

# LONGREINING

When you ride, the tendency exists to develop ‘tunnel vision’ and to focus exclusively on what you can see in front of you – the horse’s neck and head. Consequently it is very valuable on occasion to work with your horse from the ground, placing yourself so that you can see the entire horse in front of you where you can study his body and see how he responds to the aids. It becomes much easier for you to influence him correctly when you can see the whole picture.

## **PURPOSES OF LONGREINING**

- work the horse in different ways without him having to carry a rider on his back at the same time
- improve the horse’s balance
- develop the muscles on the topline
- promote and develop discipline and obedience
- correct possible problems
- supple the horse
- improve collection and self-carriage
- teach the horse piaffe and passage

Lastly, longreining can be used as an alternative to riding in the case that you or your horse are injured. This may allow you to maintain the horse’s training and fitness until you and your horse are able to work under saddle again.

## **EQUIPMENT**

Standard longreining equipment for the horse consists of the following:

- Snaffle bridle without reins
- Driving surcingle with terrets for the reins to run through. Terrets are solid upright rings firmly attached to the upper part of the surcingle placed slightly to each side of the horse’s spine. (A surcingle with flat rings, which are usually incorrectly placed, will not allow the trainer to achieve a correct and functional contact with the bit.) The longlines including the buckles or snaps must be able to pass freely through the terrets.
- Saddle pad placed under the surcingle
- Longlines (driving reins). These should be about 20 feet long and preferably made of cotton.

The portion that reaches from the bit and runs through the terrets should be rolled. The remaining length of the lines should be flat and ideally have leather stops at regular intervals.

- In-hand whip or a short driving or longeing whip, in some cases
- Boots or leg wraps to protect the horse's legs during this work

## STARTING OUT

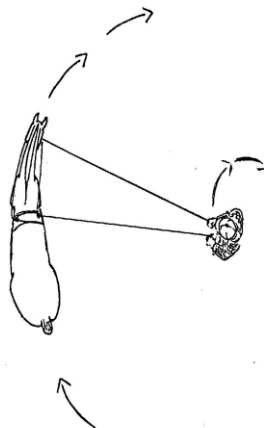
Before starting work in longlines, your horse should know how to longe. This will simplify the introduction to longreining, as your horse will already be familiar with a long line (the longe line) as well as with working on a circle in all three gaits. He will know the necessary commands and aids and how to make transitions while under the command of a person standing on the ground.

Once the horse is familiar with longeing, use the following steps to introduce your horse to longreining work. Each step can take anywhere from a few minutes to several training sessions for your horse to learn. Let your horse tell you how fast to proceed and give him time to accept each step calmly and with confidence.

### Step 1:

This first step is to get your horse used to working with two lines. Begin by longeing him while he wears the longreining surcingle and snaffle bridle. Attach one of the driving lines directly to the inside bit ring to longe him. Use a longe whip as a driving aid and work him as usual. When this is no problem, you are ready to introduce the second line.

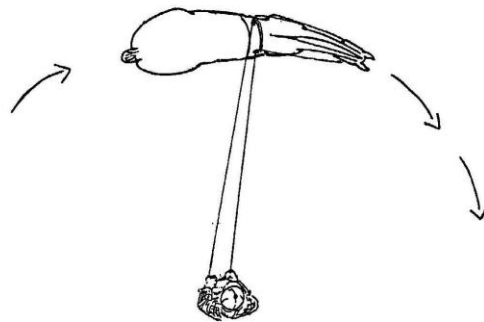
Start with your horse going to the left, and attach the second driving line to the outside (right) bit ring, run it through the outside terret, across the back of the horse and to your right hand. Your left hand should now be holding the line that goes directly to the bit and your right hand should be holding the line attached to the right side of the bit. If you need the longe whip to encourage your horse to go forward, you may also have the whip in your right hand.



To begin with, let the outside (right) line hang fairly loose, so that your horse feels only the weight of the line - there should not be a strong contact at this time. The point now is to let the horse see and feel the line while longeing him in walk and trot. If all goes well you may also work him in canter. When he works well to the left, change rein and change the lines to mirror the configuration of the previous direction. Again, work him in walk and trot (if appropriate also canter), making transitions often until he is calm, responsive and obedient.

## Step 2:

Return to the left rein again. Now run the inside line from the bit, through the terret and to your left hand. Hold the outside (right) line as before, in your right hand. Again work the horse in walk and trot until you see that he accepts this arrangement. It is normal for your horse to take some time to adjust to the position of the inside line – behind his withers, through the terret and back to your hand. But most horses get used to this very quickly. Do be careful not to have too strong a contact with especially the inside line in the beginning.

