

## Opening reminders:

1. **Softness** with our horses is aided tremendously by consistently using soft hands whilst still keeping contact with reins once you have gained their attention. Horses naturally want the soft choices and will look for it if we are consistent in our hand / rein control (using pressure / release) at all times.
2. Remember not to apply **anthropomorphic thinking** to horses since they do not think anything like we do. Therefore punishing them for errors is not clearly understood by them.
3. Horses are not necessarily afraid of predators but **they are afraid of predatory behavior.**
4. For riding safety, whenever your horse is excited or afraid, **conditioned responses should be taught before riding out.** Lateral bends via single rein with pressure release is a most important maneuver. Conditioned responses are involuntary and work from the subconscious mind so even though your horse wants to run away, if you have taught that when he feels pressure he is to bend his head laterally, rider control in frightening situations can be regained quickly.

## “Points of Interest”

1. **Bucking horses;** about 60% of bucking horses in rodeos are bred specifically for the job. Most stock producers / trainers generally agree that their horses work only about 10 minutes a year as 8 seconds is a successful ride for competition plus not all riders achieve the full 8 . This leads to extreme longevity with many champion broncs working well into their 20's.
2. **The value of horses and riding - for disabled individuals** has been recognized for centuries. In 1875 a study in Paris concluded riding improved posture, balance, joint movement, muscle control and morale. Today we understand why. The human pelvis moves forward and back as it does when crawling or walking and riding helps develop the muscles needed for walking. In the 1952 Helsinki Olympics, Liz Hartel won a silver medal for dressage although she was afflicted with polio.
3. Two of the earliest **Natural Horsemen**, in ancient Greece, were **Xenophon and Alexander the Great.** Alexander, won his horse **Bucephalus** from a General by recognizing the stallions fear of his own shadow and by dealing with it was able to ride the stallion to win the bet.
4. **It is an interesting documented historical fact** that back in 1350 B.C. chariot horses were accustomed to putting between 50 and 125 miles a day **“barefoot”** on rough roads.

## Riding & Training Advice:

1. **One of the most important aspects of training a horse** is to make sure they learn to understand desired actions and moves as well as our instructions to perform the directions. This is best achieved via repetition, beginning in small increments and progressing to larger

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ones over an average of 60 repetitions. If we teach ten or so each lesson then 60 reps. Is completed in a relatively short period of twenty days, allowing a minimum of a days rest in between each lesson.

2. **There is no chance of training a horse without its respect** ; this is a most important point to understand and remember. If your horse is difficult to train or exhibits any of the following problems : rearing, kicking, biting, barn sour, herd bound, runs over/through you, balks, spooks all the time, won't canter / lope slow on a soft rein, takes off for no reason, bad manners, out of control generally, stiff or heavy in the mouth, ignores leg queues / pressure or won't turn or stop when you want – there is a lack of respect. This is a natural situation as it is instinct and is related to dominant or submissive behavior when relating to other animals. Your horse needs you to be a firm (albeit benevolent) leader for their protection. You, as leader are required to keep the two of you safe. You also must be the dominant / firm leader to gain respect, trust and their willingness to please you - as is the norm in a herd. The immediate herd is simply the two of you. Some people act as do horses in a pasture where they whip the dickens out of the horse every time they do something wrong. However, even though this method of gaining respect will get them to mind you it does not generate trust in you. They will simply be afraid of you (of course with dangerous horses this is better than nothing at all). **To properly gain long term respect and trust requires a proper balance of training, discipline and rewarding the horse's willingness to try for you.** Knowing how to do this is the key to transforming a problem horse into a dream horse and to maintaining a good relationship. To get good results, a horseman needs to know what methods to employ and how to apply them properly. This process is not immensely complicated nor too difficult to learn. I generally, in three or four sessions, can provide sufficient training for horsemen and women to carry on with efficiently.

3. **How to handle bucking** ; there are various ways of dealing with bucking. Some of the basic strategies are to immediately put more of your weight onto the balls of your feet and not close your legs around the horse. This automatically causes your heels to drop and moves your feet forward, generating more stability allowing for bending forward at the waist and then straightening up in the saddle without bouncing or tilting out of centered position. At the same time refrain from hanging onto tight reins and simply allow the reins to slide loose when the horse has its head down for the buck – then when the horse raises its head (preparing for the next head drop and buck) slide one hand along one of the reins and using pressure release turn its head to the side, releasing the rein pressure as the horse pushes its head down again and repeat the process. Generally in two to four repetitions the horse will give up the effort.

4. A common error I often see and help folks correct is **where the rider pushes the rein down** as well as to the side when making urgent turns. This loads the weight onto the inside shoulder and makes it more difficult for the horse to turn as 60% of their weight is on their front and this move should be avoided.

### **Closing reminders:**

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1. **Helping your horse make its own decisions** regarding our requested behavior - by arranging / providing work when they err or refuse. It is much better for long term & solid memory.
2. **Horses understand and learn from the release of pressure** and not from the application of pressure itself. Constant pressure generally causes them to go right brained (instinctive thinking). This makes the use of pressure release more than well worth learning by all handlers as well as riders.
3. **Horses are fast learners**, otherwise in the wild they would not be able to stop and eat. They would never desensitize to the things that they initially fear, otherwise.
4. **Don't forget to watch out for and avoid overfeeding calcium and magnesium** (as I have explained in previous articles) in light of all the supplement feeds currently on the market.

*Until next time, have fun and stay safe.*

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