

Tuning up for horse work this riding season— A checklist by Peggy Cummings



Getting ready to ride:

- Deworming needed? Check in with the balance in your horse's teeth and feet. Clean the tack, check for wear and need for repair. Does the tack need to be adjusted? Look at it with "fresh eyes." Don't assume things are the way they were when you rode (if it was months ago). Be sure to level and check fit of your saddle before climbing aboard.

- Consider what areas you have available to make a varied and interesting plan for both you and your horse. What type terrain is nearby? –Flat ground, arena (indoor or out), hills, field, forest, obstacles? Get creative and establish some new work routines and vary them.

- Begin with Connected Groundwork to get a sense of how your horse is moving and feeling to you. You can do Connected Groundwork in all different terrains.

- What shape is your horse in, aerobically, muscle development, etc.? Transitions, and short intervals of trot and canter are more useful for conditioning than trotting or cantering for extended periods of time, initially. Increase your time of working, gradually.

- Important to remember about the posture you are reminding the horse to find (head up and hollow back is not useful). He may not be as strong as last fall; however, horses remember the posture that supports when you practice it!



- Doing upward and downward transitions in a Connected posture, whether on the ground or in the saddle, is a great way to build strength and endurance for more extended work.