



The Tying Up Debate!

There seem to be a couple of theories.

One: Tie them up solid and good, so they learn not to pull back.

Two: Tie them to something that can break easily, such as bailing twine.

I believe in teaching them to tie up and never test the lead rope.

If the horse learns to pull back and break the bailing twine, it does not take long for a problem to start. If you decide to tie this horse up solid and they pull back and cannot escape, then Hell breaks loose, with the horse risking injury to himself or damaging your equipment. I have employed bodyworkers in the past to fix body issues neck, wither, poll issues and backs from horses that have pulled back, flipped over backwards and so forth.

At my clinics, I will note that if people tie in the arenas, I ask them to use bailing twine as I do not know if horses safely tie, and I do not want a wreck on my hands.

I once had a horse in for training that would tremble and sweat profusely as soon as you tied him up; he had been tied up for hours on end for what people would label as bad behaviour. He had learnt he could not escape from being tied but would stand in fear and was very shut down; I wonder what this was doing to this horses stomach and nervous system.

Whenever I hear someone say tie him up for the day, he will be better next time you ride him. I wonder if horses have the mental capacity to figure out that he is being tied all day for the wrong he did hours ago; I think he does not. I did rehabilitate the horse with the fear issue of standing tied, but it was a lengthy process; it is my opinion that it would have been better if the problem had not been created in the first place.

My personal preference is to bring up two horses to the barn for their morning training sessions. One stands tied and watches whilst the other is working; this way, they are spending some part of their day learning to stand quietly whilst tied.

How to train your horse to stand tied.

Learn Groundwork: Good Groundwork is the key to this, and if you do not understand this or know how to teach it, seek professional help. Groundwork is not just for playing games or for the Natural Horseman, All horses and people can benefit from this. It creates soft, supple horses who freely give to halter pressure. People who think Groundwork is unnecessary are limiting themselves to the benefit of it. Our dressage masters of old and new do Groundwork in hand exercises with their horses.

- Teach your horse to step forward from halter pressure. Stand directly in front of your horse and take a gentle pull on the Halter. Wait until your horse steps forward and then immediately release the tension, practice this often.
- Play the circle driving exercise; this is an excellent way to test if your horse will come off pressure whilst his feet are in motion.
- Test your horse's reaction when you put the rope over his poll and pull down; he should give to the pressure and lower his head, not resist, lift his head and run backwards.
- Use a tie-up device; I use and recommend the Idolo tether tie; it is a device that creates resistance as the horse steps back; if he is confidently performing the steps above, he will step forward off the pressure instead of resisting. It is an effective way to teach a horse to tie safely, and horses learn very quickly using this system. As the horse learns not to panic, you can increase the level of resistance of the tie-up device.

I want to think the days of tying horses up to snubbing posts, bagging them down and letting them pull and thrash around are long gone, and we have advanced to more effective measures.

Happy Riding

Mandy