

Key Concepts:

- Anytime you touch a horse, always start by touching them on their neck, then maintain that physical contact with the horse (run your hand along their body) until you get to the part of the body that you needed to touch.
- Always check that the person holding the horse is not standing directly in front of the forelimb that you are trying to lift – the horse may pull their leg ahead to avoid your hold and inadvertently strike that person! Have the handler stand slightly further to the side than usual whenever you lift a forelimb.
- Be ready to catch the leg when the horse lifts it in response to your cues; if you miss catching the leg, the horse may put it back down and become confused about what you are asking them to do.
- Keep your own feet out of the way when lifting a horse's leg.
- When you are done with the lifted leg, let go and allow the horse to place it back down on the ground themselves.

Troubleshooting: You should not try to place the horse's leg down for them, since your continued contact with the leg confuses the horse about whether to keep it up or place it down – they eventually step it down forcefully and you may get stepped on in the process!

Lifting a Forelimb:

Lifting a forelimb may be done to clean the horse's feet, to examine the bottom surface of the hoof, or as a method of restraint when working with another limb.

In order to lift a forelimb, start by touching the horse on the neck. Maintain physical contact with the horse by running your hand down the neck, across the shoulder, and finally down the forelimb that you wish to lift. You should be facing backwards when you do this.

Most horses will automatically lift their leg if you run your hand down the back of their leg. Be ready to catch the leg as they lift it!

Troubleshooting: Before you attempt to lift any limb, check that the horse is standing squarely (evenly on all four limbs) and that they are not against a wall. A horse that is off balance may resist lifting a limb because they will not be able to maintain that position. As

well, a horse standing too close to a wall will not lift their limb if they can't shift their weight adequately to balance on their other three limbs.

Troubleshooting: If the horse does not automatically lift their leg when you run your hand down the back of it, then you can either use voice commands (“lift”, “pick it up”), or squeeze the back of the leg. Another good spot to squeeze is the “chestnut” on the leg you are trying to lift. Briefly leaning into the horse's shoulder also shifts their weight away from the forelimb, encouraging them to lift their foot.

- **Troubleshooting:** Be ready to catch the leg when the horse lifts it in response to your cues; if you miss catching the leg, the horse may put it back down and become confused about what you are asking them to do.

Once the leg is up, the best part of the leg to hold is in the pastern region, slightly overlapping the actual hoof wall (coronary band) with your hand. This provides the most stability for the horse. Hold the leg so that it is bent at a right angle at the carpus (“knee”). Holding the leg lower than this often tempts the horse to put it back down before you are ready!

When you are done with the lifted leg, be sure to step to the side with your own feet before you let go of the hoof. That way, the horse does not step on your foot as they place their hoof down on the ground.

Cleaning the Foot (Hoof):

If you are lifting a limb for the purposes of cleaning out the hooves, take out your hoof pick only after successfully lifting the limb. Clean both sulci by picking away from yourself (start at the heel and pick towards the toe of the hoof). You may need to firmly dig in order to adequately remove all dirt/manure/stones that may become packed in the sulci (as demonstrated in the hindlimb video). Be more gentle when picking out the centre (“frog”), as this area is softer and more sensitive for the horse.

Troubleshooting: Put the hoof pick in your back pocket rather than in one of your front pockets while you are trying to lift the leg (it is very hard to get something out of your front pocket once you are bent over holding the lifted leg!).