

# The Bitterroot Valley Cowboy Dressage Club

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## Enter At A

### Cowboy Dressage Arena Exercises

When I was in 3rd grade I started learning how to play the violin. In my very first week of violin lessons we learned the basic scales. Then for the next 5 years that I actively played the violin we started each lesson by warming up with the scales. That elementary exercise was just as important when we were playing Ode to Joy as it was when we were playing Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.

There are some basic elementary exercises that I use in Cowboy Dressage that are the same as that scale for the violin player. Each time I practice with my horse I start with some combination of these basic exercises before moving onto more advanced maneuvers. They serve to get the muscles warmed up evenly, help to establish communication between horse and rider and check the horse's balance and movement before the day's work begins.

**1.Partnership on the Ground.** For my horses, I always start with just a little bit of Partnership on the Ground. It may be just a few driving circles where I change the bend a few times, or it may be running through the entire Partnership on the Ground Test 1. I've found that it helps me to sync my energy to the horse's energy before I even put my

(Cowboy Dressage Arena Exercises continued from page 1)

foot in the stirrup. It allows the horse to tell me before I get on if something is bothering him. Sometimes this part of my day will take 3 minutes, sometimes it takes 20 minutes. It varies depending on my goals for the day, my time schedule (unfortunately) and the horse. But you should always start your day and your partnership on the ground. It really improves the quality of partnership you will receive from your horse when you step into the saddle. I don't do groundwork because my horses aren't "broke enough" for me to just step on. I do groundwork because my horses are broke enough that it matters where our heads are at in the game. When partnership and soft feel are your goal, you'd be crazy to forgo anything that would enhance that partnership when you step into the saddle.

**2. Free Walk.** I always start with at least a lap of free walk. Again, this for me is about syncing my energy to the horse. It allows the horse and I to establish a cadence, a feel for what the energy is between us that day and for the horse to loosen up and get settled to his environment. With my colts, it gives them a chance to check the arena for boogie men before I start asking for more concentration and effort with more difficult maneuvers. I tend to sing, whistle, yodel, bee-bop, anything to help my horses just settle into the day's exercises ahead of us. Having music on in the arena is a plus!!

**3. One handed 10 m Figure 8.** If we have our challenge court set up I like to do this exercise with my 10 m circles at H and M so I can utilize the poles and cones. If I'm on the regular court I like to do this exercise at 8 with my circles at B and E. It doesn't matter a whit where you do it, I suppose, as long as your goal is to soften and shorten your horse laterally one side at a time. Establish bend on your horse by shortening just the inside rein to a 10 m bend and then dropping your hand to the withers. There should be no pressure on the outside rein for this exercise. Create the bend with your body with your inside leg at the front cinch and your outside leg back towards the flank. Ride the bend forward. When you complete one circle, change hands and rein, change your hips/legs and ride the bend forward in the other 10 m circle. For young/green horses I like to really help them through the change of bend by riding straight for 2-3 strides before shifting my aids to the other circle. This creates more of a double D shape than a figure 8.

There are many wonderful things that happen during this exercise when you do it properly. First of all you soften the horse laterally and warm up those muscles. This is an excellent exercise for introducing or working on soft feel because you are working just one rein at a time. The goal of this exercise is not to hold the horse in bend but to ask the horse to hold himself in bend within your aids. If your horse is hanging on your hand or you feel any rein pressure at all, put some life in that rein and ask that horse to look for the soft feel. When he comes off that rein pressure make sure your hand is quiet and not pulling on him. That is his release. In this exercise the rein does not establish direction, it only establishes bend. Your seat and legs help the horse create the circle that you have started by asking for bend with the rein. If the horse falls to the inside of the circle, get your inside leg active. If the horse drifts out of the circle, get your outside leg active. If the horse is

(Cowboy Dressage Arena Exercises continued from page 2)

following your soft feel and staying on the circle make sure your aids are soft and quiet to reward him. The energy and cadence of the walk is established by your seat. Resist the urge to push your horse along with your legs or bump him forward with every stride. If you need more energy and your horse isn't listening to your seat, ask with both legs once with purpose, don't nag! Get in and get out and return to riding quietly so the horse seeks the quiet soft spot between your aids.

**4. Big Circle, Little Circle:** This is a variation of the one handed figure 8. After the horse has established good soft quality bend in the figure 8, I like to firmly establish body control with my seat and leg aids by shrinking the circle to about 5 m. After riding a quality 10 m circle to the right, when I come back to the center I will shrink that circle in to 5 m with my outside leg then take the horse back to the 10 m circle with my inside leg.

