

February 2007

EXERCISES FOR THE TRULY INTERESTED!!

These were some notes I made a year or so ago and thought they were worth repeating.

Gymnastics can only make your horse better. There is an INESCAPABLE connection between how well you ride and how well your horse jumps –a rather scary thought!!

Gymnastics teaches your horse to be calm, go straight, forward, in balance, and in rhythm. It teaches him to think for himself, adjust his strides and get you both out of trouble.

Gymnastics, can address rushing or sticking. It can free shoulders and lower heads.

Gymnastics develops a confidence and trust based on an ever-evolving partnership.

Below are some exercises to practice, but first!!

- Check the footing – soft but firm and reasonably even
- Check your distances – VERY important they be correct
- Check your stirrup length – equally as important

- ALWAYS have a ground person – for safety and to adjust distances
- ALWAYS put protective boots on the horse – he can bang his legs
- ALWAYS remove cups without poles from standards – dangerous!
- ALWAYS use safe and sturdy equipment – no wooden chairs!
- ALWAYS wear your helmet (naturally)

NEVER OVERFACE YOUR HORSE. If he doesn't understand the exercise, that's your fault. Lower or remove poles until he does understand it. Repeat until you have balance, rhythm, confidence and calmness. Build slowly and always lower the last obstacle before adding a new element: Lower and more is better than higher and less. Keep sessions short, like 20 minutes.

MAKE IT FUN FOR BOTH OF YOU. Do not repeat more than twice a week and vary the work and grids. Again, it is of the utmost importance that your distances are precise at all times. If not, you will cause accidents and undermine the confidence of both horse and rider.