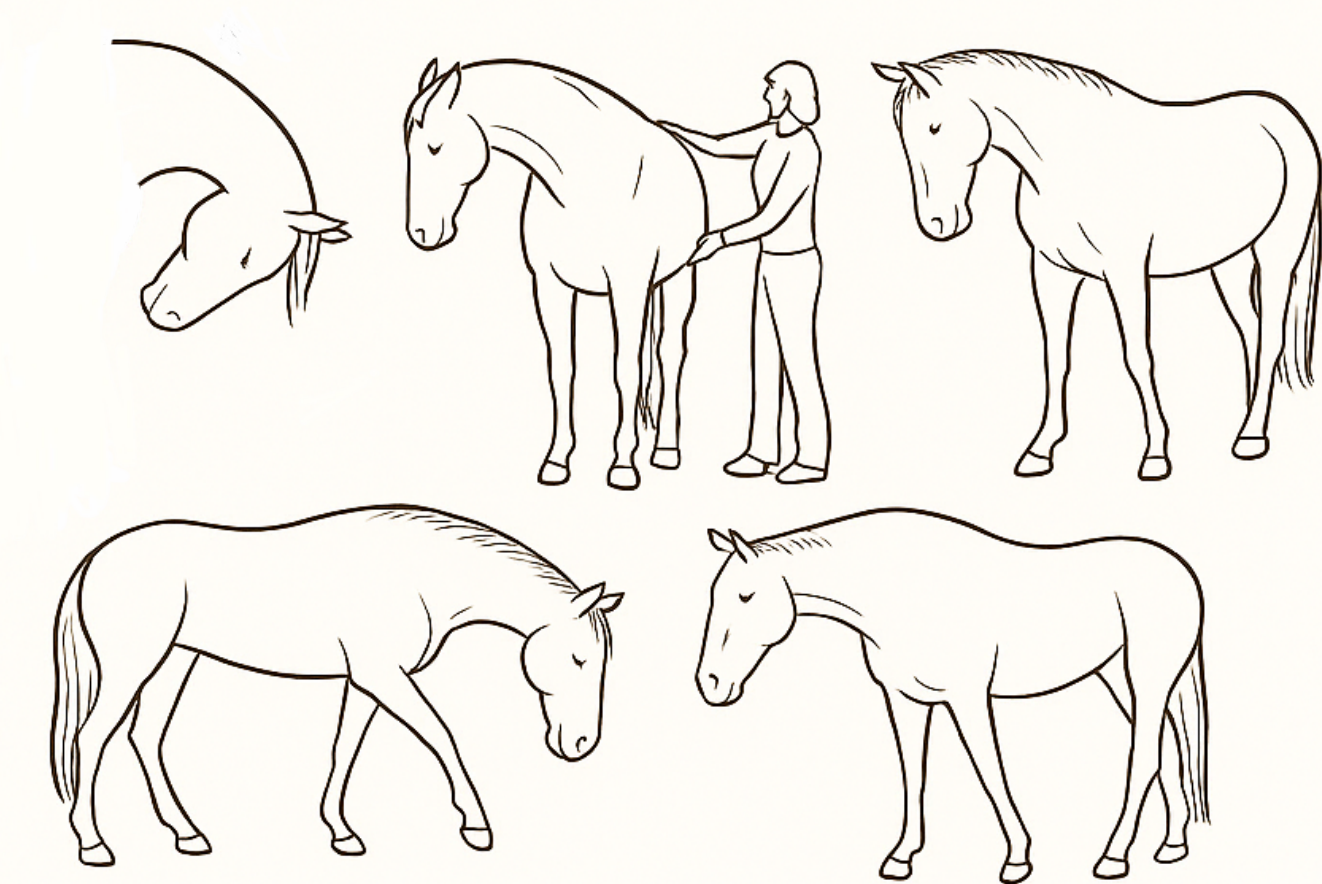


Neck & Poll: Stretching & Strengthening Guide for Horse Owners



Simple exercises and stretches to support suppleness, balance, and relaxation

Why Focus on the Neck & Poll?

The neck and poll are critical for posture, relaxation, and communication between horse and rider. Tension in this region can affect head carriage, balance, and softness.

