

A close-up photograph of a horse's eye, showing the dark iris and the surrounding skin and hair. The eye is partially closed, and the texture of the horse's coat is visible. The image is framed by a white border.

How To Get
Into The Head
Of Any Horse
In Minutes
And Form An
Awesome Mental
Connection!

Marv Walker

About Marv Walker



Marv Walker

For 60+ years I have had a love affair with horses.

The first horses I had any experience with were my grandfather's heavy draft horses. I can close my eyes and still smell and hear them, especially the times when he would harness them to skid logs, work the fields or gather ice for the ice house from the frozen lakes of Michigan's Upper Peninsula close to the shores of Lake Superior in the winter. My uncles would saw huge chunks of ice from the thick ice at the surface and hook the horses to the chunks with tongs and then they'd skid the ice back to the ice house where it would be buried in sawdust for use in hot months like July & August.

When I was in school I tried everything I could think of to be able to ride because having a horse of my own was beyond our family's means. Money was so hard to come by the words of the Country song, "If the wolf woulda come to our front door he'da had to bring a picnic lunch," was us.

I struck a deal with a riding stable owner who assured me I'd be able to swap my work for riding. And I would have been able to had there been any horses that were not needed for paying clients to ride or horses that were tired from being ridden. Every riding stable I've ever had anything to do with became a riding stable because they had a herd of horses and the horses needed to earn a little of their keep. Most of the stables had about 40 horses of which 8 or so were rideable. The rest were vice-ridden or unsound.

When I asked about all the other horses out in the pastures I was given all kinds of reasons as to why those horses were unrideable. They were vice-ridden, had chronic physical issues or weren't broke to ride. It quickly became evident that if I was going to get much riding in I was going to have to do it on the sly and it was going to have to be the vice-ridden horses that I rode.

I guess it was that beginning that gave me my preference for vice-ridden horses. I learned a lot from them and over the years became fairly adept at solving problems.

For a long time I used the "force" method of getting a horse to comply with what I wanted. I always operated under the idea that the horse was just spoiled and I needed to show it who was boss. More often than not, I was able to show them. Sometimes, they showed me and that became the inspiration for my line, "I'm a Cereal Cowboy... I Snap, Crackle & Pop when I move."

Then I met Linda Tellington-Jones. I attended one of her clinics nearly 30 years ago and mere minutes watching LT-J convinced me there was a better way of dealing with horses and opened up a whole new world. I became aware that horses can have headaches, off days, physical problems that may not be obvious or may even have mental problems that prevent them from being able to give their best.

Since then I have eagerly devoured every bit of information I could find on the subject of horse awareness. Wherever I found it I weighed it against common sense, success, and whether or not it met my new criteria of working with the horse instead of working the horse:

- 1.) It had to be reasonably safe for the horse *AND* me;
- 2.) The horse had to accept it;
- 3.) It had to show positive results;
- 4.) It had to work every time I used it.

If it failed ANY of the tests I didn't use the technique.

I spent a lot of time in my life simply observing horses and watching how they interacted with each other. I saw they had a ranking or pecking order within the herd that set some individuals up as leaders and the rest as followers. I began working some of those things I observed the horses doing into the work I was doing with horses.

But it was a lot of hit and miss. Everything I tried seemed to work but the problem I had was trying to figure out how to time the steps.

I had developed somewhat of a local reputation for being able to get into a horse's mind. I was able to develop a bonded relationship with almost any horse I worked. I would keep working with a horse until the horse screamed at me, "I'VE GOT THE PROGRAM, YOU MORON!!! I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO TO CONVINCING YOU!!!"

At that point I'd slap myself on the back, "Good job, you did it again."

And then I read an angst-laden "horse training" tome written by one of the media darlings at the time. All I found were a couple little bits of information about horse behavior that I had noticed but hadn't quite grasped the significance of. Once I realized that someone else was aware of these behaviors I knew instantly why my system worked so well and I *KNEW* at that moment how to predictably duplicate my results in minutes instead of days, weeks, months, and even years.