**5. Long Diagonals:** There are several things I work on in this exercise. Gait quality, transitions, 10 m bend and soft feel in the working gait and rein management for the rider. You can do this exercise at both the walk and the jog. Let's start at K in the free walk. Get a good quality free walk with energy, lengthening of the stride and stretching of the top line. Before you reach M, begin to pick up just your inside rein. At M apply inside leg and still your energy for the transition to the 10 m bend. Outside leg helps keep the horse from drifting too deep in the corner. Hold the bend to Y then pick up the outside rein to ask the horse to go straight to Q in the working walk. At Q lengthen the outside rein, hold the inside rein through the 10 m bend then lengthen rein to the long frame in the free walk at H. Repeat when you get to F. If you struggle with rein management and lengthening and shortening your reins without snatching at them this exercise will help you to think about the lengthening and shortening in more of a step wise fashion. It's also great for horses that are bothered when asked to hold soft feel in the working frame for a long period of time. That short 10 m is just enough to ask them to hold it with softness before they get bothered.

**6. B/E 20m and 10 m nested circles.** This particular exercise probably has as much to do with my geldings current state of mind as all of the other exercises put together. My horse was a terrible rusher in the free jog. Working with nested circles is an excellent tool for those horses that tend to get up a head of steam in the free jog rather than relaxing and stretching like they are supposed to! This is also the exercise that I personally find the most useful when preparing my horse for lope transitions. Begin with a 10 m circle at either the working walk or working jog at either B or E. Then step directly into the 20 m circle in the free jog. Remember to maintain bend. Don't do too much steering and LET THE HORSE GO. If the horse speeds up and begins to get too fast, worried, or bothered, sit, quit posting, pick up the inside rein (with soft feel, don't snatch!) and ask for a 10 m circle in a working jog. Wait for the horse to come back to a quality working jog and then return to the free jog like nothing happened. For the really rushy or worried horses I find doing a 10 m circle at not only B and E but I and D helps to keep the horse from getting too fast too quickly.

(Cowboy Dressage Arena Exercises continued from page 3)

To be successful at this exercise you have to learn to prepare the horse for the transitions from free jog to working jog. If you wait until your stirrup is already at the marker you will be too late, pull the rein too hard and yank the horse into an unbalanced 10 m circle. Instead, sit a stride or two before the marker, breathe out, shorten the inside rein while applying inside leg and at the marker apply outside leg to ask the horse to enter the bend.

Once you are successful and the horse is transitioning from free jog to working jog with soft feel going one direction, change direction through 8 changing bend in the working jog and repeat the exercise going the other direction.

Remember that the key to lightness and soft feel is the release. In the words of the great Jack Brainard, "Thou shalt not dwell with either leg or rein." If you feel like you are hanging onto your horse, kicking your horse or pushing your horse into frame think about your aids. Are you maybe doing too much? Most riders are. Try doing less and ask your horse to meet you in the middle.

There are many many more exercises that you can do using the Cowboy Dressage court, but these few basic exercises are part of our everyday warm up routine. Your horse is never too broke or too advanced to forgo a visit back to the fundamentals! Don't forget your scales before your concerto!



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Jenni Grimmett, DVM gives lessons, teaches clinics, and is a Cowboy Dressage Resource out of Idaho.

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## Horse and Rider Spotlight



My name is Dollie Horst. Horses have been a huge part of my life since I can remember. I have a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from the University of Arizona with a focus on Equine Science, having worked at the University's Thoroughbred Breeding Facility during my four years at school. After graduating college, I did an internship with the Bureau of Land Management studying the wild horses at Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range. From there, horses have always played a major part in my career choice having worked and managed guest ranches, private estates and different types of horse operations. Since 2011, I have been the Horse Operations Manager at Mountain Magic Ranch in Three Forks, MT, where we breed, raise and train Rocky Mountain Gaited horses.

I found out about Cowboy Dressage through a clinic taught by Dr. Jenni Grimmett, DVM at Sleeping Willow Ranch in June of 2015. Once I learned the in's and out's, expectations and philosophy of Cowboy Dressage, I was hooked. My Rocky Mountain mare, "Annie", who was just started under saddle in May, was a perfect candidate for this. Since then, Annie and I have been working tirelessly on Cowboy Dressage. We attended two clinics with Eitan Beth-Halachmy, the founder of Cowboy Dressage World Finals where we proud to were proud to earn Reserve Highpoint Champion in the Amateur Gaited Class.

