

A SAGA EQUINE PUBLICATION

ISSUE 3

THE EQUESTRIAN

BABY, IT'S COLD OUTSIDE

**BEAT THE COLD WITH THESE
WINTER RIDING TIPS**

PINT-SIZE PIZZAZZ

**BREED SPOTLIGHT:
THE GERMAN RIDING PONY**

**CREATE IMPULSION WITH
THE ACCORDION EXERCISE**

IMPULSION

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THE GERMAN RIDING PONY

BY: LAURA LIPPERT

As I have aged, I have gained a renewed appreciation for ponies. Ponies are smart, full of personality, and, of course, are much closer to the ground. Ponies tend to have a longer lifespan, and are usually quite sturdy. Making them more than just a kids mount. They have gained the respect of adult amateur riders and professionals alike because these pint-size powerhouses pack all of the versatility and athleticism of much larger horses in a smaller, more maneuverable package. But there is one breed in particular that is taking the world by storm... The German Riding Pony

As a breed, the German Riding Pony, or Deutsches Reitpony, is only about 40 years old - a relatively new breed when compared to the Arabian or Thoroughbred. When breeders started developing these lovely ponies, they utilized many of the same principles as those used to develop warmbloods. They imported Welsh and English ponies and began breeding them with European ponies. Eventually, breeders began infusing Arabian and Thoroughbred blood to enhance their gaits and movement. Finally, Trakehner and Hanoverian stallions were introduced to breed thus improving the quality even more. Their primary goal was to develop a pony with correct and rhythmic movement with the athletic ability for national and international competition. The outcome has been spectacular as these ponies are taking blue in a variety of shows worldwide.


The German Riding pony is a sport pony that boasts a small head, delicate ears, large eyes, a clean throat latch, a long, well-set neck, pronounced wither and a long croup. If gaits are what you're looking for, then look no further than these amazing ponies. Their correct, rhythmic and elastic gaits give



riders the feeling and impulsion of a large warmblood without the bulk and size - they are usually only 138 - 148 cm (12.2hh - 14.2hh) tall with the tallest being 151 cm (14.3hh -15 hh) for international competition. And don't worry, they come in all of your favorite colors too although bay, gray, black and chestnut are the most common. Palomino German Riding Ponies, however, are some of the most popular.

A fairly healthy breed, they generally live 20-25 years. So, riders will have plenty of time to enjoy their favorite riding partner. Like most ponies, however, they are subject to weight gain. As a result, it is imperative that their owners take great care to maintain a healthy weight for this light pony breed. Obesity can lead to secondary diseases resulting in decreased performance and possibly premature death.

The registration process begins with a physical exam. Stallions and mares are also tested to prevent the spread of genetic diseases. This careful examination helps ensure that the best characteristics are passed along to their offspring further enhancing the breed.

If you weren't in love with these dynamic beauties before, we are sure that you will be soon enough, especially once you have seen one of these pint-sized super stars grace a show arena near you. 





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6/8 & 6/9 - Lake Erie College Dressage Derby Recognized Show

6/9 - Mid Ohio Strawberry Moon Schooling Show

6/15 & 6/16 - ODS Down Centerline 1 & 2 Recognized Show

6/22 - Mid Ohio Western Dressage June Jubilation Schooling Show

7/12-14 - Mid Ohio Classic 1 & 2 Recognized Show

8/10 & 8/11 - ODS Down Centerline 3 & 4 Recognized Show

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10/19 - Mid Ohio Harvest Moon Dressage Schooling Show

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IMPULSION

HARNESSING THE ENERGY CREATED BY YOUR HORSE

BY: SARAH AUCHARD

Impulsion is the fourth level of the training pyramid and refers to the pushing power of the horse. As the horse progresses through his training, he will be asked to carry more and more weight on his hindquarter. As those muscles develop, the horse's ability to propel himself forward increases. There is more to impulsion, however, than merely propelling himself. Impulsion relates to the horse's suppleness, the elasticity of his steps and his desire to move forward. If you have ever watched horse's that appear to "float" in the trot and canter, you are witnessing impulsion.

