

## Train Your Horse For Beach Riding

### **Fantasy**

What equestrian hasn't dreamed of galloping along the shoreline astride their majestic steed? Silhouetted against a glorious sunset. Cares of the world that once held you hostage retreat as swiftly as the outgoing tide. Tiny grains of sand give way, powerless against mighty hoofs that sweep them behind. Pure joy and unbridled freedom lie ahead settling deep within your soul with every breathtaking stride. Locks, mane, and tail, blow as recklessly as the ocean waves crashing where they will, seeking permission from no one.

### **Reality check**

You've approached the shoreline and Mr. majestic instantly morphs into a prancing snorting smoke bellowing runaway express locomotive! It's full steam ahead or is it behind, exit stage right, or was it left? All those spins left you a little dizzy. The funny thing is (Come on, you can laugh about it now). you never saw the switchmen throw the switch on Black Beauty as he morphed into Ole Crazy Horse! He's has really made of mess of a horseman's ultimate fantasy but we can trust him for one final act of desperation! He is headed back to the station faster than the Orient express. You are hanging on for dear life because you knew the warranty on his brakes were about to expire before you left the barn. You knew full well he needed a tune up before setting out on this great adventure. Let's be honest, did you really expect him to offer himself up as an equine sacrifice to the water God's just so you could fulfill your little fantasy?

### **The Real World**

Set yourself up for success. Do not be an idle passenger at an elevated risk for derailment. Why not take an active role to help ensure the outcome of your first beach riding adventure more closely resembles the dream ride you have envisioned? Prepare your horse at home and create a formidable water hazard that rivals your horses worst nightmare. Be creative, it is your baby. Find a large tarp or dig a pit and add water. You could always wait for rain and allow nature to design it. Finally add a few more scary things around it. How about a few cones or jump standards with plastic bags duct taped to the top? The options are endless? Seriously you know your horse so start small. Do not overwhelm him, the goal is to build trust in your leadership not to scare the heck out of your horse.

I would put a rope halter on Ole Crazy Horse to help prevent him from bolting. It will offer you a little more control than a chain over the nose. If a horse is already afraid, the chain grabbing his nose and not releasing is just going to confirm his fears that crossing water is not only scary but extremely painful. The leather leads are usually too short anyway.

Using a driving whip, stockman's whip, or the tail end of a 12-to-14-foot rope start sending your horse toward the water. The moment he hits the brakes let your energy down and leave him alone if he is looking at the water. If he changes directions on his own just send him rapidly toward the water the opposite direction. You add pressure from the whip or end of lead rope when he is going away from the water and take it off when he is close. Soon who he will want to investigate the water. He may snort. reach his head down to paw and splash. Leave him alone while he investigates. This is called "try" he is making an honest effort. When he stops thinking about going into the water back him up and change directions again. Make him trot toward the water. Ten feet before you get to the water take the

pressure off with your whip and take your energy down. He will quickly figure out being near water is easier than being away from it. You are teaching him that he can trust you not to pressure him at the water so he can use his head and think about going in. Do not allow him to come into your space at any time if he only puts his front foot in that's great! Take him away and praise him. Continue until he goes all the way through the water or until you are satisfied, he has made progress. There are other ways to approach water crossings this is just one.

Once you have been successful add additional scary objects around your water hazard put your horse to work away from the obstacles allowed him to rest near them, he will soon realize that anything unusual to him will provide a resting spot. A place where he can relax and get a good scratch from you.

### **Time to hit the beach**

It is certainly best to go with a friend that has a seasoned horse with no fear the ocean. If that's not approach the beach and ride as close as you can. if your horse refuses to go any closer ride parallel to it. Ask a lot of your horse so he pays attention to you. Leg yields, backing up, yielding his hind quarters, trotting in a circle. Approached the beach again, let him face it, then turn him away again before he wants to leave on his own. If you force forward, you will just cause anxiety, bolting or rearing. The more you retreat and go toward surf your horse will start to become accustomed to the surf. if you are not able to go into the water do not be discouraged just riding along the beach should make you smile. End on a good note and your horse will want to try for you next beach ride. Happy Surfing!

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