

## Show Pen Advice

This Training Tip article focuses on a couple concepts important to successfully showing a reining horse.

### **Magnets**

The NRHA rulebook states; "The best reined horse should be willingly guided or controlled with little or no apparent resistance and dictated to completely."

Showing a horse that drifts or pulls towards the gate, the walls, or thru the center of the arena during the execution of the pattern does not demonstrate willingly guided or control. I refer to these areas (the gate, the walls, other horses, the barns etc.) as "**Magnets**". Magnets are created as the horse follows his natural herd bound instincts to drift towards other horses. The rider needs to be able to **identify and be aware** of what the potential Magnets are for their horse.

To discourage a horse from directing its attention to a Magnet the rider needs to ensure that the **horse's attention is always focused on solely the rider**. As soon as the horse's attention strays, the rider needs to remind the horse of where his attention should be and correct the horse by steering in the opposite direction. The horse does not require major disciplining, the rider simply should redirect the horse's forward motion, giving the horse something to think about other than the Magnet. The horse will soon learn that when he is not paying attention he actually has to work harder.

When schooling it can be important to let the horse make a mistake, such as looking and drifting a little, so that the rider can correct the action thus, allowing the horse learn from his mistakes. Drifting often occurs during circles and rundowns so specific Magnets (for example, the in-gate at the end of the arena) may require more schooling than other Magnets.

At a show the rider should check the show pen and identify what the potential Magnets may be. When warming up for performances check the horse's attention while passing by any potential Magnets. **Remind the horse to remain focused and attentive to the rider when passing by the Magnet.**

Ring Smart Classes, classes with time allotted and no requirement to complete a pattern, become extremely beneficial when a rider is attempting to work through problem areas such as drifting. It allows the rider to determine what will pull or draw the horse and understand which areas of the patterns require additional schooling.

### **Training Prior to the "Big Day"**

I like to focus my training program so that it "peaks" at the event. By peaking, I mean that hopefully all my preparation and training pay off at the show and the runs come together physically and mentally for both me and my horse.

My horses should have the stamina required for the physical challenge because each horse is ridden 5 times per week and I've completed all necessary schooling prior to the show. As the show date nears I will progressively ask for a little more of my mount but I am careful to avoid "peaking" before the big day. Asking more from my mount does not mean that I practice stopping hard everyday leading up to a show, I always remain cognizant of the horse's physical soundness and avoid over training to prevent soreness. I look to build gradually and on approximately the

day prior to the show, look to be able to complete all maneuvers to the very best of my and my mount's ability.

### **A little Warm-up Pen Advice**

In the warm-up pen my advice to non-pros is to avoid watching other riders and thinking "Oh my Gosh!" **Stay focused on your program** and do not become intimidated of what other riders and other horses are doing around you. Focus on what you need to focus on and **show your horse to the best of his and your ability**. Do not take the past months of training and hard work and trade them in for something you witnessed in the warm-up pen. Remember to take your time, deliver distinct cues so there is no confusion for your horse and stay relaxed so your horse can to. **Most importantly remember to have fun!**

Good luck and be patient!

**Gregg Lauder**