

Helpful Tips for Settling-in your new Spanish Horse

Firstly, CONGRATULATIONS!!! We hope that you forge a wonderful and rewarding relationship with your new Spanish Horse. Apart from the usual horse management, we have compiled some helpful tips for settling your new horse into its new surroundings as gently as possible. This information has been gathered from our own experience and also from our client's feedback. The list is not exhaustive and we would welcome further useful tips and suggestions to develop it further.

For the first few weeks your horse will be adjusting and settling into its new environment. Remember that a Spanish horse is not only adjusting to new places and faces, but also to completely new smells, sounds, language, weather, food, schooling styles and experiences, for example, some young Spanish horses will have very limited if any experience of grazing fresh green grass. Spanish horses are very good natured and brave and they should be delighted with their new home, however, it is worthwhile considering the transformation they are going through and easing them into it as best you can. Realise that your horse will be a little unsettled at first. A careful balance of being alert and attentive around your new horse without showing him that you fear him is vital. Be confident, friendly but firm, patient and understanding, but do not make the mistake of taking him too lightly and his good nature for granted, don't become casual until you "know" them a little more, some would say **never** be casual around any horse.

- Ensure you have access to a stable for at least the first few week or two of introduction.
- Have someone else present to help you move the horse around and get used to managing him/her.
- If buying a stallion, a grill on the stable door is a good idea to ensure they are not tempted to jump out. This can always be removed when they settle.
- Spanish horses are usually kept stabled where they are able to see other horses through grilles, it is important to make your horse feel safe and for his socialisation for him to be able to see other horses.
- It is best to stable them first, get them used to you and the smells and goings on around the yard, before turning out.
- Ensure you have safe, good quality high fencing if the horse is to be turned out.
- Turn out should be introduced gradually as many of these horses are not used to being turned out. Lunging them before you turn them out will work off some excess energy. A good idea is to section off a small paddock using electric fence or put them in a securely fenced arena or small paddock, which will allow them to get used to the idea first. Allow a gap between connections to other horses in neighbouring fields so they have a chance to get to know each other first without immediate contact.
- Although Spanish horses are rarely on grazing, this would be a good opportunity to get a worm count done and worm him only if necessary.
- Keep a safe headcollar on to start with for ease of handling.
- Take care when introducing new things such as rugs or clipping as they might not be used to it.
- Do not do any immediate farriery unless an emergency. Do not remove shoes, barefoot trim or change the shape of the hoof significantly until you have had a proper assessment of the hoof from a farrier who is used to dealing with Spanish horse hoof conformation or has done some research as

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- they can be quite different to what local your local farrier is used to working with.
- BEWARE not to feed too much on the first few days. They may be dehydrated from the journey and so look a little tucked up, they will also have lost some condition and weight. Start on good quality hay and slowly introduce the new feed. New owners will possibly not be aware of the Iberian horse's intolerance of sugar and molasses. Therefore, anything with high sugar or molasses i.e. nuts, mixes, even Haylage and Dengie are possible causes for concern. Horses can come to their new home fine and then get a mix or nut which can send them over the top and become more difficult to ride and handle. We recommend a good quality hay and a quality cool mix slowly introduced in small quantities.
 - Choosing the time and location of turnout should also be considered carefully. If it is a busy yard, it might be an idea to turn him out early in the morning before it gets too busy. If you have bought a stallion, consider the location of the turnout – is the fence high and secure, are there mares nearby, etc.?
 - Introducing the horse to companions or field mates should be done gradually to avoid bullying, accidents and to allow changes in the pecking order.
 - The first few weeks should be spent getting to know your new horse and allowing the horse to get to know you. It will take time for the horse to learn how to interact with you and to trust you.
 - It takes an average of 6 months for a rider to actually know their horse. Take time to do ground work and groom him first to get acquainted. Practice leading him, taking him for walks and lunging.
 - Be mindful of being too 'soft' (nudging, cuddles, etc.) with your new horse. Spanish horses have been taught to respect people and their body space, if you encourage them to push you over and nudge you, they will. They are very friendly, tactile horses. Be kind, but ensure the barriers of body space and respect are maintained or you may become a pushover. Compassionate handling should be gentle, but considerate of what is best for him in the long-term. Correction does not have to be severe, but it must be prompt and consistent, to not admonish a horse when he does something naughty is to do him and yourself a great disservice.
 - Spanish horses are generally not used to being hand fed, they will eventually work it out, but it is not advised to do this too often, particularly with a stallion.
 - Some people choose to purchase the Spanish halters with a 'serrator' covered in leather, these are used in traditional Spanish training to control the stallions on the nose, the alternative is a stallion chain on your headcollar. You can buy these halters, lunge cavessons and presentation halters for showing with a 'serrator' and other items of Spanish tack from www.spanishsaddlery.com. The use of this artificial aid is the same with all artificial aids – it can be useful if used responsibly. If you do not wish to use this method, we suggest buying a Monty Roberts Dually halter as this has a similar action of controlling on the nose. Spanish horses are first trained on the nose and then on the bit, so it is an important aid for both groundwork, lunging and sometimes ridden work. The Dually method is also excellent for developing a bond of trust and respect with your horse.
 - If the horse appears extremely traumatised either by its journey or in its new surroundings, it would be wise to consult your vet, who may advise some sedation to allow him to adjust to his new surroundings slowly without harming himself.
 - Allow the horse to settle in his new place before attempting to ride him. Start by getting to know him

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on the ground, leading him, lunging and eventually riding. If you are going to hack out always get a nice, safe and confident hack to join you on the first few rides.

- Be very gentle with the aids to start with until you understand what works for you and the horse. Spanish trainers often ride incredibly lightly in spite of the fierce bits and spurs, they often use a very light hand and barely perceptible leg aids, therefore, a good kick in the ribs might be a bit of a shock to a Spanish horse. Start lightly and increase the pressure until you know what your horse responds to.
- Try to treat your stallion as much like any other horse as you can.
- Horses tend to take about 6 – 8 weeks to settle into their surroundings and longer to get used to you.
- Do not expect too much, too soon. When you are fully bonded, the reward will be worth it as Spanish horses can bond more strongly than others.

Now, most importantly – **RELAX** and **HAVE FUN** together!!!

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