



Teaching Your
Morgan Horse
To Drive

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Yes, you can start your driving horse at home. It makes little difference whether your horse will ultimately be a park horse, carriage horse, pleasure show horse, or a horse for you to simply enjoy driving at home. The basic approach is the same regardless of the discipline. There are a few caveats for starting your own horse, however.

One careless mistake can forever affect your horse's attitude about learning and his ability to learn well. While training your horse should be a fun and rewarding process, you must be willing to take the educational process seriously to be fair to your horse. He did not ask you to train him. Heike Bean, in her valuable book, *Carriage Driving*, put it this way:

"What does it feel like to be this animal of flight, who must submit to being strapped to a carriage and controlled through a piece of metal in his mouth, doing things and going places he would never dream of doing on his own?"

Obviously, the handling a young horse receives from birth can play a significant role in how well the learning process is accepted in the future.

Professional trainers have facilities and equipment specifically designed for the purpose of training horses which minimizes the risks involved. That does not mean you will need specialized equipment to train your horse at home. Training equipment need not be expensive, but it must be well made, of proper

fit and design, and in good condition. There may even be ways to use or modify the equipment you already have. Equipment failure can put you in harm's way without warning and in an instant can ruin your horse for driving .

Training your horse to safely pull a vehicle rarely can be done single-handedly. Professional trainers have qualified assistants to help them. This does not mean the amateur horseman cannot start his or her own driving horse, but safety for your horse, yourself, and your assistants always must be the prime consideration. There will be steps along the way that will require you to have assistance from at least one other person, sometimes two. These people should be familiar with handling horses, and preferably, with the process.

You should seriously consider paying for professional help at some of these critical junctures if you have the slightest hesitation or concern about how to proceed. It does take a certain temperament to train horses well. People who are calm, deliberate, and attentive usually are more successful than those who are excited, unfocused, etc. Some people lack the patience and confidence necessary to train horses well. Some are simply scared. Carefully assess whether you have the qualities necessary to increase the chances of a good outcome.

Preparing horses for driving must be done in a safe environment. If your quarters are cramped, cluttered, full of noise and other distractions, your outcome will probably suffer.

Perhaps the best method of starting your driving horse at home is to work with a professional trainer. This may sound odd considering the topic at hand, but a professional can be invaluable at guiding you through the steps involved. It is not advisable to start your driving horse by yourself if you have never driven. Take some lessons to gain an understanding of what is involved. There is a lot of involved preparation required to produce a result which, when finished, looks fairly simple and straightforward. Locate a trainer who will bring you along through the training process before you try it on your own. Attending appropriate clinics given by professional trainers is another excellent way to learn how to educate your horse. The American Morgan Horse

Association maintains a Professional Committee that provides a list of clinicians across the country. Books and articles, while quite helpful, pale in comparison to real life experiences. This article is only meant to be a guide. It is by no means a definitive manual on the subject.

Your Horse

Age will be a factor. Most Morgans are not trained to drive before they are at least two years old. Some preparatory work is usually done before they reach two and some are even hooked earlier, but serious driving mileage should not be asked of a Morgan under two or even three years old. You can accomplish many elementary lessons with your horse when he is very young. Weanlings can be taught to lead. Many six month olds can start to learn basic verbal commands on a leadline. During the early grooming lessons, your horse can have his tail handled in preparation for a crupper. On the other hand, much damage can be done by doing strenuous exercises too early or too often. Great care is necessary with these young horses because not only are you introducing physical stresses on young, developing bodies, you also are introducing them to issues of trust for the very first time.

Making the transition from turning a schooled riding horse into a driving horse is generally easier and quicker than starting from scratch with a youngster. A trained riding horse has some understanding of the training process; that is, he knows the difference between the classroom and recess. One caveat: Be extremely mindful of the fact that you may not fully know what mishaps might have occurred in the early years of older horses. They may be perfectly wonderful riding horses, but could have had poor experiences with driving. These horses can be dangerous for even a professional trainer and they always are dangerous for the unprepared.

Never hook any horse to a vehicle unless you are certain he has a good history as a driving horse. If you are unsure, start with a review of the basics in order to make an assessment of the level of training and anxiety level.

Size will not be much of a factor until the

time comes to more precisely determine your horse's job. There are some jobs where size does matter. Pulling larger vehicles, for instance, is easier for large horses or pairs. One of the best-kept secrets in the driving world is the use of smaller Morgans (14.2 hands and under) in the pony divisions of carriage driving competitions, both Combined Driving Events and Pleasure Competitions. The driving heritage of the Morgan breed serves them quite well in competition against the pony breeds. Size also may matter if your equipment does not match your horse well. Some vehicles simply may be too heavy for younger, unfit, or smaller horses.



The harness is set up to accustom the horse to wearing a harness. Note the connection from the breastplate to the breeching, using a straight side rein. This set up would be used while leading, lunging, or ground driving your horse.

Mentality, maturity, and mental aptitude play a part in how you proceed with your horse. Horses, like people, learn at different rates and sometimes in different ways. If your horse's mind is immature, the lessons may have to be quite brief. This enables your horse to stay focused. Longer lessons may be counterproductive. If your horse is high strung, the process may take great tact to accomplish and may in fact be better left for someone with more experience. Sometimes high-strung horses are not so much the product of genetics as environment. A change in your horse's feed or turnout time may make a huge difference in his energy and anxiety levels and thus his trainability. There is plenty of time to concentrate and focus your horse's physical energy after he is trained. For starting your horse in harness, however, you need as much mental cooperation as your horse can give you. Anything that takes away from

that should be examined and changed if possible. Are there Morgans who just don't have the aptitude to be driving horses? Probably, but in our breed it has been my experience these horses are few and far between and almost always poor previous handling has been the real cause for this shortcoming.

Your Equipment

The harness used to start your driving horse does not need to be a special training harness, although there are some features with specialized equipment that can make the job easier and safer. The "quick-hitch" style training harness is ideal for starting driving horses since it can be put on and removed quickly with a minimum of effort. It also is easily adapted for the different stages of the training process, from accustoming your horse to the feel of a harness, to lungeing, to ground driving, to actually being hooked and driven. Most quick-hitch style harnesses also are quite suitable for pleasure driving at home. Of particular note is the safety feature of using traces that snap on in a single quick, easy motion to the breastplate at your horse's shoulder. This allows you to remain near your horse's head for more control and is especially handy when you find yourself working your horse alone or with horses who are a little nervous.

