

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. For lifting the hind limbs, this means starting at the neck and running your hand along their entire body and down the back of the hind limb!
- Stand to the side of the horse, facing backwards, when lifting the limb.
- 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.
- Avoid pulling the lifted hindlimb too far behind the horse or too far out to the side – this places them off balance.
- 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 Hindlimb:

Lifting a hindlimb 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 hindlimb, start by touching the horse on the neck. Maintain physical contact with the horse by running your hand down the neck, along the length of the body, and finally down the hindlimb that you wish to lift. You should be facing backwards when you do this, staying on the side of the horse and never standing directly behind it (= most important kick zone!).

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 hindlimb also shifts their weight away from the limb, 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. To hold the leg/foot, your arm will need to cross over the back of the limb. This position somewhat protects your head; if the horse kicks, they will hit your arm instead of your head! Hold the leg up in a position so that the leg is not overly pulled to the side or out behind the horse, as these positions will shift the horse off balance.

- **Troubleshooting:** When the horse first lifts a hindlimb, they may pull it tightly underneath their abdomen. Keep hold of the limb and let them slowly release their limb tension until the leg returns to a comfortable lifted position that you can work with. Only then will the horse be ready for you to start whatever you came there to do!

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.

Lifting a Hindlimb (alternate position video):

An alternate position to hold the leg/foot once you have it up is to cross your forearm over the front of the limb and then grip the fetlock/pastern area with your hand (see alternate video). While this position does work well too, and has become habit for many horseowners (so you don't need to change your technique for Clinical Medicine I if you do it this way), please note that this position provides less protection for your head if the horse kicks.

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 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!).