This guide provides safe, simple stretches and strength-building tools to improve suppleness and comfort in the cervical spine and poll.

When to Use This Guide

Ideal for horses who:

- Toss their head or resist when bridled
- Are stiff or uneven when bending
- Have a history of poll or cervical tension
- Brace or hollow through the topline

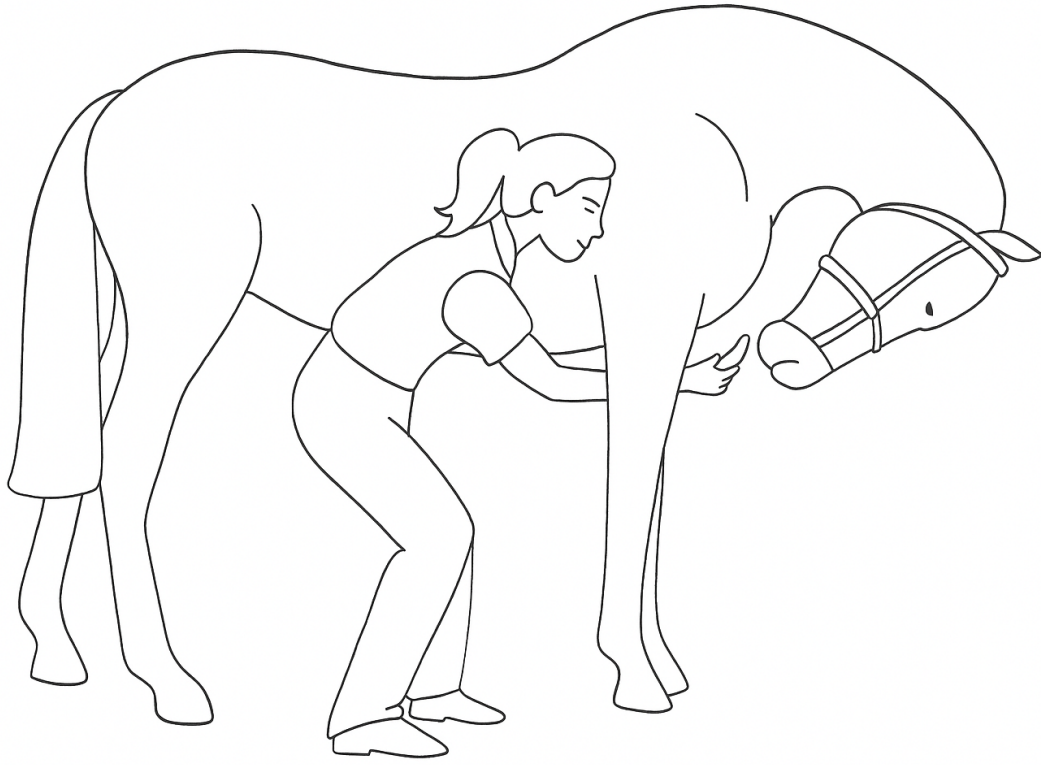
Use 1-2x per week alongside bodywork or in-hand work as advised by your equine professional.

Red Flags - When to Pause and Consult a Vet

- Heat, swelling, or sensitivity at the poll or atlas
- Sudden behavior changes during grooming or bridling
- Medical history involving the cervical spine or TMJ
- Recent dental trauma or sedation

1. Baited Stretch - Chin to Chest

Encourages flexion at the poll and loosens suboccipital tension.
Hold for 5-10 seconds. Repeat 2-3 times with plenty of reward.



2. Baited Stretch - Chin to Shoulder

Improves lateral flexibility and balance through the cervical spine.
Repeat 2-3 times each direction, ensuring soft and even motion.



