

THE COUNTRY COB

CONTENT . COMMUNITY . CONNECTION . COLLABORATION

A photograph of a grey and white horse running through a field of tall grass and wildflowers. The horse is captured in mid-stride, with its mane and tail slightly raised. The background is a soft, hazy landscape under a bright sky.

The
Simplicity
Issue



Happy January 2024! Seemingly a great time for us to launch this issue with the theme "Simplicity".

We decided on this theme because the New Year is historically a time of new beginnings, clearing out the old, reprioritising and becoming the next best version of ourselves. Time seems to be moving faster than ever and as we evolve and navigate through an ever changing world we also need to re-examin outdated philosophies when it comes to Horsemanship.

Progressive Horsemanship is taking shape as we move away from models of Horsemanship that have become obsolete. It is up to us to create sustainable ideologies that serve both the horse and human best. It is in the spirit of this that we have put this newsletter together. A small team of individuals who are dedicated to being change agents, who have strong yet agreeable philosophies and who invite conversation without criticism and involvement without judgement as we

collectively pioneer the new way of the horse. More specifically we are also excited to contribute to a community of like minded Equestrians who can think for themselves and practice analytical thinking. Skills which are necessary in all aspects of Horsemanship.

On a lighter note, the simple pleasure with horses is captured in the moments when we experience freedom through our connection with them, whether sitting quietly in observation with them or transcending the limitations of our own worlds when we ride. Our cover image by Tracy Robertson is a true encapsulation of this.

If there is a topic of interest that you feel needs to be covered and you would like to contribute please email us: info@horsetalksa.co.za

If you like what you read please pass this issue on. You can easily subscribe at www.horsetalksa.co.za if you wish to receive The Country Cob on a quarterly basis.

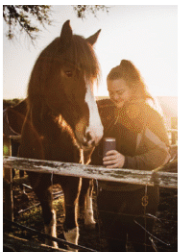
Happy Reading and Happy Riding 🐾

The Contributing Team



RIDER FITNESS NIKKI BARNES

With a background in competitive riding, natural horsemanship and mindset coaching. Nikki is on an ever evolving mission to improve her own connection to her mind and body through mindfulness, powerful movement practices and connection based equine work.



HOLISTIC SAMANTHA ANCY

Holds a diploma in Equine Psychology, is a certified FTR and EFTR Practitioner and has recently completed the Equuscience Master Class Course. Her focus is on horse-human relationships and examining equine behaviour within this dynamic.



EDUCATION STEPHEN WOLF

Hooked on horses as a child growing up in Jhb, Stephen is now a qualified Instructor, Certified Equine Therapy Specialist, Certified Assessor and Equitation Judge. He is passionate about coaching and growing professionals in the industry with a focus on harmonious horse and human connection.



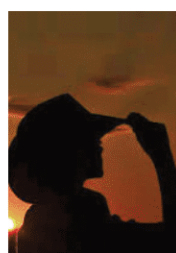
INTEGRATIVE TRAINING TRACY CIOLLI

A teacher in training with Phillippe Karl's Ecole de Légèreté, Tracy is always looking for more skills and knowledge to incorporate into her training. Her teaching focusses on two-way communication, emotion and physical balance. Her approach is humble, open minded and structured.



HORSE CARE VENESSA KAFFKA

Has been involved with horses for the past 40 years. She has extensive stud and stable management experience. She has bred and produced Warmbloods and Arabians for the competitive market. She has a keen interest in nutrition and natural remedies.



CONTRIBUTOR DEBRA PADDOCK

Debra started her career in England and has over 6 decades of horsemanship to her name. As life progressed she discovered she was unable to live without horses. There is little she hasn't tried and is delighted to share her observations of a life long love affair with horses.

Disclaimer: Please note that any opinions expressed by writers and contributors are theirs alone, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The Country Cob or HorsetalkSA.



