



Common Problems (and What They Actually Mean)

Understanding the Cause Behind the Behavior

Why This Matters

In the Shooting Horse discipline, most problems are not acts of disobedience. They are signs of confusion, imbalance, tension, or loss of confidence. That is why the best response is not emotional correction. It is accurate diagnosis.

Use the sections below to identify what you are seeing, understand what it usually means, and choose the right fix.

Rushing or Speeding Up

What You See

- The horse increases speed without being asked
- Transitions become hurried or tense

What It Means

- Loss of cadence
- Rising tension or anticipation

What To Do

- Slow everything down
- Re-establish rhythm before adding anything else
- Remove pressure until the horse settles

Spooking or Avoidance

What You See

- The horse reacts to objects, movement, or specific areas
- The horse avoids a task instead of staying with the rider

What It Means

- Loss of confidence
- Loss of focus on the rider

What To Do

- Redirect attention back to you
- Keep the horse moving forward calmly
- Do not make the object the center of the lesson

Heavy Hands or Pulling

What You See

- The horse leans on the bit
- The horse requires constant rein pressure

What It Means

- Lack of collection
- Poor balance

What To Do

- Work on body control and balance
- Use transitions and clear releases
- Do not try to fix balance only with the reins

Ignoring Cues

What You See

- Responses are delayed or inconsistent
- The horse feels dull or disconnected

What It Means

- Unclear communication
- Inconsistent expectations

What To Do

- Simplify the ask
- Be consistent with cues and follow-through
- Reward the correct response clearly

Anticipation in Patterns

What You See

- The horse speeds up or makes decisions early in familiar work
- The horse becomes chargey or mentally checked out

What It Means

- Over-repetition
- Loss of control and connection

What To Do

- Break the pattern into smaller pieces
- Change the routine
- Re-establish control before running the full pattern again

Core Principle

Resistance is not disobedience. It is information.

When something breaks down, your job is not to take it personally. Your job is to understand what the horse is telling you and respond with clarity.