# Horse handling and training series

## Part 1: Lunging – Fact sheet and questions

* It is the horse owner/trainer’s responsibility to have a good understanding of a horse’s natural behaviour for both the horse’s welfare and their own.
* Anthropomorphism can lead to welfare issues. Horses have a strong flight response and will only fight if they are in a position where they cannot run away.
* We educate horses to overcome their flight response by training them not to react instinctively and run away.
* The basic concepts of training involve routine, habit, and consistency.
* Lunging is one of the first steps involved in horse education and is a fundamental foundation that aids in enhancing the welfare of the horse and handler.
* Lunging gains respect, develops muscles and coordination, removes excess energy, enhances focus, and is opportunity to assess the soundness and mood of the horse.
* Stick position: walk = low, trot = mid, canter = high.

### Lunging basics

* Forward and around (stop and change direction): Used to remove excess energy, assess the horse’s mood and soundness. The initial stage of lunging education increases balance, muscle development, and coordination.
* Forward and around (side pass): Moves the horse away from the handler to increase safety and as a training tool to enhance the horse’s responsiveness to aids. Increases coordination and balance.
* Forward and around (change direction without stopping): A more advanced exercise to transfer weight from the front end to the back end.
* Forward and around (spreading the back end): Increases the horse’s balance and aids in transferring weight from the front end to the back end.
* Reverse spread: An advanced exercise to access the horse’s coordination and balance and to further enhance balance and weight transfer.

### Glossary

* **Anthropomorphism**: The giving of human attributes, emotions, or intentions to animals. It can lead to poor animal management.
* **Sweet spot**: The sweet spot is the position on an individual horse where the stick or hand can be held, and the horse will move away or forward at a consistent pace. For some horses, this may be very close; for others, it may be further away.
* **Crucifix**: The handler needs to stand behind the crucifix, or behind the girth area, for forward movement.
* **Handler position**: The handler’s hand must remain at the height of the horse’s eye, with the pinkie finger on the lead rope hand pointing in the direction you wish the horse to go. Remain smooth with hands and feet.

### Questions

1. Provide 2 reasons why it is the horse handler’s responsibility to have an understanding of natural horse behaviour.
2. In one sentence, explain what is meant by the term ‘anthropomorphism’.
3. Provide an issue that anthropomorphism can lead to.
4. Horses have a strong flight response. In two sentences, explain the difference between a flight and a fight response.
5. Provide the three basic concepts of training.
6. Provide three reasons a handler would lunge a horse prior to riding it.
7. Provide a list of what can be achieved through lunging.