



Trainer's Tip: Standing tied

by Brent Winston, equine trainer

As I have been out riding this summer, I have noticed that a lot of people struggle with some of the same issues I used to struggle with. One of those issues is standing tied. It's not uncommon for horses to pull back while standing tied, whether at a trailer, a hitching rail or even a tree while taking a break on a trail ride. This can be a dangerous and scary situation, as horses and people can get hurt if a horse doesn't stand tied well.

Many times the cause for a horse wanting to pull back is that she doesn't have respect for a feel on a halter. At Harmony, that is where we start. We work the horse side to side and concentrate on releasing pressure when the horse quits pulling on the rope. In addition, we focus on getting the nose to tip toward us and the hindquarters to roll away from us. Once the horse is doing this softly, we let her stand and relax for a few minutes. This will get the horse thinking that when she yields to pressure and relaxes, she gets to have a break, so she will eventually start searching for this spot.

Once you have your horse following the feel of the lead rope and disengaging her hindquarters, the next step is to wrap the lead rope around a tie rail and then repeat the process of moving her side to side while holding onto the end of the lead rope. This will create a little more solid of a feel for the horse, so she may fight a little harder than she did with it in your hand. However, if you prepared her for it, she will start looking for that release point. Once she follows her nose back to the tie rail and disengages her hindquarters, give her a break. You can then start the process over. It might take some time, but pretty soon your horse will not even hit the end of the rope; she will just move back and forth for you.

After you have your horse respecting the end of the rope, you are ready to tie her up. It is best to tie solid to something high, like a highline or solid rafters. By tying high, you allow the horse to be able to move her hindquarters freely all around. This is helpful because horses feel good when they can move their feet. It is a natural way of defending themselves, because when they feel like they can't move their feet, they may panic and fight. In addition to tying them high, it is also best to tie after a good workout, thus reinforcing that being tied is a relaxing place to be. However, that only works if you have set the foundation by teaching your horse how to respect a feel and give to the pressure on the halter.

Many horses never develop this issue, so there is no need to work at it like this. However, if your horse starts pulling back or acting antsy while tied, it is important to start with the most basic task: getting her to respect and give to pressure. Set you and your horse up for success by getting all the kinks out before moving forward and just tying tight. There are several gimmicks available, but nothing replaces hard work and dedication to improve the relationship between you and your horse.

Until next time, keep ridin' with a loose rein, and be safe.