

Your Horse's Body Language

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A horse communicates from both ends, its head and hind quarters. Although it is true that if your horse puts its ears back it is a sign of danger. On other occasions your horse may be listening to you or what is happening behind him.

However if the ears go flat back to the neck with the whites of the eyes showing, beware, this is definitely a danger symbol of a horse that thinks it is under threat.

You should also pay attention to the swishing tail, another potential sign that your horse is annoyed.

Now, you are alert to potential dangers, how should you deal with a bucking horse? If you are a novice rider this can be a very scary experience, so let's look at possible causes.

The first step is to look for physical problems, particularly for back pain. Any horse can lose it at a trot or canter if they have pain in their back. To test for this, take your finger and press firmly running it down his back first on one side of his spine, then the other. Run your finger all the way down both sides of the spine

taking note of his reactions. What you are looking for is to see if there's a place where he lurches, jerks or reacts to your finger pressure. If his back is tender,

it can easily indicate a poor fitting saddle. If this is not the cause and you can tell by your horse's reaction as you approach him with your saddle it is probably time to call in your vet

Apart from having a very good fitting saddle, it is equally as important to have a very good, strongly supportive saddle pad. One of the best you can buy is an orthopedic pad called [EquiPedic](#)

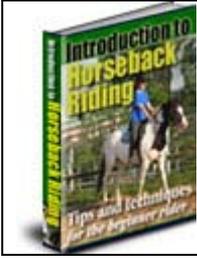
Assuming back pain is not the cause, what else might cause your horse to buck? The root cause is generally tension or frustration of some sort. An inexperienced rider, in particular, can give horse contradictory signals. By booting the horse forward, but being tense in the saddle the inexperienced rider can be found to pull or jerk on the reins, the signal a horse recognises as one to slow down. So what does your horse think he should do speed up or slow down? Well, he doesn't know and ultimately he will tell you what he thinks, possibly by bucking!

If you start a horse too quickly, you might find he bucks a little, so as you can see tension is one of the root causes of this problem. Have you heard of the Ttouch methods? Ttouch - the Tellington Ttouch - is a method based on circular movements of the fingers and hands all over the body.

The intent of the Ttouch is to activate the function of the cells and awaken cellular intelligence. This method can really help your horse relax (it works on partners too!!) and you can find out more [here](#)

One final point about bucking horses, is that whatever you do, if your horse starts bucking don't stop, even if this seems the most natural step to take. You will find your horse then develops a pattern of thinking that says, if I don't want to do something, all I have to do is to buck and I'll be stopped – big mistake!

Make your horse work harder and let him stop when he is relaxed and obeying your commands. As soon as he realises that working hard is a result of bucking, it should bring a halt to this style of behaviour.



Roger Bourdon is the author of "Introduction to Horseback Riding" and owner of the site www.anyhorsebackriding.com. If you are interested in horse riding, then sign up for Roger's free mini course and news letters at www.anyhorsebackriding.com