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CHAPTER

5

LATERAL WORK
PROBLEMS

TURN ON THE FOREHAND

Purpose

- ◆ A turn on the forehand is a basic movement designed to teach a young horse to move away from the leg.
- ◆ It also has value in introducing the concept of lateral work to a novice rider.
- ◆ As it is performed at the halt, it has little gymnastic value. Once the movement is understood, we should progress onwards and not practise it too often.

Aids for turn on the forehand

- ◆ Make a square halt, with the horse remaining attentively on the aids.
- ◆ Use the inside rein to flex the horse slightly away from the direction of the turn.
- ◆ The inside leg, at the girth (or slightly behind, if the horse does not understand) quietly pushes the hindquarters away so that the inside hind leg crosses in front of the outside hind leg. Try to control each step so that the horse does not rush.
- ◆ The rider remains tall in the saddle and the outside rein maintains soft contact so that the horse does not move forward during the turn; he should pivot around the inside foreleg.

- ◆ The rider's outside leg is kept at the girth to ensure the horse does not step back during the turn.
- ◆ It is usual to execute the turn as a quarter (90 degrees) or half (180 degrees) turn on the forehand.

PROBLEMS WITH TURN ON THE FOREHAND

1. Moves forward during the turn

During the turn the horse may push forward rather than pivoting around his inside foreleg.

SOLUTIONS

- a** This may happen because the young horse does not understand that you want him to move away from the leg.
- ◆ Usually turn on the forehand is the introduction to lateral work, and until then he has only been required to move forward when he feels a leg aid, so in fact he may be trying to please his rider when he makes this mistake.
 - ◆ Be patient and take time for him to understand, so that he does not become tense. Repeat the aids quietly and only ask for one or two steps at first, then praise him and walk on to another place where you can ask again.
 - ◆ Try halting facing the wall and close to it. This can deter the horse from stepping forwards.
- b** However, it may be that he steps forward because the rider's outside rein is not maintaining a controlling contact. This does not mean you should pull, rather that you maintain the feel as if in a halt.
- ◆ When the inside leg is applied to ask the horse to move away, the horse's first reaction is to move forward. When he feels the outside rein does not yield to allow this, he takes the second option, which is to move sideways away from the leg pressure.
- c** If the rider tips forward in the saddle, the shift in bodyweight can be enough to unbalance the horse and cause him to step forward. It is important to sit still and not disturb him.
- d** The horse may step forward to evade crossing his inside hind leg.

*Be patient
and take time
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- ◆ In this case it can be helpful to halt close to and facing the wall. The presence of the wall can deter him from walking forward and allow the rider to perform the turn without becoming stronger in the reins.
- e Stepping forward can also result in falling-out through the outside shoulder. The solution is to use the outside rein to limit the amount of neck bend. The more that is permitted, the more likely the horse is to escape through the outside shoulder. Do not forget that we want only a *small* flexion away from the direction of movement.

2. Moves backwards during the turn

The horse is required to pivot around the inside foreleg, not step backwards.

SOLUTIONS

- a This fault may be due to the rein contact being too strong, causing the horse to step back. The trainer should remind the rider to keep a steady but light rein contact to give the horse confidence.
- b It may be that the rider's outside leg is not supporting the horse during the turn; it should 'hold' him in place as he is asked to pivot around the inside foreleg. There must be a balance between the sideways aid and the 'remain in place' aids.

... keep a
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3. Inside hind leg does not cross

During the turn on the forehand the inside hind leg should cross in front of the outside one, as in a leg-yield.

SOLUTIONS

- a If the horse is lazy or lethargic, his inside hind leg can step next to, but not across, the outside hind. Try supporting the inside leg aid with a tap from the schooling whip.
 - ◆ Alternatively, ride actively in trot or canter, then ride a square halt and ask for the movement. This can make the horse more responsive to your aids and produce the crossing step as required.
- b A stiff or weak horse may have difficulty in showing the crossing step. We can help him by altering the movement to a turn *around* the forehand.
 - ◆ Instead of halting, then asking the hindquarters to move away, we *almost* halt, and then ask in the normal way. This makes it easier for the horse to

mobilise his hindquarters and to make the inside hind cross in front of the outside one.

- ◆ The price we pay for the turn *around* the forehand is that the horse will move a little forward rather than pivot on the inside foreleg. We should regard this as a compromise in order to help supple the horse sufficiently so that he can then progress to the normal turn on the forehand.

SUGGESTED EXERCISE

- ◆ Walk along the centre line. At G almost halt, then push the hindquarters around with the inside leg, taking care that, with soft half-halts from the outside rein, we limit the forward steps to a minimum, lest the turn becomes so large that he no longer crosses the inside hind leg. At D ask for another turn around the forehand. Repeat this manoeuvre on both reins until the horse starts to feel looser.
- ◆ An alternative exercise is to ride a 20m circle around X. Each time you get to the centre line on the circle, ask for the turn around the forehand, using the inside leg to push the hindquarters outwards until you have made a 180 degree turn and can then proceed on the circle on the other rein. On reaching the centre line for the second time, ask for another turn around the forehand, thereby changing rein once again.

Note this exercise is equally suitable for turn on the forehand too.

- c On occasion the inside hind leg may step across but *behind* the outside hind leg. Again we should check that the outside rein is not too strong and that there is enough outside leg on the horse for him to be *thinking* forwards rather than backwards.
- d The preparation for this movement should include a square halt, with the horse remaining on the aids so that he is mentally and physically ready for whatever you ask for.
 - ◆ Check the preparation. If the halt is not square, then it is difficult for any horse to perform the movement correctly. If the inside hind has halted behind the outside hind, then how is the horse to make the correct crossing step?
 - ◆ Or if the horse is resting a hind leg, the rider should first square him by using the opposite leg to gently push the horse to stand on all four legs. We must begin with a straight halt and the weight evenly distributed over all four legs.