CONTROL vs RESPONSIBILITY

ARE WE TRAINING FOR CONTROL OR COMMUNICATION?

Control, Responsibility, Communication. What do these terms mean to you? How do we apply them? Are we doing the best we can do, or can we do better? Are we really doing what we say or think we are doing?

We need to ensure that our philosophy aligns with the manner and method with which we train and that we are self aware and critical in our thinking when it comes to what is best for our horses. Very often there is a difference in what we believe in, what we believe we are doing, and what we are actually doing. Control as such could have a positive or negative connotation for you. If you need to feel safe, control seems like a positive thing. If you want to be respectful and kind to your horse, the idea of control may seem negative. Many people face the dilemma of wanting to be kinder but 'need control for safety'. Perhaps the term influence rather than control is a more appropriate alternative? - This could suggest leadership and responsibility without the attachment to a desired outcome.

The reality is that the more we try to create a feeling of control through force or complicated

reasoning the less safe we actually feel. A simpler approach allows a greater feeling of safety for horse and human and displays a deeper understanding of what is required. Simplicity lies in the balance between too much and too little, the essential without extra. Too much or too little creates confusion and anxiety. Simplicity is stripping away what is unnecessary and obscures the truth (like aids or equipment relying on force and leverage or excessive information), so that only the essentials remain. It doesn't mean taking away what is minimally necessary (if needs are not met or information is deficient for clarity this also leads to stress and misunderstanding). Simplicity implies responsibility to do or give enough without doing or giving too much. It is our responsibility to find that balance.

Is control for safety essential? Can we really control the horse? Do we even have the right to? Firstly, consider that we actually cannot take control of the horse without permission - it's a gift the horse can give and not one that is our to take. Secondly, consider that we put the horse in these situations, so we don't have the automatic right to

“A mandatory rule for any training is that the horses feeling of safety should never be compromised and unnecessary tension should be avoided at all costs.”

use whatever means necessary to feel safe. When the horse gifts us control, we have responsibility towards them - not only to ensure that they are safe but also that they feel safe. Good communication helps the horse feel safe and we are more likely to be safe once this is established. Wanting control to impose our will on the horse is questionable in itself - If we want the horse to do what we want, it comes with responsibility to meet the horses' needs without resorting to force.

A mandatory rule for any training is that the horse's feeling of safety should never be compromised and unnecessary tension should be avoided at all costs. We must ensure that the horse is not in discomfort and that our methods do not cause pain or compromise long-term wellbeing. We have the responsibility to refrain from asking something that the horse is not emotionally or physically capable of. We have the responsibility to develop the horse slowly and correctly and to enable them to do as we ask without causing them harm. In this regard, we should be cognizant of our own development - gaining awareness and control over ourselves (our physical and emotional imbalances significantly affect our horses) and improve our ability to communicate simply and effectively so that the horse can clearly understand what we want.

Our need for control usually arises out of our inability to communicate well. In general, it can be said that most people are not very good at even communicating with each other. Good communication requires a balance between sending and receiving. Not only do we often battle to explain ourselves in a simple understandable way, but we also tend to struggle with receiving communication. We don't always truly hear what the other is saying. When communication fails because we cannot express ourselves well or because we

don't consider the feedback, we often resort to control. Shouting louder at someone who doesn't understand, who is scared, in pain or cannot do what we are asking is nonsensical and does not solve anything. Similarly, communication to your horse needs to be simple, understandable and should not cause anxiety or pain.

SOME SIMPLE TIPS

- Take the time to break down and explain simple aids and smaller aspects of the movements or objective you are trying to achieve - when the individual pieces are clear it becomes easier to create more complex movements.
- Don't underestimate the value of explaining things on the ground. Any problems you experience under saddle already manifest in ground work.
- Communication needs to flow both ways - observe and convey.
- Remove any form of restrictive equipment preventing horses from opening their mouths, throwing their heads in the air or bolting. These behaviors don't need to be controlled they need to be listened to.
- Don't shut down the feedback - you wouldn't turn off the fire alarm and assume that the fire is out? If your horse is giving 'undesirable' feedback, you have the responsibility to investigate why.

