

A good horse person understands that handling and owning horses is not just about competition success or miles spent in the saddle. Quality horsemanship is all about the fun and friendship that you and your pony can develop when you both work as a team.

This issue, HW's Pony Princess Michelle O'Neill has some great advice on keeping your horse sound and happy under saddle, as well as some great tips on tackling the barrel racing basics...by practicing SLOW!

amajordiscovery

Dear Michelle,

My pony is a 13.3 hh Arab x Appaloosa and has always been headstrong and hard to handle. Recently I had a lady do a little Bowen therapy on daisy (my pony) and I found out that Daisy is chronically sore. She's so sore that the lady said I shouldn't be riding her for at least two weeks while we continue Bowen on her. She also suggested I get my saddle checked and fitted professionally and it appears some of Daisy's muscle has wasted away under the saddle and she has a bad 'swayed back'. Could her pain be why she was so hard to handle? She never stands when I mount, could this be why? And should I have picked up on this soreness before? I never noticed the pain, Daisy has never bucked or thrown me and she's always been willing forward moving. She must really love me to put up with the pain and I feel terrible for not noticing her soreness earlier. Could this muscle pain have been prevented?

Caitlin :(

Dear Caitlin

Well done! You have just made one of the most important discoveries I feel any horse owner can make; our horses need care and maintenance as much as they need love and carrots.

Horses and ponies are amazingly forgiving and will often put up with pain, ill treatment and neglect for years without complaint. I am not saying you have neglected Daisy, but it gives you an idea of what horses will sometimes tolerate in their lives.

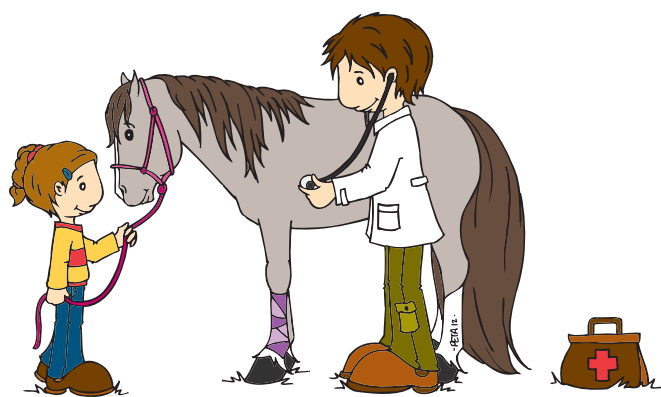
We have had several horses come to us that were considered unsafe or even dangerous. But with a little TLC in the shape of a good chiropractic treatment and a well-fitting saddle, these horses can often become beautiful to ride, once their pain is taken away!

Daisy's pain could certainly be a reason why she has been hard to handle. Not standing when you mount could be directly caused by the fact that the saddle has hurt her each time you have gotten on or pressed down on it. She may be a naturally forward horse, but perhaps she resists stopping as halting might make her uncomfortable?

Importantly, now that you have made these discoveries, you will know what to look for next time. Any time I have a behavioral issue with a horse, I always check for pain first; I have them checked for muscle or bone pain and I have their teeth checked. But, whenever you are getting someone to work on your horses be sure they are a reputable professional and that you do everything they ask you to do. In your

case, that means not riding Daisy for two weeks – even if that sounds like a long time to not be riding! That way, you have given any treatment of your horse the best chance of success.

You should also be aware that behavioral issues (like not standing when you mount) may well become a bad habit if the horse has been doing it long enough. Once you have all of Daisy's pain issues looked at, then you'll need to go back to training her to do what you want her to do (or what not to do!). Well done for making such a major discovery and for also learning from it.



tipsonbarrelracing

Dear Michelle,

My Name is Breanna, I have a welsh mountain pony called Sammy. He loves barrel racing but when he comes around a barrel, he tends to knock it. Then, when we are heading home after the last barrel, he canters but then he starts to get faster and you can't stop him! I afraid that one day I might not be able to stop him at all... Please Help Me!!!!!!