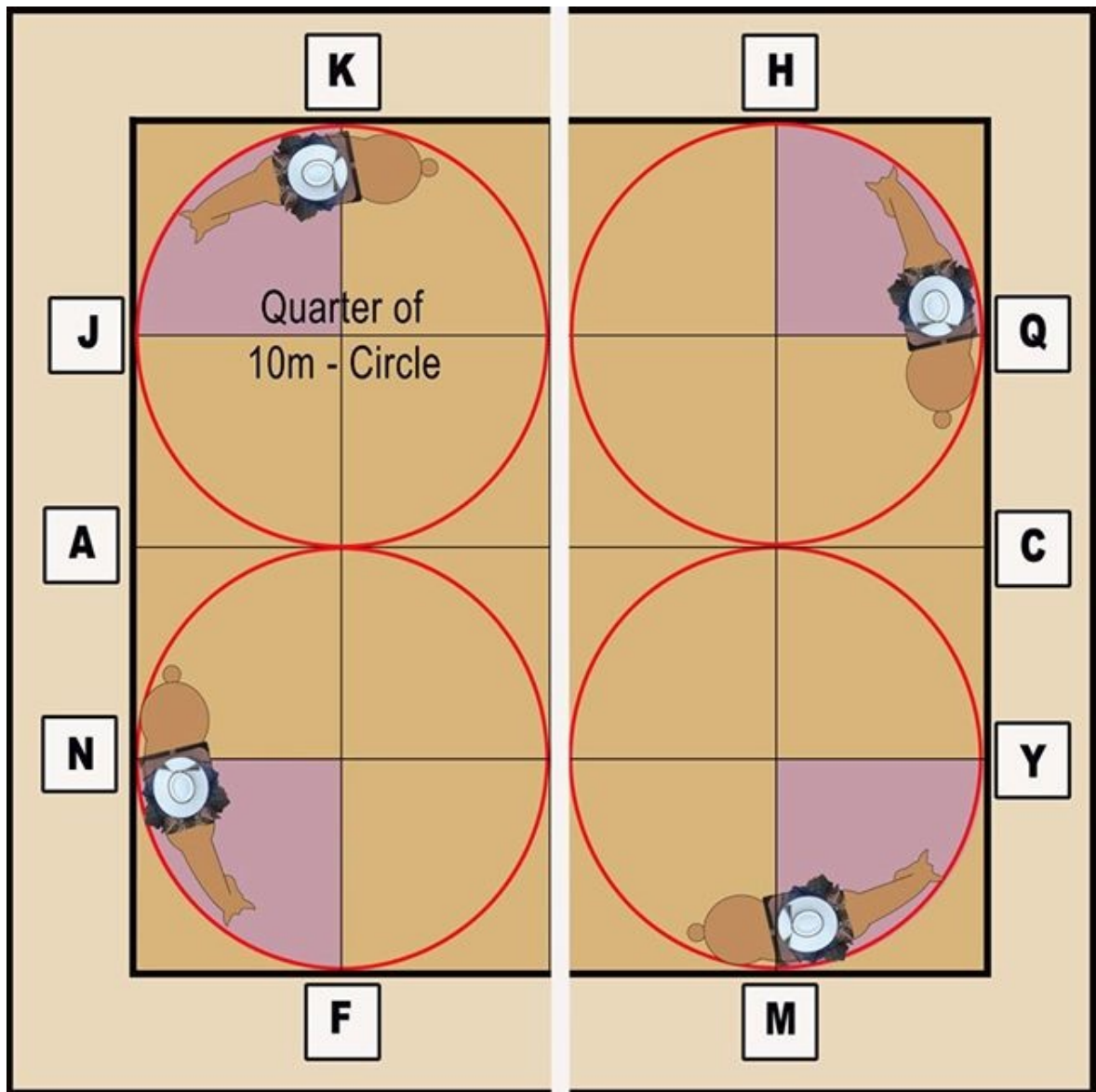
Through Cowboy Dressage I have reached a new level of partnership with Annie and all of the horses I work with, as well as a new perspective of the person, rider and trainer I want to be. Cowboy Dressage is not just a discipline, but a lifestyle. Within that, one of the most valuable lessons I have learned this year is accomplishment begins with the decision to "try". We have a long way to go, but that is what it is all about! I have begun a new journey with my horses to which I am now fully committed.

## Riding The Corners Of The Cowboy Dressage Court

### Exercise of the Quarter

by Eitan Beth- Halachmy  
with Jennifer C. Chisholm-  
Høibråten

When riding the corners of the Cowboy Dressage Court the rider's outside leg is on the travel line (shown in red). Ride a quarter of a 10m circle at a time; K to J, N to F, M to Y and Q to H. The horse will be on a 10m bend through the corner (shown in pink).