My first horse after the realization I knew how to do in minutes what it took me so long to do before was a very annoying, dangerous-to-ride 19 year old broodmare and show horse we had. If you were still on her or in the cart at the end of the class, you usually placed first with a blue ribbon. Those who rode her considered it a religious experience - "Let me off and I'll never ask for anything again!!" It was described to me as riding a motorcycle with no brakes. When we retired from the show business and the trainer's brother brought her home, he handed me the lead rope and said, "I rode that horse, once." Leading her was no joy either. I was just tired of her antics and intended to put some leading manners on her as a test of my new revelation.

In about five minutes I had a totally different horse. She became my favorite all time trail horse. The rapid results I obtained with her gave me a sense of horse confidence that is pretty much unflappable.

Around that time the Horse Whisperer thing got started and someone called the paper about a local "whisperer" they knew of. The next thing I know I'm much better known and people are contacting me from around the world asking my advice on horse problems. Folks kept asking for clinics so I started doing clinics. I do clinics, private work around the country, consult with folks outside the country and sell a variety of how to solve horse problem videos around the world.

In addition I served as a long time president of a rather large saddle club. I was also actively involved in the successful Conyers, GA bid for the 1996 Olympic Equestrian Events which resulted in the construction of the Georgia International Horse Park. I published a world wide equine magazine. I was a long-time traditional freelance writer. I outfitted an entire therapeutic riding program for a large Georgia children's home by acquiring free horses while my horse friends scoffed.

I have learned a lot about horses just by observing them. They have taught me some powerful concepts about themselves, people and animals in the years I have been fascinated by them. This ebook contains the mechanics of one of their most instinctive abilities, self-preservation, and how to use their self-preservation instincts to make the horse human relationship dramatically better for each.

"I Want My Horse Back!!"

A few days before I arrived in Arizona clinic she called me about her horse problem...

She: "She was gone to my sister's for a month and when I got her back she wasn't my horse any more. Our relationship has changed, we aren't as close as we used to be, she just won't listen..."

Me: "And now you want your horse back?"

She: "Yes! I want my horse back!"

Me: "Okay. In a few minutes your problem will be resolved at the clinic. I 'take it to the bank' promise you."



"Since you seem to think you don't need me... leave now!"



"Now I want you to leave in this direction!"



“Oh? NOW you want it to be like it used to be, do you?”



“Come with me and we’ll go talk it over a bit.”



“This seems like a good direction, let’s go back to our trailer.”



“I have my horse back...”

At NO TIME did she have any physical contact with her horse, leadline or otherwise. The halter and leadline are only on the horse as a safeguard control device SHOULD it be needed. This took less than a half hour including instruction and neither the owner nor the horse worked up a sweat (in an Arizona desert), became frustrated or unsure.

This is what the bonder produces.

Bonder / Herd Dynamics Leadership Actions

When I first put the procedure covered in this book on the Internet over twenty years ago, I needed something to call it. Giving something the right name is difficult and I was having no success coming up with the right name. I thought, “It’s a connecting sequence; it bonds people and horses together, what can I call it? I’m stumped. For the time being, I’ll just call it ‘The Bonder’ and come up with a better name later.”

In no time it was bouncing around the world to become known forever as Marv Walker’s Bonder. Thousands and thousands of downloads and thousands of videos later there is no hope of ever changing its name.

Yes, it does bond people and horses together but it is a herd dynamics technique horses are pre-programmed to respond to in a set way. Simply put, the human acts like a lead horse until the horse accepts the human as a herd leader and behaves accordingly. So it is also a leadership action display sequence.

Throughout this book the concept may be referred to as The Bonder, Herd Dynamics, or Leadership Action Presentation. All of these terms are interchangeable; no matter what we call it, the process is the same.

But, for the most part, we’ll call it the Bonder.

The Bonder produces a rapid and remarkable difference in horse - human relationships and dramatically increases cooperation and trust.



“You are not the boss of me!!”

Safety - Read This!