Finally, we should often check in and question whether we are doing the best we can. When we feel challenged in our training it is equally important to have trusted resources to fall back on as it is to question and consider what works, what is correct knowledge and what needs to be questioned and updated. With the correct knowledge, skills and a questioning mind we are constantly evolving and raising the bar for the best training outcomes. 🐾

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Horse & Human RELATIONSHIPS



While a horse is still a horse, and a human is, well, a habitual overthinker, we can connect in a simpler, more genuine way by embracing the horse's nature and our own instincts. Being human in an interspecies relationship means bringing understanding and care without trying to make the animal resemble our own interactions and responses. It's about respecting their nature while sharing compassion and connection.

So how can we fill our relationship bank to best benefit our equine partners?

Be consistent: It involves using a stable and uniform approach by using simple, clear, communication. Horses respond well to clear signals, they are exceptionally perceptive and will easily pick up on our inconsistencies. To a horse, consistency translates to honesty, it means you are dependable and reliable, qualities that build trust.

Body Language: Learn to read the horse's body language and facial expressions. This helps in understanding their emotions and needs, allowing for better communication and responsiveness. Being supportive through different emotional states that manifest in the body helps to fulfil the horse's need for feelings to be understood which in turn strengthens social bonds. Areas in the body where this will manifest are ears, eyes, lips, muzzle, body posture, tail and movement.

Simplicity in Training: Break down training into small, manageable steps. Keep sessions short and focused on achievable goals to prevent overwhelming the horse. Allow the horse the time to process in a relaxed stress-free environment. The brain's response to stress often prioritizes survival-related functions over learning and abstract thinking. Changing what you're paying attention to makes it harder to take in new information. It's important for the horse to feel supported in the learning environment, this is where relationship blends into training.

Basic Equine Psychology: Learn about the natural behaviour and instincts of horses. This understanding helps in working with their instincts rather than against them, creating a more cooperative partnership. By working within

THE FOUNDATION OF GOOD HORSEMANSHIP DOESN'T NEED TO BE COMPLICATED, IN FACT, THE ESSENCE OF EXCEPTIONAL HORSEMANSHIP THRIVES ON SIMPLICITY.

Simplicity starts with putting relationship first, it's where training becomes a conversation, a seamless dance between partners, rather than a one-sided directive, a dynamic exchange that molds itself to both the needs and responses of horse and human.

The word relationship can cover a whole myriad of things, but for the horse it is fundamentally about safety and trust. It's being seen and being heard, it's a knowing that there is an acknowledgment of concerns when they present themselves and responding with empathy and assurance.

a social framework that horses understand, you can easily establish yourself as a confident partner without resorting to force.

Build Confidence: Nurturing a horse's confidence is inherently tied to creating a safe and secure environment. Just like humans, horses thrive when they feel safe and comfortable in their surroundings. Gradually exposing new stimuli without causing unnecessary fear or panic empowers them to assess situations and make better decisions.

Spend time doing nothing: Just hang out and chill, read a book, listen to a podcast. Without expectations there is naturally less pressure to meet specific standards within the relationship. Allowing for downtime means providing the horse with the opportunity to express themselves more freely in their communication with you, rather than anticipating or offering specific behaviours.

In-hand grazing: Nothing says I love you quite like a in-hand graze while matching steps. When horses move together and in sync, it reinforces the social cohesion, strengthens the bonds within in the herd and fosters a sense of safety as a group. It's

“When we match our steps, it’s like saying, ‘We’re in this together,’ creating a strong bond like friends walking side by side.”

more than just walking side by side; it's like a dance that shows we trust each other. When we match our steps, it's like saying, 'We're in this together,' creating a strong bond like friends walking side by side. It's our way of silently telling the horse, 'I care about you.'"