Harness fit and adjustment are critical to the comfort of your horse. Poorly adjusted harnesses and bridles are a major cause of poor results. Any pain or discomfort caused in the training process may be remembered by your horse for years to come, even after the pain and physical injury are gone. Of particular importance is the width of the harness saddle, its overall construction, and its placement on your horse. Narrow saddles are fine for the brief workouts in a well conditioned, level show ring, but are unsuitable for work on the varied terrain found on longer cross-country drives. For use outside the show ring, the harness saddle should be a minimum of three inches wide. It is imperative that there be no pressure from the saddle directly on the top of the horse's spine. Most saddles have a tree and care should be taken to make sure the tree does not interfere with the spine or cause undue pressure on

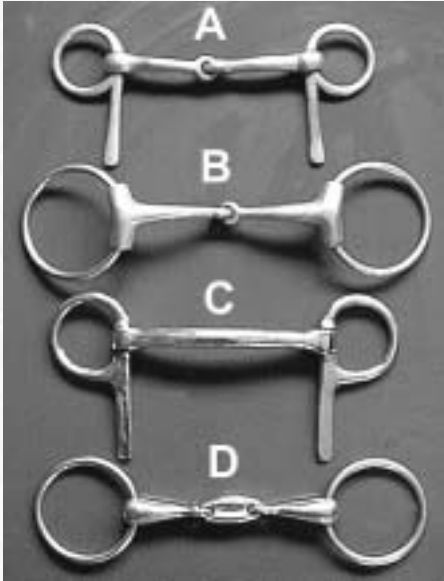
the muscle groups behind the withers. This pressure is a common fault of many Amish-made harnesses coming right from the manufacturer and usually can be remedied by taking the saddle apart and reforming the tree. The stuffing or padding of the saddle should be wide. Too often this padding is narrow and hard, causing discomfort or pain. Supplemental padding can be useful as long as it well fitted and well constructed. A well-made harness should not require additional padding.

The saddle should be placed well behind the withers. This is probably the most common misadjustment seen on harness horses. As a general rule of thumb, place the forward edge of the saddle behind the last hairs of the mane by the width of your hand. It may look too far back when your horse is first harnessed, but the saddle will reposition itself forward a bit once your horse is being worked.

The bridle used in the initial phases for starting horses can be an open bridle or one with blinders. Professional trainers have their preference on that score. Some use an open bridle up to the hooking stage and then use a blinker hood or switch to a blindered bridle. Some start right away with a closed bridle and some use an open bridle for the entire process, even while driving. To some extent you will have to assess how your horse reacts to different types of bridling and how it reacts in general to the process and the environment around him. Some horses are too distracted by the wide view of an open bridle. Others feel anxious and claustrophobic in a closed bridle. Personally, I start the basics with an open bridle and drive hooked to a vehicle with a blindered bridle. I've never gotten in trouble with a horse using a blindered bridle.

Check Reins

Check reins have been a great source of controversy since they were introduced in the 1800s. Whether you use them or not will largely depend on the final job your horse will be asked to do. Overchecks and side checks are considered proper equipment in park and pleasure driving classes in the show ring. Roadster classes require a check rein. Check reins of any kind are generally not used in car-



Examples of simple bits useful for starting driving horses.

- A-Half-Cheek Snaffle
- B-Large Ring Tube Cheek Snaffle
- C-Half-Cheek Mullen
- D-French Link Snaffle

riage driving competitions (in some competitions they are illegal). For starting your harness horse, I recommend not using a check at all. Once your horse is ground driving well, a check rein can be introduced if the job you will be asking your horse to do requires one.

Some consider a check rein a safety device on the theory that if your horse cannot lower his head, he cannot buck or kick. There are two problems with that theory. In practice, when a horse is scared enough to buck or kick, the very first piece of equipment that will break is the check rein. Second, many accidents actually are caused by the discomfort and subsequent anxiety created by the use of poorly adjusted check reins.

Running Martingales

Running martingales are used sometimes for driving horses. They are used on show horses in the Morgan breed, but rarely are used on carriage horses. They are not necessary for starting your driving horse. The martingale is a specialized device that should be introduced

later in the process and only if required for the job your horse will be asked to do. Some feel martingales are a safety device on the theory they will supply the leverage and rein direction necessary to help prevent your horse from raising up above the bit. This is true, but there will be another approach explained later to deal with this. If your horse is taught to carry himself properly, he will find it terribly inefficient to raise above the bit thus making his job more difficult. Much damage can be done with the improper use of the running martingale. It can take quite a long time to re-school a horse to perform in self carriage once he has learned to rely on the running martingale for balance. As with the check rein, the running martingale can be gradually introduced as your horse progresses toward the use for which you are training.

The bits used with harness horses in the early stages need not be particularly different in design than riding bits. It is a myth that a “driving” bit must be used for driving (except as required by certain competition specifications). First and foremost is always the consideration of comfort for your horse. Use the bits that are comfortable for your horse and which he responds to well. Then worry about whether they are traditional driving bits. Ultimately, you may want to use a design considered proper for the type of driving you will do, but in the beginning that is not your concern. Remember that we are first looking for cooperation from your horse and that mouth discomfort is a primary source of poor cooperation. The mouth is of particular importance to the harness horse since it is your principal connection to your horse. You have no seat or legs with which to influence his behavior or performance.

Many people mistakenly feel that driving means using a stronger bit since the driver does not have as much control of their horse as a rider. It would help to remember that horses do not stop with their mouth. They stop with their brain. If your horse is scared enough to consider running away with you, it is unlikely that the metal in his mouth will stop him regardless of its mechanical power. The increased pain in his mouth from such mechanics may in fact make matters far worse. Driving horses can and

should be just as light and responsive in the hand as any riding horse. Respect the power of training them to be responsive and do not abuse their mouth out of the misguided notion that stronger bits are somehow safer.

Kicking Straps

Kicking straps are the driving equivalent of the riding helmet. I use one at home with every horse on every drive, no matter how experienced or inexperienced the horse is. They have saved my life several times. A kicking strap can limit the potential damage from your horse if he thinks that kicking up or bucking will solve his problems. It can prevent a kicking fit from becoming a serious accident by not allowing your horse to get one leg over the shaft. Usually when a horse engages the limitation of the kicking strap, he stops trying the evasive escape route of kicking or bucking and will move forward. The action of the kicking strap can buy you enough time to settle your horse.

The strap runs from one shaft, up over the rump of the horse, just in front of the base of the tail and then down to the shaft on the other side. It should be adjusted loosely enough not to engage at all when your horse is walking, trotting, or cantering normally. It should be tight enough to limit the raising of the hind end should your horse begin to lift it to kick out or up. The strap can be made of stout leather, nylon, or even a heavy lead rope can be pressed into service. Harness makers can make one for a few dollars. It could be the best insurance your money can buy.

