

LUNGING

LUNGING CAN BE A VALUABLE PART OF YOUR RETIRED RACEHORSE'S TRAINING PROGRAM. DEVELOPING THIS SKILL WILL HAVE MANY BENEFITS FOR BOTH YOU AND YOUR HORSE.

WHY LUNGE YOUR HORSE?

- » Can help build and maintain fitness;
- » Develops obedience by listening and learning ground commands;
- » Develops rhythm, suppleness, balance, and engagement;
- » Opportunity to assess how your horse is working and moving from the ground;
- » Makes up part of your horse's cross-training and adds variety to the training regime;
- » Can keep your horse fit if the rider is unable to ride for any reason;
- » Beneficial at competitions to help settle your horse;
- » Is good exercise if you are short on time. 20 minutes on the lunge can be equivalent to 45 minutes to 1 hours work if done correctly;
- » Great for training a young, green, or weak horse to accept the contact and get used to working without the weight of a rider;
- » Can make up an effective part of a horse's rehabilitation program;
- » A well-trained horse on the lunge is also a great asset to improve your own riding skills with ridden lunge lessons!

EQUIPMENT

THE HORSE

The basics you will need to get started are a lunge line and a lunge whip. You can lunge off your horse's bridle or with a purpose designed lunge cavesson (Figure 1). If lunging off the bridle, an attachment which attaches to the bit and allows to change reins easily as well as having even pressure on the bit is a good idea (Figure 2). Some horses may require the lunge line to be attached as a check rein over their head. Your coach can advise you about the best method for your horse. It is best not to lunge with just a halter as this can pull over your horse's outside eye and does not allow for good control of your horse.



Figure 1

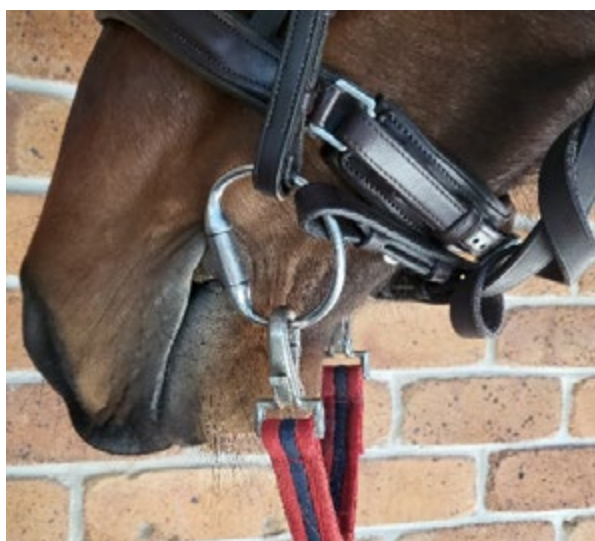


Figure 2



Figure 3

You can lunge in a roller (Figure 3), which allows for variations in how to attach training aids and may be more beneficial if lunging for rehabilitation or a green horse. You must always ensure adequate padding under the roller as they have a small surface area and therefore the pressure per square centimetre is greater. If you are planning to ride after you lunge, then a saddle can be used.

Additional training equipment such as side reins, a bungee (Figure 4), a chambon or a Pessoa can also be greatly beneficial in training your horse. Speak to your coach to work out which piece of equipment would best suit your horse as your horse's conformation, way of going and level of training will all depend on what training aid will suit your retired racehorse.

Brushing boots on all legs are advised, as are bell boots even if you do not normally use boots. Working on a small circle constantly can mean your horse is more likely to knock his or her legs



Figure 4

and the curve of the circle brings the inside hind closer to the inside fore making injury from an overreach more probable.

THE RIDER

Best practice is to always wear gloves when lunging as even an experienced horse can get spooked. Rope burn is very painful and best avoided!

A helmet is also recommended as you are standing in relatively close proximity to your horse who will be moving at various speeds on the lunge.

Sensible shoes are also a must as you will be on the ground leading the horse, but also because you need to be able to move quickly and not trip over when following your horse. It happens more than you think!

OTHER SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- » Lunge your horse in an enclosed area. An arena or round yard is best. You do not want your horse to get away from you in a large paddock and get tangled up in the lunge line and potentially injure themselves.
- » The surface should not be too deep or too hard and as flat as possible.
- » Do not get too close to the hind end of your horse. Stand at the girth or roller so you are not in the kicking zone.
- » Do not wrap the lunge line around your hand. Hold it in loops so you do not get your lunge line tangled.

- » Do not drop the end of the lunge line when lunging. It would be extremely dangerous if your feet got caught up in excess lunge line if your horse does pull away.
- » Do not drop the lunge line near the feet of your horse. You do not want the lunge line and your horse to get tangled.
- » Be aware of your whip position. Do not accidentally tap your horse with the whip when you are standing close by.
- » Work your horse equally on both sides and do not forget to give them rest periods on the lunge, as you would when riding. Fatigued horses are more likely to injure themselves.

EXERCISES ON THE LUNGE

Have a plan and make sure you do not waste your lunge session by just spinning your horse around in circles like a washing machine! Use the time to actually train your horse. The stage of your horse's training will depend on which exercises you choose to employ.

SOME BENEFICIAL EXERCISES TO INCLUDE:

- » Direct and indirect transitions. A direct transition is where you skip a gait, for example, going from walk to canter. An example of an indirect transition is going from trot to canter.
- » Transitions within a gait such as making your horse go from a working trot to a more lengthened trot and back to a working trot again.
- » Spiraling your horse in and out on the circle. Just remember that a young or green horse will find a small circle much more difficult so always consider your horse's experience and level of training.
- » You can also put trot or canter poles down at various points of the circle.

Always remember to seek the advice of your coach or trainer when commencing any new exercise or training activity with your retired racehorse.