

## Learning to Ground Drive Using TTEAM – Ivory Part 2

By Marie Hoffman

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Ivory is owned by Denise. She is a black Appendix Quarter Horse mare that is a long yearling. Denise brought Ivory over every week for their lesson. Then went home to practice what they had learned. Ivory had learned to lunge and lead through the different TT.E.A.M. ground pole arrangements. Our first lesson's goal was to accustom Ivory to the ropes that we would use to ground drive her. Denise stood ready to lead Ivory in the Elegant Elephant leading position. This is where the chain is over the noseband of the halter and the handler is holding the lead about 6 inches from the halter in the hand closest to the horse with the other hand holding the end of the lead and the wand ( a four foot stiff whip) with the button end toward the horse. I took a 20 foot piece of ¼ inch climbing rope and folded it in half. While Denise was at Ivory's head I placed the rope around the base of her neck. TT.E.A.M. calls this the challenge rope. Denise then led Ivory while I walked along side. This was all we did at first to let Ivory become used to the two of us walking so close to her.

Then I gave a little resistance to the rope pulling up and toward me. I did this for a few steps then I released. This challenged Ivory's balance for those few steps and she recovered while I released. I challenged her very little at first letting her confidence build as we went along. Once she was good with this which took only a few minutes, I used the challenge rope to ask her to stop by lifting and giving a repeating tug then release signal on the rope. Ivory soon caught on and was stopping in balance without falling on her forehead.

Denise and I worked her on her right side repeating the same procedure. Denise had to switch how the chain was treaded through her halter and switch hands on the lead and wand position. Ivory was a little concerned and wanted to rush at the walk a little. We stopped often. After a few stops Ivory was doing equally well on this side too.

At the same time Ivory was learning about the challenge rope we started getting her used to the saddle. We started by using a surcingle and doing TT.E.A.M. belly lifts with it. Holding both ends I would lift the bottom part until it put a light pressure on her girth area. Then I would take a breath and count to 8 then slowly release the pressure breathing and counting to 16. I repeated this several times increasing the pressure around her girth each time. Once she was used to this, I put the surcingle on her and left her in the stall to get used to it.

The next step is the position of the TT.E.A.M. Pig Tail. The driving (climbing) rope was tied around the base of Ivory's neck in a quick release bowline knot. So it could be released in case of an emergency. Then I walked back and to the side. I was still on the same side of Denise in case Ivory should become frightened and move quickly forward. I could let go and Denise would hold on to her. Once reaching Ivory's hips I wound the end of the rope around the wand. I used the wand to guide the rope up and down Ivory's sides. The point of this position was to accustom Ivory to the ropes behind and on her body.

Once I did this and Ivory could chew and was not concerned (which was right away), Denise then led her while I walked behind and to the side stroking her body with the rope. Ivory was used to being stroked with the wand already; so that part did not bother her. She also became accustomed to me walking behind her quickly also. I knew this because she was relaxed in her ears and did not keep them focused on me the whole time.

Denise and I repeated all the Pig Tail exercises on the other side. Ivory was the same, concerned a little at first then fine.

The next step was to add a second driving line also tied in a bowline around the base of her neck. I then walked behind her as Denise led her. I would add tugs on the lines to suggest to Ivory to stop, turn, and slow. To start her I also would gently flop the lines against her hips to signal her to walk forward.

Now it was Denise's turn. After giving Denise a chance to learn how to hold the driving lines. I had Denise drive me around the arena showing her how to step into her turns, use and comb the reins to stop without stopping her feet before the horse stops. That was the end of the first lesson. Denise went home to practice her driving skills using her 11 yr old daughter as the horse. Both had a good time and I think Ivory was glad Denise used her daughter for the horse while she learned.

Denise brought Ivory back and we repeated the chest driving with the ropes around the base of Ivory's neck, with Denise driving. We drove through the different TT.E.A.M. ground exercises. Ivory was very good and not concerned at all. Denise became more comfortable with the lines. In the last weeks, Denise started putting on an english saddle on Ivory to get her used to it. First in a stall and then while led and finally while she was lunging. Ivory was concerned about the flaps of the saddle flapping because Denise had taken the stirrup irons off. I suggested that Denise add the irons back in a fixed run up

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position and let Ivory get used to the saddle first. Then when she was fine with that take the irons off again. Denise did this and Ivory soon learned the flapping flaps were of no concern.

The next lesson was Ivory was ready to attach the lines to the side rings of the halter. I lead while Denise drove. At first I was in control but gradually I let Denise take over more and more of the signaling to tell Ivory what to do.

We spent the next lesson doing the same halter driving but this time going over the ground obstacles of the labyrinth, and ground poles. I, the leader gradually did less and less controlling. This lesson we added the english saddle running the lines through the irons fixed in the run up position.

This week Denise was to practice driving with a leader at home. At her next lesson she had a problem with her practicing at home. Every time she signaled Ivory to stop or turn she dropped her head to the ground. Her daughter was able to keep her head up when she was close but as soon as she moved away Ivory dropped her head again.

I took Ivory with no leader I tapped her until she went forward from a cue on the croup showing her what we wanted. It was clear she was confused. I was able to get her to move but she thought we wanted her to lower her head whenever she felt pressure on the halter. She was taught to lower her head from the slightest downward pressure on the halter. She misinterpreted the cues to turn and stop for lowering her head. To give her a different feel, we put on a side pull and drove her with that. She was fine with that and Denise was able to drive her with no leader.

In a couple of weeks it was time to trot. We cued Ivory to go a few steps and then walk using voice and lines. Ivory caught on quickly and soon Denise was driving her to walk and trot all over. Over the next year Denise drove Ivory all around my farm, hers and their neighborhood.

Ivory's driving training was giving her a chance to learn to go forward and gain confidence without a leader right at her head. She was learning how to respond to cues coming from behind her withers, she would need these skills when ridden later as she matured.