Many things contribute to the horse's impulsion. First is musculature. In order for the horse to demonstrate impulsion, he must adequately reach underneath his body with his hind legs in order to propel himself forward. This requires a great deal of musculature in the hindquarter. Allowing the horse the time and ensuring proper training will aid in the development of these muscles. Transitions within the gait, work on circles and curved lines, leg yields and lateral work are all excellent for encouraging the horse to step further underneath his center of gravity, compressing the hocks and carrying more weight behind.

Getting the horse to engage the hindquarter also requires the use of effective half halts. The half halt essentially builds energy by momentarily slowing/stopping forward movement. When released, the horse will push himself forward and upward creating a moment of suspension. As the horse develops his strength, the moment of suspension will become more elevated and prolonged. This leads us to the second element of impulsion - elasticity.



The elasticity of the horse's steps is created by suppleness and the swinging of the back. None of which is possible without relaxation. With relaxation, the hindlegs of the horse become more free and can step further forward, underneath the horse's center of gravity. This is achieved through the rider adequately supporting the horse with proper use of the driving aids and their position. The horse moves from the back to the front without being restricted by the rider's aids. The flow of energy must come from the hindlegs flowing over the horse's back to the bit and into the rider's hand. It is then recycled back to the hindquarter. As the rider becomes more effective with the aids and the horse develops, the horse's elasticity will become more apparent.

Creating impulsion in the horse is a process. But through consistent, proper work, the horse will develop the muscle, balance and proprioception that will allow him to carry himself. The horse is said to have no impulsion in the walk because there is no moment of suspension. This does not, however, mean that the walk cannot be used to aid in the development of impulsion. Anytime that the horse is asked to bear more weight behind through exercises that require the horse step underneath his body and carry his weight, it serves a purpose in developing impulsion, even when there is no moment of suspension. The ultimate key to developing impulsion, however, comes from transitions. Transitions within and between the gaits are essential for shifting the horse's weight to the hindquarter. In the trot and canter, the horse can be asked to collect and lengthen his stride. These variations transfer the horse's weight to his hindquarter. It is imperative that the rider not interfere with the free movement of the hindlegs through the use of harsh or strong aids, especially in the downward transitions. This is the only way that the horse will be able to move in an unrestricted manner.


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continued from p.7 - Impulsion

It is also important for the rider to understand the difference between impulsion and action. With impulsion, the horse should maintain his rhythm. If there is a variation in the rhythm, then the horse is experiencing tension. Tension leads to less elastic muscles and inhibits impulsion. If done correctly, however, the horse with impulsion will be able achieve greater focus and release nervous energy.

As you can see, there is more to impulsion than meets the eye. Horses with large expressive extended gaits and high levels of collection have been trained to harness their energy, shift it to their hindquarter and use it to propel themselves freely forward. While all levels of the Training Pyramid work together to create the complete dressage horse, impulsion is the beginning of the self carriage that is necessary at the pinnacle of Dressage. 



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JOHN BORYS

BABY, IT'S COLD OUTSIDE

5 WINTER RIDING TIPS TO BEAT THE COLD

BY: SARAH AUCHARD

Well, winter may have finally hit and it is downright COLD!!! It can be really difficult to stay motivated in the colder weather to ride. Shorter days and colder temperatures can make even the most dedicated rider second guess their reasons for participating in this sport. After all, there are countless ways to stay fit and healthy that don't require bundling up in layer upon layer and trekking through feet of snow, or mud as is the case in some areas, to put in an entire workout grooming and tacking up just so you can achieve the best windburn and pins and needles in your feet when you dismount. Winter riding, especially in the cold weather areas, can be downright frustrating.

It is still possible, however, to enjoy your four-legged companion during the Winter. Here are a few tips that will help take the edge off the cold and keep you progressing toward your riding goals.

