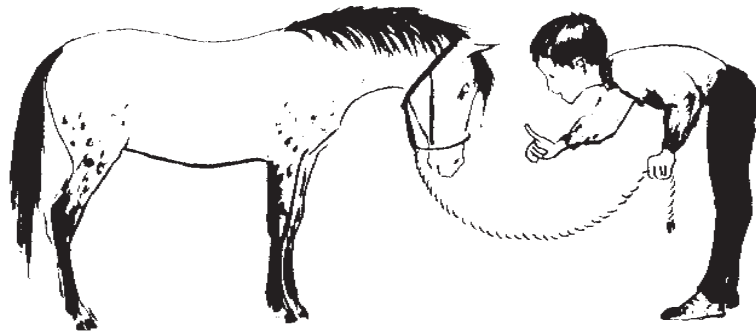


4-H LEADER GUIDE



# LONGE LINE TRAINING



## WASHINGTON 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT POLICY FOR PROTECTIVE HEADGEAR USE IN THE 4-H EQUINE PROGRAM

All Washington 4-H junior and intermediate youth participating in Performance Horse, Driving, Trail, Western Games, Hunt Seat Over Fences, Rodeo, Team Penning, and Team Roping projects and activities will wear American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM) and Safety Engineering Institute (SEI) #1163 equestrian approved protective headgear, properly fitted and with a chin strap, when mounted and riding in 4-H horse riding activities.

**October 1, 1997**, all 4-H youths in 4-H horse projects and activities will wear protective headgear.



## LONGE LINE TRAINING

With the increased interest in owning and raising horses, more people want to know how to train young horses. An excellent starting method for a young horse is on the longe line. This is one method of training, but not the only way. Many horsemen will have different methods and ideas on longeing and on training horses in general. You need to adjust the training method to fit both the horse and the handler.

What is longeing and what are its objectives? Longeing is a training method where the horse works on a circle around the handler. A horse is said to be on the longe when he takes even contact on the longe line from the handler. The handler can, with the longe line and the whip, control the horse through his different gaits and control the size of the circle the horse works on. The longe line is a substitute for the reins, as the longe whip is a substitute for the leg aids. If a horse just runs around in a circle, it is only an exercising method, but not a training method.

Longeing is used to gain the confidence of the young horse. The horse learns to submit to the handler's will. Longeing also conditions the young horse and teaches him balance without a rider on his back.

Longeing can be used in numerous ways. You can exercise and calm a horse before riding, similar to the warm-up exercises of an athlete. Training the rider on a horse is another longeing use. It is also a good method of cooling a horse after exercise. Another use, the one to be covered in this bulletin, is to train young horses.

When starting young horses to longe, it is desirable that they be long two-year-olds or three years of age. Many people do not realize that most two-year-old horses are not mentally and physically ready to be started under saddle.

How do we begin? Training starts in the stable, preferably shortly after the animal is born. The first two years of a horse's life should be spent developing confidence and trust in the horse toward man. It is a gentling process where the horse develops desirable habits under many new and different situations. This process includes, among other things, halter training, trimming and shoeing, sacking out, trailering, worming, and halter showing. If this basic education is taught properly over a long period of time, then the longe line training, when begun, should progress more easily and produce a better finished horse.

When the horse is about two years old saddling can be attempted. Use a lightweight saddle or surcingle. Proceed slowly when first introducing the saddle. Tighten the girth gently and not too tight. This is an important stage in a young horse's education. You do not want to make him "cinchy." Lead the horse around quietly for his first lesson. Be sure that the stirrups are tied or taken off to prevent them from flapping and scaring the horse. As this training progresses, let the horse feel the loose stirrups and eventually let them flop around while leading him at the trot. Lead the horse around for a few weeks at the walk and the trot. Don't try to do everything at once or in a few days.

