

Key Concepts:

- This restraint technique is very effective to gain temporary control over a horse, but is only useful for very short periods of time.

Application of a Skin Twitch: (video script)

Application of a skin twitch may be used to temporarily gain control over a horse in order to accomplish a very short procedure... such as giving a needle or placing an upper lip twitch (for more prolonged restraint of the horse).

To apply a skin twitch, stand beside the horse. Grab a handful of skin in each hand on the neck just ahead of the shoulder (the skin is quite mobile in this area so it is easier to grab). You may need to reposition your hands several times in order to gather sufficient skin in your grip. Then twist the skin – you will know you have reached an effective level of twist when the horse's head bends towards you as they curl their neck around the site of the skin twitch (as seen in the video).

You will only be able to maintain your grip for several seconds before you begin to develop a hand cramp and lose effectiveness of your skin twitch. Therefore, this restraint technique is only useful to accomplish very short procedures. It is particularly useful during application of an upper lip twitch, which will then provide you with a longer duration of restraint (you let go of the skin twitch once the lip twitch is in place).

Upon removing your skin twitch once the procedure is done, be sure to reward the horse for cooperating by patting the horse's neck and giving positive praise!

Troubleshooting: If you are short-handed, you can hold the horse's lead shank in one hand while applying a one-handed skin twitch on the neck with your other hand. This is not quite as effective as performing it with two hands, but will do in a pinch when there's only you and one other person around to get a job done!