Layers. For many, dressing in layers just makes sense when the temperatures drop. But trying to mount up when you are donning so many layers that you slightly resemble the Stay-Puff Marshmallow Man is not exactly conducive of the balance or coordination required for riding. Today's riding apparel and athletic wear has all but eliminated the bulkiness of layers of years past. Under Armor, long johns and thermal base layers are designed to keep your body heat in and the cold air out. Adding a sweatshirt and/or an insulated vest under your jacket can make all the difference and give you options should you become too warm. A pair of yoga pants under your jeans or breeches can also make you warmer without adding too much bulk. Be careful not to layer up too much though. Too many layers will eliminate the trapping of air that helps to keep you warm.

Modern Technology. For those who are super sensitive to the cold or those who don't want to leave their comfort and warmth to chance, cold weather apparel companies have you covered. Heated socks, gloves, jackets and vests are a great add to your wardrobe. These can keep you comfy in even the coldest climates. The length of use is strongly dependent on the temperature setting that you use, the quality of the battery and whether you are using continuous heat. Be sure to do your research before buying to insure that you are getting the most for your money. All that being said, adding battery powered apparel to your wardrobe may be just the ticket to keeping you in the saddle this winter.



Lower Tech Options.

If you are on a budget, you just don't want the hassle of having to re-charge or you don't want to leave your warmth to chance, you might opt for hand, body and foot warmers. A budget-friendly alternative to the battery-powered apparel, warmers offer hours of consistent warmth and comfort for outdoors enthusiasts. They come in a variety of sizes and can be used in your gloves, shoes and across your midsection to help keep you warm. Unfortunately, these do not offer the adjustability of the battery-powered apparel, but they are a great option for adding warmth to your riding time.

Take a Blanket. Quarter sheets and coolers should be a staple in every cold-weather rider's tack trunk. Some coolers/exercise rugs are designed to be worn under the saddle, while others have cutouts for the saddle or can be draped over the rider's legs and fastened with a hook and loop closure for easy removal. Using a quarter sheet can make your horse a little more comfortable during cold-weather work sessions, especially if your horse is blanketed during the winter. Cold muscles are much more tense than warm muscles making the horse susceptible to injury. The quarter sheet will help the muscles warmer and more supple. They can be used throughout the work sessions or removed after the warm up and returned for the cool down phase of the ride depending on how heavy the horse is worked and whether they are clipped/blanketed or not.

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Winter Riding Tips continued from pg. 9

A cooler is another option that will not only keep the horse warm, but also the rider. It can be draped over the rider's legs and horse's hindquarter during the warm up and cool down phases of the ride to help keep both the horse and the rider's muscles warm.

Regardless of the type of rug, you should always make sure that it is fitted properly and that your horse is comfortable wearing it before trying to ride in it. This will help to eliminate any unwanted surprises when you do ride with one.



Walk It Out. Sometimes the winter weather does get the better of our riding goals and requires us to slow things down a bit. During these times, it can be extremely difficult to stay motivated. But remember, you can work on so many things in the walk. We can sometimes get tunnel vision when working with our horses and forget to slow things down and offer the horse a mental and physical break from their work. Just like us, it is important to allow horses to take a moment to re-group - which will not only help them physically, but also mentally. When you slow things down, you allow your horse more time to process your aids and to assess their body and position. This can be really beneficial when you are introducing new concepts like lateral work. The initial inclination is to think that the horse will not maintain muscle or stamina if they are not worked harder. But nothing could be farther from the truth. The horse will not only maintain his physical condition, but he will also become more content and confident in his work. The cold weather months are a great opportunity to introduce lateral movements and do some cross training that will help your horse stay at the top of his game.

Winter riding can be challenging, but it doesn't have to put a crimp in your training. A little foresight and preparedness will go a long way toward making the best of your cold-weather schooling sessions. You may even find that your winter training sessions give rise to even better riding during the fair weather months.



