

Training Advice

An important constant in training is to avoid being autocratic and our efforts should always be non-confrontationally directed toward creating confidence & trust between humans and horses. This method / attitude is much more efficient than fighting, beating or berating our horses. Patience & understanding, using firm (albeit beneficial) leadership, generally generates a desire in the horse to discover and see /trust us as their leader. 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 to have discovered (with an Uncles help) and made the changes in my attitude over many years. My experiences with many thousands of horses and their problems have proved me with and solidified the methods that I use and advocate. I continue to work improving my consistency with application of these methods. Consistency has been a huge key in succeeding with horses.

Horses can (and all too often do) learn to live and comply with harsh treatment if it is consistently applied. However, such mistreatment does not generate a true partnership. My observation has been that horses can often become shut down and ticking bombs waiting to one day explode. By dealing in firm, yet benevolent and non-confrontive leadership, in a consistent, patient fashion generates long lasting solid partnerships. This generally results in interested and more accurate attention being paid by horse to riders and trainers - rather than fearful attention which isn't always accurate and can generate the natural reaction of "opposition reflex".

Riding Advice:

For every muscle we may tense as riders, horse's often tense one as well. If we relax then so will they. By offering the (millions of years) naturally understood method of "**pressure - release**" for all physical and/or body language pressures which we may apply to our horses (whether via reins, spurs, voice or legs) - they quickly recognize our signals are read to be much more akin to what they originally learned from their mothers. They generally will be more comfortable following - so long as we are clear and consistent.

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 as a survival mechanism - so long as it is consistent. The harsh methods do not generate good working relationships or partnerships as we wish, however they can survive. The negative aspects of this can be recognized / felt by feeling how stiff and 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

bodies for far too long. As explained above the problem can be alleviated rather quickly by practicing what today is known as Natural Horsemanship. The application of which can generate good two-way communication and security between horses and riders/trainers. I have found horses to be extremely responsive to these methods and they can carry on with their lives in a much more cooperative and trusting 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 of pressure** once 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 via added controlled re-directed work or when a horse “roots”, simply hold the block (often against your leg) until the root or “brace” is released by them - then you should immediately release the blocking position.

Never pull directly back (nor statically) on reins and bit rings when asking for turns. Initially ask with slight pressure release lateral or slightly upward movement before asking the side movement. Even if done in an incorrect static fashion (as could be the case in an emergency) you can still succeed as via the use of a chinstrap, not curb strap (as explained above), the jaw will be safely moved to the side. Once the head is slightly turned then it is much less likely you will initiate pain if you must pull directly back to generate an abrupt turn if needed. In all cases, pressure release action is still important in maintaining a soft and compliant horse's 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. This tube helps the bit, more or less, become a Mullen mouth shape which is very comfortable to horses. The sweet-iron aspect prevents "electrolysis" from occurring whenever the horse's teeth touch the normally chrome portion across the bar area as it does in many conventional bits. These bits are currently sold in the UK under the name "Reinsman 292". The bit should (*as should most bits*) be used with a chin strap fitted ABOVE the reins connection to the bit ring (thus avoiding the effect of a curb chain. The "chin strap" should be tightened sufficiently in order to prevent the bit from being pulled out the sides of the mouth in emergency rein pressure moves. This way the chin strap and bit effectively turns the entire lower jaw without any pain. I have

convinced many U.K. riders to use this arrangement and to date none of the horses have ever rejected nor disliked such bits and chin strap arrangement. **Very important note: avoid allowing any chrome material to touch a horse's teeth, as the nickel material in the chrome causes electrolysis which is very uncomfortable. Much as it would feel for humans to touch their teeth to tin foil.**

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

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