

## **Lesson Topic: Turn on the Haunches**

This lesson plan would be appropriate for a first level horse/rider combination that is being introduced to the turn on the haunches.

### **Purpose**

The turn on the haunches is an exercise that prepares the horse for collection. The turn on the haunches is performed in the medium walk. The forehand describes a small half circle around the hind legs. The diameter of the turn is one meter. The rhythm of the walk (4 time) is maintained, with the inner hind leg stepping up and down, and the outside hind leg making a small half circle around the inner hind leg. The hind legs should not cross. The forelegs move forward and sideways and cross one in front of the other. The center of the turn is close to the inner hind leg, which means that the horse moves onto a track the width of its body away from the original track. As a result, the ending of the movement requires that the horse steps slightly sideways back to the track.

In order for the horse to perform a balanced and engaged turn on the haunches, he must develop an increased sensitivity to the rider's aids, in which the horse becomes lighter and quicker in his responses to the rider's leg and weight aids. In addition, increased suppleness and mobility in the shoulders of the horse are developed as the horse becomes proficient in the exercise. This increased mobility also assists in the rider's ability to straighten the horse, an important ingredient to collection.

The pirouette in the walk is performed from the collected walk, and the size of the turn is a radius that is equal to the length of the horse's body. The pirouette is much more difficult than the turn on the haunches, in that the collected walk requires much more activity and balance, and the size of the turn is smaller.

### **The Aids**

The aids for the turn are as follows: As the horse is bent and flexed in the direction of the turn, the rider sits inward. The horse is flexed in the direction of the movement. The inner leg is positioned close to the girth, in a forward driving position, acting to maintain bend and activity. The inside leg prevents the horse's inside hind leg from stepping sideways, which is a serious fault. The outside leg is behind the girth, in a guarding position, assisting in keeping activity and also preventing the haunches from falling out. The inner rein leads the horse into the turn, and the outside rein prevents excessive bend, but also allows the outside shoulder to turn. Every horse has a different 'feel' for the aids when performing this movement, so this requires that the rider develop a sense of the horse and what he requires of the rider in terms of the feel of the aids. The rider prepares the horse for the turn with half halts, where the walk is slightly shortened as it is activated. The turn is initiated as the inner foreleg is coming forward, and the rider's inner rein and outside leg start the turn. In the next step, the inner leg and outside rein are applied, and this sequence is continued until the turn is completed.

### **Common Faults**

It is very important that the walk rhythm is maintained, so sticking with a hind leg is a serious fault, as is stepping backwards. Other common faults include performing a small half circle, the horse throwing itself around the turn, losing activity of the walk, and a lack of obedience to the aids.

Generally, the quality of the walk must be preserved. The value of the exercise is only as good as the quality of the walk.

### **Action Plan**

The horse warms up in his normal program, making sure that by the end of the warm up phase, he is obedient to the aids, and relaxed and swinging through his back.

In preparation for teaching the turns, the horse and rider will ride transition work, first walk-trot transitions, and then more difficult trot-halt transitions. During this work, it is emphasized that the horse must respond to the rider's aids immediately, and that the rider must use light, sensitive aids, and not over-aid the horse. In addition, the rider should be

able to slightly shorten and collect the trot prior to the transition. Next, leg yielding on the circle in trot is done, in which the horse, on a 20 meter circle, is asked to enlarge away from the inner leg of the rider, stepping underneath his center of gravity with his inner hind leg to the outside rein. This is done on both reins, to further loosen the horse, and ensure that the horse is active and reactive to the inner leg and seat of the rider.

## Exercise #1

The rider will ride the horse in an active working trot. Starting towards the corners, the rider will prepare the horse with half halts, before the corner marker, shorten the trot slightly and walk at the corner marker. Then, he will walk as deeply into the corner as he can and maintain balance. At the end of the corner, he will transition to trot. This sequence is repeated at each corner, emphasizing the promptness of the transitions. The next phase of this exercise is to ride a quarter turn on the haunches in the corner, after the transition to walk, and trot at the end of the turn. The quick transition from trot to walk helps to keep the horse active, and using the corner helps to give both horse and rider parameters for the turn. The rider should trouble shoot that he is able to keep the horse softly between his aids, and maintain the flexion and slight bend in the direction of the movement.

## Exercise #2

The rider begins on a twenty meter circle in walk at either A or C. After riding one round on the circle, he will then change the circle shape to a rectangle, using the corners in this. It is important to keep the horse straight both before and after the quarter turns, which will happen at each point of the rectangle.

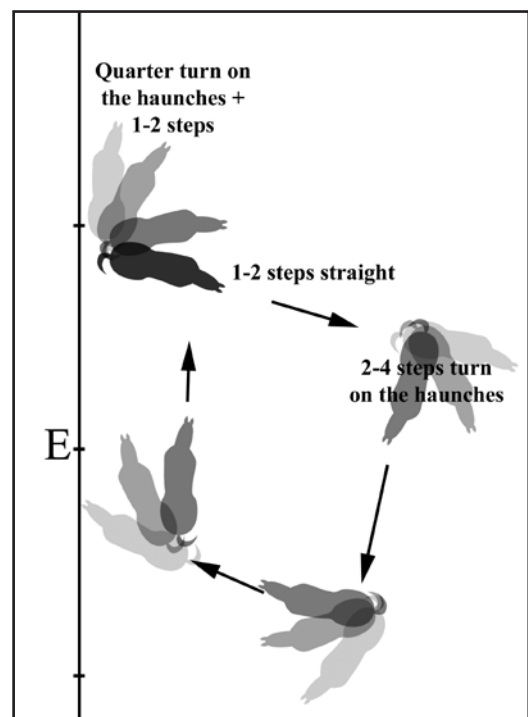
After riding the rectangle several times in one direction, the rider can then transition to trot and change back to the 20 meter circle shape, to activate and supple the horse. Change rein and repeat the exercise in the other direction.

## Exercise #3

When the first two exercises become fairly easy, the rider can then move onto this next exercise. From any point on the long side of the arena, the rider will ride a quarter turn on the haunches and add one to two more additional steps. Before the horse loses rhythm or balance, ride 1-2 steps straight, then immediately resume 2-4 steps of the turn. You can continue in this manner, interrupting the turn with 1-2 steps straight to regain activity and balance. The walk steps should not get too long and on the fore-hand.

After training the turns, it is often helpful to ride some active trot or canter work, such as lengthening, or frequent transition within the gait.

As with any exercise and movement that we teach the horse, in the initial lesson, we do want to repeat the exercise until the horse 'gets it'. Once the light bulb has gone on in his mind, then the exercise can be integrated into the work program on a regular basis, but taking care never to drill the horse in this or any exercise.



*Turn on the haunches with forward walk steps*