Leadlines

Leadlines will be part of your training equipment at times. They should be longer rather than shorter. They should have secure, sturdy snaps that are easy to work with one hand. Nylon should be avoided because if your horse should suddenly pull away, severe injuries to hand and skin can result. Cotton leads work very well and are easy to grip securely. It also is wise for you and your assistants to wear gloves to protect your skin. Make sure they are thin enough to enable you to easily work with your buckles and snaps.

Long Lines

Long lines are used to drive your horse from the ground. Regular driving reins are too short and usually too heavy to make good ground driving lines. Professional trainers have their preferences for long lines. Some prefer leather, nylon, or cotton rope, cotton or synthetic webbing, or a combination of webbing and rope. They should be long enough to allow you to work your horse in at least a 50 foot diameter circle and light enough to allow you to carry them coiled up for close work with your horse from the side or behind without becoming too bulky.

Breeching

Breeching is used on carriage horses as the mechanism by which the horse can hold back the weight of the vehicle on slopes and in downward transitions. Some horses initially object to the pressure of breeching or even to its feel on their rump, but most adapt to it readily if properly introduced. It is advisable that breeching pressure be introduced early in the training process and certainly before your horse is hooked to a vehicle. Breeching is not used in the Morgan show ring for park or pleasure driving, but it is necessary equipment if you will be driving your horse outside of the ring over varied terrain or in carriage competition. Do not expect any horse to automatically know what breeching is or to readily accept it without some training.

Drags

Drags are useful, if not necessary, equipment for starting your driving horse. A drag is merely something your horse can pull behind him on the ground with the traces while you drive him from the ground with long lines. A drag helps accustom your horse to the feel of pulling something with his chest, the feel of the traces on his sides and legs, and the sounds coming from behind him.

There are many set ups one can use for a drag. Using anything that is too heavy runs the risk of over facing and frustrating your horse. It also is not advisable to use anything that bounces too easily. Some consideration should be given to the sound the drag makes.

Steady, lower frequency noise is better than a high frequency, excitable noise. Some use an old tire or a piece of lumber. Care should be taken when using a tire that you attach it in a way which limits its ability to bounce up on edge and begin to roll. Two U-bolts placed about 90 degrees apart on a tire work well as attachments for your traces. I use a section of sturdy metal wire grating which lies flat all the time, is not too heavy nor too light, and is safe for my horses if they should act up and get tangled in the traces. They will not get hurt stepping on it. The screen arrangement spreads the traces wider than the width of the horse and helps keep the horse from stepping on or over the traces. It has the added benefit of grooming my work area!

Set up a breastplate with traces long enough to reach the ground several feet behind your horse. Regular driving traces will be too short. You can easily add length to regular traces using stout cord of some kind. Make sure it is strong enough not to break too easily while you are working. Baling twine is not sufficient. Attach sturdy snaps of a design that will not easily come undone by themselves to the end of your trace extensions so that you can quickly attach and detach your drag. Some trainers attach the end of their traces to a single tree and then attach their drag to the single tree. You can make your own single tree out of a solid 2 x 4 and a few eye bolts: one on each end facing the same direction for your traces and one in the middle facing the opposite direction to hook up your drag. Eye bolts are much more secure than screw eyes. The advantage of this arrangement is that the traces remain spread the width of the single tree rather than coming to a single point behind your horse. This helps to prevent your horse from becoming tangled in the traces while working, especially in a circle.

With this type of drag, you can set up your traces to remain attached to the drag and to snap on the breastplate when you hook up your horse. This allows you to remain in proximity of the head of your horse, which will give you more control than if you move out behind him.

Some trainers will make up a drag that has shafts and a single tree. It is, in essence, a cart with no wheels. The shafts are placed through

the tugs and your horse is hitched as if it were hooked to a vehicle while one end of the drag simply is dragged across the ground. There are disadvantages to this arrangement. It is relatively easy for an excited horse to get a leg over one of the shafts since they are quite low relative to his hind legs. A horse cannot back up with this drag set up. That may cause some consternation for your horse and it may cause some difficulty for you if you find your horse in a position where backing up could get them out of trouble. Of course, the benefit is your horse can get the feel of the shafts and become accustomed to the process of being hooked and unhooked without putting a more expensive vehicle at risk.

Some drags are designed to have additional weight attached once your horse understands the basics. This may accustom him to having more pull on his breastplate prior to actually pulling the load of a vehicle. This may be a valid concern if the first vehicle to which you hook your horse will be somewhat heavy. There are trainers who use heavier drag work with fully trained horses as a strengthening exercise. You may want to consider that possibility as you construct your drag; however, most Morgans are willing pullers and the extra weight issue is not usually important when starting your harness horse.

The vehicle to which your horse is initially hooked must first of all be safe. It absolutely must be structurally sound. It should be well lubricated so it rolls freely and does not squeak as you work. It should be easy for you to get in and out of for your own safety should your horse suddenly decide to move off while you are climbing in. You should have good vision while seated, meaning you should be seated high enough to see well in front of your horse without contorting your body. The vehicle should fit your horse. The shaft tips should come to the point of the shoulder while the rear end of your horse is at least 18 inches from the front of the basket. Some breaking carts have longer shafts that will place your horse well away from the basket and seat. This design will usually prevent a green horse from reaching any part of the vehicle should he decide to kick backwards. When your horse is able to strike

something, he often will kick immediately a second, third, or fourth time. He will be more likely to stop if, when he kicks, he does not connect with anything. The disadvantage is that it places you farther away from your horse when climbing into the vehicle. The extra step can make a difference if your horse acts up and you have to reach his head for control.

Your horse should not be hooked to a four-wheeled vehicle until he is well schooled at the halt and the rein back. These vehicles are easily jack knifed in reverse and could cause serious problems for an unschooled horse.

The ubiquitous pneumatic tired, light metal pipe cart is also a poor choice for starting your horse to drive. They are too light and generally of poor structural strength and design. The seating is usually too low. The metal construction is also very unforgiving should you have an accident.

A wooden, two-wheeled, pneumatic tired jog cart works well as long as the terrain of your work area is in good condition and relatively level. The seating is generally a little low, but is acceptable or it can be raised if you are handy. Wooden wheeled road carts also work well with the one disadvantage that some can be a little difficult to get in and out of. Generally, Meadowbrooks are on the heavy side for starting a horse the size of most Morgans. However, once your horse is accustomed to pulling and is fit, a heavier vehicle can be introduced. It's probably wise not to use your best show vehicles for starting your horse.

