



Joann K. Long, President
2906 Wheeler Station Rd.
Bloomfield, N.Y. 14469
585-738-7477
www.GentleDoveFarm.com

“Getting Ready to Ride”

by Joann Long, Gentle Dove Farm

How do you start your riding season? With the long winter still hanging on as I write this in March, I’m really looking forward to warmer weather! My horses had plenty of hay all winter to keep them warm. They are fat and happy because of it. The frigid weather limited riding and now it’s time to get them back to work.

We recently started out hacking down the road because, without access to an indoor arena, there were little options on where we could ride. Snow was still belly deep and risk of injury was apparent. The road however has finally gotten some sun to



melt and recede the snow-covered shoulder to allow for safe travels.

Now that the snow isn’t flying, I could feel safe that I wouldn’t encounter snowplows that could create an unsafe situation. When traveling on the road I try to always have a contingency plan in case my horse becomes unnerved on the road.

That plan includes access

to off road ground to put some distance between my horse and any possible frightening traffic. With the snowmelt, I was assured the ice was gone, there was access to a bigger road shoulder, and I could start getting my horse in shape.

Slow going was on the agenda. Just like people, our horses have to get slowly conditioned. I couldn’t expect my boy with his thick winter coat and soft muscles to pick up where we left off before the cold had hit. Further, mentally he may not be the same as before either. It was important for me to buddy up with a friend especially the first time out to give him confidence as he re-experienced all the sights and sounds while riding. Safety first was in the forefront of the plan to getting my horse back in shape.

Now it’s a matter of time and mileage. I will make changes to his exercise in small increments to increase either the intensity or the duration of his workout over time. Interspersed with our workout will be obstacle training. This can be as simple as incorporating objects we encounter on our ride. For instance, our last ride was on garbage day where everyone had his or her trash out by the road for pickup. Using these natural obstacles as part of our ride builds my horse’s confidence and trust.

When my outdoor arena footing becomes suitable we'll enhance our rides and build on our road hacking start. I'll also look forward to trucking off premises to different locations. I'm just waiting for the snow to melt enough to be able to turn my rig around in the driveway.

With this plan, I hope to have my horse ready, physically and mentally, for the season! What about you? Are you getting your horse ready and for what? Hope you can join us at one of our upcoming Gentle Dove Farm Obstacle and Sensory Clinics Mounted Police Style!

Happy and safe riding!

Joann K. Long
©GentleDoveFarm

