



Dr. Beverly Gordon

Gordon Chiropractic, P.C.
www.TheHorseInMotion.com
TheHorseInMotion@aol.com
EquineDC@aol.com

The Horse In Motion, LLC, Pres.
Oyster Bay, NY 11771
Wellington, FL, 33414
cell # (516) 606-4141

Origins of Resistances: Part 1 -Classifying Resistances

**Note: This is a two part series. Part 1 will be Classifying Resistances, and Part 2 will be Resistance-free performance*

I admit that this information might be a *tad* difficult to comprehend. It is slightly technical, and as such, can be a bit confusing. I include it because most everything we want to learn about horses begins with understanding their movement; why they do what they do and how we can affect it. Therefore, it is advantageous to possess at least a basic familiarity with resistances.

Most equestrians use the term “resistance” when referring to any basic difficulty encountered with horses. This, however, is an inadequate explanation. For this reason, I have developed a classification system to help define and simplify the framework for understanding horses’ movement and behavior. It allows us to become more educated in assessing movement and alleviating problems which interfere with optimum performance (including soundness and behavioral issues). Following is a very, VERY, basic summarization of this classification system.

I. Resistances

Understanding resistances can be confusing (as I have often been told), so I will try to give examples to help clarify. First let’s define the term ‘resistance’.

RESISTANCE - Horse’s inability or lack of desire to yield to pressure in an uncompromising and willing manner.

Loosely defined, resistances are the horse’s **failure to yield to pressure.**

Pressure can be perceived by a horse as something as obvious as the physical contact of a leg to something as subtle as a ground rail. **In every resistance, there is some pressure to which the horse is not yielding.** There are four types of Primary Resistances: 1-physical, 2-training, 3-behavioral, and 4-instinctual. Many resistances fit into more than one category. Think of your own horse's resistances and try to determine which category(s) they might fall into.

1 - **Physical** – These are resistances associated with any problem related to the **physical** structure of the horse. For instance:

- a) The horse has a lack of desire to yield because he has pain.
Examples: lack of forwardness due to Navicular Syndrome
- b) lack of ability due to structural limitations – *Example:*
difficulty collecting because of arthritis
- c) lack of development or adequate proprioception - *Examples:*
horse has altered movement from neurological disorders such as EPM

**Always consider ruling out this category first as the cause of the resistance.*

2 - **Training** - Resistances which have been *created* by humans through improper riding or handling. By far, this is the most common type of resistance. *Examples:* unevenness under tack, laziness or shut down, tension, heavy on the bit, teeth grinding, difficulty flexing or bending, falling on forehand, running, etc.

3 - **Behavioral** - Horse exhibits undesirable behavior on ground or under tack. *Examples:* trailer loading problems, pulling when leading, disrespect of your space, difficult catching in turnout, mounting issues, tacking problems, rearing, aggression, etc.

4 - **Instinctual** - Behavior is guided by the natural instinct for self-preservation and survival. *Examples:* fear of close places such as difficulty trailer loading, herd-separation anxiety, or fear of new or unfamiliar objects or noises (prey-predator reaction)

II. Braces

Breaking resistances down to another category called *Braces* allows us to more easily alleviate the resistances which interfere with optimum movement. These *Braces* are resistances which are specifically related to altered movement (such as a horse not bending as well on one side). By identifying exactly where the brace is occurring, we can address the specific muscles

involved, and either train, or rehab them to help improve performance. Let's define the term *Brace*:

BRACE - *Lack of correct, complete, voluntary, and unimpeded movement*

in any able direction

A Brace is what we notice or feel with regard to the quality of the horse's movement. It is observed as a response by the horse as a less than optimal reaction to an aid. Braces occur at all levels of riding and result in poor performance, soundness problems, and loss of overall potential. *Examples:* back tension, lack of engagement, shortened stride length, etc. **Observing braces and understanding how to alleviate them is central to improving your horse's performance!** (More on this next month)

III. Interferences

Now, not every problem we encounter in our relationship with our horse is a resistance, especially if we define a resistance as the horse's failure to yield to pressure. So, we need a category in which to group these other issues. I call them Interferences.

Interference - *Any particular undesirable behavior or response exhibited by the horse which interferes with the human's communication or relationship with his horse*

Interferences occur when the horse does not have either the desire or the ability to act in a manner acceptable to the human

Interference is a broad category which encompasses both resistances and braces. *Examples:* biting, kicking, shying, difficulty mounting, rearing, refusing fences, pawing, herd-bound or barn sour horses, etc. (Any of these sound familiar?)

Note: the inability to alleviate interferences is usually because the horse also has a resistance. Example: your horse bolts because he is frightened (that is an interference – interferes with your relationship with your horse). You ask

him to walk quietly but he does not yield to the pressure of the aids and bolts anyway (that is the resistance – the failure to yield to pressure).



Resistance's can, and usually do, fall into more than one category. **All four categories are inherently connected, and a resistance in one can cause a resistance in another!** Examples of common resistances which fall into more than one category are: difficulty mounting or tacking, refusing collected gaits, difficulty backing, heavy on the bit or forehand, refusing jumps, not moving forward, unevenness, trouble with transitions or flying changes, etc. Most of us have had the unhappy experience of dealing with any number of these issues.

I will end by asking you to identify the resistances, braces and interferences you may be experiencing with your horse. What do you think the origin of these resistances would be?????

**Next month: Part 2 - Resistance-free performance*

Until next time,

Dr. Bev Gordon





