



Calendar of Events

Pilates in Coventry's lounge Saturdays at 11am. Your first class is free, then sign up for packages at a reduced rate. FMI contact Anita [pilatesanita@gmail.com](mailto:pilatesanita@gmail.com) or Kristin at [blythedale@comcast.net](mailto:blythedale@comcast.net)

NEW DATE ~ March 23rd - Robin Birk Clinic goes from 930am - 330pm (or longer)

March 27th - Vet for Spring shots and will check teeth. Vet will come back on a different day to do teeth. Sign up sheet in barn....



Another white deer living in our woods. I hear they are sacred and magical! No wonder they live near Coventry!

~ May 25th ~  
**Coventry Spring Dressage Schooling Show**  
 Judge ~ Ingrid Albrecht ~

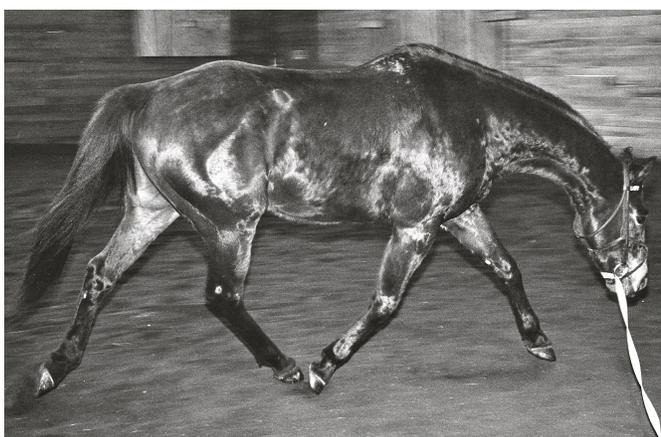
Horse on Course 2014 Dressage Schooling Shows ~ April 27th; May 4th; June 1st; July 27th; August 24th; September 7th

*Lunging Season is among us!*

The grass in the fields is going to start to grow and the April rains will make everything muddy! So, horses will be stuck in a lot! We do not turnout when fields are wet, that is BECAUSE we want grass all

summer long when the horses are out over night. Wondering if your horse is happy stuck in his stall, likely not. But, he or she will be munching on hay ~ however, nothing pleases a horse more than stretching its legs and back. So, if you are unable to get to the barn or just want to know your horse is content and not going to buck you off when you do get to the barn, asks me to apply my *expert* lunging skills for your horse during this season, you know what to do! *LOL!*

Robin Birk is returning March 23rd for another clinic! Continue reading... 



My horse Blythedale (OTTT) stretching out his whole top line while lunging. Circa 1985 at Pheasant Hollow Stables in South Park!

March 23rd is this coming Sunday... Clinic starts at 930am and will end around 430pm. If you are riding in the clinic please let me know what you are contributing toward lunch. I will post schedule in barn and email everyone! Auditors welcome! Robin is an effective and very knowledgeable, rider, trainer and teacher. Here are some notes from the Test N Train Clinic we did last year.

**“What are your opportunities for Improvement?”**  
Test n Train Clinic with Prix St George rider... Robin Birk

Every year Coventry Equestrian Center does a Test n Train Clinic. At these clinics, riders ride a test and learn how to read, score and scribe a test. In the past Coventry has had Diana Miller, Emily Craig, Sue Hershey, Larry Buseck, Ingrid Albrecht and Lisa Hall be the judges for this annual event. In 2013 Coventry's Test N Train was USDF L Graduate Robin Birk.

Robin Birk is the owner and trainer at Timber Ridge Equestrian Center, located in Ruffs Dale Pennsylvania (near New Stanton). Robin is a FEI competitor and a USDF Silver Medalist. She is also an approved young horse trainer by the American Hanoverian Society. Robin has also won in the past a USDF Horse of the Year Award. Robin currently trains with renowned rider, breeder, trainer Ken Borden, and in the past with Jane Savoie, Linda Zang, Walter Zettl and Betsy Steiner, to name a few! In 2013 Robin attended and completed the USDF L judges program and graduated with 'Distinction'

This clinic was held in the spring of 2013 ran in order of the tests ridden from Intro A to Second Level Test 1. After a lunch break Robin gave a fifteen minute talk about the New Rider Tests and mentioned a few of the new USEF rules. Here are some of the pointers we learned from Robin.

With every rider Robin kept asking, “What are your opportunities for improvement?”  
Robin's favorite four letter word is 'plan.'  
Think and plan about what you need to do

**New Rules 2013...**

A reader is not aloud to start reading the test after the rider has started down center line.  
As of April 1 of 2013 the rules require the rider to be on the correct diagonal.

**Training Level** - In riding Training level, geometry can get you if you are no accurate with patterns in the test. Be sure to ride centerline well, it is too easy to loose points if center line is not straight. In Training Level the collective marks are 30% of the score.

**Contact** - you need contact to connect the back with the front. The outside rein needs to be steady. With a better connection you can add more leg and go more forward...

**Whip** - do not over use the leg, use the whip to get a more responsive horse

**Center line** - turn early to ht the Center line.. If you ride center line correctly it is easy points

**Collective marks** - the judge is always looking for the purity of gaits

**Half halt** - after every half halt should come a moment of relaxation

**Canter** - ride horse forward into canter, do not let the horse take a shorter stride at the trot and then canter. We should not have to help the horse to canter

**Free walk** - In the free walk the judge is looking for reach, stretch and energy with swing the horse should be moving over the back and not falling of forehead

As you ride the free walk do the “fanny walk” with your hips so it appears as though your horse’s back is swinging. Doing the “fanny walk” is walking with your seat from side to side.... Just because you are walking does not mean you are not riding. Don’t be too anxious to drop reins for the free walk, feel the mouth and then give. Keep the horse’s head even with shoulders

**Rider Position** -The rider’s shoulders have so much to do with turning a horse. Many riders need mental super glue to keep the elbows bending at their sides. Do not cock the elbows out

~ The quicker the rider response to fix something the better.