When the saddling stage has been accomplished successfully, move on to the biting of the horse. It is best to use a jointed snaffle with large rings, such as a dee-ring or egg-butt snaffle. *Do not* use a snaffle with shanks such as a cowboy snaffle. Introduce the snaffle gently into the horse's mouth and only for a few minutes for the first time. Be sure that the snaffle is properly fitted. If the snaffle is too narrow, it will pinch the horse's lips, and if too wide, it will move back and forth through the mouth. A thin bar snaffle

has a more severe effect than a thicker one. The large rings on the snaffle will help keep the bit from being pulled through the mouth. Rubber mouth protectors serve the same function. The snaffle must not be set too high or low in the mouth. A good rule of thumb for fitting a snaffle is to get a very slight wrinkle in the corner of the mouth. Watch the corners of the horse's mouth for the first few weeks to make sure they do not become tender. If they do, you will need to put a salve or ointment on them.

It is desirable to use a dropped noseband in conjunction with the snaffle bit. The noseband will keep the horse from opening his mouth too much, and also prevents you from pulling the bit through his mouth. It further helps you flex the horse at his poll rather than with his lower jaw. The noseband should rest on the bone of the nose and not on the soft cartilage below it. The noseband is fastened below the bit and under the chin and should be loose enough to get two fingers under the strap (Fig. 1). The noseband must be above the nostrils where it will not restrict the horse's breathing.



Fig. 1—Dropped noseband. The noseband is fastened below the bit and under the chin. Chin strap should be loose enough to get two fingers under the strap.

After this initial adjustment, lead the horse around for a few minutes with a halter. Be sure not to attach the lead strap or rope to the bit, as the mouth is extremely tender. As training progresses, you can leave the bit in the mouth for longer periods of time. After a few weeks, you can even let your horse eat in the snaffle. Be sure to keep an eye on your horse when you let him loose in a corral or arena. You do not want him to get hung up with the snaffle in his mouth. At this stage, you may introduce some side reins with elastic inserts. With the bit in place, and the horse standing normally, adjust the side reins so there is practically no contact with the mouth. It is better to have side reins with elastic inserts, so they will give somewhat to the horse. Snap one end of the side rein in the bit ring and buckle the other end around the first billet on an English saddle, or to a ring on the surcingle, or on a Western saddle. Be sure that both side reins are of equal length. Work quietly with the horse and be gentle when the horse first feels the contact of the side reins. A young horse may become excited when he flips his head and first feels this restraint. You do not want the horse to become excited or to buck or rear. Lead the horse around for a few days at the walk and trot with the bit, saddle, and side reins in place. Again, show leniency to a young and playful horse. Once you have his confidence and obedience, then you are ready to start on the longe line.

Before we start with the first lesson on the longe line, we will cover the equipment that is needed. You will need either a jointed snaffle with a dropped noseband (Fig. 2), a longeing cavesson (Fig. 3), or a snaffle bit with a halter (Fig. 4). You will also need a light saddle (Fig. 5), or surcingle with side reins that have elastic inserts (Fig. 6). A 30-foot longe line or rope and a longe whip will finish the equipment needs. Again, the side reins should have no contact with the horse's mouth when first starting.

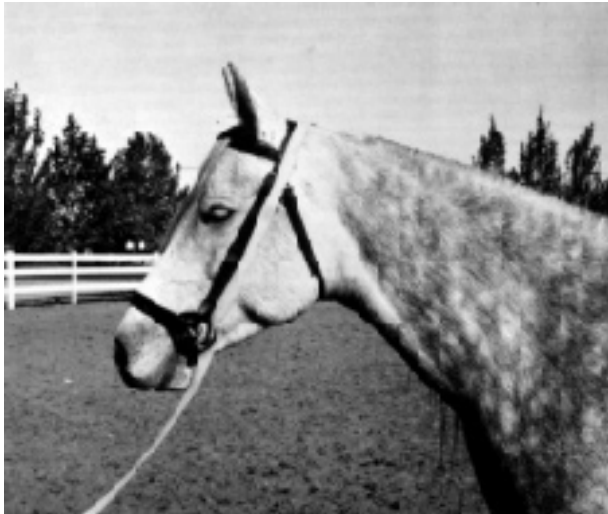


Fig. 2—Dee-ring snaffle with dropped noseband. Longe line is attached by the French method where the line goes through the near side bit ring, over the head and hooks to the off-side bit ring. This method of hook-up is not used until the later stages of training.



