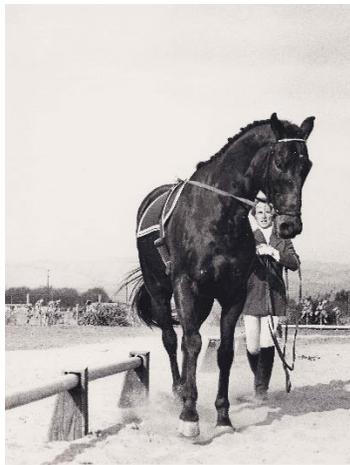


Ground Work– Portland and Indianapolis clinics

4/11/2011



Ground Work is a little understood, little-addressed, and under-used aspect of horse training in the dressage world. At recent clinics in Portland and Indianapolis I gave lectures and demonstrations on this subject.

Watching a trainer doing ground work is the quickest way to determine if the trainer operates with Horse Think or empathy, or is just a dressage blunderer, or pet owner.

Ground Work helps both horse and trainer to cultivate understanding of Tactile, Verbal, and Auditory input. Ground work is useful in many areas:

- Establishing the horse/human relationship – the “Herd of Two” (Submission)
- Teaching the horse How to Learn (Experimentation)
- Teaching the horse responses specific to riding (lateral work, stop, go, turn)

It can be started before weaning to make the horse more manageable:

For general management:

- Leading
- Hoof cleaning
- Sheath/udder cleaning
- Trailer loading
- Longeing

It can be a life-saver with difficult or rambunctious or scary or naughty horses. It still applies to the highest levels of training - beginning lateral work, all the way to piaffe.

Ground Work is a way of helping the rider gauge the horse’s reactivity and submission, and a way of establishing a better relationship between horse and trainer.

As for the advantages to the trainer, Ground Work taxes and cultivates the trainer’s perceptions and techniques, as he asks the horse to make correct responses. From the ground the trainer can see the whole horse, (unlike in riding when the rider can only see the head and neck), and its responses – parts and the whole - to stimulus. This all contributes to the improvement in “Horse Think” or empathy by the trainer.

The Osierlea System includes a structured and comprehensive lesson-plan for Ground Work that addresses a wide range of responses and perception and relationship issues.