

### *Training and Riding Advice*

An important constant in training is that our efforts should always be directed toward creating confidence and trust between humans and horses. This constant is much more constructive than in fighting with or beating /berating our horses. I have always advocated patience, understanding with firm albeit beneficial leadership, which generates a desire in the horse to see & trust us as their leader and to do what, we asked of it. Working steadily though misunderstandings - eliminates any need for rough handling. Being a Native Texan, the change to Natural Horsemanship was not an easy transition. I feel lucky that the Cherokee blood included in my Family tree helped with the changes I have made over the years. Over the years and via my many thousands of experiences with horses and their problems, I have proved and solidified the methods that I advocate and use. I continue to work improving my consistency with application of these methods. Consistency has been a huge key in succeeding with horses.

Horses can learn to live and comply with harsh treatment if it is consistently applied, however it does not generate a true partnership. They simply become shut down and ticking bombs waiting to one day explode - is my observation. Whereas, dealing with firm yet benevolent non-confrontive leadership also in a consistent fashion generates a long lasting solid partnership resulting in “interested and more accurate attention” being paid by horse to rider rather than fearful attention, which is not always accurate as opposition reflex can become ingrained.

### *Riding & Training Advice:*

For every muscle we tense as riders, the horse will tense one as well. If we relax then so will our horse. By offering the method of pressure - release for all physical and implied pressures that we apply to our horses (whether with rein, voice or leg) they quickly recognize it to be much more akin to what they originally learned from their mothers and will become more ready to follow so long as we are clear and concise with our messages / requests.

Folks have asked me how horses have dealt in the past with harsh human behavior before the last 90+ years of Natural Horsemanship awakening. The answer is actually simple in that horses can deal with most any kind of human behavior a survival mechanism - so long as it is consistent. This can be seen and felt by feeling how stiff / hard they can become along the esophagus and down their neck underside when their heads are up. Some even over develop crests due to holding too much stress response in their necks for too long. This under-neck stiffness indicates stress load retention in order to exist in uncomfortable situations or worries. Many years back I realized that was not the best way for horses to live so I began practicing what is today known as Natural Horsemanship - where non confrontive,

albeit firm, benevolent leadership is practiced along with two way communication being understood by both horse and rider. I have found horses to be extremely responsive to these methods and they can carry on with their lives in a much more cooperative manner.

As always, rein control should be accomplished via slow, steady soft yet firm hands and with definite rein to bit contact without jerking. Remembering to be firm yet benevolent via releases as the horse complies. Use well timed releases (pressure release) with no constant or static pressure and never “jerk” unnecessarily on the reins. Although sometime “blocking” may be required to reprimand when a horse “roots” and in such cases simply hold the block (often against your leg) until the root or “brace” is released by him and then you should immediately release the blocking rein.

Never pull directly back on the rein and bit ring when asking for turns. Initially ask for a slight lateral /upward movement, which moves the horses jaw (via use of a chinstrap, not curb strap) and face slightly to the side. This protects the edges / corners of the mouth. Once the head is slightly turned then it is much less likely you will initiate pain when pulling back. In both movements, pressure release action is most important in maintaining a soft and compliant horse mouth. By using the reins in this manner, as well as slightly lifting on the plane naturally shaped by the line from your elbow to the corner of the horses mouth, your horse will become ever softer and responsive for turns and other movements, as there will be no pain associated.

***Riding tool tip:*** An excellent tool for general and many competitive riding activities is the use of a Billy Allen sweet iron snaffle bit with a tube/collar holding the center joint from completely folding / pinching and more or less becoming a Mullen mouth shape. Currently sold in the UK under the name Reinsman 292 (sweet iron bit with a tube/collar in the middle joint). The bit should (as should most bits) be used with a chin strap fitted close enough to prevent the bit from being pulled out the side of the mouth and effectively turning the entire lower jaw. I have convinced many riders to use these and none of the horses have ever rejected or disliked such bit and arrangement. Very important not to allow and chrome material to touch a horses teeth as that caused electrolysis and is very uncomfortable.

***Ya'll ride safely and I hope this information has been helpful.***

***Lewis aka Blackie Blackburn,***

**[www.blackburnnaturalhorsetraining.com](http://www.blackburnnaturalhorsetraining.com),**  
**[blackieb@btconnect.com](mailto:blackieb@btconnect.com), 01799-543711, 0771-8317654**