Ground Work

Leading your horse is the first step in the process of training your youngster to drive. Do not underestimate the effect of simply leading your horse around your property or taking him for walks in the countryside. This is the beginning of your schooling relationship with your horse. Much of the basis for all the education to follow begins at this point. It can be easily spoiled. This process should begin in a confined space until your horse understands basic commands. Of particular importance is the command to halt and stand still. Practice the command "Whoa" until your horse is absolutely reliable. It will help you immensely through-

out your entire relationship with your driving horse. You cannot physically make a driving horse stand while hooked to a vehicle. He has to want to do it and the process begins in these first few lessons on the leadline. Once you can lead your horse anywhere reliably, you can introduce the harness.

Introduce the bit to your horse by using a simple, well-designed, well-fitting bit. A mullen mouth or a two or three piece mouth of simple snaffle design is just fine. A plain headstall will hold the bit and allow for a halter to be used over the top when leading. You can, of course, allow him to wear the headstall and bit in his stall for short periods to accustom him to the bit in his mouth. Cues from the bit will come later. For now, you should lead him from the halter, not the bit.

Introduce the saddle by placing it on your horse in his stall without a back strap (turn-back) and crupper. Keep the girth loose. Allow him to walk around his stall wearing the saddle for short periods. When you put the saddle on, slide it on calmly and quietly from the side. Do not slap it down on his back. When you remove it, go slowly. Be especially careful not to yank on the girth. Let him know there is nothing about the saddle that should excite him. After one or two sessions you can tighten the girth slowly and carefully and lead him outside with it on. Horses who move around a lot while being harnessed are unpleasant to deal with and that bad habit usually has its origins with the first few attempts to put something on his back. Be mindful how unnatural this is for your horse.

A breastplate can be introduced at this point. Horses usually are unconcerned with breastplates. Use one that is made for snap on or buckle on traces. Sewn on traces will just get in the way at this point. I fasten each end of the breastplate to the saddle. Quick hitch training saddles usually have rings on the sides. I connect the rings on the saddle to the breastplate with double ended snaps. This does two things: It adds some stability to the saddle while lunging and ground driving, and it accustoms the horse to a feel of the breastplate across his chest as he moves his shoulders.

Introducing the crupper should be done

carefully. You should prepare your horse for the crupper by making sure he is relatively unconcerned with having his tail handled. Scratching him on his rump around his tail usually will help him become accustomed to your handling. Lift his tail slowly and gently let it down. Do this regularly as an extension of his normal grooming process. Slow down the instant he becomes tense and allow him time to relax before proceeding. Your goal is to have your horse absolutely unconcerned about anything under his tail. If you scare him at this point in his training, you may have to live with “crupper anxiety” for a long time. Horses are quite sensitive under their tail. Some horses are naturally concerned with this process and will reflexively clamp their tail every time you go near it or touch it. You may have to live with some crupper anxiety although there are tail exercises you can do to accustom your horse to having his tail handled. Some horses can benefit by massage or even chiropractic adjustment of their tail and hind end. Some never seem to get over it. A slightly over stuffed crupper seems to help “tail claspers” as it stretches the muscles around the tail and it is much more dif-



The horse is set up for lungeing. He has become accustomed to wearing a bit in his mouth, but has not yet had reins attached. The lunge line runs from the trainer's hand angled forward in the direction the horse will be moving and is connected to the halter, not the bit. Although somewhat difficult to see in this photo, he is wearing a sliding side rein which he has become accustomed to in previous lessons. He is wearing breeching which is attached to the breastplate with leather straps on each side. As his shoulders and hind legs move, he quickly will become accustomed to the feel of the breeching. The trainer can also move closer to the horse and pull on the leather straps to help simulate the feel of the breeching when the horse is attached to a vehicle. The horse is wearing an open bridle and has not yet been introduced to blinders.

ficult to clamp their tail around something a little fatter. A fatter crupper also will help prevent a rein from getting caught tightly under the tail and will help minimize the reaction of your horse when it does happen.

Introduce the crupper in your horse's stall with an assistant holding your horse with a lead. The crupper should have a buckle on at least one side, which you can undo to make placement under the tail fairly easy and comfortable for your horse. Stand to the side up against the flank, not directly behind your horse, when you put the crupper under the tail for the first time and be very careful to let the tail down gently. Be careful to not get tail hairs between the crupper and the underside of the tail. They will cause rubs and make your horse quite uncomfortable. If you have never put a crupper on a horse, it might be wise to practice on a well trained driving horse until you can do it smoothly and deliberately with a minimum of fuss.

The turnback strap need not be tight. Its function is to prevent the saddle from riding forward up onto the withers and to support the breeching if it is used. Keep it a little on the long side when you first put the crupper on. Shorten it once the crupper is on only to the point where the crupper is just positioned in place, not pulled tight against the tail nor with any large amount of space between the crupper and the tail. Recheck the crupper placement once your horse relaxes in his stall or at work and reposition if necessary.

Let your horse walk about in his stall with the crupper on for a session or two before you take him outside. Some horses do not fully realize they are wearing a crupper until they are outside and begin to trot. At that point they may kick up or wring their tail and may actually get the crupper off. If that happens, just stop your horse and settle him. With your assistant at his head, put the crupper back in place and start over. Once your horse realizes the crupper isn't going to hurt him and it isn't going away, he should soon forget about it.

Introduce the breeching once your horse is wearing the crupper without concern. This can be done by putting on the saddle and crupper, then attaching the breeching. This will

include all the breeching parts: the breeching hanger straps, breeching itself, and breeching straps. Again proceed with some care so you do not upset your horse with all these new straps. The breeching straps can be brought forward and attached to the sides of the saddle, to the tugs, or to a breastplate on each side in some fashion. I remove the breeching straps altogether and use a straight adjustable side rein to hook the breeching through the tug and then to the breastplate. This setup connects the breastplate to the breeching and quickly accustoms your horse to pressures on his chest, flanks, and rump as he moves. As I work with the horse from the ground, I can easily pull on the side rein from the side to simulate the sudden pressures your horse will feel once hooked to a vehicle.

Lungeing

By now you have prepared your horse with lessons while grooming, leading, and have introduced the bit, the breastplate, the saddle, and the crupper. Your horse should understand and obey the elementary verbal commands walk, trot, halt, back, and stand. Whether you teach your horse to lunge or to ground drive first will depend on factors such as the age, learning aptitude, and his general nature. Professional trainers have personal preferences on how to proceed and there is no hard and fast rule about whether lungeing or ground driving is better to teach first. Generally, it is fairly simple for a horse who already knows how to lunge to readily accept ground driving. Lungeing, on the other hand, can be a little more physically stressful on the young horse than ground driving.