Listen to the Horse: Pay attention to the horse's responses and adjust your approach accordingly. Being adaptable and responsive to the horse's needs simplifies

communication and enhances cooperation. It let's the horse know you are listening, being seen and heard increases confidence, establishes a sense of security, and strengthens the sense of trust in the relationship. It validates our feelings,

thoughts, and experiences. When we feel seen, it means our emotions and perspectives are acknowledged and respected. Likewise, being heard means our thoughts and opinions are valued and considered.

In horse-human relationships, building a bond involves listening to the horse, acknowledging their feelings, and embracing their nature without imposing our will. It's about relationship, a genuine connection, and simpler, heartfelt communication. 🐾

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SIMPLE in Nature

LOOKING BACK AT THE HISTORY OF HORSE WELFARE AND THE CONSERVANCY OF FREEDOM IN TODAY'S HORSE

I often ponder on the misunderstandings that lead to the abuse of horses, the belief systems that we hold about animals and their place in our lives. We live in a time where previously acceptable and common place methods of training and horsemanship are being questioned. Are they abusive? Is this ignorance or is it the inability of people to empathize with horses beyond the limitations of their own needs?

The Five freedoms for horses is a list of the basic physical and mental welfare rights for all horses that originated in the United Kingdom in 1965. It is quite thought provoking to read through this list in consideration of the polarity and dissension that is now being addressed in modern day horsemanship.

THE FIVE FREEDOMS ARE

- 1** Freedom from hunger and thirst and the right type of food.
- 2** Freedom from discomfort - To provide the right type of environment, including shelter and somewhere comfortable for the horse to rest.
- 3** Freedom from pain, injury and disease and prevention of illness or injury.
- 4** Freedom from fear and distress with proper care and handling.
- 5** Freedom to behave normally with enough space provided, proper facilities and the company of other horses.

Historically wild horses were nomadic herd animals that by their very nature were hard wired to conceal pain and discomfort as moving was imperative for their survival. When we refer to the natural state of the horse we are in fact referring to an idealized version of the horse's natural state and do not include in our thoughts the reality that their existence was survival

based. They were not free from being preyed upon; they were affected by drought, food shortages and the harshness of nature and its seasons. Although in one aspect they were free - free in spirit and inexplicably connected to nature and its flowing rhythms.

So, now we consider the domesticated horse. With the idealized perspective of giving them the best of what nature has to offer by removing the harshness from their reality and creating spaces for them in our environments which opposingly often comes with a level of compromise and stress. There is a well-known saying; "When you know better, you do better."

"Learn from those that have done the work, those that speak with a whisper often have the most powerful messages."

Whether your horse is at a high-end stable yard, a semi DIY outdoor livery or living in a field, there will always be pros and cons that affect the well-being of the horse. So we have to look at finding equilibrium in these environments to give our horses the most of what they need to the best of our ability.

An integral approach to horse care thus includes finding the balance between the horse's natural environment and way of living and the horse's fundamental needs in the environment in which it lives.

In addition to the 5 freedoms, the responsible horse person should strive to:

- 1** Have a good working knowledge of Equine Nutrition. If your horse is valuable to you don't unknowingly put his welfare in someone else's hands. Ignorance is bliss and can be costly! Learn the basics of equine nutrition to best understand your horses' individual needs.
- 2** Understand that Horsemanship comes before Sportsmanship. Being a good rider does not qualify a person as an Equine Professional. Learn from those that have done the work in their specific field, those that speak with a whisper often have the most powerful messages.

- 3** Acknowledge when a horse is in distress, do not dismiss discomfort as an inconvenience.
- 4** Understand that horses might be wired differently than humans but they experience pain in the same way that we do. There is a vast amount of abuse that is tolerated in Equestrian Sport due to ignorance.
- 5** Be sensitive to your horses environment - a horse is by nature a social creature and needs space. Although it is not always possible, the reality is that a horse that has enough space to move and graze and socialize will be considerably

more sound in body and mind. Keeping a horse in a convenient but unsuitable environment will drastically reduce its rideability and longevity.