YOU ACCEPT ALL RISKS INHERENT IN THE USE OF THE MATERIAL IN THIS BOOK. THIS PROCEDURE WORKS SO SMOOTHLY YOU MAY BE LULLED INTO A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A BOMBPROOF CHILD-SAFE OR ADULT-SAFE HORSE. *ALL*** HORSES ARE SUBJECT TO UNPREDICTABLE OR UNEXPECTED REACTIONS. IF YOU ARE INVOLVED WITH HORSES YOU WILL BE INJURED AT SOME POINT. IT IS NOT A MATTER OF IF BUT WHEN AND THOSE INJURIES CAN RANGE FROM BARELY NOTICEABLE TO DEATH.**

I personally have been severely injured and almost killed by horses - however, not since I became enlightened years ago and discovered there was a better way to deal with horses than what is referred to as the “cowboy way.”

I have known people who have been horribly hurt by horses. I’ve even known people who were killed by horses.

Use appropriate safety equipment and great caution when working with horses.

Accept NO ONE’S word about any horse you do not know and only accept things you KNOW to be true.

There is no such thing as a “child-safe,” bombproof horse. All horses are subject to unpredictable and unexpected reactions

Horses Are Herd Animals

Nothing is more important to a horse than being in a herd.

Horses gather together in groups for a common purpose. All survival, all comfort, all confidence, all

peace, all security is rooted in the herd. In a herd the horse can eat, drink and rest more than it could by itself because there are more eyes and ears to share the guard duty. The more members there are in the herd the more eyes, ears and noses there are to discover danger before it's too late. An approaching predator usually only moves when its prey is distracted by bending down for a bite of grass or a drink of water. The more eyes, ears and noses at work the less likely any herd member will be surprised.

One does not have to be the fastest in a herd to outrun a predator, it only has to be the next to last slowest. It is like the joke about the two hikers who encounter a bear. One of them sits down on a log and begins to change his hiking boots for running shoes. His buddy says scornfully, "You can't outrun a bear." The reply was, "I don't plan on out running the bear. I plan on out running you."

This "second slowest" concept brings out an important aspect of the herd. The herd as a whole is not interested in the protection of the group. It is made up of individuals who are only interested in their own survival and welfare. The more individuals in the herd the more choices predators have to choose from. Predators are instinctively able to pick out the most vulnerable in a herd.

An example of how comfort is found in the herd can be seen when two horses are standing head to tail during high-insect days. Each horse's tail will be swishing the insects away from the other horse's head. Another would be grooming, where two horses will be scratching each other's withers or backs with their teeth. I have heard, but not seen, horses will close in together and share body heat during exceptionally cold weather. I have lived in some cold nasty places and given a choice between shelter and the open the horses always seemed to take the open.

Confidence in the herd is knowing beyond a shadow of a doubt you can do whatever is expected of you. In a herd a horse knows exactly what to expect from the other horses and it knows beyond a shadow of a doubt it can do exactly what is expected of it by the other horses.

Peace in the herd comes from knowing what is expected of you and doing it.

Nothing is more important to a horse than being in a herd.

Horses Will Form Herds

Since all survival, all comfort, all confidence, all peace is rooted in the herd horses will form herds at every opportunity. When they come into contact with other horses they immediately begin forming a herd. In short order they have the herd all sorted out and they know what to do to fit into the herd.

Since every horse instinctively knows how to play the herd forming game they fairly quickly work it out. There may be a small percentage of horses who take a little bit more time and drama, but for the most part they work it out. They are expert negotiators and harmony quickly begins to rule.

Because horses have been forming herds for uncounted generations their signals have become crystal clear with each other no matter how subtle. A slight flick of an ear, a slight twist of the neck, speak volumes.

A herd does not have to be more than one horse. It can be a horse and another being.

If pastured alone without other horses close by horses will often form "herds" with other species - dogs, cats, goats, cows, so on - and get quite upset when separated from them.

