

## Gunfire of Mounted Shooting from the Ground

Whether your goal is mounted shooting or hunting, your horse needs to be introduced to gunfire. This article shows how to begin working from the ground.

on Oct 1, 2010

One of the fastest growing equine sports is mounted shooting. Running full speed around a course of pylons and balloons shooting single-action .45 caliber revolvers is just fun. To learn more about this exciting sport visit the Cowboy Mounted Shooting Association online. But, there is the small issue of introducing your horse to the sound of gunfire. This article covers the beginning steps on the ground. Another article will continue the process from the ground to the saddle.

### **Equine Earplugs**

Before you begin firing a gun close to your horse get him used to earplugs. It will save his hearing and keep him happy about working around gunfire by keeping him comfortable. Teach the steps in this article without earplugs, then repeat with earplugs. They will be even more important when you move up in firepower for competition

### Introducing Your Horse to Gunfire From the Ground

Whether your goal is mounted shooting or hunting, your horse needs to be introduced to gunfire. This article shows how to begin working from the ground.

One of the fastest growing equine sports is mounted shooting. Running full speed around a course of pylons and balloons shooting single-action .45 caliber revolvers is just fun. To learn more about this exciting sport visit the Cowboy Mounted Shooting Association online. But, there is the small issue of introducing your horse to the sound of gunfire. This article covers the beginning steps on the ground. Another article will continue the process from the ground to the saddle.

### **Desensitizing Your Horse**

Desensitizing your horse to gunfire follows the same concept used to acclimate a horse to fly spray or clippers. Before you begin your horse must already know how to longe and yield his hindquarters easily and with confidence. All good horse trainers build a solid foundation and then just add more a little at a time. Introducing your horse to gunfire requires that you have a good foundation already in place.

### Eleven Steps to Introducing Your Horse to Gunfire

At one end of an arena begin a familiar longing exercise with your horse. Have him trot, yield hindquarters, change directions, and repeat. Once your horse is confident in the exercise have an experienced gun handler at the other end of the arena or standing well outside of the arena with a double-action .22 revolver filled with blanks. (A double-action revolver does not require cocking the hammer between shots.)

While you continue your routine of trot, yield, reverse and trot... have the gun handler shoot the .22 in the air with a rhythmic count of 1...2...3, pause for a second, then 1...2...3. If your horse reacts to the gunfire pretend you didn't even hear it and simply correct any errors in your horse's performance. Continue the

longing exercise until the horse is calm and secure. Repeat as many times as needed until your horse has no reaction to the sound of the .22 being fired.

When your horse is good with the gunfire have the gun handler move within 50 or 60 feet of you. Begin the longing exercise again. When the horse is calm have the gun handler repeat the rhythmic firing; 1...2...3, wait a second, and 1...2...3.

As in the second step, continue the longing exercise as if there were no gunfire. When your horse ignores the noise you will move to the next step.

Bring the gun handler closer, to twenty feet away, and repeat the exercise. Each time, your horse should get used to the gunfire more quickly. The secret is in the rhythm of the noise and the fact that you don't seem to hear it at all.

The next step requires you to handle the .22 revolver. Have a long lead rope in one hand and carry the revolver loaded with blanks in the other. Walk around the arena purposefully with your horse following behind. Allow him to get six to eight feet behind you if he wants to.

As you walk along lock your elbow and bring your gun arm up so it is parallel to the ground, even with your shoulder. Point the gun first to the right side then to the left side so your horse can get used to the action your arm makes and the sight of a gun in your hand. Use a calm, steady rhythm as you move your arm up on the right side, then over and up on the left.

When your horse is calm you will repeat the same arm movements. This time you will fire the gun in the same rhythm the gun handler did, 1...2...3. - change sides, 1...2...3. Be sure to never point the gun behind you.

Continue walking at the same steady pace and pretend to ignore the horse behind you. You will be able to tell if he reacts by the feel on the lead rope. Just keep walking until he is calm again, moving the empty gun first to the right, then to the left.

When your horse is used to gunfire in front of him you will begin to work closer to your horse. Next you will have your horse stand still and move to his near side. Lay your arm across his back perpendicular to his spine as if you are reaching across his back. Hold the gun over his back and get him used to the sight of it. Change sides and repeat. If your horse moves away just move with him until his feet stop and try again.

This final step adds gunfire over your horse's back. In the same position, fire the .22 blanks in the same rhythm; 1...2...3, wait a second, and 1...2...3. Repeat until your horse remains calm on both sides.

### **Practice, Practice, Practice**

These steps can usually be done in one session if you already have a great relationship with your horse. Regardless of how quickly your horse accepts gunfire you must practice regularly or you will have to begin all over again. All training requires maintenance and gunfire is no exception. The steps for advancing from firing on the ground to shooting from the saddle will be covered in the next article.