

Break the Monotony



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For Albertans About Albertans

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Cold winters in Edmonton - not ideal conditions for show jumping! Thank goodness for our indoor arenas and many entertaining exercises to keep us going until we can get back outside.

For those of us lucky enough to travel to a warm winter destination for competition, we need to continue training through the coldest months of the year. Here are some exercises that help keep us going and hopefully give us the competitive edge when we finally arrive at our sunny destination!

One of our favorite go-to exercises starts with placing three rails in a straight line, evenly spaced apart by 60 feet. First have the horse and rider head through the poles at the trot, making sure they can maintain an even rhythm over the rails. Next, moving up to the canter, have the horse and rider do 4, 5, or 6 strides between the poles or any variation of those numbers. It will teach balance, rhythm and stride control while the rider has to maintain impulsion to not break from the canter. Five strides should be fairly normal, while four strides requires slight lengthening of stride, and six strides requires slight collection of stride.

Another variation is to trot the first rail, transition up to canter for the second, and transition back down to trot the third rail. Next, reverse the order of the transitions to start at the canter for the first rail, trot the second, and canter the third.

We use this exercise and the many variations of it during the cold winter months and find it helps keep the horses and riders sharp to cues and demands without having to over-jump and over-use the horses during the "off season". I hope you enjoy this exercise and it helps stop some of the winter blahs! See you all in the 2014 show season!