### Your Gift with Donation

The Wings Programs, Inc., a 501c3 non profit program offering both equine rescue and assistance and equine assisted therapies, needs your support.

For a limited time The Wings Programs, Inc. will send you a gift to help show your support of equine welfare. Help us to help horses in need of rehabilitation and rehoming. Funds also support equine assisted life skills and therapy programs for veterans and others in need of services.



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## Late Season (Fall/Winter) Grazing

It's early November here in the Intermountain West. Large herds of livestock are being moved onto winter feeding pastures, elk are being shot at, and snowflakes are starting to blow sideways. Smaller operations are also generally concentrating livestock and start feeding hay in the Fall/Winter. Typically this occurs in bottom lands, which are generally flat, easy to access, and close to home. It just so happens that these areas are often moist (at least for part of the year). These moist bottom lands are generally referred to as "riparian areas" (although many such areas have been converted to hay production). Some operations utilize "Late Season" grazing of these riparian areas as part of their livestock management plans.

There can be several advantages to grazing these areas in the late season. By Fall, most plants have completed their reproductive and energy storage cycles. Generally this means the plants can be grazed without injuring them. In fact, with proper management, pastures dominated by grasses and sedges/rushes can do well under late season use. In addition to herbaceous (grasses and forbs) plants being impacted, soils are often drier or frozen - generally reducing soil compaction. Using such areas in the late season also reduces the impact on wildlife such as ground nesting birds, and game animals - which use these areas in Spring.

Unfortunately there can also be several disadvantages to late season riparian area grazing. Grass regrowth typically will not occur once livestock are moved off the pasture due to low temperatures and lower soil moisture. This can potentially leave soil surfaces unprotected if excessive cover is removed. Excess removal of protective vegetation can also leave stream banks very vulnerable to erosion and degradation from Spring runoff. Late season grazing can also significantly injure beneficial woody species such as willows and alders. Often, portions of these woody plants remain palatable after grasses have cured, and browsed pressure can be serious problem. Livestock may also "camp" in woody pockets for thermal cover/wind breaks, which can severely physical damage (break) the plants.

As mentioned above, soils are generally drier or frozen during this time. However, where soils remain wet due to natural water flows or above normal temperatures, sever damage can occur quickly. This damage starts with what is know as "pugging" (repeated deep hoof indentations into the soil). Pugging compacts the soil, which interferes with natural water infiltration (so your soil

## Small Pasture Management

Max Thompson has worked as a rangeland ecologist and assisted land managers make data-driven decisions since 2004. His work typically includes the collection and analysis of ecological data for site assessment, classification, and restoration or rehabilitation - all based upon clients' management goals. This usually involves the quantification of vegetative cover, an evaluation of current and historical agricultural practices, an assessment of site hydrology and soil conditions, and site evaluation in terms of wildlife habitat. Max has worked as a rangeland ecologist throughout Idaho, the Central Valley of California, Alberta Canada, the Black Hills of South Dakota, Northern Utah, and across the entire State of Montana.



(Late Season (Fall/Winter) Grazing continued from page 8)

doesn't get the deeper water it needs for the grasses you want). Prolonged pugging leads to "hummocks" (sever soil disturbance with steep, tall mounds). Hummocked areas have lost significant vegetation productivity and can even be harmful to cow and horses movement.

Grazing these areas can certainly be done late season, but you have to be actively involved in your herd management. Grazing wet areas anytime of the year should be closely monitored to avoid soil damage and excessive vegetation removal. Temporary fencing can be a great tool in your herd management. As I've said before, I am of the opinion that a healthy piece of land is better able to produce healthy livestock - horses are no exception. Healthy land and healthy animals is our choice.

## The Importance of Balanced Minerals in the Equine Diet- Part 2

### Calcium and Phosphorus

#### Equine Nutrition

Debora Lay is an avid student of Equine Nutrition and metabolic conditions. She has completed numerous American Association of Veterinarian approved courtesies including: Nutrition as Therapy, Equine Cushings and Insulin Resistance, Nutrition for Pregnancy and Growth. She may be contacted at [LayzD@live.com](mailto:LayzD@live.com)

We started last newsletter with the major mineral sodium. To continue with the major minerals this quarter with will discuss Calcium and Phosphorus. Remember major minerals are measured in grams. Trace minerals are measured in milligrams or 1/1000 of a gram. Calcium and Phosphorus are both major minerals, measured in grams.

