

Back To Basics

something does happen and he pulls back, you can get him loose without injury," London advises.

Many headshyness problems are caused by careless, quick unbridling in which the bit hits the horse's teeth. Always take care when removing the bridle. Slip the crownpiece over the ears slowly and hold the bridle until the horse drops or "spits out" the bit. Then remove the bridle completely.

Ideal bridling and unbridling is when the horse holds his muzzle at the level of your waist and calmly allows you to slip the headstall over his ears. If at any time he doesn't willingly accept this, you should back up and repeat the above head-handling exercises until he does.

"The incredible thing about the horse is that he learns to forgive all past transgressions, as soon as we show him the situation is no longer dangerous," Ken McNabb says.

Even extremely headshy horses can overcome this problem with time, patience and proper handling. ☐

Ornella McFarland is an Ocala, Florida-based freelance writer and horse owner whose latest book is The Fading Primes.

What Doesn't Work

Both Olympic dressage rider London Gray and clinician Ken McNabb agree there are a variety of things that don't help a horse overcome headshyness, even though many owners resort to such methods. Here's what doesn't work:

- Jerking or pulling down on the lead rope or reins.
- Yelling at the horse.
- Any form of punishment.
- Losing your temper or becoming frustrated.
- Being in a hurry.
- Tying the horse close to a post to bridle him. This will only teach the horse to become more frightened and pull back.
- Closely restricting the horse's movement when he is frightened so that he can't

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