

## LUNGING VS LONG-LINING

I am often asked why I long-line horses rather than lunge them. It looks like a lot of trouble if you are just going to warm the horse up and make it ready and quiet to ride. However there is a lot more to long-lining than that and its advantages over lunging are many and varied.

Whenever I am with the horse I am teaching it something so I want to make the most of each minute I spend with the horse. If the horse is tired he has stopped learning so the time I put into attempting to teach him something is wasted.

Lunging is often used to 'work a horse down' and make it quieter to ride. When this is done, by the time the rider gets on the horse they have thrown away the opportunity to teach the horse anything much because the horse is already tired. Lunging the horse does improve his fitness level and you can quite quickly end up with a very fit, uneducated horse.

The main advantages to long-lining are: 1) The horse is travelling in a correct frame and therefore building all of those muscles he requires to maintain balance and self-carriage with a rider aboard, and 2) The horse is being taught to give to the bit and be light in the bridle. Because the trainer is holding the reins, in the same way we would be if we were riding the horse, he/she knows that the horse is light and in self-carriage and if the horse is not, the trainer can correct this.

If you see a horse being lunged in side-reins you may think that the horse is in frame and looks pretty good. However, the trainer has no idea if the horse is 'leaning' on the bit and this often leads to horses learning to pull and fall onto the forehand rather than be light and elevated.

Teaching a horse to long-line well will be useful for the rest of its working life. The long-lines are a great place to teach new things or correct problems that may arise without the added complication of your weight in the saddle and possible cues you may be giving the horse. I teach all youngsters to long-line well before they are able to be ridden. When it comes time for the first ride the horse already has a very good understanding of his job making it an easier and safer transition for both horse and trainer.

No matter the breed, size or previous education of your horse - all horses will greatly benefit from long-lining, if done well. Get a lesson or two to get you started and make sure you are making the most of the time you are spending with your horse.

Look at the two pictures below. In the first one the 3 year old Arab is in a good frame the handler utilizing his time well.



In this second picture the horse is not in frame and might as well be on a lunge line. The horse's back is hollow and he is falling on to the forehand.



Remember: Practice doesn't make perfect. Perfect practice makes perfect!