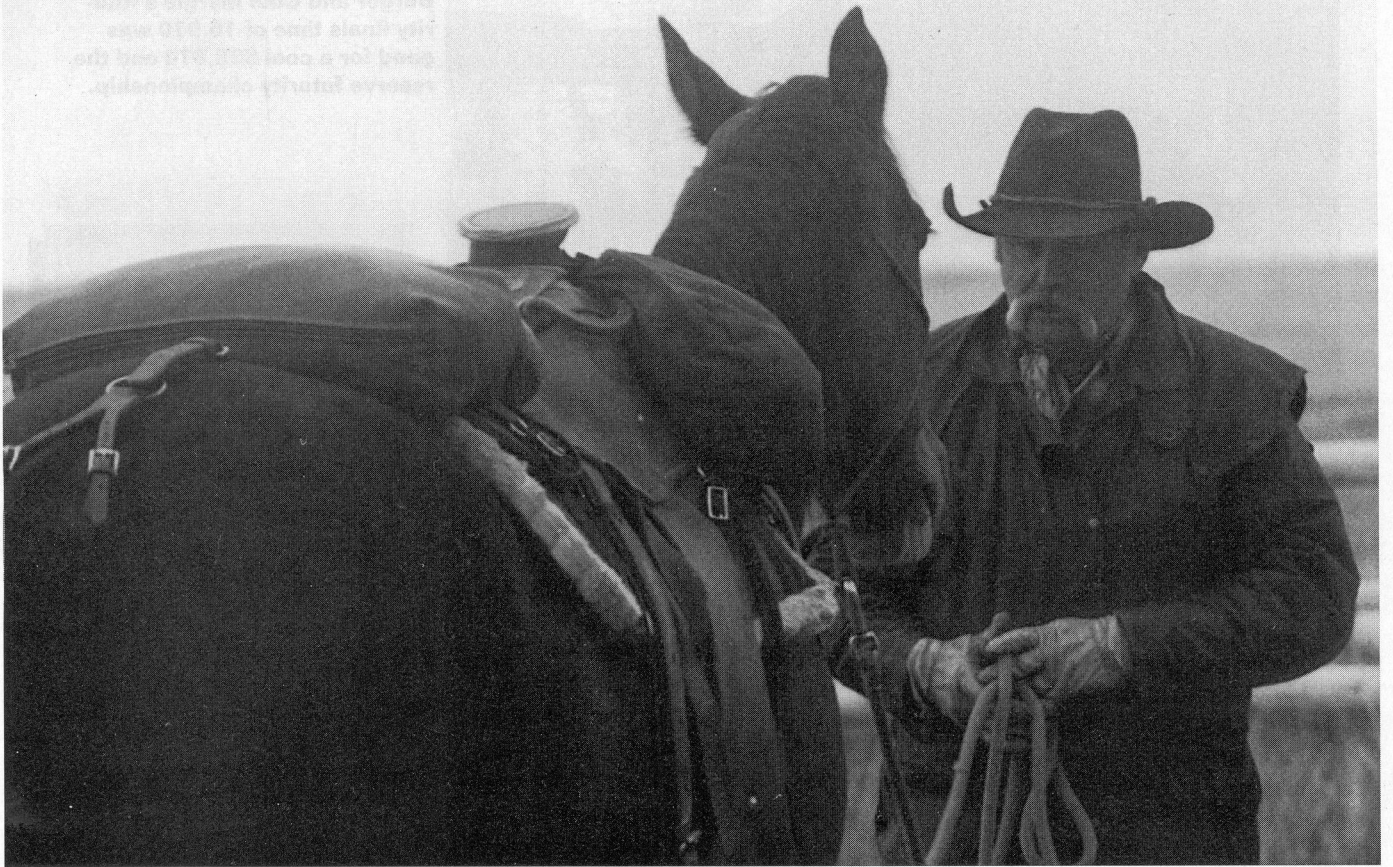


Duaine Hagen.



Teach Your Horse To Yield

Duaine Hagen presents his five steps to a good horse-handler relationship.

Article and Photographs
by Jan Murawski Evans

GROWING UP with horses, Wyoming's Duaine Hagen learned the older, rougher ways of breaking and training horses. Saddened by the thought, he admits he probably ruined some good horses with harsh training methods.

