

## Showmanship Set up

### How do I get my horse to set up correctly for showmanship?

March 16, 2010

**Q:** I want to start showing my Quarter Horse in showmanship classes, but we have a hard time with setting up. I've been working on my halter and leadrope cues to get him to move his feet. The problem is that even when I get his feet in the right place, he won't leave them there.

**A:** Showmanship requires a halter, leadrope and chain, so when you practice, you need to have a stud chain that runs under your horse's chin. Using a correctly fitted chain will help you get his attention.

To apply a stud chain, find the halter ring below your horse's left cheek. Run the chain through the ring from the outside, under your horse's chin, and from the inside of the halter ring below your horse's right cheek to the outside. Attach the chain to the upper right cheek ring with the clip facing outward. At the correct length, there should be about six links of chain between the halter and the point at which the leadrope begins.

Before you show or practice, spray your horse with fly repellent so he doesn't move around because insects are irritating him. Your horse needs to focus on you. If you're trying to square him up but he's not paying attention to what's going on, he will likely move. Use a verbal command (such as "whoa") when you get your horse set. Then you need to keep his attention; don't let him look around or drop his head. As the handler, you should also be energized and focused.

If your horse moves, tell him "whoa" and give him a quick tug on the chain, which reinforces your request to stand still. Your horse needs to know you're serious. At first, ask him to stand still in a squared position for only 30 seconds or so, then give him a pat and walk off. He will soon learn that he gets rewarded for standing still and square. When your horse succeeds at that, you can build up to 45 seconds and then to a minute or two, but always increase your time slowly so you build on positive reinforcement.

Cathy Hanson has been training horses for 30 years, producing American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) World Champions and Reserve World Champions in trail and western riding. She is an AQHA Professional Horseman and was named AQHA's 2007 Most Valuable Professional. [www.hansonquarterhorses.com](http://www.hansonquarterhorses.com)

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