Exercise pattern to help diagnose and treat rein lameness.

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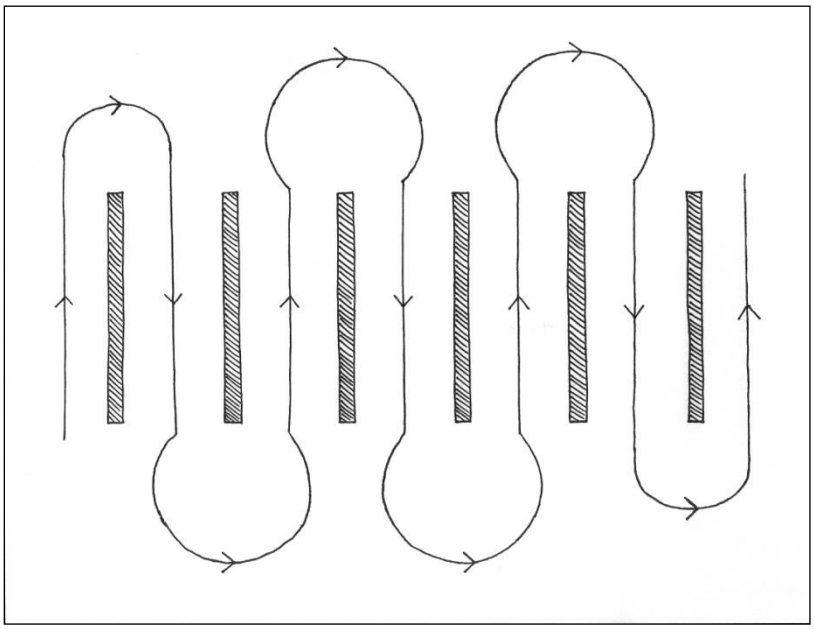
This is an aerial view of the layout of cavaletti or ground poles. Each pole (shaded bar) is laid parallel to its neighbor, 4 to 4 ½ feet apart. The rider is instructed to first walk the pattern making precise ¾ circles at the end of each "lane", then take up the sitting trot in a serpentine pattern (thin line, arrows) through the lanes of poles, making as neat a turn as possible at the end of each pole. Then go to the posting trot switching diagonals as needed. Then do the pattern in reverse. Then if the horse and rider have found a normal rhythm then skip a lane, then skip 2 lanes and then do a trot around the entire set of poles.

The principle of this exercise is that it distracts both the horse and rider making them concentrate on the quickly changing turns and avoiding the poles rather than worry about the odd rhythm of the gait.

If the horse has a rein lameness, the horse should improve with this exercise. If the horse shows improvement then use this exercise daily as treatment. Any time in the future if horse reverts back to his/her rein lame gait go back immediately into the cavaletti-serpentine exercise.

If the horse gets worse during this exercise then further diagnositics to rule out a painful cause for the gait irregularity should be done.