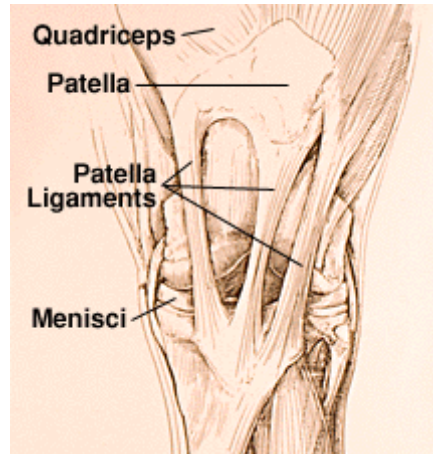


Intermittent upward fixation of the patella

Intermittent upward fixation of the patella occurs when the medial (inside) patella ligament remains hooked over the trochlear ridge of the femur (thigh bone). This locks the hind limb in extension and the horse will stand with the hind limb fixed in extension with the fetlock flexed.



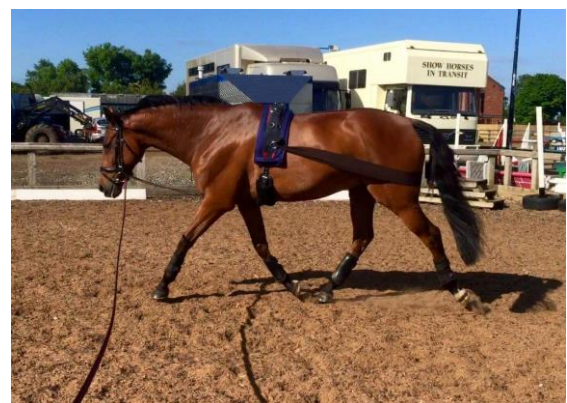
The stifle apparatus

Upward fixation of the patella is usually seen in young horses particularly those with poor muscling or those who have been stabled or inactive. Also horses with straight hind limb conformation are predisposed to the condition.

Exercises for strengthening the quadriceps and biceps femoris

Lunging

Using a whole body training aid such as an EquiAmi, if possible, and work on the lowest setting to get your horse to stretch over the back and work in an open frame. Lunge for 20 minutes (5 minutes warm up and stretch, 10 minutes working correctly and 5 minutes cool down and stretch, over both reins). If you do not have an EquiAmi you can use a Pessoa or use 4" Ace bandage (available from amazon) or a tail bandage tied behind the hindquarters between the level of the hock and stifle at an adequate tension to encourage engagement of the hindquarters (as shown upper photo right).



Long reining

Long reining encourages the horse to work as they would when ridden but without the weight of a rider. Utilize this to your advantage and use long reining out for hacks (if safe to do so), in the ménage, using pole work and using hills. Make sure the horse is working in a forward manner, engaging the hind quarters and rounding over the back. The Equiband system can be used whilst long reining or you can use 4" Ace bandage (available from amazon) or an elastic tail bandage behind the hindquarters between the level of the hock and stifle at an adequate tension to encourage engagement of the hindquarters, as above.

Pole exercises (ridden/long rein or on the lunge)

Start by placing three to five poles on the ground. Place them approximately 3' apart for walk, or 4' for trot work. This distance may have to be adjusted for ponies or larger horses. As your training progresses, increase the number of poles on the ground. After a few weeks of fittening work raise alternate ends of the poles by a few inches (as shown below right, potties are good and cheap way of doing this). Try to alternate pole exercises, raise both ends of the pole or alternate ends of the poles, and adjust distances, place poles around corners etc. (some exercises are shown below)

Tip: if your horse is lazy or requires a change in plan, use dressage boards rather than poles to get your horse to engage.



Hill work (ridden or in hand)

Asking your horse to simply stand on a downhill slope requires engagement of the quadriceps and abdominals. Begin by asking your horse to walk down a mild to moderate slope. Ask your horse to sit back on his hindquarters, and approach the slope in a slow but steady manner. Repeat three or four times each session, gradually increasing the degree of the slope, and the number of repetitions. This can also be done in hand or in long reins

When hacking walk or canter up long steady gradients as often as possible.

Backing up/reversing

Backing up requires strength and coordination. Incorporate this into your training session by asking your horse to take 2 to 10 good quality steps backward and then move immediately off into walk. This move however is about quality not quantity as demanding this too often or for too long can put strain on the stifle and hock.

Note: In all exercises ensure the horse is travelling forward in a constant even rhythm, if the horse is falling behind the leg whilst ridden or being lazy on the lunge then he will not be using his hindquarters correctly.

We appreciate that every horse is individual, if there are any elements of this program which you cannot complete please call us to discuss changes.

Any questions/problems please contact:

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Gymnasticising

Exercises for Horse & Rider

From Issue 2, Athleticism



ELOQUENT
EQUINE

Volume 1

No. 3

Why use gymnastic exercises?

Gymnastic exercises can be a valuable tool for horse & rider of any level and discipline. They build strength and position, and can refocus the attention of a distracted horse. The gymnastic you build for you and your horse can be simple or complex and can reflect the level of training or the set of skills you want to work on at a certain time.

Gymnastics help the rider:

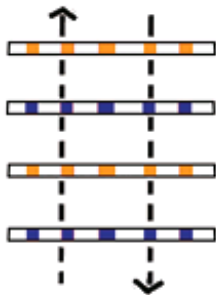
- increase focus
- learn to control pace & spacing
- work on adjusting strides
- enhance rider position
- learn to achieve a consistency of pace / gait

Gymnastics help the horse:

- loosen their body & engage
- increase suppleness
- lighten the forehand
- engage the hind end
- increase general fitness
- regain focus in training

Trot Pole Exercises

The Straight Line



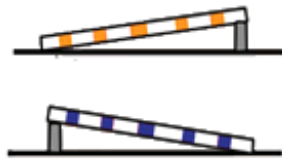
To set up:

- Arrange 4 poles in a line
- Each pole should be approx. 4 - 4.5 ft. apart
- Spacing may need to be adjusted based on length of horse's stride

Purpose of exercise:

- Good for encouraging horse to lift his feet and articulate the joints
- Can be incorporated into turns & patterns, making for various training exercises

The Raised Pole



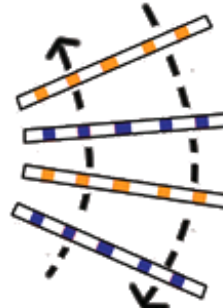
To set up:

- Arrange 4 poles in a line
- Raise one end of each pole slightly off the ground
- Alternate which end is raised on each subsequent pole

Purpose of exercise:

- Encourages articulation in the joints
- Horse is forced to engage its muscles as it lifts each of its legs over the obstacle

The Fan



To set up:

- Arrange 4 poles in a fan pattern
- Adjust spacing based on horse's gait

Purpose of exercise:

- To help work on extension and collection of gaits
- By riding where the space is smaller your horse must collect his gait, where it is wider the horse must extend.

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