Fig. 3—Longeing cavesson.



Fig. 4—Dee-ring snaffle with halter hook-up.

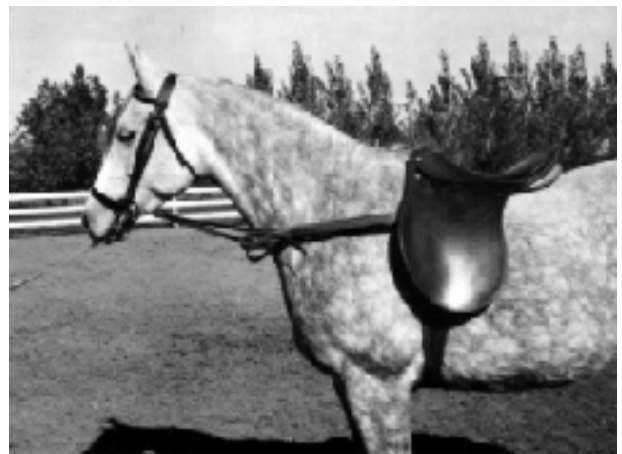


Fig. 5—Dropped noseband, side reins, and English saddle. Note that the longe line is attached to the ring of the dropped noseband and not the bit ring. This attachment is recommended when first starting a young horse. As training progresses, the longe line can then be attached to the bit.



Fig. 6—Dropped noseband, side reins, and surcingle.

When first starting the horse, never hook the longe line directly to the snaffle ring. Hook the longe line either to the ring of the dropped noseband (Fig. 5), the halter ring (Fig. 4), or to the ring on the longeing cavesson (Fig. 3). In the event the horse becomes excited or afraid and tries to run away, you will not be shanking on his mouth.

It is best to start with two handlers. The handler in the center can have a lead rope or the longe line. The second handler can either be behind the horse with the longe whip (Fig. 7) or be on the outside of the circle to lead the horse in a small circle (Fig. 8). Start the horse to the left and go slowly at the walk. It is better to work the horse in a small corral or arena to have some physical limits set for the horse. For the first few lessons, five minutes is long enough to work. As you progress, and the horse gets the idea of traveling in a circle, the second handler will not be needed. If the horse breaks into a trot, let him trot around for a minute or two and gently bring him back to the walk.

At this stage, with the horse going to the left, you should have the longe line in your left hand and the longe whip in your right hand. With the horse going to the left, you should pivot on your left foot.

After a few days, when the horse works to the left without a handler, switch to the right and repeat the above process. The horse may show more resistance going to the right than the left. When the horse will work both ways quietly, enlarge the circle by giving more longe line. A young horse should be longed in as large a circle as possible and worked only for short periods of time. If the horse tries to come into the center of the circle, point the longe whip at his head. If the horse becomes confused and tries to turn around or stop, move to the hind end and keep pushing with the longe whip. Then, when he resumes traveling in a circle, keep your left foot stationary again, when

going to the left. When the horse travels to the right, keep your right foot stationary.

When the horse will walk quietly on 30 feet of the line, shorten the longe and ask for the trot (Fig. 10). At first, a couple of minutes is long enough for the horse to trot. The horse may be playful and exuberant. The horse has to learn to be guided. Don't punish the horse if he becomes confused or afraid. Be patient, go back a few steps and start over.

Be sure you use your voice to calm the horse and to give him your different aids. When giving voice commands for the walk, trot, canter, whoa, etc., vary the inflection and tone of your voice. Don't overwork and push the young horse in this important stage of his training. Gradually increase the length of time on the longe line as the horse becomes conditioned. Remember, horses have different constitutions, mentalities, and attention spans. Get the horse accustomed to the longe whip. Push the horse with the whip, but do not use the whip on the horse.

