



# **Long-Reining**

## **Guidelines from North American Western Dressage**

Long-Reining is recently something being used more and more around the Nation, thanks in part to our friend Dan James and his partner Dan Steers of Double Dan Horsemanship. NAWD is excited to begin a new partnership with these great horsemen as we come together to bring Long-Reining and Dressage as one. If you are looking to start or further your Long-Reining skills, look no further than Double Dan Horsemanship's terrific DVDs that provide great instruction in a safe and step by step system. Also available for purchase is their great book *Long-Reining with Double Dan Horsemanship*. Both are available on their website. Click [HERE](#).

### **Why Long-Reining?**

Long-Reining is something you will find that will benefit both you and your horse in so many rewarding ways! What began, and is more traditionally associated with long-reining, is the technique used to teach young horses to transition from ground work into going under saddle with their rider. But long-reining can do so much more! Yes, Long-Reining is a great next step for your young horse to reduce the level of confusion and anxiety when the rider climbs on for that first ride, nevertheless it can also improve balance, rhythm, impulsion, and relaxation.

Anything you can do under saddle you can do in long-reins! By being able to see how your horse is moving, brings a new understanding to the handler. You are able to attempt new maneuvers, build stronger foundations, or fix problems your having under saddle without the added weight of the rider.

Therefore, Long-Reining is beneficial to all horses, of all ages, of all levels and all disciplines. It is used by many classically trained Dressage horses at Olympic levels as well as the famous Lipizzaner stallions of the Spanish Riding School in Austria, who bring a whole new level to Long-Reining.

### **Tests**

North American Western Dressage has created two different sets of Long-Reining Tests brand NEW for 2017! The first set of tests are Long-Reining Exercise Tests which consist of 5 tests that take you through the basics and handling skills to help you start out your Long-Reining fundamentals. Tests 1-5 start simple and are based off of Double Dan Horsemanship's Long-Reining Program offering simple exercises that are a great place to start then progress step by step.

The Long-Reining Exercise Tests do NOT require use of a Dressage court, however tests 3 and 4 involve cones and ground poles. Which brings us to our other new group of tests, Long-Reining Dressage Tests that do take place inside the small traditional Dressage court (20m x 40m). These Tests start and run through the familiar levels of Introductory, Basic and Level 1 with 2 tests per level.

### **Test Rules:**

- 1) The Horse may be shown in any type of long lining set up as long as it consists of 2 unconnected lines running directly from the hands of the handler, through some type of ring or surcingle, to the bit of the horse.
- 2) The bit used and shown MUST be a broken, smooth mouthed snaffle or bitless bridle.
- 3) Absolutely NO SPURRS.
- 4) The handler may use an artificial aid such as a whip(s).
- 5) The handler may touch the horse with artificial aid to give the appropriate cues.
- 6) Leg protection for the horse is allowed.
- 7) The handler's clothing should be neat and clean and shall include a shirt with a collar, jeans or chaps, boots with a heel, and gloves. Helmet or hat is allowed, but not required.
- 8) All age horses and handlers are allowed.

**Safety is important whenever we work with our horses, but having two long ropes dragging from a 1,000-pound animal can be quite dangerous if you do not take the time to properly desensitize your horse. To learn these skills, it is best to learn under the instruction of an experienced handler or to first start with an older, quieter horse.**

### **Terminology and Maneuver Guidelines:**

#### ***Positions:***

*Behind the horse* When the handler follows directly behind the horse through turns, circles, stops, backs and faster gaits. Keep safety in mind when working your horse from this position.

*Center Position* This position is when the handler stands off to the side of the horse, between the withers and the hip in a traditional lunging stance. Here is where the horse will perform circles around the handler.

*3/4 Position* This is a position that is used and called for in many of the Long-Reining Tests and is the place between the center position and behind the horse. Here the handler should stand to the side off the horse's hip. This placement gives the handler the ability to perform more advanced movements such as lateral maneuvers.

***NOTE: The Long-Reining Exercise Tests will call for the handler to be in a specific position for each maneuver. The Long-Reining Dressage Tests allow the handler to change their position as they desire depending on the trainability of their horse and the different maneuvers asked.***

*Walking/Trotting/Cantering* The horse should remain relaxed with head level or slightly above the withers and the tempo of the footfalls should be steady and even. Rhythm, Relaxation and Impulsion at the walk and the trot are keys to your success. The horse should move in a straight line with the footprints of the hind legs following in the tracks of the front feet without drifting sideways, becoming crooked, charging ahead, or dragging behind.

