

## Extend the Jog and Collect Benefits

**Work your western horse at the extended jog to enhance slower gaits.**

*By Dale Rudin*

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When schooling, the majority of western riders focus their attention on establishing consistently slow and steady gaits, which are essential for competition in many western events. However, there is a downside to reducing a horse's speed—he can lose the smoothness and fluidity of a normal stride.

When a horse is required to slow down his speed by unnaturally shortening the length of his step, he's compelled to tighten his muscles and place excessive strain on his joints. The results are coarse gaits that appear choppy and mechanical, and an increased tension and stiffness in the horse's body. To prevent this from happening, give a horse the chance to move in a long frame at an extended jog or trot, which will lengthen muscles, increase the flexibility of joints and allow his entire body to stretch and relax.

A restricted stride can cause a horse to emphasize action in both the knees and the hocks. This is due to the lack of impulsion coming from the hindquarters at reduced speed. This style of movement is also frowned upon in the show arena.

In addition to the physical benefits gained by a longer stride, a horse's gaits will also improve. When a horse is asked to engage his hind end and drive under his body with his hocks, he will naturally increase the length of his stride. The longer stride will reduce the unwanted lifting motion of the knees and hocks, because the legs will have the freedom to move forward with full range of motion. When the horse is brought back to the slower speeds, the work at the extended jog will make him more physically capable of traveling with a flatter and more sweeping stride.

Though underutilized by many western riders, incorporating the extended jog and working trot can significantly enhance the gaits of the western performance horse.

Dale Rudin has trained various breeds and competed in western performance events in Southern California. Her philosophy emphasizes a willing attitude while developing a high level of physical performance.