~ A rider can get a good score on position, but the score can then be lowered because there is no effectiveness

~ For example, Robin told one rider, “You have a beautiful position, but I would like to see you out of position and use it occasionally!”

“You talk to the horse with your aids...”

“Don’t just be a passenger up there be effective...”

“No puppy paws when riding keep thumbs up...”

“If the horse’s tongue is sticking it is can be minus 2 points per movement...”

“Horse’s are allowed to protest...”

“If the horse’s is blowing his nose he is happy...”

“To sit up sit up taller, imagine there is a fish hook pulling you up at the sternum...”

**Head tossing** - push with the inside leg and steady horse with the outside rein. asking horse to go more forward will help to fix head tossing

**Bending** - when bending horse with inside leg make sure your inside shoulder is back

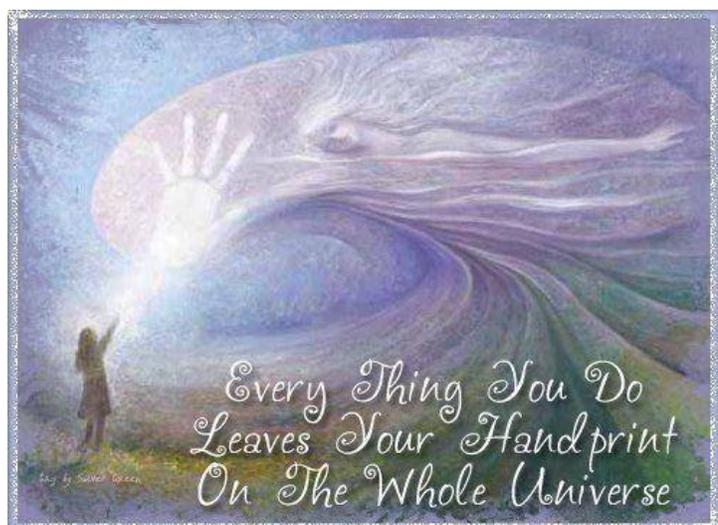
Look down the horse’s crest of mane to see if it is bending correctly

**Stretching** - the horse should politely stretch down and not tug at the reins.. If the horse pulls push with your leg, do not punish the horse in the bridle. Stretch for the whole diagonal with the free walk. The judge is looking for energy, swing and over stride

### **The Three R’s ~ request ~ response ~ reward**

**First Level** - What’s different in First Level - read the tests! Judge wants to see more thrust, connection and impulsion in the First Level horse. Its okay to not be consistently on the bit in Training level, but not at First!

**Leg Yielding** - Ride from the inside leg to outside rein - the horse needs to be almost straight when leg yielding. Train the leg yield slowly so you learn to control the horse. Because our horses are different on each side we have to ride the leg yield differently in each direction



**Hill work** helps to build the horse's core and get more push from behind.

**Over bending** - if you can see your horse's nostril your over bending it. If bending to inside be sure not to loose the outside shoulder.

**Rib cage** - ride the middle of your horse, not just the back or the front push the ribs out and put your inside shoulder bak to get more bend, if needed.

**Lengthening** - we are looking for longer steps not quicker. Lengthening requires a plan. If you can't quite get a lengthening at least show the judge a difference in stride across the diagonal.

Breaks and gas are needed for lengthening, in the corners - collect, collect, and collect then longer striders across the diagonal. For the lengthening we compress and contract the horse's top line like an accordion. When compressing, keep activity from behind

It is the same for the canter, compress the horse in the corner, longer stride down the long side

Robert Dover does what he calls the 'rubber band exercise' - lengthening on the circles.

To get a better lengthening, try to stay in air longer with the posting trot to get a longer stride

Also, school - shoulder-in then lengthen

For all tests - ride to the letter!

### The New Rider Tests in 2013 evaluate the proficiency of the rider

At **Training Level** these tests are looking to see that the rider has mastered the fundamentals of riding - position, alignment and the mechanics at the walk trot and canter, an elastic rein contact, acceptance of the bridle, balance and suppleness... ( oh is that it! - kh)

At **First Level** - In addition to the TL requirements, now the judge wants to see the sitting trot, turns on the forehand, the correct use of aids and transitions...

**Second Level** - adding on to the First Level requirements the horse is now reliably on the bit, at First Level mostly on the bit, and that the rider can now lengthen and shorten the gaits, has collection, lateral movements and the horse is straight...

In the rider tests, the judge will comment on what they see, not how to fix. You are paying for their opinion.

***In every test, not just the new rider tests, the rider is now judged on***  
Effective use of aids ~ Accuracy ~ Harmony between horse and rider

**Rider Knowledge Test** - Define what these words mean and how they relate to the training of the horse and/or rider and why.

- ~ Over Stride
- ~ Swing
- ~ Thrust
- ~ Connection
- ~ Puppy Paws
- ~ Effective use of Aids

☞ Two of my amazing students ☞



☞ Does this horse have Over Stride? Why is Over Stride good?



Is this horse connected? If so how can you tell? How does connection relate to effective use of the aids ☞