Lungeing techniques are well covered in several good books on the subject and an in-depth discussion of them is beyond the scope of this article. Use lungeing to refine and reinforce the verbal communication you have established previously with your horse. Lungeing should be used to improve your horse's balance and rhythm at the walk and trot. The canter can be introduced if your horse gives you an indication that he might be physically and mentally ready. This means that your horse may simply break into the canter from

the trot at times and not become overly excited or unbalanced while doing so. Racing, swinging the hindquarters away from you, and pulling the lunge line are indications that your horse may not be ready for canter work, but there is adequate time for that and it need not be asked for at this stage.

Lungeing is not used for simply exercising your horse, lungeing is for training your horse. All lungeing should be done with your horse wearing a bit attached to some form of side rein. Without side reins, your horse is not learning anything about balance and self carriage. Important lessons your harness horse can learn and you can refine on the lunge are to halt and stand, back up, walk, trot, and canter (although not essential at this point) with ease, comfort, and relaxation.

Side Rein

Introducing the side rein is done while lungeing or ground driving. There are many kinds of side reins, each with their particular strengths and weaknesses. The sliding side rein (also known as a German side rein) is particularly suited to starting the harness horse. The sliding side rein runs from one side of the saddle through the bit on the same side, then down between the legs of the horse, through a ring on the girth, back up through the bit on the opposite side, then to the saddle on that side. The rein can slide at every point except at the attachments to the saddle, where it is fixed and where its length is adjusted. This arrangement allows the horse a wide range of motion of its head and neck—up and down and side to side. It effectively helps your horse find his balance, stretch through the topline, and to accept mild pressures on the bit in preparation for actual rein instructions. It allows your horse to accomplish this without being overly interfered with through the bit by less educated or less skillful hands. The sliding side rein should not pull or force your horse into a position; it should simply remind and guide your horse to a position that is efficient for work. Efficiency carries a built-in reward: As your horse realizes that his job becomes physically easier to perform, he naturally will more readily assume the most efficient position to perform it on his own.

Sliding side reins are easily made out of cotton cord (clothesline works fairly well). A few well chosen snaps make it handy to put on the horse. A further modification is to make the rein entirely out of elastic shock cord. This works particularly well as it has the consistent “give and take” that is very similar to the gentle hands of an educated rider or driver.

Warning: Some horses resent being overly constricted by side reins of any design, so great care should be taken to adjust them properly, very loose at first, shorter only as your horse becomes accustomed to what the side rein is asking. A side rein should only be used on any kind of leverage (curb, Liverpool) bit by an experienced horseman. An elastic rein, instead of a fixed length rein, considerably lowers the risk of the occasional bad reaction. Never hook a horse wearing any kind of side rein for the first time to a vehicle. Always ground drive your horse for a few minutes whenever you add a side rein or change any part of your harness set-up to make sure he is accustomed to the new feel.

The sliding side rein is particularly useful for re-schooling driving horses who have been driven originally in a check rein and a running martingale. Some horses become so reliant on those devices for balance that they have to completely re-learn how to carry themselves when working without them. The sliding side rein, used correctly, can help that process dramatically. Horses originally introduced to the sliding side rein can readily move to a running martingale if it is required by a particular discipline. The side rein should not become a permanent article of working or training equipment. It is worth repeating: the sliding side rein is simply for showing your horse the way to a more efficient approach to his work. Once the horse realizes the benefit of this efficiency, the side rein can be dispensed.

Ground Driving

Ground driving or long lining is an essential step in training your horse to drive. Frequently, older horses already have been taught to ground drive and ground driving can be used to refresh their training or to safely work on areas in their training that may be

lacking, like balance, fear issues, suppleness, bit acceptance, etc. Ground driving is done with two lines or reins attached to the bit. Since you have not been using rein contact to the bit up to this point, begin by attaching the reins to the side rings of the halter or cavesson. Your horse may need a few sessions to become accustomed to the feel of lines over his back or on his rump or to the sound of them slapping together as he works. Attaching the lines to the halter or cavesson will prevent your horse from jerking himself in the mouth. Once your horse accepts the lines, attach them to the bit. For the first few lessons, you may wish to have an assistant lead your horse with a leadline attached to the halter.

Every trainer has preferences for how he or she sets up the reins and there is no hard and fast rule. Usually the lines are run from the bit rings through the terrets on the harness saddle to your hands. Some trainers prefer to run the lines through a lower position on the side of the saddle in an effort to encourage the horse to travel with a lower head and neck carriage at first. This position asks your horse to carry himself and work in an efficient position and makes it a little less likely that your horse will evade the action of the bit by raising up above it. If you do not have training rings attached on the side of your saddle, you can run the lines through the tugs. If you are using the sliding side rein attachment, you can run the reins from the bit through the terrets since the side rein will be reminding your horse to carry himself in an efficient position with his head and neck lowered.

Draw rein arrangements are not useful at this time. Their increased leverage may in fact be quite counterproductive to producing a supple, cooperative driving horse with a light and responsive mouth. Some horses with specific problems may benefit from the use of draw reins, but that is beyond the scope of this article. If your ultimate goal is for the raised-up carriage of the head and neck of the Morgan show horse, how you will work with your horse to attain that first depends on whether his conformation will allow it and second depends on your horse being slowly conditioned to carry himself comfortably in that manner.

Resist the temptation to ask your horse for this before he has been adequately prepared. There is plenty of time.

If your horse already has done some lungeing, he is by now used to working in a circle. Your first ground driving lessons will use the same circle. Round pens make this work simple since your horse's work area is so well defined by the pen. It may be more difficult to do this work in an open area, but if you have done your lungeing work well it should not be a big problem. Repeat your verbal command lessons that your horse learned on the lunge and begin to add some signals through the bit from your hands. This can be difficult for people to do well who are not experienced at ground driving. You must be able to maintain a light, constant connection through the rein to your horse's mouth while moving yourself across the ground. The secret to this is to be willing and able to freely move your entire body toward and away from the horse, depending on where he moves in relation to you. This will take some practice. Hold your elbows by your side, bent at 90 degrees, with your hands level in front of you. This position will allow your elbow to act like a hinge, opening to stretch your arms forward or closing to move your elbows behind your back. This will help you maintain a responsive connection to your horse's mouth. You may find it beneficial to practice ground driving on a well-trained horse with the help of an experienced instructor before you try it on a young horse or an older horse who has some training issues.

