

Manners can save Horses



Every horse will need hoof care regularly and Veterinary care sometimes. If your horse is not used to having his hooves handled, he can likely harm someone or harm himself. If you need a Veterinarian's care in an emergency, the manners you have taught your horse could be a life saver.

Every horse should be taught to lift his hooves and allow us to clean, inspect and trim them. It is ideal to do this with the youngsters and just continue throughout their lives, lifting and holding each hoof up each day. Often, though, we have horses whose beginnings in life were bereft of this basic schooling and we must start (just as we would to teach the colt) by asking him to lift a front leg/hoof briefly, then letting him put it back down. After a while, when the horse is at ease with the lifting of front limbs, we can carefully ask for the hind hoof on each side.

It is important to reward every good effort. A horse is much more likely to do things seeking reward than trying to avoid punishment.

By slowly accustoming the horse to this handling of his hooves and gradually increasing the time he holds them for us, we create good manners that will serve this horse well. The horse who resists or fights with the hoof trimmer or farrier will likely have to be handled roughly and he will learn to hate the process.

It is a good idea to teach all horses to stand tied by their halter and lead rope. It is important for horses to lead confidently and listen to their handlers. When a Veterinarian is needed for regular care or, especially, in a medical emergency, you want the horse to be calm and obedient on the lead so that any care can be safely

given. I like to teach horses to accept oral dosing by putting applesauce in a syringe and, over time, placing the syringe at the corner of their mouths while pressing some of the sauce for them to taste. If the horse gets used to having a treat “pasted” into his mouth often, when a wormer or medication needs to be dosed, there will not be a fight about it.

When a Vet needs to draw blood or inject medicine into a vein (at the horse’s neck), I will gently cover the horse’s eye on that side so he will not see the needle. If I often just cover that eye for no reason, then reward him, he won’t be worried about me doing it for the Vet.

When a Vet or farrier is coming, always catch your horse and have him ready on his halter and lead – no professional should have to wait while you trudge across 40 acres to get the animal. Of course, emergencies are always exceptions.

It is good to know your horse’s normal pulse, respiration and temperature so you can relay a difference to the Vet and, knowing that the Vet needs to take the temperature (rectally), it is good for your horse to know how to accept the process.

The more things you can calmly and routinely bring to your horse’s experiences, the easier it will be for him to handle the needed procedures of life.