

# OUTSIDE THE ARENA

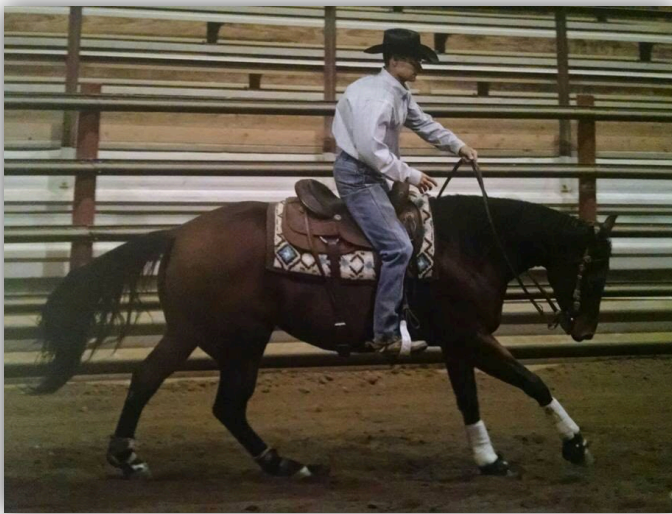
## HOW TO KEEP YOUR HORSE ENGAGED & LEARNING OUTSIDE OF THE ARENA

with Kevin Vesey

When horses come here for training we do our best to get them out of the arena a couple times a week. I have found that this helps improve the endurance on all ages of horses without boring them in the arena. I will cover 3 areas that can be improved upon while enjoying time outside the arena: Endurance, Rate and Steering.

### ENDURANCE

When we have a solid stop on the horse, we start to move them outside the arena. These rides will usually cover 4-6 miles at a trot and lope. We ride them down our road ditches, section lines, fields in the fall or spring or anywhere else that has fairly safe footing. These rides will be about 30-45 minutes long and always end by walking the last half mile to the yard. As endurance improves, the chance of injuries is minimized. The minimal mental stress on these rides also keep my horses fresh to eliminate bit chomping, tail wringing, and the bad attitude of a bored horse.



Einsteins Rowdy Whiz & Kevin Vesey  
owned by Paige Brummund

### RATE

While on these rides, I do some rate exercises that help with any discipline of arena competition. We usually start at a trot to get your rate set in the horse's mind. Don't be afraid to throw the reins away and let those playful ones trot out. If they break to a lope, don't get frustrated. Just pull them down to the pace you want and hold them there for a few seconds. When you let the reins back out, the speed will probably increase again. Wait until the horse is way too fast or breaking to a lope. Then pull them down again to the desired speed. This may take a few days of just trotting before they stay at the consistent pace, but it will come. The biggest thing is not to hold them at the pace with your hands. Let them get too fast and then pull them back to your speed. This is going to keep their mouth softer. Eventually the tiredness from these rides will make it easier for the horse to stick to a consistent pace.

I have found that using a hum sound as I slow the horse down also increases the responsiveness. The timing of the hum is extremely important. If the rider consistently relaxes their body, followed by a hum *before* applying pressure on the reins, the horse will eventually break gait and slow down any time we relax our body. For any program, good rate leads to a softer mouth during the high stress steering maneuvers. For instance, many barrel racers I've worked with have found this useful after reaching the timer. They know they can push their horse to the timer, relax, hum, lightly pick up on the reins, and still be safe during a closed gate run.

### STEERING

Once our rate is pretty solid, we will use this open space riding to fix some steering issues. In the arena, most riders start to use the sight of the fences instead of feel to know when their horses are dropping their shoulders or ignoring steering commands. Along these rides, I will trot or lope a couple circles every

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Smart Charcoal Chex & Kevin Vesey  
2015 NRCHA World Show  
Stallion owned by Ammon Ranch

half mile or so. I have found that a few things typically happen while circling:

1. If I feel my horse stiffen his jaw, I will keep him bent to the inside and hold his shoulder up until he relaxes. I then head straight out of the circle and move forward down the field.
2. If they start to fade towards home, I wouldn't fix him aggressively so as not to scare him. I would just guide them as best as I can for a couple circles and head out again.
3. If they forget what the outside rein pressure is, I will throw a few 90-degree turns at any point during the circle and head out again. Keep in mind that these turns need to maintain a consistent pace with the circle, without breaking gate.

These circles don't have to be perfect like our days training in the arena. They are more to get our horses attention on us and give me some confidence that I have control. I typically know that we are ready to compete when these circles are as good as the arena circles.

I hope that this gives you a few ideas of ways to take your horses outside the arena. I have found it to be a great help when I'm trying to restore or maintain mental soundness, increase endurance, or simply do a bit of training while I enjoy the beauty of my surroundings.

To schedule Clinics or lessons  
Contact Kevin Vesey Equine Center  
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ABOUT: Kevin Vesey is a horse trainer, coach, and clinician based in Baldwin, ND. He actively shows Reining, Ranch Horse Pleasure, and Working Cow Horses. He has qualified over 20 horses for the AQHA World show, has ridden many horses to AQHA year-end Honor Role awards, and has earnings in NRHA and NRCHA. He was the 2000 APHA Freestyle Reining World Champion and a multiple top 5 finisher at the APHA Congress in Reining and Working Cow Horse. He coaches students of all disciplines including reining, working cow horse, barrels, and all around events. Kevin is married to Tara and has 2 daughters, Emma (8) and Nora (4). In his free time he enjoys taking his girls to open shows, skiing, playing basketball, and coaching his daughter's grade school basketball team.