One of the most profound ways that the horses' behaviors are misunderstood is that we train and keep horses in ways that affect their ability to flee. A horse will lose autonomy of its reactions and will become shut down if it cannot leave a situation where it feels anxious, scared or threatened. This can develop into a myriad of behavioral issues and by understanding this simple concept we can really ensure that the horse remains free in mind, body and spirit. Horses that are severely restricted when being ridden, in limiting paddock space, or isolated in a stabled environment illustrate this point. All of these scenarios are examples of where the horse's fight or flight nature, innate behavior, and the security that they enjoy in a herd environment are compromised.

Sensitivity to the mental well being of the modern day "kept" horse is paramount. The horse's striving to survive may no longer be its greatest challenge but the lifestyle of horse's today is remarkably mired with different challenges. The antidote to this lies in the simplicity of creating an environment as close to what the horse experiences in nature and to remember with resolve and respect who the horse really is and where it comes from. 🐾



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The principles of feeding horses are as simple or as complex as you want to make them - depending on your level of interest and what you are feeding for. The attempts of the first time horse owner when feeding is often inundated with ill informed advice and the lay person often has an unrealistic expectation of what it costs to feed the horse. The biggest challenge to correct feeding is most often auxiliary to economy. It is best to be realistic about the costs involved. What is most important to correctly fulfill the horse's nutritional requirements. It's easy to get to a point when cutting corners on feed or feed planning, can cost us more in the long run due to health related issues that manifest due to incorrect feeding.

With the changes in weather patterns and the disruption in roughage supplies that have affected the price of feed, many are looking for more cost effective and sustainable solutions to maintain their horse's health. If one can understand the fundamentals of the horse's digestive process and

nutritional requirements we can go a long way in avoiding unwanted vet bills. Feeding should always be preventative.

To establish a solid foundation for a proper feeding program, it is essential to understand the biology as well as behaviour of horses. Horse's digestive systems are designed for them to forage continuously - this is referred to as trickle feeding. Unlike us, their stomachs are continuously producing acid, this is not something that is triggered by chewing. Providing access to high-quality grazing or roughage is crucial. Horses with access to ample grazing and roughage are usually quite capable of regulating their own consumption. There are various factors that should be taken into account when considering roughage needs, for example: time spent in a stable, time spent grazing, quality and availability of grazing, and whether grass is in active growth or an out of season resting phase. While there might be plenty of grass available, during dry seasons the nutritional value will be low and supplementing with roughage will be necessary.

HOW CAN WE BEST NAVIGATE OUR HORSES' INDIVIDUAL NUTRITIONAL NEEDS?

For stabled horses: ensuring a continuous supply of roughage throughout the night is ideal while checking there is always a small amount left over in the morning. This is considered Adlib feeding.

For grazing: regularly assess the pasture's availability and quality. During dry periods, supplementation with high-quality hay becomes necessary. Opting for cheaper alternatives, or alternatives not grown specifically for horses, can lead to health issues, such as colic or respiratory problems due to mould or other contaminants.

Purchasing hay exclusively from reputable suppliers is advisable to ensure that quality control has been considered. The choice of roughage will almost always depend on availability and price. While some regions don't always have full access to variety, cutting costs with cheaper alternatives can once again cost long term. For example - different straw varieties are inexpensive, but have little nutritional value. Oat hay is a preferred option in the Western Cape due to availability and lower price. It serves as an energy source with a pleasant taste. However, in some breeds its high phosphates and low calcium content require careful consideration to maintain a balanced diet.