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Is It Too Cold To Ride?

BY: SARAH AUCHARD

Let's first qualify this article by saying that "Too Cold" is relative. The climate that you live in and what your horse's are accustomed to will play a huge factor in whether it is truly "too cold" to ride. Riders in Alaska would find a 20 degree day a great opportunity for riding. While southern riders wouldn't be caught dead riding when the temperature is below 35 or 40 degrees F. It's all a matter of what you are accustomed to. Now that we have established that, we can discuss the effects of riding in colder temperatures on your horse's body especially the respiratory system and joints.



Let's start with the respiratory system. Horse's lungs are well adapted to their environment and can adapt to cold weather fairly well. And while most studies have looked at the effects of heat and humidity on horse's, some research indicates that prolonged exercise in cold temperatures (temperatures 20 degrees F and below) can potentially harm the respiratory system. The body is designed to warm and humidify the air that is breathed in before it enters the lower respiratory system. When the respiration rate is elevated, especially on cold days, the body's ability to perform this function is diminished. The lower respiratory system is then exposed to cold, dry air, which in turn can cool and dry the trachea, bronchi and lungs. Although this takes place with exertion (i.e. - working in canter for 15 minutes or more), it is important to understand that breathing cold dry air more deeply and rapidly can cause an inflammatory response and stress to the airways resulting in irregular breathing patterns for a period



of time after work. Therefore, as a precautionary measure, it is best to keep riding on days when the temperature is 20 degrees or lower to a walk and light trot.

Next, let's take a look at the horse's joints. There are a few factors that can cause issues with your horse's joints in the winter. First, is age related. Just like with people, older horses or horses that have experienced injuries can feel the effects of colder temperatures due to arthritis. In addition to arthritis, the cold impacts the elasticity of the horse's muscles, ligaments and tendons. Because of this, it is important to allow ample warm up and cool down time. Generally, 15-20 minutes of walk at the beginning and the end will allow the horse to increase their heart rate and warm the muscles prior to work. The use of a quarter sheet or exercise rug can also help keep muscles warm and elastic and prevent the horse from catching a chill during work sessions.

Footing can also play a huge factor in winter riding. If an indoor is not available, it is imperative to pay close attention to the area that you will use for riding. Snow, ice and uneven ground can result in unnecessary injury. Keep sessions to a walk in order to prevent an inadvertent misstep that will cause a layup.




Finally, it is important to take yourself into consideration. Horse people often think of their horses before themselves. However, it is important to realize that it will most likely be "too cold" for you before it is "too cold" for your horse. It is extremely important to take that into consideration when planning your rides. Frostbite and dehydration are two issues that riders face with cold weather riding. Proper riding attire including gloves and ear covers are important especially if you are going to be exposed to the elements directly. Riding indoors can help, but does not completely eliminate the need to worry about temperature.

continued on p. 13 - Too Cold

Too Cold - continued from p. 12

Dehydration is another factor to consider with winter riding. Because of the colder temperatures, we generally do not drink as much. Compound that with sweating due to the exertion of riding and drier air and you could find yourself experiencing dehydration. Make sure that you are still consuming enough water before and after your ride to help prevent dehydration.

The onset of colder temperatures does not mean that you have to stop riding. With a few, relatively minor changes, you can still make huge progress during the colder months of winter. Allowing your horse ample warm up and cool down time, paying close attention to joint health and footing concerns and considering your own needs can help ensure that you and your horse stay happy and healthy this winter. Who knows, you may even find that your winter riding sessions go a long way towards helping you achieve this season's riding goals. 

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Create Impulsion with the Accordion Exercise

The Accordion Exercise will improve your horse's carrying capacity, get them in front of the leg and add impulsion and cadence to their gaits. This is especially useful for the horse that may be somewhat "dead to the leg" or can be a little "checked out" at times.

