

## RnRTrainer USING THE FLAG

Use the RnRTrainer as a training aid for you and your horse.

Getting your horse working on a flag is a good break for them from other work.

And, for cutting and reined-cow horse, you can use a flag, it's an invaluable training aid.

The main things to do are:

1. Rate a cow – that is, follow the cow at the same speed, not getting ahead of the hip, and not falling too far behind.
2. Deep stops – when the cow stops, the horse should stop, without getting ahead of the hip, and with a soft, deep stop that can then be the base for a quick turnaround (rollback), or another move forward.
3. Perform Rollbacks – in cattle work, this is done by turning on the haunches, with shift of weight to the rear, and then a turn around to follow the cow. The turn is always towards the cow.

## Rating the Flag

Do this exercise at the walk. Get the flag speed set to run at a walk before starting.

**WARNING** – most horses will be startled by the first flag movement. Start with your horse at least 30 feet away from the flag, and be prepared for a spook. As your horse gets used to the flag, you can get closer – eventually staying 10 or 15 feet away off the wall, or whatever keeps you and your horse comfortable. Don't let your horse work up any closer.

For horses that lose interest in the flag when it stops moving, you can use the quiver function – a quick click of one of the buttons, to shake the flag and move it momentarily.

Use the remote to bring the flag into the left end of the arena wall, with room behind it for your horse. Position your horse parallel to the wall, so it is facing the right end of the wall, and with the flag in front of the horse.

Start the flag at low speed and push your horse to follow the flag. After a few lengths, stop the flag and ask the horse to stop. Wait 10 seconds, then restart the flag and push your horse to follow the flag again.

Do not let the flag get too far ahead of your horse - you want the horse to be with the flag. If the flag is too fast, slow it down.

When you are ready to change direction, do it with the flag stopped and the horse quiet. If you have to stop and ride up to face the other way, that's fine, too. Remember to position your horse so it is following the flag.

Practice the "Rate" until your horse is comfortable following the flag at a walk.

## Getting the Stop

It helps at first to think of a stop as three steps:

1. Stop (whoa) – sit deep, lift your hand;
2. Step back – ask for one step backwards: keep your hand up, and use your legs to get the step back;
3. Release – stop leg pressure and lower your hand. Let your horse rest.

The release is the reward to the horse. At first, count to 5, to establish the reward. This can be shorter as you and your horse get better at the stop.

Doing stops like this, consistently, is key. If your horse throws its head up at the stop, or gets excited about backing up after a stop, tracking sideways or tossing its head, then you need to fix these issues first. Always providing a soft release will help reduce anxiety, and getting the shift backwards will provide a deep stable stop for cow work.

When your horse can do these things, the step back can be compressed into a shift backwards in weight. Your horse will be ready to stop deep, and then move lightly off his front end and turn around (rollback). At speed, this will set the horse up for a sliding stop.

## Stopping with the Flag

Once you have established a good solid stop, use the flag to reinforce it.

Following the flag, when the flag stops, your horse should stop.

At first, you will have to ask for the stops. To reinforce the backwards shift, stop the flag, get the stop on the horse, and then back the flag up until it is positioned at the horse's hip. Wait there, then turn your horse so that its nose is even with the flag. This will help lead to working on the rollback.

Don't hurry these maneuvers – work the flag slowly up the arena, with your horse's nose behind it. Stop the flag, stop the horse, then back up the flag to your horse's hip, and then turn around again to go back the other way. Keep everything slow and easy for your horse.

The turn must be done with a light front end. Leg pressure on the side away from the wall will push the horse around to finish the turn. Keep your hands light.

## Practicing Rollbacks

Once you have rating and stopping, you can work on the rollback. The flag is useful for concentrating your horse on consistently getting set up for a deep soft stop, and immediate rollback, to follow the flag.

Work at slow speeds first, until you have this working.

In the rollback, you will follow the flag with your horse, stop the flag and the horse. Once stopped, run the flag in the opposite direction.

Wait until the flag is moving and reaches your horse's hip, and then ask for the turn. Guide your horse to follow the flag and come around, using weight on the haunches and with a light front end. Practice at slow speeds until these are solid. Then mix it up, with a slow run down, then a fast turn around back, then perhaps a slow run the other way.

## **Boost**

Newer RnRTrainer systems have a speed boost function in the remote. If you have an earlier model, contact Starview Farm to get a free update with the boost.

Speed boosting is a temporary increase in speed, while the flag is running. To accomplish this:

1. hold down the button for the desired direction;
2. Release and IMMEDIATELY repress that button.
3. The flag should move at a higher speed for that run.
4. Releasing the button reverts to the original speed.

The re-press is a bit of a knack – you have 1/4 of a second to re-press the button. Practice without a horse to get this right.

Boosting is useful as part of rating – the horse should have 'hooked on' to the flag, and automatically accelerate to keep up. This is a trait most cutting horses are born with. But you can still play with it on any horse – you may need to cue your horse to move forwards and stay with the flag, and to stop when the flag is stopped.