*Circling the handler – walk, trot or canter* In this maneuver, the horse should move around the handler with a steady tempo and rhythm. The horse should demonstrate a relaxed state of mind and body. The handler may stand stationary in one spot and pivot around facing the horse, but the handler is also welcome to move in a small circle with their horse as long as the handler stays within a 5ft diameter circle.

*Change Direction on the Circle* The handler has the horse change direction on the circle by asking it to turn **away** the from handler and change directions while maintaining rhythm and cadence as it returns to the circle and continues the gait in the opposite direction. This should be executed without hesitation in one fluid movement.

*Spiral on the Circle* The horse should gradually spiral in or out of the circle as the handler cues them, remaining balanced, rhythmic, fluid, and consistent. The amount of time or laps it takes the horse to spiral in or out of a circle is not designated nor specified, therefore as long as the horse performs this maneuver properly, the score will only reflect as such.

*Halt* The horse should stand quietly, immobile with all four legs square and straight.

*Backing* Maintain a steady and even tempo to the footfalls as the horse steps straight back. The horse should remain relaxed with head level or slightly above the withers. The horse should step freely back with each diagonal pair of legs moving together. The horse should back without being crooked or drifting and maintain Rhythm, Relaxation and Impulsion.

*Leg Yield* A lateral leg yield will have the horse bending in the opposite direction of travel with the body of the horse remaining fairly straight. as they move both forward and diagonal at the same time.

## Scoring:

NAWD Tests are judged under the **NAWD Objective Judging Scale**. This scale provides consistency and uniformity across NAWD Six Feet on the Ground, Western Dressage, NAWD Dressage on a Dime, Ranch Horse Western Dressage, and NAWD All-Around Freestyle.

You might ask--"How is it possible for NAWD to provide consistency across these different categories?" It IS possible because although the tests are different, we have connected our judging system to the training scale, which we believe that; when combined with a solid understanding of equine movement and bio-mechanics, provides the foundation for all horsemanship activities.

Not Executed	6 – Satisfactory
1 – Very Bad	7 – Fairly good
2 – Bad	8 – Good
3 – Fairly Bad	9 – Very Good
4 – Insufficient	10 - Excellent
5 - Sufficient	

The NAWD Objective Judging System does not replace the FEI judging program. Rather, it provides more detail for the rider regarding what they need to do to receive a score. This system demystifies the judging process and ties the word meanings of the numbers directly to the training scale.

A PDF with this judging system is available for download and viewing.

## **NAWD Objective Judging System 122015**

NAWD wishes to thank Dr. McLean for his contributions to this discussion. Andrew McLean, PhD is CEO, Equitation Science International ([esi-education.com](http://esi-education.com)) and an Honorary Associate, University of Sydney, Honorary Fellow, International Society for Equitation Science (ISES, [equitationsscience.com](http://equitationsscience.com)) and senior Section editor, Journal of Animal Welfare.

*A note from Amanda Lane (composer of the Long-Reining Dressage Tests)-*

*As a full-time horse trainer I have been familiar with long-reining for a long time, but it was something I often didn't take the time to use in my programs. I've always believed that a soft, sensitive mouth was so important that I was sometimes afraid the long reins would cause me to lose that. However, now with the help of Double Dan Horsemanship and their great DVDs and instruction, I now see, understand and have witnessed the amazing benefits of Long-Reining! Since recently getting involved with this process of writing these tests for NAWD, with all of the research, and trial and error, I've begun using the Long-Reining on many of my client horses as well as some of my personal horses. The benefits and results have been infinite. I've even found some of my horses to really enjoy the Long-Reining and therefore become a more willing and confident horse under saddle.*

*I cannot wait for people to begin this new direction and journey with their horses! I also cannot stress enough the advantage of learning from the Double Dan Horsemanship Long-Reining DVDs! There are so straight forward and simple for anyone to understand, while taking you from the very beginning with the importance of safety, then building step by step in a way that makes sense for you and horse. I'm so excited to have Dan James become a part of NAWD!*

*-Amanda Lane*