You can work your horse from several positions while ground driving. At first you will probably find that staying in the position your horse was taught to lunge from will work the best: from the side, away from your horse, just behind the girth. This works well for circle work. You will want to begin to teach your horse to steer and for this you should move closer to the horse and a little further behind but still to the side where he can see you, not directly behind out of his vision. If you are using a hood or blinders, this will not matter to your horse since he cannot see you.

You can introduce steering in several ways. The choice you make will depend on the

nature of your horse and the working space available to you. It is easy to begin to add a few straight strides in your circle work by giving a signal with the rein in your outside hand followed by another signal from your inside rein asking the horse to return to the circle. Some trainers will simply walk the horse along a fence in a straight line and ask for a turn when coming to a corner in the fence. The horse will quickly associate the instruction in his mouth with turning. After a few tries at this, you can ask for a turn slightly before the corner and gradually increase the distance from the corner in successive tries. You always can return to waiting until rather deep in the corner if your horse has difficulty. Once this introductory work is learned at the walk, you can move on to the trot.

The instruction from your hand to your horse's mouth will be rather coarse in comparison to the refined, subtle rein movements that come with lots of practice and experience. You likely will find yourself overexaggerating your rein instructions so your horse can realize you are trying to tell him something. Take advantage of good opportunities to reward correct behavior when your horse delivers the desired result almost by accident from quieter cues. In spite of all your efforts to make the right choices easy for your horse to understand, a certain amount of his efforts will be just his best guesses. You can think of your rein instructions as similar in quality to the language you used when first learning to read. It was basic, simple, and easy to comprehend. It was no more complicated than "see Spot run." This is a similar elementary level of understanding your horse will have when you first introduce the signals through his bit. It is OK that your instruction is not as quiet and subtle as that you would use with a fully schooled horse. Your new driving horse has not yet been prepared to understand the subtleties of a more refined language. There is time for that later.

Life comes at you and your horse a lot faster at the trot! That means two things: You will have to be quite fit to run along with your trotting horse and second, your horse may find it more difficult to stay calm and relaxed as his blood pumps a little faster and as his brain has

to process life a little faster. For those reasons, ground driving at the trot is best done in a circle at first. Once again, you can begin to add a few straight strides in your circle, which will necessitate you moving quickly along with those few strides. If you are up to it physically, you can make other simple figures while running along side your horse.

Keep your lessons brief (15-20 minutes) and be happy with small, but positive results. Always begin with things you already know your horse understands. Your horse is trying to assimilate a lot of information that is foreign to his inherent nature. Give him plenty of time to process it. At many junctures along the way, you will have to carefully gauge when to move on to the next step. Some horses seem to be born trained and some of the more independently minded just want to choose the hard way every time. Be patient. Go slow, repeat, and review. Your horse will be a good driving horse for years if you take the time to make his life in school as pleasant as it can.

Once your horse has the basic elements of steering under control, you can take him for walks outside of your work area. Most horses really enjoy this, so if your horse seems to be bored, inattentive, or tired of ring work, perhaps you can refresh his mind by taking him to explore the outside world. It's a good idea to ground drive your horse where you will be driving once you get him hooked. A familiar environment is one less thing for your horse to worry about on those first few drives.

At some point, you will have to make a decision about whether to use blinders or not; good arguments are on both sides of this issue. Those who use blinders will tell you they never have gotten in trouble using them. Most horses in competitions, whether in the show ring (where they are considered appropriate) or in carriage competitions, will be driven in blinders. Others will tell you that teaching your horse not to be afraid of all kinds of things behind and around him while he is driving is a good thing. Nevertheless, once your horse is being ground driven well, you can introduce the blindered bridle.

Introducing the blinders can be done by switching to a blindered bridle or by adding a

blinker hood over an open bridle. Blinker hoods can be helpful with horses who ignore your verbal commands and react inappropriately when you attempt to reinforce your instructions with a tap of a whip. When they can no longer see you when your verbal instruction is reinforced with the touch of the whip, suddenly they become quite obedient! In any event, repeat your lessons using blinders until your horse is relaxed and comfortable with his newly limited vision.

Introducing noises is especially important to the making of a reliable driving horse. Once your horse has the basic knowledge of commands and can be driven from the ground relatively confidently, you can begin to expose him more and more to the noises and commotion that you will inevitably encounter while driving. The time to find out how he will react to a sudden noise and movement is before he is hooked to a vehicle. Tap the bushes or the ground with your whip while ground driving. Pick up a stick and drag it on the ground. Have your assistant tactfully drag things on the ground in front, beside, and behind your horse while you drive him from the ground. The object is not to frighten your horse, but to accustom him to sudden and changing noises around him. Some horses will be unconcerned with this. Count yourself lucky if this is your horse! Some are quite bothered by these noises. You will have to work a little harder and longer to desensitize your horse, but it must be done before you hook him to a vehicle.

Pulling a Drag

Pulling a drag is the next natural progression to this process. The initial work with the drag is best done in an enclosed area. Drags make noise. This is a good thing. It will help to desensitize your horse to sudden noises around him. In making this step, it is wise to use an assistant. Your assistant can pull your drag out in front of your horse where he can see it and get used to the sounds it makes while it is in his view. Once he is settled at that, your assistant can move to various positions around your horse. Work at this until your horse is unconcerned with the noises made by the drag. Remember that the drag

will make different noises on different surfaces. It may even be almost silent on grass. Make sure you work with your drag going from one type of surface to another around your horse.

Once your horse is unconcerned with the drag being pulled around him, it is time to hook him to it. Before you hook up your drag, have your assistant hold the traces out behind your horse while you ground drive him for a brief walk. Have your assistant pull on the traces from directly behind your horse, then from each side. This will alert you to any issues the horse may have with the feeling of the traces on his rump and legs and with the feel of the pressure against his chest from the breastplate. Once you are convinced those things do not bother him, proceed to the next step.

Place your assistant on the end of a lead attached to your horse's halter that is placed over the bridle, making sure the bit and reins have room to function properly. You can also attach a lead to the cavesson if it is sturdy enough. Do not attach the lead to the bit. You will need the bit unencumbered to communicate to your horse.

Run the traces through the breeching hanger straps and above the breeching strap itself and then down to the drag, rather than directly from the breastplate to the drag. This keeps the traces well above the hocks. The additional benefit to this arrangement is that some pull and tug is applied to the breeching as your horse pulls the drag, which will help accustom him to the feel of the breeching when finally hooked to a vehicle. If you are not using breeching, you can fashion a hanger strap using stout cord from the turnback strap to hold the traces up above the hocks.