Preferred quality options may include Teff, Eragrostis, Rhodes grass, and Lucerne. Teff and Eragrostis are favoured choices due to their palatability and suitability for horses prone to metabolic disorders. Lucerne, a legume rich in calcium, is popular for its ability to buffer stomach acidity, making it beneficial for horses prone to, or recovering from ulcers. It is high in protein and essential amino acids, complementing other possible roughage choices.

horse food manufacturers often provide technical advisors for guidance. It is advisable to stick to one type of feed, avoid the addition of other brands or extras. As horse rations are meticulously balanced, introducing additional elements may disrupt this balance.

Simplicity in feeding is somewhat counter intuitive. Cost cutting by feeding cheaper and less quality roughage increases the risk of health related complications. The

“It’s easy to get to a point when cutting corners on feed or feed planning, can cost us more in the long run due to the physical issues that manifest due to incorrect feeding.”

FEEDING CONCENTRATES

While roughage provides essential nutrients, it may not meet the energy demands of working horses, especially when our soils are depleted of key minerals and nutrients. The amount of concentrates should be tailored to individual needs, considering factors such as body weight, energy requirements and type of work. The availability of good quality commercial concentrates is vast, there will always be a perfect balanced ration available for each horse. Selecting appropriate concentrates and determining the right amounts to feed can be challenging, but reputable

imbalances created from feeding incorrectly often create the need for supplementation, medication and even veterinary intervention. High quality sourced feed reduces these risks and become more cost effective in the long term as the amount of feed required can often be maintained and reduced as the horses health becomes established in good condition. Prioritize good roughage choices as the foundation for your horse's diet and don't hesitate to seek expert advice if unsure. Proper feeding is the foremost and crucial aspect of horse care. A well-fed horse is healthy and content and is up to the tasks we ask of them. 🐾




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*IMPROVE
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As riders, whether you are competitive or casual, we have a responsibility to our horses. We ask a lot from these incredible animals, and it is our job to support them as best as we can, with which there are of course endless ways to do this. However, to ride in a way that reflects positively on our horse, we need to have control over several things - our mindset, our emotions, our energy, and our bodies. In this article I'll dive a little into the topic of a holistic approach to rider fitness.

What I mean when I say rider fitness is this: I believe that it should be expected of us as equestrians to have a good baseline of stamina, strength, flexibility, mobility, and coordination. This will not only enhance overall performance and increase clarity of communication between you and your horse - being a more resilient human will just make your life better all round.

In the pursuit of becoming stronger, more mobile, more resilient, and generally more connected to our bodies lies a really challenging and beautiful journey that can teach us so much about ourselves. Becoming fitter is so much more than a body thing - it's all about your mindset too! Your willingness to fail and learn and grow and become better every day. Your ability to challenge yourself and push your limits in healthy ways that prepare you for the inevitable unknown situations that we get ourselves into with these animals. Your curiosity for your own potential, and breaking down old beliefs of what you used to believe you were capable of. Developing and discovering confidence that was lying dormant, waiting to be lit up and turned into a fire that fuels your passion. A shared passion that is this crazy, wild, wonderful pursuit that we call horsemanship. An ever evolving, never ending, all consuming, and unfathomably addictive journey that can show us whole new ways of being - if you are open to it.

There are one hundred ways to become a fit, strong, flexible person. Thousands of programs promising to get you results in 30 days. Millions of people on the same journey of beginning to move more or finding ways to improve themselves. But all it really takes is one step of action, followed by another and another, taking every day as it comes and showing up to the best of your ability, for the rest of your life. And you know why? Because this is your one life, and there is no quick fix or short cut route, no magic workout routine that's going to change everything and no special diet that will get you what you want. It's only you - and the way you decide to show up is everything. If you are consistent with your baseline healthy habits and you adopt the right mindset - one of

If you adopt the right mindset - one of open-mindedness, willingness to try new things, determination to not give up when it gets hard... then you have everything you need to set yourself up for success

open-mindedness, willingness to try new things, determination to not give up when it gets hard, and a long term vision of the kind of person (or rider) you want to be - then you have everything you need to set yourself up for success.

