

NEW MOVEMENTS

What exercises can you do to help prepare your body for the barn? Bridget Braden-Olson, owner of BioRider Fitness, recommends the following.

1 SQUATS: We've covered squats in previous columns, but they are one of the most basic movements you can do to strengthen your lower body.

Stand upright with your feet hip-width apart, chest up and shoulders back, then push your hips back (which transfers the weight to your heels) and lower your body into a squat, keeping your knees straight and behind the toe. You'll want to go as low as you comfortably can, but at least aim for your thighs to be parallel with the floor. As you stand up, drive up through your heels and extend your body up without lifting your toes off the ground.



2 LUNGE WITH A TWIST: Braden-Olson likes to use this movement to strengthen the body for efforts like mucking stalls and raking the arena.

A lunge is when you take a step forward while keeping one foot back. Bend your front leg at the knee in a 90-degree angle, keeping your knee behind the toe, while your back knee goes down towards the ground. When you stand up, drive up through your front heel, engaging the backs of your thighs (hamstrings) and glutes.


Add onto this movement by twisting your torso in the direction of the front leg when you go down. (So if your right leg is in front, twist to the right.) You can add resistance to this movement by holding hand weights or a medicine ball.

Repeat this with nine more lunges before turning around and doing 10 with the other leg leading.



3 BENDING ROW: Another exercise to prepare your upper body and arms for heavy chores is a bent-over low row, says Braden-Olson.

With your feet together or hip-width apart, hinge at the hips with a slight bend in your knees, keeping a flat back. Holding a weight in each hand, let your arms hang, engage your core, and keep your chest and chin up. Pull the weights up to your stomach while maintaining a bend from the hips, keeping your elbows in. Squeeze your shoulder blades together and pause for a second, then release without releasing your stance. Repeat this 10 to 12 times.

Braden-Olson also suggests you make an effort to switch arms when raking or picking stalls. "You want to be as even as possible with your body, so try to do equal amounts of work on both sides," she says. "If you pick stalls everyday, and you only do it on one side, I guarantee that one side is more developed than the other." 

MEGAN ARSZMAN is a freelance writer based in Indiana, where she's learning to balance motherhood with horses, dogs and writing.