

Horsing around: Catching and haltering your horse

By Birgit Stutz

One of the first things I teach my students is how to properly approach and “catch” a horse. I think of catching as in “catching a ball”, backing up and drawing it into you, as opposed to “capturing”.

Before you approach your horse, make sure you have turned off all your predatory moves and instincts. By this I mean learn to move like a horse, by moving in arcs and bends in your body to the horse’s body, not in a straight line to its head. Horses are acutely aware of angles.

If your horse is standing with his hip cocked towards you, which means his head is out and away from you,

ask him to move his hip away from you with pushing energy from your core, or, if he doesn’t respond to that, use your fingers to apply pressure on his hip. This will bring his front end towards you. Back away a few steps in front of your horse and draw him towards you, with your body slightly folded. Then approach the horse’s shoulder on an arc, with the halter in your outside hand (away from the horse’s head). Praise him by scratching his withers or shoulders. Put your right arm over the horse’s neck (from the withers), then pass the throatlatch of the halter to your right hand (underneath the neck). Or, holding the halter by the throatlatch, drop the halter over the side of your horse’s withers and slide it towards its nose. Make sure you keep your core (belly button) folded away from his head while you are doing all this. Ask your horse to lower his head and drop it into the halter. If he doesn’t do so on his own, arc your left hand around the horse’s nose to cup it, with your thumb on the left side and your fingers on the right. Put your right hand on your horse’s poll to cup it, and firmly but gently flex its head down and around you in a massaging right-left movement until you can feel him relax and soften. If your horse doesn’t soften right away, be patient, be consistent and make sure your body language is user-friendly.

It is important to bring your horse’s head down before you try to put the halter on. Only when his head is level or low is his mind calm and relaxed and accepting of your request. If he is high-headed and braced, he says “no” to whatever you are asking of him. A lot of horses instinctively turn away from people and lift

their head up and out because a human’s core and/or bend (hip) tends to be in their face.

Horses determine what they will do for us – or won’t do for us – based on the anticipation of how they will feel about what is being asked of them. Horses are extremely psychological. They don’t separate how their body feels from how their mind reacts. So whenever you are around your horse, or any horse for that matter, be aware of your body language at all times.

If you still can’t catch your horse and need grain to get him to come to you or if you have to hide the halter behind your back in order to approach him, take a serious look at the relationship you have with this horse. Most likely not being able to catch a horse is an issue of lack of trust and/or respect or due to inappropriate human body language. Be aware of your own body language and learn to become fluent in horse body language. Respect your horse’s space, especially around his head. Make sure your angles of approach are user-friendly, and develop an awareness of your three different energies, pushing, drawing and blocking.

And please do not leave a halter on an unattended horse ever. It is a recipe for disaster.

Birgit Stutz is a Chris Irwin Silver Certified Trainer and Coach and has been involved with horses for a quarter century. She owns and operates Falling Star Ranch in Dunster together with her husband. Birgit welcomes any questions related to horses. Send your questions to birgit@thevalleysentinel.com



Notice

The Village of McBride will be accepting sealed bids for the following item:

13 pieces – Series 560 – 14” x 60’ T J I’s

The units will be sold “as is, where is”, the successful bidder will be responsible for removing the pieces from the McBride Community Hall Site prior to December 19, 2007.

Anyone interested in submitting a bid may deliver their bid in a sealed envelope to the **Village of McBride Office** prior to **4:00 pm December 3, 2007** and ensure that the envelope is addressed as follows:

RE: TJI Bid

Village of McBride Office
100 Robson Centre
McBride, BC
VOJ 2E0

Attention: *Eliana Clements, CAO*

The lowest or any bid will not necessarily be accepted

Valemount Learning Centre
Box 789, Valemount, BC V0E 2Z0
Ph: 566 4601

Ground Disturbance

Date: Dec. 2 2007 Time: 8:30am - 1:00pm
Cost: \$105.00+gst

Confined Space

Date: Nov. 30 2007 Time: 6:00pm - 10:00pm
Cost: \$75.00+gst

H2S Alive

Date: Dec. 1 2007 Time: 8:30am - 4:30pm
Cost: \$250.00+gst

Scared Stiff to Computer Confident

Date: Nov. 27 & 28 2007 Time: 6:30pm - 9:30pm
Cost: \$60.00+gst

Occupational First Aid - Level I

Dates: Dec. 7 or 8 2007 Time: 8:30am - 4:30pm
Cost: 98.00+gst

Foodsafe - Level I

Date: Nov. 24 2007 Time: 8:30am - 5:00pm
Cost: 88.00+gst

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P.O. Box 108, Valemount, BC, V0E 2Z0
Phone: (250) 566-4474 Fax: (250) 566-4350

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November 28, 2007
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

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