

Riding & Training Perspectives

This month I thought it worthwhile to make a point regarding the high esteem in which Cowboys are held in the United States and in many other Countries.

The United States Senate named the cowboy a national icon and dedicated a National American Cowboy Day (a National Holiday in the States) to represent and appropriately celebrate his and her role in the development of the United States. The first such Holiday was July 23, 2005. The Senate resolution is number **S. Res. 138.**

The resolution (in brief) recognizes : that the cowboy spirit continues to infuse America with its solid character, sound family values and good common sense; to embody honesty, integrity, courage, compassion, respect, a strong work ethic and patriotism; the cowboy is an excellent steward, protecting and enhancing the environment; continues to play a significant role in America's culture and economy; there are approximately 800,000 ranchers conducting business in all of the 50 United States; Rodeo is the sixth most watched sport in America; membership in rodeo and other organizations surrounding the livelihood of a cowboy transcends race and gender and spans every generation. It further states that the Cowboy is an American Icon; it recognizes the ongoing contributions made by cowboys to their communities and that it should be recognized and encouraged.

To this end the Senate designated July 23, 2005 as the first "National Day of the Cowboy" and encourages the people of the United States to observe the day with appropriate ceremonies and activities. There has never before been such a resolution passed by the United States Senate and it makes me extremely proud to be a cowboy. It is no small job to maintain the high standards set out in that resolution.

Now back to riding and training perspectives:

Riding:

Napping can come from obstinacy and/or worries. It is important to remember that when dealing with napping riders need to resist the error of trying to directly change the direction of the horse by attempting to move them opposite to the direction of the napping (generating an opposition reflex). Instead and in a non confrontational style, go with the direction of the horse by using a direct rein (with normal pressure not extremely heavy pressure, which will again only illicit opposition reflex) then carry on beyond the initial target that the horse intended and on toward our newly chosen direction. In this manner the rider does not constrain the horse, nor create opposition reflex and basically take over the movement of the feet.

Another reminder:

An observation I have made here in the UK, as well as in Europe and back home in the States, is that ultimately it takes a much more competent rider to stay on an unruly, confused or frightened horse. Therefore it is commonplace to lose one's confidence when the unruliness finally takes its toll and the rider is dumped in a "hard" fashion.

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Therefore it is important for all riders to learn and practice single rein controls (both direct and indirect rein) along with better rider positioning in the saddle when attempting to regain control. Lost confidence can be regained fairly quickly by learning these things.

Until next time, have fun and stay safe and have a Merry Christmas.

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