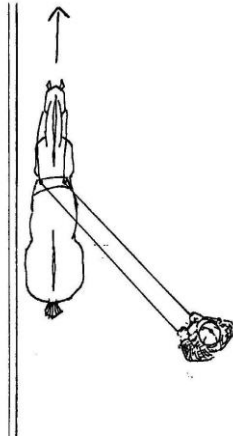


As your horse becomes used to the two lines, gradually take up a soft, steady contact. Work in all three gaits in both directions. Be careful when changing directions, and ***carefully switch the lines over to the new side***, taking care not to scare your horse, or to tangle the lines. Be very aware that many horses, (even those that have many years of work under saddle) do react to the touch of the lines on the rump and respond by swiftly kicking out and/or trying to run away. Always stay out of kicking range.

## Step 3:

You are now ready to longrein (drive) your horse on the track. To start, you will need an assistant to help lead your horse by keeping a light hold of the inside line fairly close to where it is attached to the bit. Position yourself in the normal driving position (~ 45 degrees from the horse at a safe distance from his inside hip, see figure 3.) Now ask your assistant to lead the horse along the track while you walk in the driving position, keeping up a light contact with the bit. Go in both directions, practice some transitions between walk, halt and walk with the help of your assistant. Use the same voice commands and body language as you do when longeing, but

also begin to use the contact of the lines as you would the reins when riding. Carefully change reins by going across the diagonal. When crossing the diagonal the first few times, make a halt near centerline and ask your assistant to hold the horse while you carefully move to the new inside. **Remember that your horses can be nervous about the lines passing over the hindquarters, so proceed slowly and with caution.**



After a little practice your horse will understand that you are now driving him forward and “steering” him with the lines, and your assistant can gradually step away. When you can drive your horse around the arena without the help of your assistant you are ready to begin work putting your horse on the aids.

## CAUTIONS

- Be sure to stay out of kicking range. Be aware that a horse can kick out swiftly and suddenly. Do not place yourself directly behind him, but stay in the correct spot at a 45 degree angle to his side.
- Always have your driving lines neatly coiled in your hands. Never let them drag on the ground, and be very careful to keep them organized while changing directions, starting work or stopping work. It is a good idea not to have the lines buckled together - in case one or both lines should tangle with your legs, in essence forming a loop for you to get caught up in.
- Should your horse get scared and run away the best approach is to let go of the outside line while keeping hold of the inside one. This will result either in the horse finding himself on a circle around you where you eventually can gain control, or he will end up wrapped up into a neat package by the line, which also puts you back in control. ***The main thing is to remain calm no matter what, and to use caution in untangling the situation. Do your best to avoid frightening your horse.***

## EXERCISES TO PUT THE HORSE ON THE AIDS

### **CHANGE FROM ONE LARGE CIRCLE TO ANOTHER** (DEVELOP INTO A FIGURE 8 AND SERPENTINE)

**Purpose:** To teach the horse to change direction and bend, and take a contact with and follow the outside rein. This is necessary before he can begin work on smaller circles. This type of work helps to supple the horse.

Start on the left rein with your horse in walk on a 10 to 15 meter circle around you. Make sure that he is going forward with energy and that you are able to take some contact with each rein. As you approach the centerline of the arena, make one or several half-halts to create more energy as well as to focus your horse's attention securely on you. As he responds to your half-halt invite him to turn slowly onto a circle to the right by taking lightly with the new inside rein. Simultaneously meet him with a contact from the outside rein which both leads him out of the circle (prevents him from falling in) and at the same time invites him to establish a steady connection with the outside rein.

At the moment that your horse begins the new (right hand) circle, lift the lines a little so that they may pass freely over his hindquarters as he changes direction. (Be careful in the beginning as some horses make take some time and practice to accept the lines passing over the rump.) During this maneuver your driving aids must keep him moving steadily forward and your new inside rein continues to tell him to stay on the circle.

Once your horse understands this exercise you may change from circle to circle a number of times in a row - a figure of eight. If you change direction repeatedly each time that he completes half a circle, he will then be working on a serpentine.

After your horse understands this exercise in walk, try it in trot also. When beginning the trot work, circle the horse in trot, but change directions in walk and then resume the trot. When he is able to do this calmly do the whole exercise in trot. A more educated horse can work in canter as well, with either trot, simple or flying changes of lead with each change of direction.

### **SMALL CIRCLES**

Similar to making changes from one circle to another, this exercise teaches the horse the turning aids as well as to follow the outside and/or inside rein. It also aids in developing collection.

Start in walk, following the long side. Prepare for the circle with half-halts. Your driving aids maintain energy in the walk. As your inside rein invites the horse onto the circle step slightly more towards his hindquarters and at the same time stop moving along the wall with the horse and instead rotate so that you face his side as he circles around you. Several strides before he

completes the circle and reaches the long side use the outside rein to indicate that he should now follow the wall in a straight line again. Remember to motivate him to continue forward by using the driving aids effectively. This exercise can be executed in trot also.