

Freestyle training for selection and maintenance, training and schooling horses in therapy.

Abstract submission: "Horses for Body, Mind and Soul", the XIII International Congress for Therapeutic Riding in Münster from 12th-15th august 2009.



1. Personal data

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2. Kind of the contribution

Demonstrations in practice or workshop

3. Duration of the contribution

45 - 90 minutes

4. Title of the contribution

Freestyle training for selection and maintenance, training and schooling horses in therapy.

5. Attachment to the themes

Horses in therapy

6. Group of aim

Therapists, horse handlers, interested people

7. Abstract

Question

How to select and train a therapy horse for life? Freestyle training gives an answer to these two questions.

Method

This training method aims for safe and friendly horse riding. It is divided into 4 techniques;

The first one is **work at liberty**. The horse is running freely in a pen from 15 x 15 metres. Control over its speed and directions is the main goal. Next to this, leadership is settled. In this work body language is the only language being used.

The second technique is **groundwork**. The horse wears a special halter with a leadrope. Next to showing respect and trust, the horse learns to be in control of its speed and directions.

During the third technique, **double lunging**, the horse is trained without weight of a rider. This can be done from a circle, or in position behind the horse. Like in the first two techniques, control over its speed and directions is the goal, also to work the horse's body. The muscles are trained to be strong and supple, so it is prepared to be a riding horse, up to the highest levels.

The final technique is **Freestyle riding**, in which all three techniques above are combined. Control over speed and direction, leadership and bodywork are the goals, achieved with as little as possible means. The horse feels safe, he is obedient and he uses his body well to live the life of a riding horse for as long as possible.

Result

- The question of how to select a suitable therapy horse, is answered by work at liberty and groundwork.

During **work at liberty** you can easily estimate the behaviour and character of the horse, as well as how he copes with stress. Every horse reacts differently on unknown surroundings. Add some foreign objects, such as a ball or umbrella, and it becomes clear how this horse reacts. Next to this, you can observe how he reacts on people, when a person approaches him. And how he reacts on body language and leadership. With different **groundwork** exercises it becomes clear how the horse responds to pressure on his body. Also it shows if there is a balance between trust and respect.

How to keep a horse fit during his job as a therapy horse is answered by **double lunging**. Also **Freestyle riding** can be used to train his body and keep him sound. For people/therapists who do not ride, but want to train the horse's body, double lunge training is very safe, instructive and fun to do.

Conclusions

Selection of therapy-horses is a very important step. The horse needs to be safe for his patients and trainers. He needs a reliable and balanced character. The Freestyle training can be of much importance.

Therapy-horses are working on a daily basis. This work is not always suitable for keeping the horse supple and happy. Freestyle training can help to keep them fit and happy for as long as possible.

8. CV

mrs. M.M. (Marion) van de Klundert - de Munck BSc.

In The Netherlands Marion is working as a fulltime Freestyle instructor, -trainer, -workshop initiator and company manager to train both horses and riders. The natural behaviour of horses has a very important role and makes this method animal friendly.

9. Desired technique

An indoor arena and 3 horses

10. Desired date

Thursday the 13th of august