With your assistant at your horse's head and your horse positioned so the traces can reach the drag, attach your traces quickly to the drag. Better yet, with the traces already attached to the drag, bring them up as described above and attach them to the breastplate with snaps or buckles, depending on the design. Keep the reins in one hand or at least within easy reach at all times so that if your horse moves off you can instantly assume control.

You are in the most vulnerable position

when just one trace is attached to the drag. Should your horse move off at that point, he is apt to be easily frightened by the uneven drag on the breastplate and events can quickly escalate out of control.

Once your drag is hooked, move to the side with your reins and ask your horse to walk off. Plan in advance to walk only a few strides and then to ask for a halt. If all goes well through that first halt, walk off again for a longer distance and then halt. The point is to make sure your horse is confirmed in the halt command before things can escalate out of control should your horse become a little leery of the drag. The first lesson with the drag is best ended before your horse has a chance to make a mistake. If he walks off and halts a few times with the drag in the first lesson, you are probably smart to quit.

Begin the next lesson just like the first. Make the lesson longer each time and begin to add some figures and turning. If he is unconcerned with the drag, you may proceed without your assistant and ask for a trot in a circle. Again, ask for just a few strides at the trot that first time. The drag will make a different noise and life will come at your horse faster than at the walk. Give him a chance to assimilate the new sensations before asking for longer and faster trot work. Do several halt-walk-trot-walk-halt transitions in each lesson. Gradually increase the duration of the halt. It is vitally important that harness horses be obedient at performing the halt and be able to remain standing still for as long as you ask. Your safety and that of other drivers and their horses depends on it. At the same time, remember that you cannot make your horse stand still. He has to want to do it. Too much repetition or repetition when your horse is non-receptive may produce a horse who resents standing still. Vary the routine slightly each time so that your horse does not anticipate what you will ask for next and eagerly looks forward to your next instruction.

The key to good driving is not so much with the quality of the forward movement as it is with the quality of the transitions between the movements. The most common mistake drivers make is not allowing enough time and

space for their horse to execute their instructions. This is especially important early in your horse's education when he lacks the physical strength and coordination, as well as the mental discipline, to execute precise, controlled movements. All athletes need practice and exercise to perfect their performance. Horses are no different.

Once your horse is doing well with the drag in the ring, take him for lessons out of the ring. Go wherever you plan to drive him for his first few lessons. Don't forget the standing lessons!

False shafts are a good way to introduce the feel of a vehicle to the horse. If you have been using a drag that has shafts, you obviously can skip the next step. False shafts can be a simple piece of light lumber, a debarked sapling, or a piece of plastic pipe about 12 feet long. Slip one end of the false shaft through the tug on one side of the horse and have your assistant on the other end holding it up about waist high. Your assistant can make sure the pole rubs against the body of your horse as you ground drive him. Most horses do not mind this, but it is best to find out before you proceed with actually hooking to a cart. A horse who is afraid of the touch of the shafts will have a hard time bending properly while hooked to vehicle. This lesson can be brief and usually, unless you encounter trouble, does not need to be repeated more than once or twice before proceeding.

Hooking Your Horse

Hooking the horse for the first time is one of the most critical junctures in the driving horse's life. Your horse can be ruined in seconds if things do not go well. All the careful work you have done to this point should have prepared your horse well, so that being hooked will be a non-issue. But there always is that slim chance that his natural instincts will overpower all your training if he becomes scared.

You will need at least one assistant, but two are better. Provide each with a stout lead shank. Put a halter on over the bridle of your horse. For a few minutes, pull the drag you have been using up until now so you can assess your horse's mood and obedience level. If there is any question, proceed with your regular drag

lesson rather than hooking him that day. It can wait until he is ready. It's probably not a good idea to try to hook your horse for the first time after he has been cooped up in his stall for a couple of days. Do what you can to have him in a relaxed frame of mind for this lesson.

If all goes well, you are ready to hook. Unhook your drag and have your assistant(s) pull the vehicle in front of the horse just like you did when first training your horse with the drag. Drive your horse from the ground behind, beside, and in front of the vehicle that is being pulled at the same time by your assistants. If your horse is unconcerned, proceed with the next step right away or wait until the next lesson and repeat the above.

Attach the leads to the halter on each side with an assistant on the end of each lead. There is some debate about whether to attach the leads directly to the bit or the halter. Attaching them to the bit removes some level of control from the driver. Attaching to the halter may not give the assistants as much control. As a trainer and driver, I prefer to have as much control as possible, so I attach the leads to the halter, perhaps even running a chain lead over the horse's nose. This gives me control through the horse's mouth and the assistants have additional control with the halter. That's usually sufficient.

Stand your horse in front of your vehicle. Keeping the reins in one hand and coiled carefully for instant use, slide the shafts through the tugs with an assistant doing the same on the other side. Some trainers will not tie the horse into the vehicle at first and ask the horse to walk forward while your assistants pull the vehicle. If the horse rushes forward, the vehicle can simply be slid out of the tugs and the horse can just continue on unharmed. Other trainers tie them in the first time as described below.

If your horse has been prepared correctly, you probably can safely tie your horse in and go as follows: With your assistant(s) holding your horse at his head, attach the trace and breeching on one side, then the trace and breeching on the other. This keeps you from crossing back and forth several times to get your horse hooked. Better yet, if you have

enough assistance, hook both traces at the same time, then both breeching straps. Quick hitch style harnesses make this process quick. The greatest risk is having the horse move off while only partially hooked. Hook quickly, quietly, and calmly without any wasted motion. Don't rush or you will make a mistake, but do not waste a lot of time either. This is where snap-on traces and breeching can help a lot. They are much faster than fussing with buckles and straps. You can reduce a lot of fussing with harness adjustments if you have everything pre-adjusted to fit your size horse to your vehicle. If possible, use a good driving harness of the same size to make sure everything will fit with minimum adjustment.

Some trainers feel the safest place to be once your horse is hooked is seated in the cart. Generally speaking, that is true. However, for these first lessons, as long as you have your assistants to help you, you may find it preferable to drive from the ground. From there you usually can make a quicker assessment of your horse's mental state and thereby be able to prevent escalation of his anxieties sooner. The disadvantage is that if he breaks into a trot, you'll have to move quickly to keep up. If the situation begins to unravel, generally it is safer for you to be on the ground.