DESCRIPTION

Begin this exercise on a 20-meter circle in walk or trot or canter. At B, lengthen the stride to the centerline. Upon arriving at the centerline, collect the stride until E. At E, ask the horse to lengthen the stride again until the centerline. Upon reaching the centerline, you will collect the horse until you have reached B to complete the circle.

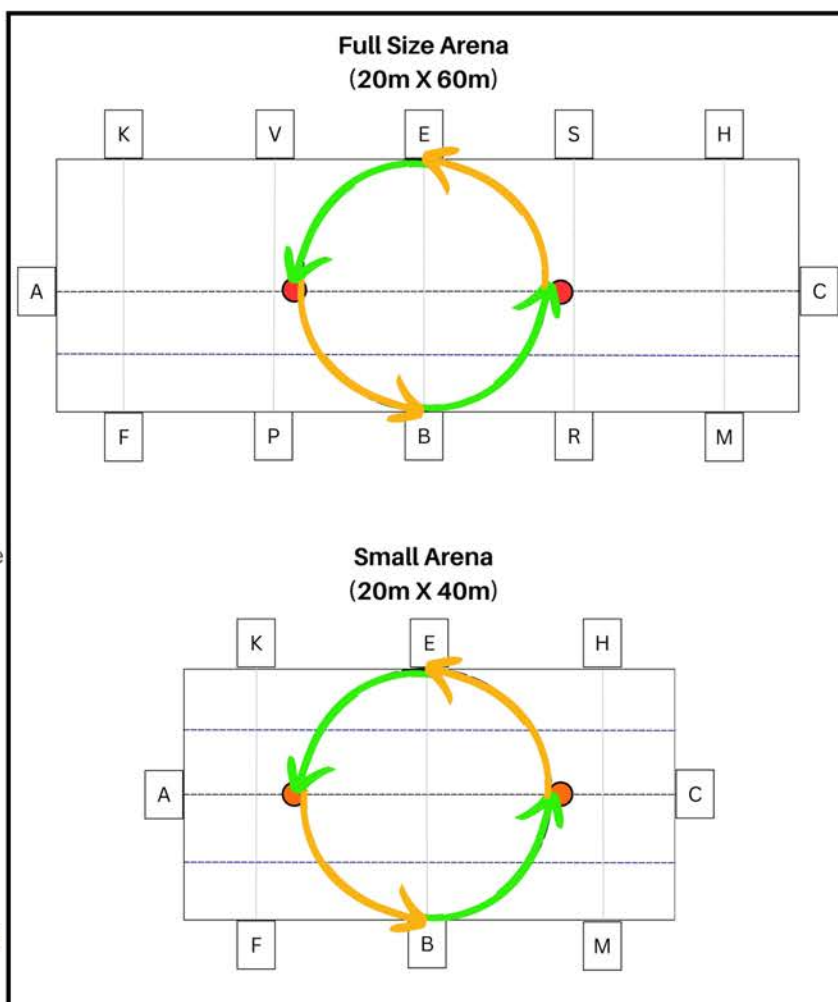
You may repeat the circle or change direction and perform the exercise going the opposite direction.

VARIATIONS


- Perform a full upward/downward transition at each 1/4 point of the circle
- Perform lengthening and collection for 1/2 of the circle instead of 1/4 of the circle
- Shorten the distance for collection and increase the distance of the lengthening
- Shorten the distance for the lengthening and increase the distance of the collection

COMMON MISTAKES

- The horse rushes in the lengthening
- The horse breaks during the collection phase
- The horse performs an upward transition when asked to lengthen
- The horse does not respond promptly to the driving aids
- The rider does not use enough half halts for the horse to maintain his balance



BENEFITS

- The horse becomes more responsive to the driving aids
- The horse learns to carry more weight behind
- The horse develops more cadence
- The horse develops more thrust/pushing power
- The rider learns to balance the driving aids and half halts
- The rider learns how to prepare the horse for the transitions 

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