

## Beating the Big Spook on the Trail

Trail-riding expert Lori Stewart helps you spot a spook or blowup in the making and deal with it.  
By Sandra Cooke

It's a breezy day on the trail, and both you and your horse have spotted the torn kite snagged in the cornstalks ahead. His stride shortens, his head comes up, and you feel the familiar knot in your stomach: Oh, no, he's going to spook...

Moments like these are less stressful if you equip yourself ahead of time to deal with them. For instance, endurance rider Lori Stewart (two-time winner of the 100-mile Tevis Cup) demonstrates an easy technique to help you keep a moderate shy from turning into a major blow-up.

1. Rocky's begun to spook at something in the cornfield. His ears and eyes show his attention is locked to the right and in front of him, and his hindquarters are slipping away from the spooky area, bulging into Lori's left leg.

2. Right away, she snaps into her power two-point position (weight in her heels, seat just brushing the saddle, upper body balanced over the middle of her horse and ready to go with him). At the same time, she opens her right (inside) rein -- the one nearer the spook -- to keep his nose pointing in the direction she wants, closes her left (outside) leg and left rein to discourage him from whirling away to the outside, and "kisses" him forward with her mouth to push him on by. Rocky's right eye and ear are still cocked toward what's spooking him, and his tail is up (body language for "What?! What?! What?!"), but he's beginning to straighten -- and that flicked-back left ear says he's giving his attention back to Lori.

3. Now Lori has him back in a straight line. His right ear is still on the spook, but his feet are marching again. She keeps her right rein open and her left rein and leg closed; though Rocky isn't happy (that tail is still up), he's listening. Now that he's going forward, she's dropped to a full three-point position, her seat deep in the saddle and her legs closed and pushing him forward.

4. A moment later, Rocky's total attention is on Lori. He's actually swung his hindquarters closer to the spook, and she's just trucking him on by, both legs closed, maintaining that opening rein for a few more strides.

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