#### Calcium

If we play word association, mineral probably makes you think calcium; and calcium probably makes you thing bones and teeth. Both are correct, but there's much more to it than that. Calcium also

- helps regulate the pacemaker in the heart
- the excitability of nerves
- sets the seizure threshold
- relaxes muscle in the walls of blood vessels

In muscle, calcium is also required as an enzyme cofactor for the breakdown of glycogen to release glucose as an energy source and for normal blood clotting.

Calcium absorption in horses is very efficient. It occurs primarily in the upper portion of the small intestine with little, if any, absorption in the large bowel. Calcium absorption is an active process, occurring when calcium binds to a transport protein on the

(Calcium and Phosphorus continued from page 9)

intestinal lining cell. High phosphorus intakes significantly depress calcium absorption. High phosphorus is rare in our area naturally occurring in our hays.

Calcium minimum requirements for a 1100 lb (500kg) horse in maintenance at 150% NRC is 30 grams. If you have a hay test, look at the column as sampled g/lb. Multiply that number by the pounds you are feeding for the total calcium in your horses hay. Don't forget to account for any additional bag feeds or products that also contain calcium to get the total in the diet.

Most hays in our area meet or come close to meeting the calcium requirements. Some are a little high, which only affects the need to supplement phosphorus to balance the ratios. Excessive calcium intake has a negative effect on phosphorus absorption, just like high phosphorus reduces calcium absorption.

Example: On a recent hay test, the g/lb was 2.21 X 20 lbs of hay fed gives total consumption of 44.2g of calcium. Since the requirement for this horse in maintenance, meaning hanging around the property, rarely if ever being ridden is 30 grams this hay easily meets requirements. But in work the requirements increase.

Pregnant, lactating mares and growing foals have an even higher requirement for calcium, but remember the calcium and phosphorus must be in balance for absorption so just adding calcium can cause as many problems due to the ratio imbalance as could a calcium deficit.

Alfalfa and other legumes are high in calcium, but low in phosphorus. Calcium/phosphorus ratios are 1.2:1 optimum, but we usually try to shoot for 1.5:1 as optimum is difficult to achieve.

Target calcium: magnesium ratios are from 1.5:1 to 2:1.  
Calcium needs to be balanced both to phosphorus and magnesium.

## Phosphorus

Like calcium, phosphorus is an important mineral in bone. Phosphorus and nitrogen group also replace one fatty acid in fats to produce phospholipids, which are an important component of cell membranes and assist in normal fluid balance in the cell.

Excessive calcium intake has a negative effect on phosphorus absorption, just like high phosphorus reduces calcium absorption. The mechanism/Hormonal basis for this is poorly understood. As in other species, salt intake increases the absorption of calcium and phosphorus in horses. Another reason to make sure your sodium requirement is met, which last quarter we discussed is almost impossible to do with just a salt block.

Since phosphorus is one of the more unpalatable supplements, it can be difficult to supplement. However, for athletically active, growing, pregnant and lactating horses it would be advisable to bring the Ca:Ph ratio down to between 2:1 to 1.2:1. Getting horses to accept more than 10 grams of supplemental phosphorus is very difficult.

(Calcium and Phosphorus continued from page 10)

Adult horses "tolerate" (no obvious outward symptoms) a Ca:Ph ratio as high as 6:1, at least short term. Tolerate, means it doesn't kill them in a short time. What does happen is the body will steal the mineral it needs to attempt to balance the ratios from storage areas like bones. This happens often with pregnant and lactating mares. The milk is balanced by the mares system and to do that it takes what it needs from her body. Nursing foals will have both the requirements and the ratios they need without supplementation as the milk is a perfect food source for them. However, the mare if not consuming the necessary amounts of both calcium and phosphorus, within acceptable ratios, her body will suffer.

Non-nursing foals also have issues if their feed source is not balanced and meeting the huge requirements their growing bodies need in calcium and phosphorus. Poor bone development is one of the most easily visible signs, but these minerals play an important role in many developing systems.

At 6 months, a foal's calcium requirement is a whopping 69 grams. To balance the ratio at 1.5:1, the phosphorus will need to be 46 grams. Early weaning can have a negative effect on the foal's mineral consumption and optimum growth.

### News and Events

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**The Bitterroot Valley Cowboy Dressage Club  
wants to wish you all a happy New Year!**

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### Classifieds



Trotting Horse Therapeutic Riding is now accepting clients. Please contact Cyndi Meyer at 406-370-8477 or [trottinghorsestables@gmail.com](mailto:trottinghorsestables@gmail.com) for more information.



Breeding Pre Horses, Irish Black and Wagyu Cattle.  
Please visit our website for up coming clinics, sales and The  
Bitterroot Valley Cowboy Dressage Club.

[www.sleepingwillowranch.com](http://www.sleepingwillowranch.com)