Once hooked, ask your horse to quietly walk off while you drive from the ground. As with the drag, plan on halting after only a few strides. Be mindful that when your horse halts, the breeching along with the vehicle's weight will push your horse forward. That bothers some horses. Your horse may try to halt only to be shoved forward by the breeching, causing him to take another step or two. Your horse may try to halt again and be shoved once more. Some tactful rein management may be required to keep your horse from becoming confused by these apparently conflicting signals. You can have one of your assistants help to manage the shoving of the breeching by keeping a hand on the shaft and pushing backwards when you ask for the halt. It should not take long for your horse to learn how to manage the breeching for himself.

If all goes well, walk off again. Your assistants should be instructed to leave the horse

completely alone unless he acts upset. They should remain behind the blinders, out of sight, unless your horse needs some extra encouragement to walk forward. At that point, one assistant can actually lead the horse forward with the lead shank. The assistants should be careful that they are not inadvertently poked by the ends of the shafts or even knocked to the ground if things go wrong. They may be instructed to talk to the horse and stroke him carefully on the neck to reassure him and to praise him for being such a well-behaved and brave horse. This first session should be short and sweet. Walk, halt, walk a little more, and halt. Then stand and be unhooked. Take your horse back to the barn and lavish much praise on him. It sometimes helps to end this lesson right about feeding time; nothing compares to the positive reinforcement of food.

The next lesson proceeds much as the previous one. Each time, you should be focused on building your horse's confidence in the process of learning and the routine should become more solidified in your horse's mind with each repetition. If you have no problems after the first few lessons, you can climb into the vehicle and ask your horse to walk off. Once he can walk, halt, and stand with you in the vehicle, you are ready to ask for a brief trot. Most horses will let you know they are ready for this step. They naturally will want to break from the walk into a trot because pulling at the trot is easier than pulling at the walk. Be alert to when that happens. The first time it happens, calmly ask to return to the walk right away. Walk for a short distance and then ask for the trot. Make trotting your idea. Plan on only a few strides at the trot before asking for a return to the walk. If all goes well, ask your horse for another brief trot. Return to the walk. Then halt and stand. End of lesson.

In these early lessons, your horse is assimilating a lot of information. Give him the time and space to do so. Insisting that your horse give you the desired response instantly by being forceful with your aids (voice, reins, whip) will only make him resentful and fearful of the entire experience. Your horse is not physically strong enough nor is he balanced or

coordinated enough to deliver perfect transitions. At this stage of the process, your horse does not even have a clear idea of what the finished result should be. He will make a few mistakes, but with repetition your horse will improve, provided you are consistent. For now, be satisfied with small, simple successes.

In your next lesson, proceed much the same and ask for a trot, increasing the distance a little bit each time. Do not worry too much about making sure you go in both directions. There is plenty of time for that. Right now you just want the experience to be uneventful, unexciting, and untroubling to your horse. Your horse needs to know there is nothing to become excited about and part of the success in these early lessons is to quit before you give him the chance to make a big mistake.

Driving

You are well on your way to having a safe driving horse. Work a few more lessons including a trot with at least one assistant on a lead. Once you are sure your horse is unperturbed at trotting while hooked to a vehicle, you can ask your assistant to unhook the lead while you continue with your lesson, making sure he or she stands by to come to your aid should you need another pair of hands.

Once you can trot both directions of your ring, halt, stand quietly, etc., you are ready to take your horse out into the world. Drive him at the walk on your planned route where you already have taken him on your walks with the drag. The first lesson out there is all at the walk and is short. Try to make this work on more or less level ground. Your horse is not ready to face going up or down steep, long hills. Introduce the hills gradually. Don't be overly concerned if your horse wants to travel crooked or wander a bit on the hills. It is unnatural for horses to travel straight up or straight down a hill. Given a choice at liberty, he will traverse hills. However, to efficiently pull a vehicle, they must be kept straight from the head to the tail while traveling in a straight line. It is your job as a driver to show them how to do that. Again, be mindful of when they tell you they are ready to trot outside of the ring, especially going up hill. Do as you

did in the ring: ask for a return to the walk, and then ask for the trot. Make it your idea. Gradually increase the length of your drives. Gradually expose your horse to more sights and sounds. Keep an eye out for things your horse has never seen or heard before. During these first few lessons outside your ring, try to work when you know the environment will be quiet and predictable.

You'll note I have not focused much on the rein back up to this point. That does not mean you should not work on it as you go through the ground driving and hooking process. However, it is a fairly complicated movement for a horse to perform correctly while hooked to a vehicle. It is quite unnatural for him to push backwards with the breeching without being able to see in that direction. Since the rein back is not used nearly as often as the halt or the forward movements, you can teach the rein back while ground driving and then wait until your horse is driving well while hooked before picking up the rein back lesson again. When asking your horse for a rein back while hooked, it is helpful to halt upward on a slight incline. This will make it easy for him to rein back without becoming overly concerned with pushing a lot of weight with the breeching. As he makes progress, halt on more level ground and eventually on downward slopes.

Finishing

Finally, your horse has become a well-started driving horse. He has undergone intensive work that has been a lot for his mind and his body to accept. It's probably a good time to give him some time off. Your horse will not forget his lessons. Two weeks off or more at this point will work wonders on your horse's mental outlook and he will be ready and more willing than ever to take you wherever you wish to drive him. Once back to work, you can begin to fine-tune his education by working on the quality of your transitions, bending, speed, etc. It can take years of work to fine-tune and finish your driving horse. There seems to be no end to the polish you can apply, but there also is no end to the fun and satisfaction of doing it yourself!

About the Author:

The author, Jeff Morse, learned to ride on Abbington Of Shady Lawn, the 1949 National Champion Morgan Mare. He spent 12 summers as a youth at Green Meads Farm riding Morgans and attending the New England Morgan Shows. He returned to Green Meads Farm as manager in 1974. He has served as vice president of the New England Morgan Horse Association and president and treasurer of the Massachusetts Morgan Horse Association. He has been the chairman of the Massachusetts Morgan Horse Show since 1989. He currently is training Morgan horses with an emphasis on carriage driving at Green Meads Farm in Richmond, Massachusetts.

Author's Note:

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Disclaimer:

The practices and exercises described are not the only way to produce a safe driving horse at home, but are generally accepted as legitimate approaches to training a horse to drive. The process is not without some risk to horses and handlers. The instructions contained in this article are to be used only as a guideline. Neither AMHA nor the author can be held liable for the actions of a horse beyond his control or for the actions or injuries of anyone using these guidelines to start a driving horse. The author does, however encourage readers to contact him should there be any questions about any information in this booklet: Jeff Morse, Green Meads Farm, P.O. Box 158, Richmond, MA 01254, e-mail green@meads.com, phone (413) 698-3804.

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