3. Forelimb Protraction with Neck Release

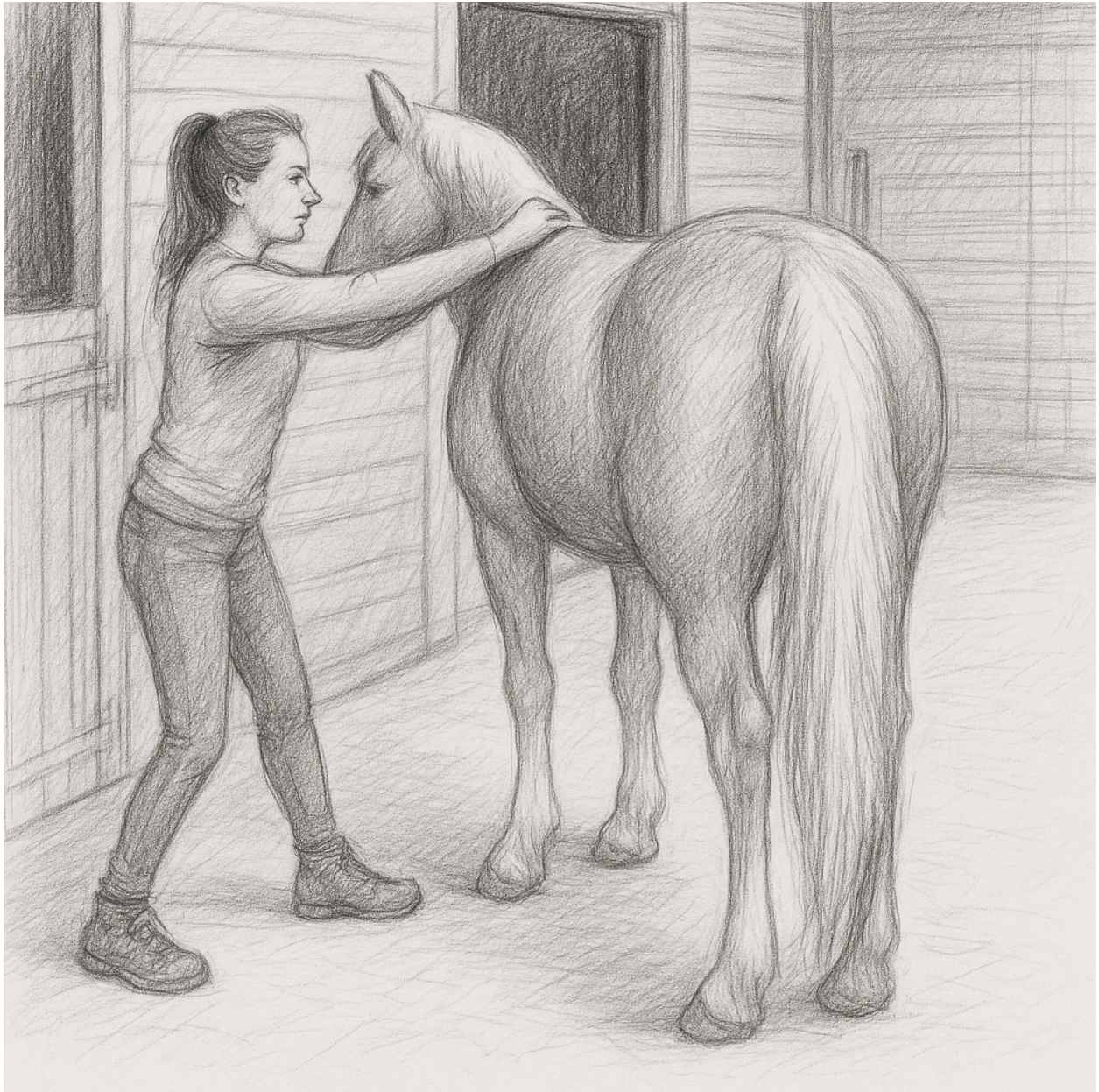
While gently extending the front leg forward, observe the horse lowering and releasing through the neck.

Hold the stretch briefly and switch sides.



Wither Wiggles / Shoulder Rocking

Use rhythmic hand pressure at the withers to release tension in the neck.
Look for blinking, chewing, or a drop of the head.



