

# Clinics with Anke Hawke

Written by Nele Koemle :: Clinics held in August and November 2019

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I have attended three balanced dressage clinics with Anke over the last 12 months. At the first one I rode Gneisti (stallion & school master) and at the other two I rode my stallion Lotto. As I don't get much time to ride most of the year, I haven't had much chance to work on myself to improve my seat, leg and rein aids. Like many people I often sit a bit crooked in the saddle, leaning to one side or clamp up when I lose my balance.

I am very lucky to have a horse like Lotto who is in a way my best teacher. If I don't do it right, he lets me know that I haven't communicated things correctly by not doing what I initially wanted him to do.

Taking Lotto to another location, away from home, makes things a bit harder too. There were other stallions, mares and geldings around that took his attention away from the task at hand. So, with Anke's help we started to work on focussing him on the work in the arena.

To help Lotto focus I had to start balancing and grounding myself first. Making sure I actually sit straight, lifting my chest and chin, look through the horse's ear and in the direction I want him to go, not on the ground. Also have both sides of the reins at the same and right length. By relaxing my hips and thighs and breathing through my whole body I can calm and relax my whole posture which in turn calms the horse.

Not rushing and not letting Lotto run around at his own pace is the key to get him calm and focussed.

Once focussed we worked on correct bending, using my whole body to steer the horse not really the reins. Anke picked up on all the small cues that I was missing and with simple instructions, like lift your outside shoulder a bit or step into the

outside stirrup to balance yourself again, we achieved smooth transitions, bends and balanced halts (with Lotto standing square).

When we started to work with the trot, the next challenge came up. Lotto and I constantly mixed up the gaits, from trot to tölt, then to a canter roll and so on.

So, we worked on maintaining one gait. Mainly the trot to start with. I found by holding my hands a bit higher I automatically sit more balanced and I don't lean forward all the time. When I asked for trot, Anke told me to bring my hands together a bit more in front of me and give the leg aid at the same time. It was so great to see how easy I could find my and Lotto's balance again by adjusting little things.

After we achieved some nice work in trot, we did some tölt and it was sooo much fun! We started on slowing down the walk (by using my seat, relaxing my thighs and not too much rein) and that way starting to shorten the horse's steps and collecting him. Then by just thinking of going a bit faster and the leg aid we increased the energy and BANG! We had the best tölt! I couldn't stop smiling.

I am looking forward to the next clinics with Anke over the year. With her positive and encouraging attitude towards the rider and the horse, Anke is definitely an asset to the gaited horse community!