Today, though, Hagen teaches gentle, more effective techniques anyone can use to safely gain a horse's respect and train him to respond to cues. Hagen employs these methods with the horses he

and his guests ride at his LaBonte Canyon Ranch near Douglas.

Equipment

Hagen uses a knotted rope halter and 12-foot lead rope to train a horse to yield to a handler.

Step 1: Touch

Accustom the horse to being touched all over his body by gently running your hands and the lead rope over him. Touch the horse from

his nose to his feet to the underside of his tail. When the horse tolerates the feel of hands and rope, proceed.

Step 2: Backing Up

Purpose: A horse must pay attention to you before he'll yield. Teaching the horse to back a step at a time, you capture the horse's attention and develop his backing response.

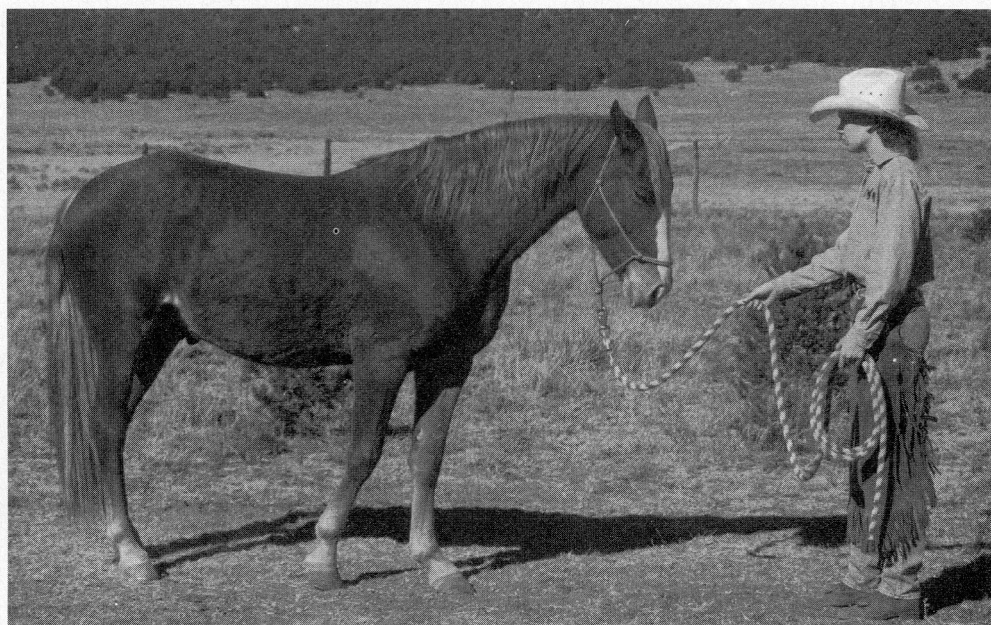
Exercises: Gently put your hand on the horse's face, midway between his nostrils and eyes. Apply pressure until the horse backs a step, then immediately release the pressure. Always follow a successful result by rubbing the horse's forehead. Next, stand on the opposite side of the horse and repeat the exercise with your other hand.

Now, put a hand on each side of the horse's chest, just in front of his shoulders, and press until the horse backs a step. Move to the other side of the horse's head and repeat the exercise. Practice until the horse responds from just a touch.

Next, gently rub the halter back and forth over the horse's nose until he backs a step. Move to the other side of the horse's head and repeat.

Finally, back the horse, praising each step and moving your hand down the lead rope until the rope is loose and the horse responds to your shaking the rope. Stop moving the rope as soon as the horse begins backing so he learns that moving back releases the pressure of the rope.

Benefits: The ability to back a horse with a gentle shake of the lead rope can come in handy when positioning the horse for grooming or saddling or when backing him out of a trailer. A horse who charges ahead of his handler also



Step 2: A shake of the rope sends the horse into reverse.

benefits. A shake of the rope focuses the horse's attention on the handler without triggering a tug-of-war contest the human can't win.

Step 3: Disengaging the Hindquarters

Purpose: This exercise teaches the horse to disengage his hindquarters while turning his head and to respond to pressure on his sides.

Exercises: Standing at the horse's

left shoulder, bend his head slightly left while pushing on his side with your right hand. The horse should move his hindquarters away from the pressure, crossing his near hind foot over the opposite hind foot. Release any pressure on the lead rope and rub him until he stops. Next, practice on the right side of the horse.