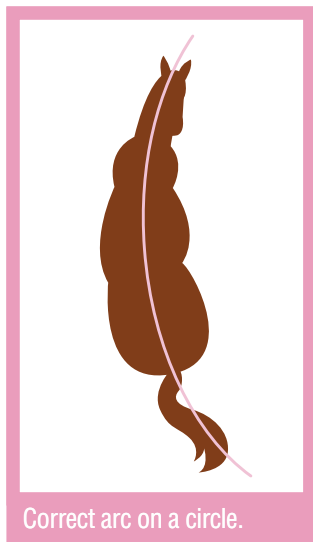
Hi Breanna

I am thrilled to hear that you have such a great little barrel racing horse. I'll try and deal with your two problems separately, as you'll need to 'train' them separately. But first, I want to talk to you about control and training in ANY speed events.

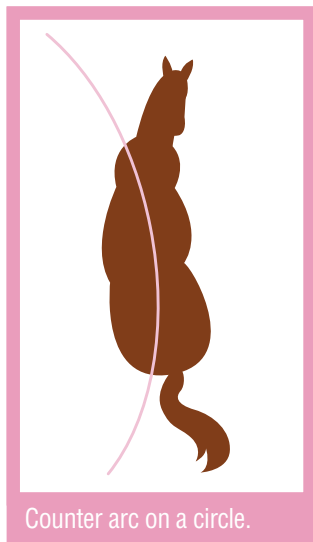


Photo by Jenny Solomon

michelle o'neill



Correct arc on a circle.



Counter arc on a circle.

It is really important for sports like barrel racing or sporting, where speed is so important, to do LOTS of training at home...SLOWLY! Save your really fast runs for the competition arena. When you work at home, do most of your work at a walk, trot or a canter, rather than at a gallop. This way, you can control every situation and teach your horse to stay balanced and relaxed.

Knocking Drums

Often, the most common reason a horse knock a drum is because they 'dive' into the drum with their shoulders; often referred to as 'dropping the shoulder'.

The easiest way to fix this is to do lots of counter-arching and flexing exercises. This will help teach your pony to move off your legs, while helping him to become less stiff in his body and to bend correctly in the direction of travel. For example, a 'correct' arc is when you do a circle to the right and get your pony nicely flexed around your inside leg. Then you do a circle to the left, whilst maintaining the same flexion you had on the right circle, so you create a 'reverse' or 'counter-arc' (see images above).

Excessive Speed on the Way Home

Whilst barrel racing is a speed event, we still need to be in control at ALL TIMES! If at any time you feel like Sammy is going too fast, just do a one rein stop. (*See Michelle's explanation of a one-rein stop in our Spring 11 HW issue! Ed*) Not only will this give you the chance to get back in control, but it will also let Sammy know he was going too fast and that he needs to slow down!

I do one rein stops on all my barrel racing horses when I am just cantering them in circles. I will let my reins go loose and let them canter around the circle. The instant they get faster than I have asked them too, I reach down and do a one rein stop. It is a gentle reminder for them that I am still running the show and they need to go slow!

I would practice getting Sammy under control and stopping him at home. Just trot or canter through the barrel pattern and then - when you head for home and he gets too fast - just do a one rein-stop. Keep repeating the process as many times as it takes to get him to listen to you but don't forget to reward and praise him when he does slow down or stops on your command.

Good luck Breanna and remember to PRACTICE SLOW!!



Here is a great photo of Te and me at Tumut Rodeo. Notice he is bent around the drum and even though he is leaning to make the turn, his body is arced and his shoulders are up. *Photo by Andrew Hennell.*



MITAVITE GIVEAWAY! Thanks to the team at Mitavite, every HW reader who has their letter featured in HW's Help Line column will receive a gift voucher for **TWO bags of Mitavite Xtra-Cool horse feed**; it doesn't get any cooler than this! Check out www.mitavite.com.au to find your nearest Mitavite stockist! You can e-mail your horsey questions to Michelle at mail@horseywyse.com.au or post your letters to 'Ask Michelle' c/o HorseWyse Magazine, PO Box 260, Pambula, NSW 2549, Australia. And remember, no problem (or pony) is too small to Ask Michelle!



training • sales • lessons • stud

JOIN US ON FACEBOOK



To learn more about **Cherry Tree Equine** visit our website or join us on **Facebook** to find out all about the latest events, horses for sale and see some fabulous horsey photos!

www.cherrytreeequine.com.au



CHERRY TREE EQUINE