

MANAGING STRESS

Taking time for our horse's mental game...Barrel racing can be a highly stressful event for our horses. It is our job to help them manage their stress, paying close attention to my horse's anxiety level and working with my horse to control it. I always approach a big futurity making sure I have prepared my colts mentally.

I prepare my horses mentally by taking them to exhibition at a weekly barrel race. I usually just try to have them focus on me and not give them a lot of time to look around. My goal is simple--to have my horse relaxed. I usually exhibition two or four times and work on their weaknesses. I want the exhibition to be calm and not a ram and jam session for our benefit. It is a time for you to work with your horse and reassure them every time we go down the alley we won't be running. Once you are prepared with your slow work at home and your weekly exhibitions, now it's the big show preparation. If there are exhibitions available at the bigger shows I always try to be there.

Sometimes keeping your horse calm is as simple as warming them up and getting off and walking them into the holding pen, then mounting. For others, I will just walk them up and stand waiting on my turn because moving a nervous horse increases anxiety. For some, taking their mind off what's going on around them by asking them to keep moving and flexing keeps them calm. Find what works for your horse and do it.

I have always believed that anxiety builds in a horse and they will get to a point mentally that they shut down. At that point they are running scared and can't even see clearly, let alone think. Try to keep their anxiety to a minimum and their performance level will increase inside the arena.



*All in a days work
"Love Being Home!"*

--Molli Montgomery

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