

Training tips with EC hand®

EC Hand helps the rider achieve an increased level of awareness and feeling related to the rider's hands. It helps the rider understand how it feels having an equal amount of rein weight in both hands. It helps the rider support the horse with adequate and quick "gives" in the rein. It helps the rider hold the reins with just enough contact and to enable better timing between both hands.

With EC Hand's user friendly design, the rider can double check the feeling by looking at the device while riding.

By following the training tips step-by-step, the rider will soon achieve a new level of awareness and feeling in the hands and understand how it feels when it is "right".

1. Recognize the feeling
2. Control by looking at the EC Hand device
3. Correct the hand.
4. Look forward and soak in the feeling when it is "right".

Conclusion: **Feel-control-correct-feel.**

In order to work on straightening the horse the rider must be able to work with both hands in same consistent way. Many riders are not aware that one hand is stronger than the other or that one hand has better timing than the other. The bigger the difference between the right and the left hand, the harder it is for the rider to straighten the horse. In many cases, it is the rider that has created the un-even or crooked horse without knowing it.

Some common types of riding problems and how you can correct them through EC hand®.

- The horse is stiffer in one rein, is un-even and loses the contact in the other rein.

How do I notice?

To make it easier we assume that the horse is stiffer on the left rein. When you are riding straight forward you feel more weight in the left rein and very little to no weight in the right rein. Also, in this situation, the horse may not want to travel straight and instead moves the haunches a little to the right and/or pushes the shoulder to the left. When this happens, EC Hand is extended on the left rein and therefore shows a larger field of color, and none to little color on the right rein.

At the same time it is hard to get the horse to take support on the outside rein (right rein) going on a circle to the left. The horse doesn't want to respond to the inside aids and bend through the neck and body and as soon as you try to soften the inside rein (left rein) the horse straightens the neck instead of keeping the bend. The horse only slows down for the left rein and if you take with the right rein the horse simply bends his neck to the right and you get an empty feeling in your right hand. When you want to turn to the left the horse often turns too quickly and falls inward. And when you want to turn to the right the horse is late to turn and falls a little to the outside.

All these symptoms can vary and are different from horse to horse. There are few horses that are completely even sided and straight and the same goes for the riders.

How are you going to work with EC Hand to correct this?

Start by riding the horse on a straight line. Be sure to have equal amount of weight in both reins, equal color markings showing on EC Hand, even if that means that the horse bends like a "macaroon" in the neck to the right.

Ride the horse like that for a little time, and then try with an open rein aid (using left rein) to place the horse's neck straight between his shoulders.

Be careful to not let go of the contact on the right rein and that you do not pull back on the left rein.

Check EC Hand that it shows green on the right side. As soon as the neck is straight, continue with the left hand parallel with the right and check that EC Hand is showing equal amount on both reins.

This means that you shall not hold the horse's neck straight forward but guide it there and repeat otherwise the open rein aid if the horse flexes the neck to right again.

Don't forget to drive the horse enough forward with the leg, so it feels energetic without being tense. If the horse wants to travel with the haunches to the right you can use the right leg to support him.

When EC Hand shows that the horse has equal support on both reins you can start to train on circle and ride with more support on the outside rein and less support on the inside rein. Start with loops or ride a figure-eight. By changing reins and turns often you don't get stuck on just one rein which can easily happen.

Control often that you have same amount of support in each outside rein as you change directions (right and left). Pay attention that the horse tracks up and bends through the body and the neck corresponding to the same curved line that you are riding on. After a few training sessions/weeks, your horse should be straighter depending on how un-even he was when you started working with EC Hand.

As with all training, you will achieve success faster the more accurate and consistent you are. If you don't see an improvement or if the horse is protesting a lot, check with a veterinarian to make sure that the horse is not in pain.

The horse goes behind the bit, avoids contact and doesn't want to step forward into the bit.

How are you noticing this?

You will have no weight in your hands and EC Hand doesn't show any color at all, it is totally closed. If you try to take contact, the horse pulls the nose into the chest, behind the vertical plane. Often the horse doesn't want to go forward when you take contact with the horse's mouth and can slow down or become short in his stride and moves the haunches to left and right.

How can EC Hand help you with this?

Shorten the rein so that the green area shows all the time, even if the horse tries to avoid the bit or do anything else to avoid contact. Make sure your hands follow the motion so that the green field shows all the time. Drive the horse energetically to the bit and keep the contact with the horse's mouth. The horse will be relatively quick to accept a soft contact when noticing that there is no way to escape it.

When the horse calmly accepts a soft contact with your hand and actively moves forward at the same time EC Hand shows green on both reins, try to give the horse little more rein. The objective is to get the horse to move his head forward toward the vertical line and take the contact with longer neck. When the horse has accepted the contact, he will follow the rider's hands forward and keep a green contact.

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The horse wants too heavy contact in the rein, drops on the forehead and doesn't want to carry his neck and head by himself.

How do I notice?

The rein gets longer and longer requiring you to shorten it often, your arms and hands get tired and the horse pulls you forward into a forward leaning position, EC Hand shows red all the time. The horse can be hard to slow down and is not listening to your aids. If you give with the reins, the horse will straighten the neck immediately.

How are you going to work with EC Hand to correct this?

Start in “halt” and play with the reins until the horse stands in collected frame and bent at the poll. Don’t be worried if EC Hand shows red. As soon as the horse stands in good frame, give some slack with the reins so that EC Hand shows green. Praise with your voice. If the horse seeks heavy contact again and straightens his neck, do the same exercise again. Repeat until the horse can stand in “halt” with easy contact on the reins with his poll bent and EC Hand on green.

Be patient and don’t give up even if it takes many trials until the horse accepts to “stand by himself”. When the horse stands with a light green contact, wait 3-4 seconds, praise the horse and give the horse totally long reins so it can stretch the neck all the way as a reward.

When the horse consistently stands with light contact in “halt”, you can start to work in walking pace. Do the same as you did in “halt”. Remember to give the horse long reins when he maintains walking posture 3-4 seconds. Let him stretch the neck 5-6 seconds before you pick up the reins again. Eventually, you can work longer and increase the time in self carriage before you give long reins. The horse has to get the opportunity to build muscles in order to be strong enough to walk with self carriage. So don’t ask too much to start off.

When the horse works consistently with self carriage in the walk, you can start working in trot and later canter. Only use enough forward driving aid to get the horse to think forward. Pay attention to not ride on red once the horse gives you self carriage and have correct bent at the poll. The green reward must come immediately when the horse feels that it is comfortable and soft to work in the right position. This is the key to success.

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How can I get a softer, more elastic and sensitive hand?

Practice with EC Hand; recognize the feeling in your hand when EC Hand’s elasticity moves with the horse’s movements, when he moves his head and neck. When you later ride without EC Hand, try to remember that springy feeling and recreate it with only your hand. It is only small, small movements you have to do with your wrists and fingers, so small you barely can see them, but they are very important to achieve a soft and elastic connection with your horse’s mouth.

If you want more information about EC Hand go to www.proec.se

Good luck!