Benefits: The horse learns to yield to pressure on his side and develops a feel for the cues a rider uses to stop him. ↻



Step 3: Disengaging the hindquarters.

Duaine Hagen

In 1983 Duaine Hagen created the Wyoming Wrangler School, a program aimed at training people to work at guest ranches. He no longer offers a structured group learning program, but guests at his LaBonte Canyon Ranch near Douglas, Wyo., have opportunities to learn how to develop their relationships with horses.

Hagen conducts an annual clinic at Westcliffe, Colo., and has given horse-packing demonstrations in conjunction with Pat Parelli conferences.

He can be reached at LaBonte Canyon Ranch, 831 Braae Road, Douglas, WY 82633; 800-894-7262, FAX: 307-358-3410; www.labontecanyonranch.com, sshagen@netcommander.com.

Many people believe that you stop a horse who's moving too fast or running off by pulling straight back on the reins. This is not true. No one is strong enough to pull straight back and stop a bolting horse. You get him stopped by pulling his head to one side and moving his hindquarters to the opposite side. For example, pull his head to the left and push his hindquarters to the right. That's what "disengaging the hindquarters" means.

Hagen says, "If you can't do this, you can't stop him. And if you can't get it done on the ground, you can't get it done on his back. It's a lot safer to get started while building the foundation on the ground."

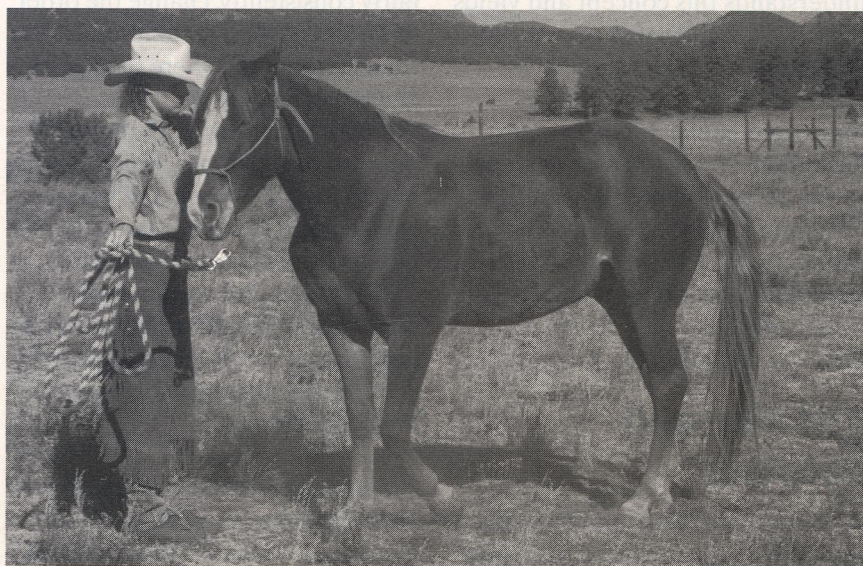
Step 4: Yielding the Front End

Purpose: Moving the horse's front end around the handler teaches the horse to be worked from both sides. This exercise trains the horse to respond to lead-rope pressure to move to the right or left.

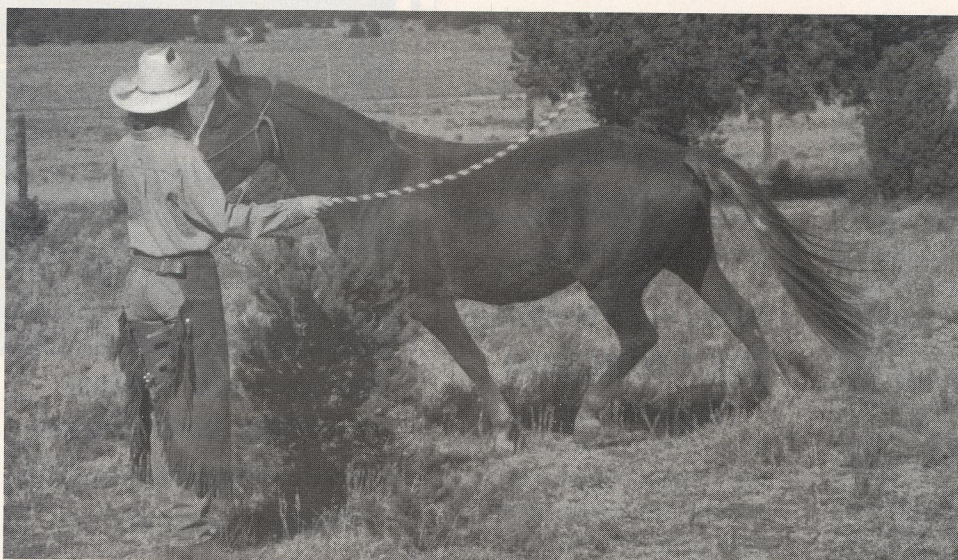
Exercises: Start with disengaging the hindquarters, as you did in Step 3.

