

April 2007

NOTES ON GYMNASTICS 2

OR Better late than never!!



Should I even mention that the weather might have broken!! Nah, don't think I will BUT when the weather breaks..... Here are some exercises to work on.

First let's talk about you: Do you remember that you put your left foot in the stirrup and swing your leg over? Do you remember how to put the bridle on? As I hadn't ridden, until today, for about two months (ice, mud, knee, cold, etc, etc.) I wasn't sure either!! Like riding a bike, it does come back!!! ☺. SO what we need to do is get up in two point and trot around the ring, the field, whatever, bigger and bigger, longer and longer. This will improve your muscles and your balance. Up and down the hills, this is also good for the above things. Trotting without stirrups is also a wonderful exercise for deepening the leg and improving balance. Do it!!

Next, the horse: Apart from just plain riding and basic dressage exercises, here are some fun things to do after re reading Notes on Gymnastics 1. These exercises are very basic but build confidence and rhythm; the basics of all jumping.

Put four or five poles on the ground on a level surface at about 4'6" apart. If your horse has trouble maintaining the rhythm, take every other pole out, making it 9' apart. Do this and go back for the first exercise. You must make sure your horse goes confidently through this both ways, from both sides in a relaxed manner. Don't beat it to death but make sure he gets it. Next: put four poles in an almost semi circle making the space between one set of ends, 3' apart and the other set of ends, 6' apart. See the fan shape? Now, you have a lot of options here; 3'ends, 6'ends AND diagonally across. Make sure he is comfortable with ALL that you ask him to do. These exercises will make him lengthen and shorten his stride. This is good just don't ask him for more than he can give. Watch your speed. Go forward with impulsion but do not rush. If neither of those things is present upon approach, you lose the benefits. Remember, rhythm, relaxation, and confidence. This is what you are ALWAYS going for – without exception!

OK, you've finished all that and life is good. You and your horse are getting fitter and more flexible. Boredom is a thing of the past. The next exercise to try is to put the same four poles spaced 5' apart and 4' apart. This will REALLY make him lengthen or shorten. A word of caution: If your horse is having a really hard time doing the 5', his stride may not be up to it. Think. Change stuff. Also make sure that when shortening his stride, he is rounding his back under your seat. Naturally, you are allowed to put a small jump at the end of whatever line you wish but the idea of these exercises is stretching and flexibility with impulsion, relaxation, and confidence.