I will share a part of my story here with you. Interestingly, my riding improved the most during a time where I rode less, but moved more. I had times during my travels where there just weren't horses around, but I focused a lot on my own skill development and have now built a solid routine movement program that revolves around resistance training, mobility training, bouldering, hiking, surfing, and riding. Honestly, 2 years ago, the last thing I expected when getting on a horse for the first time in 6 months was a drastic improvement in my riding. But when I got on that horse, everything just clicked. I had this feeling of lightness and connection with the horse that I had never experienced with such ease before, and I

put it all down to the deepened connection to my body, my energy, and my mind. After the last few years of consistent movement practices as well as consistent riding with all kinds of horses in different disciplines, I can say with confidence that I truly believe an equestrian athlete can only thrive from integrating several consistent movement practices into their lifestyles.

It truly should be a non-negotiable in our lives to move often and to move well, free of pain and tightness. Fitness should no longer be a thing we do when we maybe have time - we are designed to move, we thrive on varied functional movement.

So today I ask one thing of you: make a promise to yourself to try new ways of moving your body, find ways to get more connected to yourself, to build strength and mobility, and to become more resilient. I promise you won't regret it, and your horse will thank you for it too. 🐾

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“Horsemanship is not - never has been, never will be - an exact science.”

finest and most experienced horsemen and women continue to learn more about this never-ending topic every day.

We read articles written by masters who write about their experiences with their horses and use their vast amount of expertise to guide and teach as much as possible through their knowledge and experience. I wonder, if one were to find two masters, who had each written a book on 500 horses that they had worked with, using the same classical methods, would we find these two books full of interesting and informative narrative with the odd extra bit about how this horse or that horse had required things to be done slightly differently to achieve the best results. I don't believe these books would by any means be the same as each other.

Perhaps you have you been taking time out to learn more about horse and rider? Biomechanics? There is so much to learn and even more still to be uncovered: further opportunity for factual understanding of cause and effect. How horse biomechanics and human biomechanics function as well as the influences between them. You can look to at the mechanics of tack and how each item affects the body, its actions and the horse's behaviour.

Each of us, have the opportunity to influence and affect our horses in so very many different ways. It is this way most of us are taught to deal with whatever happens between horse and human. Not all our physical cues are rough and harsh, nor intended to be. Unfortunately many are due to a simple and unfortunate lack of understanding of our actions and the mechanics of equipment. Often behavioral cues that are ignored. Surely it is our responsibility as the custodian of the duo to be sure we do our discovery homework so that we become aware of how what we do, and what we use, affects the horse in a developmental and positive manner.

Looking at the science connected to equestrianism is to acknowledge that there are certain things that can be factually learned during a lifetime of interacting with horses, but the simple truth is that horsemanship is not - never has been, never will be - an exact science. Nuances abound and even the

If it were possible to turn back time and give each master the others horses and to elicit again the book about these experiences, I can guarantee that these two books would differ from start to finish from the ones already written. Even though the same methods are generally used, it can never be an exact science that will produce the same results, regardless of the methods used. We all have different personalities and perspectives - the horses too - and for sure we get on with some personalities better than we do with others. So too with the horses.

Does this mean that we should ignore the words - often very wise - of experienced horseman? No, not at all, but it does mean that to understand the results we are getting we first need to understand ourselves from the inside out. Until we master ourselves and we learn to work with self-awareness we will forever be leaving the beauty and magnificent possibility of true connection completely out of the equation.

Avatar, the movie, images the possible and sought after connection in a clear and easily understood way when they “plug into” their 6 legged beasts. Maybe the six legged ones need to be physically plugged into. This I don't know, but what I do, unquestionably and undoubtedly know is that our 4 legged partners do not need anything physical through which to connect with us. They don't even need us to be with them. Our mission is to meld into a single unit of communication and response to form a unity of partners. 🐾

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