

REGULARITY

-Situation of balance and suppleness during quality light canter –

First it is necessary to position the four points of contact:

A and B – When the position is correct, the two hands keep the reins always tightened by transferring onto them a small part of the weight of the trunk, in the opposite direction with respect to the horse's mouth. This weight is designed to support the horse on the bite. The correct position of the hands, with the reins tightened and the even and constant pressure of the horse on the bite at a light canter helps the rider move in harmony with his horse. That is together with a steady and firm contact.

C and D – The two heels – directly in contact with the horse's ribs - are pushed downwards by the weight of the rider. The correct position of the heels and the legs is only obtained by controlling the direction of the weight and by the precise use of the stirrups.

The rider's weight must be shifted onto the stirrups a little bit off the perpendicular line to enable him to push his heels downwards. In fact, when the stirrups are held slightly behind the perpendicular line, heels are easily pushed downwards if the ankles are kept relaxed.

Along the line from the first to the third canter time, the heels press downwards and push the horse forward to the point of landing, maintaining the right inclination of the trunk.

The concurrent downward push of the heels and the forward tilting of the trunk are designed to accurately determine where the horse lands and to avoid shortening the canter.

By rhythmically accompanying:

- the first canter time with greater pressure of the fingers on the palm of the hand;
- the third canter time with a lower pressure on the palm of the hand

it is possible to act on the stride in a simpler and more natural, timely way.

Therefore the rider is able to promptly:

- increase the pressure of the fingers and simultaneously lift the trunk to shorten the pace;
- diminish the pressure of the fingers and concurrently increase the pressure on the heels and tilt the trunk forward to lengthen the pace.

It is always desirable to start from this light and quality canter before making any request. Then the rider goes back to his basic position to allow the horse to perform the action required, without constantly asking the horse to oblige. Naturally, the more

experienced the horse, the quicker its response to the rider's commands. However it is always preferable to go back to the basic position.

Balance, hands and legs – the three main aids – should be used on the basis of this principle, in order for them to retain their effectiveness.

When the rider can fulfill all these conditions at a light, quality canter – looking in the right direction, remaining calm, with the right position and balance, the result is *suppleness*.

This means that it is not necessary to act to maintain the canter requirements that is impulsion, direction, rhythm, pace, collection, decontraction, suppleness. etc..

But for how long will this situation last? Only for some seconds, after which the rider feels the need to intervene once again in order to restore some conditions, otherwise the canter will inevitably deteriorate.

When the horse moves with *suppleness*, it does so as if inside a container that limits and directs its movement down to its finest details, quality and requirements: duration, extension, balance, rhythm, impulsion, direction etc..

The rider is the container through his four points of contact and balance.

A case in point is a water pipe, where the water represents the movement of the horse and the rider the container channeling the water, giving it direction, pressure, power and final destination.

Therefore the rider feels the need to slightly correct the horse to restore and maintain *suppleness*. The longer this ideal condition lasts and the more imperceptible and sophisticated the corrective actions are, the higher the level of the rider.

Unfortunately, many riders do not seem at all concerned about what they do, but rather about how their horse responds. They do not have the faintest idea that the horse is conditioned first and foremost by the quality of their interventions.