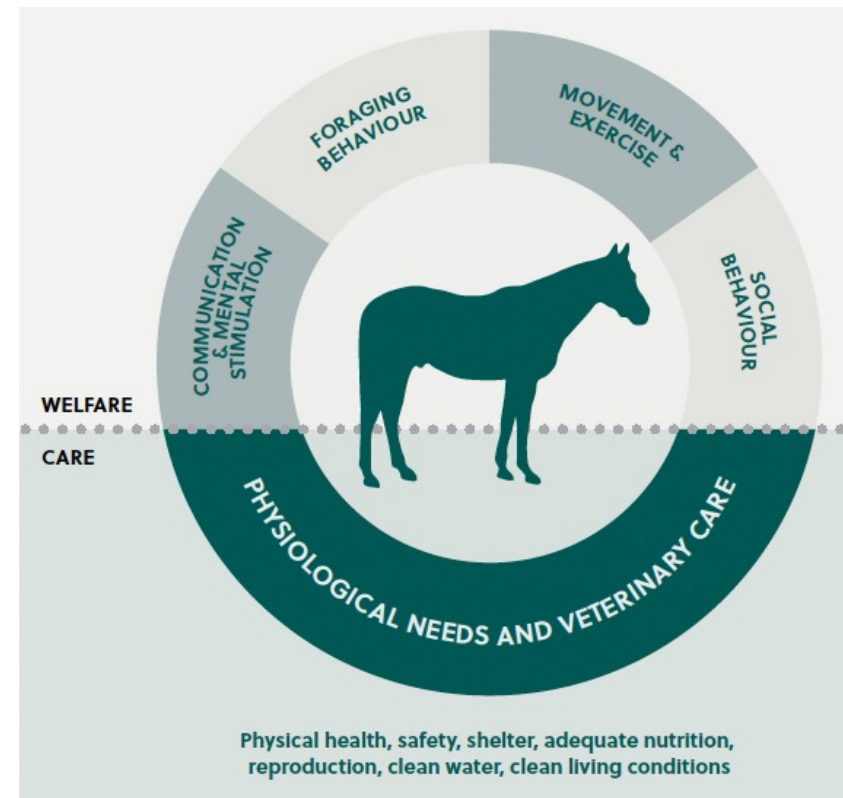


# Management



Hard-wired needs:

- Behavioural Interactions
- Foraging
- Exercise/movement
- Socialisation



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# Socialisation



Images supplied by Manchester Police, UK



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## Post racing: Remember the remaining 85% of his life



*“If you are fond of a horse and wish to do him a real favour - train him well. Teach him good manners, good habits, both in the stable and under the saddle. You never need worry about the future of such a horse if for any reason you may have to part with him. You assure him of friends wherever he goes. Perhaps the greatest kindness you can do any horse is to educate him well.”*

Tom Roberts – The Young Horse.



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# Thanks



Andrew McLean  
Equitation Science International  
[www.esi-education.com](http://www.esi-education.com)

- Lay and academic texts
- Education
- Diploma of Equitation Science - nationally accredited horse training qualification

