

Trainer Tips

Welcome to Frontier Western Shop's resource of training advice from professional horse trainers! Each month we will post a new article from one of our accredited trainers in different disciplines of competition and horsemanship.

April 2010

"Preparing yourself and the heading horse for fresh cattle at spring ropings." with Steele Depaoli

Spring is coming, and the most exciting time of the year is in the near future. This is one of my favorite times of the year. In the past, the spring and the fall is when the most money is up for grabs. The spring season is the season where we get to move from the old trashy steers to the fresh energized and exciting steers. The first couple of runs on these steers can be very difficult because they have never been roped and they don't know how to leave the shoot. After a couple runs they usually have it figured out. These steers are so much fun because they always try and get away, and they have no tricks to them. This time of year is when my confidence goes through the roof and I feel I can achieve the most growth of my skills. There is a lot a person can do to get your horses working just right to set these steers up for your heelers and win the big bucks.

Preparing your horse is one of the most important aspects to the roping arena. At this point in the season we are making the transition from the old steers to the new steers. Our horses are usually strong, and with good reason, as the old steers are big and usually heavy. Also, all the (winter) events are indoors and the scores are short. This combination combines for a situation where our horses get very short and anticipating when to go left. When roping fresh cattle, this makes it very difficult to control the steers for your heeler. The goal for handling a fresh steer is to get control of his head and allow him to have control of his feet and to keep his balance. The best way to accomplish this goal with your horse is to free them up. A good way to practice this is to rope the steer and keep your horse moving down the pen with the steer. Another thing you can do is the first time you

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Above: Steele turns a steer at the ITRC Finals.

Roping Accomplishments

2-Time CFR Qualifier

Canadian Tour Finals qualifier

**2-Time Instant Rancher Roping Champion
(Heading & Heeling)**

#13 Rope Canada Champion

#15 ITRC Champion

decide to rope fresh steers, when breaking a pen in, put the rope on in the chute. When you go to dally, get control of the steers head and use your feet to push your horse down the arena. This will help your steers by allowing them to keep their feet and also helps your horse by keeping their shoulders elevated and on their hips instead of dropping out of the hole. The goal with your horse is for him to stay in the hole until you rope, dally and ask him to sit on his hips and sidestep left.

When roping fresh cattle you never know what exactly they are going to do. From the start a steer has no clue on when to leave the chute. Then they usually lope out and shoot away when you surprise them by blowing up on them. There is no telling which way they are going to go. A very important aspect to roping is to read your cattle from the time he leaves the chute until right before you rope him. Scoring is the first step to this. I cannot stress enough how important scoring is and how it sets up the entire run. This single technique has cost people a lot of money; including me. A header should also be able to know what the steer is going to handle like before they have ever roped the steer. Some steers can take the handle and some need to be helped out a lot. Most of the time, a header can see this while they are gaining on the steer before and as they rope him. Knowing this will allow your heeler the fastest, most consistent shot possible. With a steer that appears he will handle really well, the goal is to get control of the steer's head in the corner and ask them to leave the corner by pulling him. This allows for a much faster throw for your heeler. With a steer that is wild and really fresh, the best thing to do is to take control of their head and almost let them come around the corner themselves. The team aspect is very crucial in these situations; your partner should be able to understand what you are going to do in each situation. They should be reading the steers along with you and setting things up for the best chance to win.

This event we call Team Roping has more "team" in it than just the header and the heeler. It has the header and their horse, the heeler and their horse and even the steer they draw. Every run brings a new scenario and a different situation. If a person takes the time to work on these aspects of the game, it is inevitable that they will win. Practice is the key to winning at the spring ropings. The more consistent all of these techniques become, the more money a person will bring into their roping business.

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