

## SEPARATING DISRESPECT AND UNKNOWING

In general this is probably the most misidentified problem horseman on varying levels deal with. The big problem for the horse is many of the handlers are unaware and want to “discipline” the horse for not performing to their expectations. If the person is open minded enough to consider where the horse may be coming from and reevaluate the line of communication life might be easier for both of them. Often the horse may be responding to some discomfort the person is imposing, this could be physical or mental, and the horse is only trying to get away from the pressure or seek relief. If is important for the person to realize the cause of a problem in order to find the proper solution. The more aware the person is of what is causing the actions of the horse the easier it is to deal with the problem. Many times the solution doesn't mean putting the horse in a pressure situation to get what you want, it is as easy as removing the cause. If it's not something the person is doing, it may be environmental; in either case the situation may allow removing the cause to get the desired results.

Excluding the hormonal influences, horses will generally try to please people. They don't want conflict. Even with a certain amount of hormonal influence, if the situation is that the easy way out for the horse is to comply with our desire, the horse may willingly do what we want?

Disrespect is something people teach horses. It's hard for people to set their egos aside to see this, but if you watch someone that is having a conflict with a horse and ask yourself two questions:

1. Is the person taking the horses actions personal, and wanting revenge?
2. Is the person trying to discipline the horse after the fact, in other words, the pressures coming at a later time than when the action took place?

In either case, it is unlikely the horse is going to relate the persons reaction to his action and therefore just resent the person or respond with fear. Many times if the horse is afraid the person feels like they have accomplished something because the horse is distracted with fear and may not think about whatever it was that caused him to get in trouble. Whether it be fear or disrespect the horse is not in a frame of mind to willingly do what we would like to get done with them.

The reactions of the horse are going to be based on experience and instinct. Instinct can tell them to be cautious or curious. Self-preservation is always strong in a horse that doesn't have confidence in something. This is where an inexperienced horse could get in trouble if the person reacts with too much pressure.

To help see the horses perspective in this area think about this scenario: If you were walking through some grass thinking about dangerous snakes and all of the sudden you stepped on a stick and it flipped up and startled you, then at the same time someone grabbed you to prevent you from getting a safe distance away, you may experience panic on top of panic. There's no physical pain to hurt you although that maybe easier to accept, horses are very emotional when it comes to fear, caution, self preservation, whatever we label it. It is important they get good experiences in these areas so they can get the confidence in us to handle other situations when they come up.

If we don't trigger their flight instinct or expose them to bad experiences they can learn in a respectful, interested manner and be, in my opinion, a pleasure to work with.

Good Luck and God Bless  
Martin Black