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Useful Transition Exercises

The following exercises can help you transition from a treed saddle into your new Ansur saddle. Using these and performing them slowly will assist you in adapting to your horse's new way of going. Slowly is the operative word here...you're looking for precision, not speed.

"Outline" a 20 meter circle in the arena with shavings or cones. Be fussy about the circle...it must be round. Tack up and let the fun begin!

1. Walk for the first 15 - 20 minutes....not on the circle yet. Let your horse develop a nice big walk, stretching the reins down to the ground. Ask the horse to continue long and low, with his hind limbs coming through from behind, no quickening. Take your feet out of stirrups and just cruise. Then, pick up stirrups and walk on the inside of the circle a couple of laps. Be careful to stay just to the inside of the circle, keep a nice even bend in your horse. Now, stop your motion, narrow up your body and come to a nice soft halt. Repeat walk, halt in other direction. (The first time you try this, it may take half the circle to achieve the halt; but leave the reins alone and let the horse "read" your position. Goal: Accurate circle, maintaining quiet seat and legs.)

2. Walk to Trot. On inside of cir circle, walk 6 strides and ask for slow jog trot, rising (posting), for 1 lap of circle. Narrow your position and sit softly, asking the horse to walk, 10 strides, then softly halt using technique as in #1. Again, keep your feet still and allow your horse to maintain long, low position ... let him take the rein nearly down to the ground. Repeat movement in both directions, always staying just barely to the inside of the circle and maintaining a nice even bend throughout the exercise. (Goal: horse to "read" your position; no pulling on reins in the downward transitions. Horse's frame should not change whether you are rising or seated.)

3. Rising trot to sitting trot. Again, on the inside of the circle, ask horse for a slow job trot, rising, for 8 strides; then sit softly and trot sitting for 8 strides. Repeat....8 strides rising then 8 strides sitting. Repeat these movements in both directions. (Goal: accurate circle and stride count; relaxed horse, slow cadence; feet quiet in stirrups. Remember, horse's frame should not change whether you are rising or seated.)

4. Once you have mastered the first exercises, you can put them all together as you wish, but remember, go slowly. Combinations can include:
 - a. Begin at the walk just to the inside of the circle, then move into a slow jog trot, rising, for 8 strides; accelerate the trot just a bit more, still rising, for 8 strides; drop back down to the jog trot for 8 strides, down to a walk for 8 strides and ask for a soft halt.

(Goal: To make definite transitions from the accelerated trot back down to the slow jog trot and also from the jog to the walk. Your feet should stay very still, rein contact is only just barely enough to maintain a nice bend in the horse. You should be traveling very close to the circle you've drawn but not in/through it! Horse should not be tense. Matter of fact, throughout these exercises, he should almost be a bit bored.)

b. This time ask for the walk, then a slow jog trot for 10 strides, then ask for a very slow canter. Canter on, very quietly, for 1/2 the circle, then softly transition to a jog trot and back to the walk. Repeat this for a couple of laps. When it becomes smooth, with no muss or fuss, you can go from the jog to the canter, down to the jog trot, up to the canter with 8 strides of each. (Goal: Stay soft. Go slowly. Neither horse nor rider tensing. Rider's feet and hands quiet. Rider sitting nice and tall with seat in contact with saddle.) If tension results, go back to prior exercise and save this one for other another day!



Happy Trails,

Carole Weidner,

President