



Frank Bell Horse Whisperer

Jiggy Horse

Hi Frank,

Just found your website.....can you help?

Two months ago I purchased my first horse for myself and my 12 yr old daughter. He is an 11 yr old quarter horse palomino gelding. We ride him western in the arena. I am unsure of his training and the previous owner did not know much either. He is very calm.

Our problems are under saddle - he will not walk - he trots. Walking is not part of his vocabulary. He also, at times, gets jiggy and swings his hindquarters around with his head up. Very sensitive to any leg pressure. Instead of moving away from it sideways he moves forward - faster - which makes us ride his mouth. Also ...loping...not collected...very fast...head up and chargey. It is almost like he has done some kind of cow work? Not arena polished at all. He is a bit more calm for me, I talk to him a lot. He is a bit more of a handful for my daughter, pivoting his hindquarters around. He will also approach the arena railing and place his head over it while he is swinging about. Also when trotting he travels on a diagonal line, very pretty, neck bent. I am not aware that I am making him do this but when doing a figure eight or if I do not make him go straight he just falls in it. He also likes to back up when we are trying to mount up. I just pull the check strap of the bridle around and am patient and he will then stand still. Any ideas on his previous training or ways that we can work with him? They used to use a snaffle bit on him and I felt that I had no control so I put him in a curb, his head was up with both bits and he likes to chomp and chew on them although he is not mouthy without the bit.

Wow I guess that was a lot. He is sweet...we just need to understand him better. My parents have bred and shown horses for 50 years so I am not a total greenhorn, however, this is my first individual horse venture and welcome your opinion.

Karen Hays



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Dear Karen:

The very first concern should be pain. It sure sounds to me like he's unhappy and perhaps in pain. It's very common for a saddle to fit poorly and create an unhappy horse. Try riding him bareback and see if he's the same horse. He may need a chiropractic adjustment. As far as being too high and always wanting to run, prance, charge, etc., he needs an alternate job to keep him busy. That is why my program includes an exercise called "ballet in the saddle" that uses excess energy constructively while promoting you and your horse's safety.

Another consideration should be his feeding program. By the sounds of it, this horse does not need hot, high protein food. Beet pulp is a great answer that keeps the weight on, but doesn't add to energy. He should not hear the word alfalfa. He sounds oversensitive as he half passes almost at will. You'd need to desensitize his sides by rubbing your legs, stirrups, etc. on his sides while on the ground, then in the saddle. I suspect that spurs were used at some point, so he's moving away to avoid that potential pain. His sides need to be dulled out.

As far as mounting. When he's moving, make it uncomfortable by bumping the inside rein and making a shhhhhhhh noise. Quit the moment he's still. Before long he'll want to stand perfectly still when mounting. It's all about making the right thing obvious and comfortable: the wrong is uncomfortable. But make it obvious. Too many riders are in the gray zone which the horse just does not understand. It has to be black and white for the horse to "get it." I've developed a very specific set of exercises to prepare the horse for the ride and a very direct place to go when it falls apart.

This set of exercises is my 7-Step Safety System which is well-described in the [Western Horseman articles](#). From there it's a matter of getting the information and tools to be successful which we make very easy and affordable with our variety of packages. I'd suggest the "[Getting Started Package](#)" along with "[Mounting the Difficult Horse](#)". You've entered into a wonderful and sometimes challenging journey that is going to make you think and compare and tune into the horse and understand the word "feel." Be patient and feel what the horse is telling you.

Happy Trails and Safe Riding,