

## **Pre Season** **(Exercise)**

As we approach polo season I thought it would be a good idea start thinking about getting yourself and your horses ready for the season. These are a few tips and suggestions to help keep you and your horses healthy for the entire season. Don't wait until it is too late.

As our season approaches, get your horses into a fitness routine so they will be ready when the season starts. If you don't give your horses enough time to prepare, they likely won't last the season.

Injuries are much more likely to occur when horses are not fit enough. Imagine not exercising for months then deciding to jog for 10 days before running a marathon. It is equally ridiculous to play a horse that has only had a week or two of exercise. Why risk injury to begin your season?

Getting horses fit is an art not everyone completely understands. It is also one you could debate as everyone has his own ideas. There are, however, some common aspects that most people would agree upon.

Most of your horses have been turned out for 6-7 months, which means you will need at least 3 months to get them into proper shape. The following exercise program is a great example of how to get your ponies in playing condition.

### **March**

#### **Week 1 (7-10 days of work)**

Walk 20mins

#### **Week 2 (7-10 days of work)**

Walk 15mins

Trot 5-7mins

Walk 10mins

#### **Week 3 (7-10 days of work)**

Walk 15mins

Trot 10-12mins

Walk 10mins

#### **Week 4 (7-10 days of work)**

Walk 10mins

Trot 10mins

Walk 10mins

Trot 5mins

Walk 5 mins

# April

## Week 5 (7-10 days of work)

Walk 10mins  
Trot 20mins  
Walk 10mins

## Week 6 (7-10days of work)

Walk 10mins  
-In circles, spiral in/spiral out 5mins each direction  
Trot 30mins  
-In circles for 15mins each direction  
Walk 10mins  
Trot 10mins  
Walk 5mins

## Week 7 (7-10days of work)

Walk 10mins  
-In circles, spiral in/spiral out 5mins each direction  
Trot 20mins  
-In circles, spiral in/spiral out 10mins each direction  
Walk 5mins  
Trot 5mins  
Slow Canter 5mins  
Walk 5mins

## Week 8 (7-10days of work)

Walk 5mins  
Trot 20mins  
Slow Canter 10-12mins  
Walk 10mins

This two month/80 day program is a great way to get your horses legged up to start stick and balling along with adding in short work. For the next month before the season starts you will want to add in a little bit more canter.

Remember some people think that you should break your trot or slow lope routine into two segments during one outing. That is, you would trot two intervals of five to 10 minutes as opposed to one interval of 10 to 20 minutes. The overall point is basically the same. Start out slow and ease into a routine that actually builds fitness levels.

### NOTE:

Walking –Stretches and warms muscle  
Trotting – Builds muscle  
Canter – Builds lungs

If your horse is coming back from a prior injury it is a good idea to wrap their legs with polo wraps or boots to give them extra support. That being said when you start your horses do not wrap their legs, this is why we start so slow. Adding the polo wraps will not allow their tendons to strengthen while you are legging them up. Add them when you star to canter, do circles or short work.

## **During the Season** **(Exercise)**

By now (May) your horses should be legged up and ready for the outdoor season. With a few arena games under their belt they should be back to normal. Typically each year we will be playing Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday. A good maintenance program would be as follows:

### **Monday** Day Off

**Tuesday**  
Walk – 10mins  
Trot – 15mins  
Canter – 20mins  
Walk – 10mins

### **Wednesday** Practice

**Thursday**  
Walk – 10mins  
Trot – 10mins  
Canter – 10mins  
Walk – 10mins

**Friday**  
Short Work – 20mins  
-Transitions  
-Rollbacks  
-Sprints

Make sure to cool down with a easy walk to easy their mind.

### **Saturday/Sunday** Practice

Remember, no two horses are the same. Some horses you can literally lead and play and they always play consistently and well. Other horses take more precise exercise and preparation in order to consistently play well. Get to know your string, regardless of how big or small it may be.

A lot of injuries polo horses experience are because they are not properly legged up. You are asking for trouble if you do fitness work such as short work and sprints if a horse does not have its legs. An investment in a string of polo horses is not a small one. If you give enough thought to the proper way to leg up a horse, get it fit and maintain that fitness, your investment will have an opportunity to give you many years of happy return.

## **Post Season** **(Exercise)**

After several months of hard work your horses need a mental break. It is still a good idea to ride them but make it fun. Go down the trail or try something new. Not only is it good for your horses mind but it will help them enjoy being ridden.

We usually will play until November so this gives your horse a long time after the season to mentally calm down from the hard rigorous training from the season.

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## **Great Places to Exercise**

### **The Highline Canal**

- When you cross the bridge head right. Stay on the canal until you hit the paved road. The ground is soft but a little hard to help strengthen tendons. REMEMBER: No fast galloping on the canal...its too hard.

### **The Hills**

-Head right, down the canal. When you pass the round house go down the hill to the left. Cross the street and continue through the field, when the path has a left turn take it. You will be riding parallel to the mountains. Then when the trail heads left again... turn left. You will see a series of hills. Walk or Trot up and down the hills. DO NOT gallop. Then cross the road and continue East on the canal. We call this the "Short Circle." Really any hill will do just make sure the footing is good.

### **Galloping Track**

- Go on the canal to the right and head across the paved road. About 300 yards there will be a path that goes left. Go down the hill and you will find another path to the left. Do not ride in the deep path but the footing is great to "breeze them out." You'll see another path to the left that heads back go the canal (it comes up quick).

### **Cross Country Course**

- Behind the pond is a great field for riding sets or riding home away from home. You can make your own path around the tress or in a circle in the field.