As the horse moves away, switch the lead rope to your other hand, and lead the horse around you so he's on the opposite side from where he started. Keep a safe distance between you and the horse so he doesn't step on you.

This exercise can create a problem if the horse is resistant to your being on one particular side. Once the horse has accomplished the maneuver, however clumsily, go back to an exercise



Step 4: Moving the front end.



Step 5: Longeing around obstacles gives purpose to the ground exercises.

he's mastered, such as backing.

Benefits: The horse learns to respond to a pull on the lead rope by moving to the left or right. This helps prepare a horse to load into a trailer or maneuver through a small space.

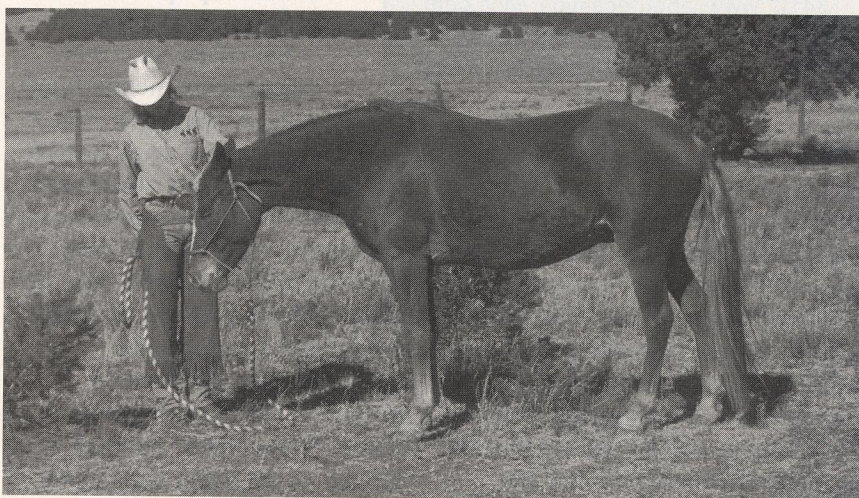
Step 5: Longeing

Purpose: Moving the horse in a circle at the end of the lead rope reinforces the previous exercises, creating a continuation of front-end yielding.

Exercise: Cue the horse to move sideways, away from you, then swing the end of the lead rope toward his withers. As the horse moves away from the rope, aim the rope toward his hip. Don't hit him, but use the rhythm of the swinging rope to create pressure to which the horse can respond.

When the horse moves in a circle at the end of the lead rope and pays attention to you, pull on the rope to move his hindquarters around until he faces you. Gently pull your horse to you and praise him. Repeat the exercise, this time longeing the horse in the opposite direction.

Practice this exercise over ground poles, jumps, water, tarps, or anything else the horse might encounter on a trail or in a show arena.



End your training session with a calm horse.

Benefits: "When the horse understands this concept and yields fairly well, build some purpose into the exercise," says Hagen. "Use obstacles and longe him over jumps and banks. If you just go around in circles, it's meaningless to the horse, and he'll get soured. Give him a job that he wouldn't normally do. When you can get those kinds of things done, that's when longeing really starts meaning something to the horse."

Practice and Patience

Practice each step until the horse responds, but keep the process interesting for the horse by breaking up

the exercises. After the horse yields fairly consistently, change the order of the exercises. This helps the trainer recognize where the horse needs more practice.

Patience on your part allows the horse to react to cues, which teaches him to respond. Soon, the horse will perform the exercises willingly, not just when pressure is applied.

After the horse responds correctly during a difficult step, lavish him with praise. Repeat a previous exercise the horse performs easily, then end the session.

The author has been involved with horses for more than 30 years. She lives near Cotopaxi, Colo., with her husband, K.C., and their children.