

30 Days Does Not Make a Well Broke Horse, Folks (Neither will 90, if you were wondering): What Trainers and Horses Need YOU to Know

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If we could only make this truth fully understood in the horse world, how much time and trouble would horses, buyers, owners, and trainers save?

Fewer horses would be mishandled, misunderstood, and exchanged. Trainers would keep their reputations intact. Owners/Buyers would realize it is "they" who would need continual training and seek it out...

We'd all hold hands and sing "We Are The World," but I am off-track now.

Some years ago, I sent my 8 year old Arabian mare to a friend to start under saddle. She had her one year. Weather and time meant this friend put about 120 days of work into Champagne. At the end when she came back to me, Raven took her into a few classes at a show, and the pair did well. When she came back, she was a well started, sensible mare suitable for a solid intermediate rider. My expectations were met. They were fair. The trainer did a lovely job. The expectations on my horse were reasonable. Success.

When you take an un-started horse to a trainer, thirty days is not enough. The bare minimum should be 90 days. Longer is better. Sure, it costs money. Horses cost a fortune, and there is no way around that. Of course, make sure you select an honest trainer with a track record of putting the time you're paying for into the horse. Ideally, visit the trainer and take lessons, once it is possible, on the horse you have in training, as well. 30 days is not enough to the vast majority of horse owners to step in and continue with success with the horse. You're setting the horse up for failure, and you're setting the trainer up for a bad reputation, as you've taken the horse out of training too soon. You will set the horse back and blame the "bad trainer" for your failure. The only fault will be your own, though.

What your horse and trainer can do together after 30, 60 and 90 days are not necessarily what you and your horse can do together. Since you sought out a trainer, you're not one. It means you need to be super engaged in the process with your horse, actively in lessons, and seeking to learn yourself if you want to recreate the success you're seeing unfold with your horse in training.

The expectation of a 90 day horse is that they now have a solid foundation of the basics. What those basics actually are will vary on the horse, age, and trainer, but regardless, you do not have a finished horse, friends. You do not "USUALLY" have a beginner safe horse, either. The expectation that you could is unfair to the horse, and to the industry, really. Additionally, the horse will also not necessarily retain ALL of what he learns, unless you continue to work with the horse with a similar skill set and method regularly. So if you aren't continuing your own education, you're going to undo what the horse has actually learned.

I see it so often:

- Horse has 30 days
- Owner can't ride horse
- Sells horse
- Horse ends up in a bad situation
- Trainer is maligned, even though the trainer told the owner the horse would need longer
- Owner never takes lessons
- Buys another horse and starts an unkind cycle of horse exchange looking for a unicorn.

The owner may eventually get a well broke horse that has, whether they know it or not, had years of training and good handling. The chances are that owner will undo some of that good training, though, as the person never bothered to seek out "training" for his/her self, but that is another blog, another story.

The moral? Be fair to your horse and your trainer.

1. Give the horse what he needs to get a solid start.
2. Good horses deserve good riders, so "train" yourself so that you're knowledgeable enough to work with your horse effectively.
3. Understand a well-rounded, well-trained horse takes years to develop, and they are worth that investment.
4. Good training isn't quick. Good trainers aren't cheap.