



Fran (Dearing) Kehr

is a USEF "S" dressage judge. She has been successfully competing Accentuate, a 10-year-old KWPN gelding, through Intermediaire I. Based in Magnolia, Texas, she is the owner and trainer of Windy Knoll Farm.

don't I see a difference? This issue is about communication and effectiveness. Just as with human-to-human interaction, there must be a common language in order to communicate. In the case of this scenario, the language from you is, "I apply pressure," and what your horse must comprehend is, *I move away from the pressure*. Only then are you speaking the same language.

When that point is understood, effectiveness must come into play for a positive result. You must not only use the pressure aid for a response; also, it must be a correct and effective response. How do you decide? If you have a correct and progressively positive response to those aids, it can be considered proper communication. I must emphasize that just going through the motions does not necessarily give you a correct response. Inside leg to outside rein provides the correct ingredients, but you must deter-

mine the recipe. If you have never experienced the proper feel of these aids, have a professional establish the communication with your horse and show you the correct response in your horse's balance, posture and contact. Then get on your horse and with the help of your instructor, try to recreate that connection until you feel the straightness, improved balance and contact. In the golfing world it would be called the "sweet spot." You must apply these aids until you feel the sweet spot. You will know you are there when you feel an elastic, uphill contact and energy. Until then, unfortunately, you are just motoring around.

2. Why should these aids work? The bottom line is: It's physics. However, you do not have to understand the details of physics to comprehend the results. And the result of inside leg to outside rein is uphill and forward energy. The inside hind leg of a horse is the driving (energy) source. The outside rein is the stabilizer (organizer, if you will) of that energy. This technique is what properly compresses the body length, which in turn, controls the balance of a horse appropriate to the level of the horse's ability. That means this is the same aid that a Training Level horse will need in order to move from his untrained "front-wheel-drive" tendency to a more balanced "four-wheel-drive" tendency and eventually developing into an athlete (over years of building muscle and power) in the quest of becoming a Grand Prix horse.

3. What exercises can I use to get the correct feel for inside-leg-to-outside-rein aiding? The best exercise to help you achieve the proper feel is a leg yield. Once again, I must emphasize that it is not just going through the motions of haphazardly moving sideways and thinking you are accomplishing something. Leg yielding is a methodical movement that promotes straightness and throughness, which in turn promote balance. You should leg yield at the walk, with the help of your instructor, in either straight lines or around a large circle. It is not only the sideways yielding, but also the forward into the bit that will lift your horse's balance. This is why, if you've never felt this before, it is essential you work with an instructor or ground person who has. Once you get this connection, you can go into the trot. Then ask more with the driving (inside leg) aids into the straightening, stabilizing aid (outside rein).

Attaining the balance, energy and organization (the inside-leg-to-outside-rein concept) ignites our endorphins, giving us cause to continue the passionate pursuit of dressage excellence.