

# BORRQW A TRAINER

*A good turn on the forehand is a horse's  
balanced response to the rider's aids.*

**By AQHA Professional  
Horsewoman Carla Wennberg**

**with Sara Gugelmeyer**

**Illustrations by Jean Abernethy**

**W**HEN I ASK FOR A TURN ON THE FOREHAND IN HUNT SEAT equitation, as a judge, I am looking to see whether that rider understands the concept of it. A lot of exhibitors do it very well. But some people, especially at the beginner level, get very confused. For the hunt-seat horse, the concept of the turn on the forehand is a basic bending exercise. It's also a turn and change of direction. It can be either a full or a half turn.

## **Understanding Which Way to Turn**

TO KEEP IT SIMPLE, WHEN I COACH THE TURN ON THE FOREHAND, I tell the rider to think of it this way: With a turn on the forehand to the right, the horse is pivoting on the right foreleg. If you're doing a turn to the left, the horse is pivoting on the left foreleg. So that, mentally, should tell you to use that same leg aid, behind the girth, to move the ribcage and therefore the haunches away.

The first key step is the positioning of the horse's bend. So if it's a turn on the forehand right, the bend is to the right. The right leg aid is the strongest aid, turning the horse and the right, or inside, leg asks the horse's haunches to move left. It's about what leg the horse is turning on and that, to me, is

the simplest way for the rider to think about it. If it's a forehand turn to the right, the horse turns around the right foreleg and moves the haunches to the left. The haunches are what is moving; the right foreleg stays put as a pivot.

## **Sequence of Aids**

A GOOD TURN ON THE FOREHAND IS WHERE THE HORSE IS FIRST positioned in the direction of the turn. The rider's rein aids ask for the bend, and simultaneously stabilize the front end. For example, in a forehand turn left, the rider asks for a slight bend left and stabilizes the right rein to contain the shoulder.

The rider's leg aids ask the horse to step around however many steps it takes to move the haunches. In the example of the forehand turn left, the rider's left leg should slide back a few inches and move the ribcage around. The rider's right leg rests softly on the horse's side so as not to cue to move forward or backward. That's a quality turn.

A poorly executed turn is when a rider pulls her leg back, kicks the horse or squeezes it hard with the spur and the horse just evades and often pins its ears or gets ugly. In the poor example, the horse just whips its body around and doesn't really stabilize the front end. The horse is still moving the