

Over many years I've read the books, taken the lessons, cried the tears of frustration and marvelled at my horse's patience. Where has this left me?

My Rules of Engagement

What are the cornerstones of my training philosophy

1. Firstly, I fully believe in encouraging the horse to be a horse. Respect and understanding of all things that make him equine is essential. Ignorance of this demeans him and endangers me and our relationship. From this base I can form a common understanding and mutual trust. Understanding and applying the basics of equine learning is essential for all trainers and carers of horses.
2. Living as close to nature intended is crucial, as is equine enrichment. Horses living in an impoverished environment will be stressed.
3. Training horses starts with calm; look for it, encourage it. Horses can show stress in very subtle ways.
4. Set up a training environment to encourage desired behaviour. Hungry, thirsty, tired and demotivated horses should not be expected to train.
5. Use play as a motivator.
6. Tempted to use physical force? Go back; your horse isn't correctly prepared. Force is unacceptable when training horses.
7. Most gadgets are a means of covering mistakes or an attempt to prevent unwanted behaviour; avoid them.
8. Simplicity wins every time. Shape responses, adding clearly understood behaviour specific cues, according to a well thought out plan.
9. Respond to feedback from the horse; your training may not always follow the chapters of the book you are studying!
10. A clicker is just a noise maker combined with suitable rewards to enable clear cut shaping. It is a powerful tool in support of good training but it has no power without an able trainer to apply it.
11. There are indeed many roads to Rome; don't become blinded by the goal, see the path before you and take one very small step at a time.
12. Mistakes happen, don't bury yourself in guilt-tomorrow is another day to be better.



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