



## Philosophy Of Training

Volume 1, No 2

Foundation  
Horsemanship  
Level One Series

### Introduction

When we are training our horses, our goals should be to help the horse learn in a calm and structured manner, providing an environment that best suits the particular horse. Horses have three areas of learning, physical, mental and emotional.

#### Physical

The physical side of the horse includes the mechanics that allow the horse to walk, trot, canter, sidepass etc. We apply cues to communicate physically with the horse what we want him to do.

#### Mental

The thought processes and natural instincts of the horse make up the mental side of our horse. We need to be able to tap into these in order to communicate effectively with our horse. The horse can use these to work with us or against us.

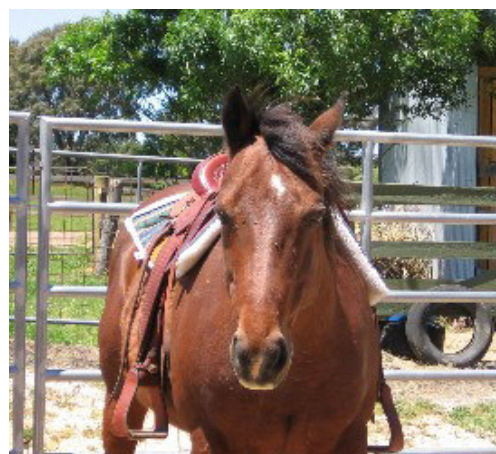
#### Emotional

The horse won't learn if he is upset, anxious or scared. We need to ensure we try and keep the horse calm at all times. This does not mean quitting if the horse tries to avoid what we are asking him. If we are sure we have prepared the horse correctly then we need to maintain a firm and assertive attitude till the horse complies with our request.

### 1. How Horses learn

If we cue a horse to perform a movement for us, e.g. apply rein pressure to get him to give to the bit. He does not know instantly what we want (although it might seem logical to us), he will try certain things to get relief from the pressure. When he responds with what we want we release the pressure instantly and after some repetition he will learn that a certain response to a certain cue gives him the relief he wants.

Consistent repetition is the secret to getting a horse solid in responding to our cues. Try to teach only one cue/response at a time. If you mix cues then the horse and the rider can become confused. For instance if you are asking the horse to give to the bit as he is walking forward and he stops without giving to the bit.



Don't start giving the cue to go forward as well as asking to give to the bit. Just wait till he gives to the bit then cue him to move forward. When he understands both cues well you can start to combine them.

### 2. The Learning Curve

Horses don't learn in a linear fashion, e.g they do not improve their responses to a cue in a predictable and incremental way. Rather they will improve their responses then fall away again (sometimes to the point where we think they have 'lost it'). But each time they improve they will improve to a higher level and drop away not as low as they have been previously.

### 3. Our Responsibilities

Our responsibilities to the horse are to be consistent in everything we do, how we ask for responses, our attitude to the horse and our reward to the horse. We must reward the horse both physically and emotionally when he does the right thing and only reprimand if he is doing something dangerous such as biting, kicking etc. We have a duty to learn all we can about the horse, what works best and what is best for him.

We must not ever physically or emotionally abuse the horse.



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### 4. The Horses Responsibilities

Our horse has the responsibility to act as he has been trained or his instincts dictate. If he has been trained to a certain level of responses then we expect him to be consistent in those responses. We cannot expect him to do things he has not been trained for or for reacting in a way that is natural to him and that he has not been trained to be able to handle.

### 5. Applying Pressure

In most instances we cue our horse for a response by applying pressure either with our body, the rein or the lead rope. We apply pressure and wait for the horse to respond with the correct response.

Don't try and force the horse into providing the correct response, this will only cause the horse to tense more and turn off his ability to learn. Always ask with pressure and wait for the horse to work it out. Immediately the horse responds with the correct response (even if we believe he just thought about the response) then the release. By consistent repetition of this process our horse will learn what we are asking with each cue.