For the first few weeks, work the horse on the longe at the walk and trot with full equipment. As the horse starts to collect and balance himself, the side reins can be gradually tightened. To help the horse collect himself, you constantly have to be pushing from behind with your whip. The whip creates impulsion in the horse; it helps him to engage his hindquarters. The whip is used in an underhanded motion, with the end pointing near the hocks. Be sure not to hit the horse though.

As the side reins are tightened slowly, the horse teaches himself restraint at the same time. Eventually the horse will set his own limits without you jerking on him. At this point the horse should be carrying the bit easily and working on the longe quietly. You can then change the longe line from the halter or noseband ring to the bit. It is





Fig. 7—The second handler is behind the horse with the longe whip and drives the horse.



Fig. 8—Alternative method used in starting the horse to longe. The handler in the center has the longe line and longe whip. The second handler is on the outside of the circle and helps lead the horse.



Fig. 9—Horse on the longe to the left at the walk.



Fig. 10—Horse on the longe to the left at the trot.

best if you use the French method (Fig. 2) of bit hookup. This is where the line goes through the inside snaffle ring, over the head, and snaps on the outside snaffle ring. This method gives you even contact on the snaffle plus prevents you from pulling the bit through the horse's mouth.

Now the longe line actually becomes a longe rein. You can control the forehand of the horse with the longe rein and hind end with the longe whip. You always work the horse between the line and the whip.

When first stopping a horse, especially at the faster gaits, you may need a wall or corner. Just step with the horse into the wall so he cannot pass you.

Don't overflex the horse with side reins that are too tight. As mentioned previously, let the horse collect himself and bring his own head in. Don't force his head in with the side reins. If a horse is carrying his head too high, attach the side reins lower on the girth or surcingle. If carrying his head too low, attach the side reins higher. If the horse carries his head to the outside and does not bend or flex around the circle, shorten the inside side rein a couple of holes to get the horse to flex to the inside. The final adjustment for the side reins is near the normal head position desired on the horse.

When the horse understands the stop, walk, and trot commands and will work quietly, you can then move on to the canter. The horse also needs to have the proper contact with the line, not too loose or tight.

In preparation for the canter, trot the horse. Draw the horse slightly into the circle by shortening the longe line. Then loosen the line and make him go back out onto the end of the line. At the same time, push with the whip and ask for the canter. Most times the horse will strike off on the correct lead. Bringing the horse into the circle creates more collection. When the horse is pushed back out, the inside foreleg is freed and will make it easier for the horse to take the proper lead. If the horse drops out of the canter, repeat the above process again quietly. Be patient. The horse needs to find his balance again on the circle at the canter. If the horse takes the incorrect lead, quietly pull him down and repeat the above process. Only ask for the canter to the left on this lesson and only for a short period of time. A minute or two is a long time for a young unbalanced horse. Reward the horse for his effort and try to always finish the lesson by walking quietly.

A young horse may also cross-lead behind because he is unbalanced. If this is the case, gently bring the horse out of the canter and start him over again. Some young horses, at first, will only be able to go halfway around the circle and then start to cross-lead.

Repeat the canter to the left for a few times before you ask for the canter on the right side.

As the horse begins to work quietly on both

leads, gently slow him down and collect him with your rein hand and voice. The longe rein can be used as a restraint in front and the whip to collect him from behind. The whip creates impulsion from behind to get the horse to engage his hindquarters.

Sometime during this stage of training, the horse will be ready to be mounted for the first time. Time on the longe line before mounting will vary from a few weeks to two or three months, depending upon the mental and physical constitution of the horse. The longer the horse is on the longe line, the more control the rider will have over the horse.

Young, green horses are not fully developed either mentally or physically. These horses need to be conditioned and balanced before they are asked to take a rider's weight. This early stage of training may be one of the most important stages in your horse's life. If this early work is done correctly, your chance of success in making a well-trained horse is greatly increased.