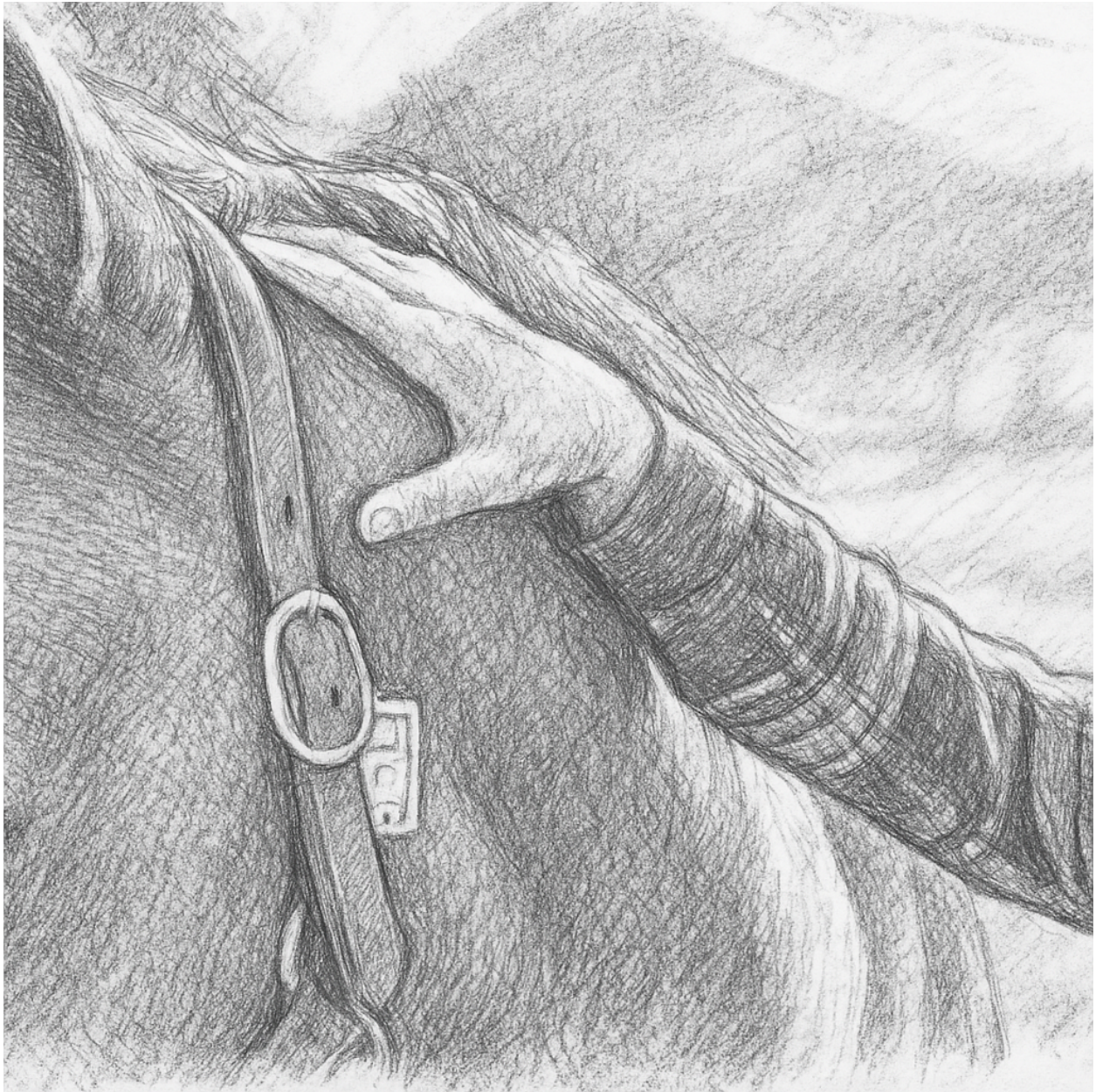
5. Gentle Poll Rocking

Lightly cradle the base of the ears and jaw, and apply gentle lateral motion. Never force-allow the horse to melt into the movement.



6. Atlas Circles (C1 Mobilization)

Using two fingers, draw small circles on either side of the atlas (behind the ears).
Supports circulation and soft tissue release.



Tips for Success

- Keep sessions short and low-pressure (10-15 minutes)
- Always begin with groundwork or hand-walking to warm up
- Use treats mindfully to guide, not force movement
- Watch for softening signs like blinking, licking, or lowering the head
- Never push into resistance-wait for the horse to offer release

Progress & Tracking Notes

Use this section to track your horse's responses and progress after each session.

Date | Exercise/Stretch | Reaction/Notes
