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# TRAINING TIP OF THE MONTH

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## Leaning Out

*Using the side pass to square up your horse*

**Shaun McBride**

**Balance** is something we should all work on with our horses. From reiners to cow horses, when a horse's body isn't balanced and square, you are at a disadvantage. Your horse's shoulders are a big part of this.

Getting control of your horse's shoulders is more than cantering around in a circle, pulling on your inside rein. Too much of this causes your horse to lean to the outside, making it harder for him to be willingly guided. Leaning to the outside is not only poor form, it can actually create other problems.

For example, you are traveling in a circle to the right, preparing for a lead change to the left. Your horse is leaning out. Because of this, he is going to have to make an extra adjustment to get his rib cage in line with the rest of his body before he can change leads. This extra adjustment usually creates a rough, choppy lead change and more often than not, no lead change at all.

### HOW CAN I TELL IF MY HORSE LEANING OUT?

If you're loping around in a circle, pulling on your reins and working on getting his head tipped in and down – are you paying attention to the rest of his body? Your horse might be over bent, causing him to lean out. If your horse is leaning out, you will start to feel as if he is drifting out or his shoulder is pushing you out of the circle. You might also be able to feel his hip just hanging out behind him. Remember to use your legs when you are pulling on his face. If you aren't using your legs to keep him in a frame, things will fall apart very quickly. You will need to use inside and outside leg to keep your horse in a frame and use your legs EVERY TIME you go to pull on his face.

Leaning out is fixable with simple exercises that I do on a daily basis with all the horses in my training program, even the older finished horses. When I'm warming up, I spend a lot of time side passing the horse both directions. This insures that the horse is listening to my rein and leg cues, and helps him understand balance and what I'm asking for when I want him to be square. Once my horse is warmed up, I begin working on circles. If I'm loping to the left and I feel my horse begin to drift out, I immediately ask him to stop and side pass him five or six steps to the right. After the side pass, I'll ask him to pick up that left lead again and continue this process until he stays square in his body. The most important part of the side passing exercise is to make certain that your horse stays square from his hips to the tip of his nose. Don't let him get at an angle. Most horses will move the front end farther than the back end – and you end up moving at an angle and not truly sideways. Use your leg back well behind the girth to encourage him to use his hip. And remember, correctness is more an important than speed when you are schooling.

Side passing doesn't only promote balance and keep your horse square. It will build strength in his body and improve coordination – improving every maneuver required in your pattern work. Adding this to your daily training program will make things easier on your horse, hopefully improving your score, and leading to more trips to the winner's circle.

Until next time – Ride Well!

Be sure to let me know if there is a topic you would like me to cover in future Tips or if you have a training question. – Shaun McBride

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# Your Training Tip of the Month is Here!

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### WORKING COW HORSE CLINIC

DATE SATURDAY APRIL 14, 2007  
PLACE McBRIDE FARM; MT STERLING, OH  
TIME 9 AM – 5 PM

9-12 Reining  
12-1 Lunch (provided)  
1-5 Cow Work

Details are on our website: [www.cowhorseohio.com](http://www.cowhorseohio.com)

### WORKING COW HORSE CLINIC

DATE SATURDAY, MAY 2007 (TBA)  
PLACE McBRIDE FARM  
TIME 9 AM – 5 PM

POSTAGE