

Introduction to Groundwork: Initial Round Pen Work.

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Introduction:

Natural Horsemanship: Involves the effort to match training techniques to those used by horses in a herd setting.

1. The goal is the establishment of a partnership relationship with the human in control, that is, with the human as the “Alpha horse.”
2. This involves bringing about a shift in the horse from purely instinctive behavior to learned behavior, from pure flight in the face of fear to looking to a human for direction.
2. This control is used to the end of
 1. Creating a desire in the horse to be with you and respond to your requests.
 2. Bringing about changes in behavior for safety and to help in attaining performance goals.
3. The pressure we use in this is not “predator-like pressure/force” but “prey-like pressure” as is used in establishing and maintaining the herd pecking order. As in the horse world it needs to be just stronger than the resistance and withdrawn the moment the horse yields to you. This results in discipline as is known by horses in a herd setting.

Example of correct Natural Horsemanship pressure: The “Take your Space” game. You advance to stand where the horse is presently standing. You create pressure by your energy and position before you ever get to him. He must move out of your way or you increase your pressure until he does. As the “dominant horse,” you have the right to any spot you choose. This flows from the hierarchical nature of the horse world that demands that one horse/leader be in control at all times, or chaos erupts in the ranks.

The Rules: 1. Horses must move when asked.

2. They are not allowed to run you over, bite or kick you.

All else is Negotiable

The Negotiation: What I want as a natural horseman:

- 1. For the horse to stand and face me.**
- 2. Allow me to touch him/her all over.**
- 3. Move calmly off my “prey-like” pressure.**
- 4. Overall, I want to gain her trust and respect.**

What the Horse Wants:

- 1. First, to Survive, at any cost.**
- 2. Freedom from pressure, esp. from predators.**
- 3. Rest, Calm. To be able to graze and play.**
- 4. The social context of a herd.**
- 5. A Leader. Herself or another. No democracy.**

Initial Problems:

1. For the Handler.

- 1. Learn to use “soft focus,” on ultimate goals.**
- 2. Adjust second by second to what the horse needs.**
- 3. To be persistent; outlast resistance.**
- 4. Not to over clue.**
- 5. Gain a feel for “prey-like” pressure.**
- 6. Overall, project calmness and focus on your body language rather than on getting fast results.**

2. For the Horse.

- 1. The horse must learn alternatives to their instinctual reaction of “flight,” in response to any frightening situation.**
- 2. The horse must learn not to invade the handler’s space/bubble.**
In short, the horse must learn to focus on what is being asked by the handler, and think and choose among several possible way to remove the pressure that is being applied.

Overall, what you will see in this Process:

- 1. The reduction of fear of the human.**
- 2. The development of a degree of Trust and Respect between horse and handler.**
- 3. Communication through body language that is similar to that used in a herd.**

All of this is directed towards preparation of the horse willingly to accept control by a human, both on the ground and on its back.

Initial Work: Developing Trust, Respect and Establishing Lines of Communication.

1. Work at Liberty:

Drive: Send, Allow, Change Directions.

[Start students with a flag, then a lead rope, then a lariat].

Draw: Drop back and step over in front of horse's shoulder.

If horse sticks at rail, push on HQ & draw. [Catching procedure]

Contact &: Follow-Up.

2. Work on Line.

Horse yields hindquarters, and you walk away: [Initial exercise for safety].

Sack-Out: Hand, Lariat, Flag and Lead Itossing.

Jump at side.

[Close attn: Cinch area, legs].

Lead: 1. Off holding in the face of resistance.

2. Off HQ yield

3. Off send.

Establish Backing-Up [hand on nose, under halter, from a distance].

Back, Come-to-you, and Stand. [Yo-Yo].

Lower Head [hand on bridge of nose and pole].

Send on Circle: [Addresses Yielding & Bubble].

Slide down, step towards shoulder,

lift arm, swing lead [minimally].

Belly button on flank, eyes ahead on circle.

Focus on "Taking his Space."

Keep moving forward and maintain bubble till yield.

If Pulling: Sidepass down the fence line in the direction of the pull until HQ shifts away from you, then allow horse to pass between you and the fence.

Allow: Keep attention on and Energy off.

Keep belly-button back, eyes in the direction of movement.

[Same as trailing a cow or "remaining alive" in the saddle]

Change Directions: “Slack & Back”

Hold for two eyes.

Slide down lead to indicate new direction.

Advance towards outside shoulder.

Send on: Increase speed if not a change directions.

Squeeze: Advance to panels while circling.

HQ

HQ & Front-end through.

HQ & Diagonal; walk away.

“Follow-the Feel”

Flank & Belly Rope Work

If Preparing for Starting:

Blanket and Saddle sacking and acceptance.

Repeat all earlier exercises under saddle.

3. Advanced Liberty Work :

1. Changing eyes & Driving from Neck and Body Pressure.
2. Circling while standing still in center.
[Limit the number of times around].
3. “Send & Squeeze” by walking backwards towards panels.
4. “Plow the Field.”

4. Optional.

1. Send through gate as preparation for trailer loading.
Send in & out of three-sided panel set up for trailer loading preparation.
3. Send over small jump at liberty/on line.
4. Bull whip.
5. “Send & Squeeze.” Back to panels while horse is circling.
6. Pen Wheel.
7. Transitions at Liberty.
8. Stop and Back at Liberty while circling.
9. Lead by tail, leg.
10. Laying down