Before you ever get on your horse's back, you will have introduced a bit, side reins, and saddle. You will have taught him to walk, trot, and canter. You will also have taught him his correct leads. He will have learned obedience and gained confidence from you. You have conditioned and balanced him so he will better be able to take your weight. Your horse will make better progress under saddle if you longe him first rather than just throwing a saddle on him.

Remember, longeing is a training method if you go about it quietly, correctly, and with patience.

## GLOSSARY

**Balance.** A horse is said to be balanced when his own weight and that of his rider are distributed in such a way as to allow him to use himself with maximum ease and efficiency. Balance is given partly by nature, but can be improved by systematic training. The horse needs to readjust his center of gravity or balance when he carries a rider. The object of training is to correct the balance by making the hindquarters carry a greater proportion of the weight.

**Bit-ring.** The ring attached to each end of a snaffle bit to which the side reins are attached.

**Canter.** An easy, rhythmical, three-beat gait. It is known as the right or left lead according to which foreleg is leading. The horse has a hind lead that corresponds to the front lead. A horse that leads with the left front and also with the left hind is coordinated. A horse can execute a sharper turn with greater ease and efficiency if he leads with the inside (correct) leg lead.

**Cinchy.** The development of fear in the horse of having a cinch tightened. Some horses improperly trained will take air and tense up, rear, or even try to throw themselves.

**Collection.** The uniting of the forehand and hindquarters, and the bringing of the hindquarters under the horse. This makes the hindquarters carry a greater proportion of the weight and thus relieves the forehand. The collection or shortening of the horse must be produced by pushing forward from behind and not by pulling back with the reins.

**Cross-leading.** A common fault with young and/or unbalanced horses at the canter where the left leg is leading in front and the right leg leading behind, or vice versa.

**Dee-ring snaffle.** A bit with a joint in the middle with "D" shaped rings on each end of the bit.

**Egg-butt snaffle.** A fairly thick bit with a joint in the middle, with large rings attached on each end of the bit.

**Dropped noseband.** A cavesson-type noseband that is fastened below the snaffle bit on the nosebone, but not on the soft cartilage below it. The chin strap is fastened under the chin. The noseband must be above the nostrils where it will not restrict the horse's breathing.

**Flexion.** The bending of different parts of the horse's body. The horse may be bent both laterally and vertically. Flexion increases the horse's suppleness and proficiency and helps to eliminate stiffness.

**Impulsion.** The energy and continuity of the particular gait or movement.

**Longeing.** To exercise or train the horse, or train the rider, where the horse works on a circle around the handler by the use of a longe line attached to a bridle or cavesson.

**Longe line.** A webbing, nylon tape, or rope some 25 to 30 feet long. It is fastened to a cavesson or bridle, through which the handler controls the horse moving on a circle around him.

**Longe whip.** A whip usually about 6 feet long with a lash long enough to reach the horse on the end of a longe line.

**Longeing cavesson.** A heavy bridle arrangement equipped with a padded noseband with a ring on top into which the longe line is snapped. It also has an extra strap around the jaw to keep it from slipping on the horse's head.

**On the longe.** A horse is said to be on the longe when he takes even contact on the longe line from the handler.

**Sacking out.** A training operation whereby a young horse is taught to become fearless of waving and flopping objects. This prepares the horse for saddling and gets him used to sudden movements close to him.

**Side reins.** A pair of reins, one end of which is snapped to the bit ring of the bridle, and the other end is buckled to the rings of a surcingle or to the billets of an English saddle.

**Snaffle bridle.** A bridle used in training, consisting of a headstall, snaffle bit, throatlatch, and reins.

**Surcingle.** A leather girth used in training which is buckled around the horse. There are metal rings in various locations on the surcingle for the attachment of side reins.

**Transitions.** Changes between the different gaits or movements. They should be quick, precise, smooth, and fluid.

**Trot.** A rapid, two-beat diagonal gait. The forefoot on one side and the opposite hind foot take off and strike the ground at the same time. The horse works from one pair of diagonals to the other pair.

**Walk.** A slow, natural, flat-footed, four-beat gait. Each foot takes off from and strikes the ground independently of the other three feet.



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