I believe it was Mary Jean Vasiloff of <http://www.whippoorwillmorgans.com/> who years ago said, you have no idea who your horse is friends with. We had a horse who would impatiently whip her head from side to side over her stall door at feeding time. The barn cat would sometimes walk on her stall door at feeding time. As the mare whipped her head back and forth she would lift her head over the cat

barely missing it with each wave. Guess which stall door the cat preferred to walk on and hang out by? We had stallion who like to look out one side of his stall door then move to the other side to look in that direction. He'd look from one side a few moments then he'd go to the other side and look down that direction. Back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. A hen hatched a clutch of chicks in the corner of his stall. The chicks ran all over his stall and he knew where every one of them was at all times even when his head was out looking down the hall. If one of the chicks was under his hoof as he started to set it down he would move it just enough to avoid stepping on the chick.

A horse is a hard wired herd animal. There is nothing you can do to change that When you and a horse, or horses, are together, you will be treated like a herd member.

Getting inside the horse's head and understanding how it thinks and what motivates it will increase your survival, comfort, confidence and peace in the herd.

Every horse will form a herd and every herd will have a leader. If it is not you, it WILL be the horse.

Trust me, you'll want it to be you.

All Herds Have A Leader

All horse herds have a leader and all have a low horse on the totem pole.. Some refer to this as the pecking order. One horse is at the top. One horse is at the bottom. And all the other horses fall somewhere in between the two with no two horses occupying the same level or rank.

I regularly hear from folks who say they have two, three or more, joined at the hip horses who they insist are equal in rank. Put a handful of grain in bucket, shake it a couple of times then set it on the ground and walk away a few yards and watch closely.

When people talk about Alpha and Omega horses, or dogs, or any other species pecking order ranking they are talking about the being's position in the pecking order, or status, ranking or hierarchy. The "Alpha" is the top horse on the totem pole, the "Omega" is the bottom horse on the totoem pole.

Horses are tuned to the WIII.FM - (W)hat (I)s (I)n (I)t.(F)or (M)e? - network. Since the herd exists for the benefit of the individual, the individual is primarily concerned with itself.

The higher the horse is in the hierarchy the greater the advantage. If the horse is the alpha horse it gets the best of everything. If the horse is the omega horse, it gets whatever is left over.

The other horse rankings in the herd fall between the alpha and the omega. The alpha gets whatever it wants before the rest of the herd gets theirs if there is any left. The omega gets what is left over. Each horse in between is either alpha or omega to each of the other horses. While there appears to be no name for the position of each horse between the alpha and the omega, some describe the rank of each horse in relation to another horse or horses. "Sweetums is more alpha that Boots, Blaze or Betsy."

It's best to be the Alpha. When was the last time you ever heard the word, "omega?" I rest my case, it's better to be an alpha in a herd.

What Makes A Herd Leader

There is one law in a horse herd; take all the rights you can and honor all the rights you can't take. This law develops the herd hierarchy or ranking. To make it easier to understand, it boils down to, "That's mine." The more a horse is able to claim and keep for its own the higher it ranks in the pecking

order. The horse that is able to claim and keep anything it wants from all the other herd members is the herd leader or Alpha.

One flake of hay is tossed among the herd. One horse claims it and says, "Mine!" with a shake of its head, a pinning of an ear, a shift in body weight or something that signals any approaching horse, "Mess with my hay and there will be trouble!" If all of the other horses lack what it takes to stand up to the claiming horse, it has taken the right and can defend it. The other horses then honor that right.

If one of the other horses says, "I want it!" and ignores or does not respect the hay claimer's right the two horses then work out who is going to get the hay. They then begin to fight it out until one horse quits or is injured too severely to continue or is mortally wounded. In some cases both horses may be mortally injured. The victor then becomes the alpha horse and takes the hay. If no other horse can challenge and defeat the alpha horse when it takes the best hay, the shadiest spot, the first drink or basically utters, "Mine!" the alpha is the automatic leader.

Because horses are herd animals and the alpha goes where it wants and when it wants, the other horses tend to stick by it to preserve the integrity of the group. This in effect, makes the alpha the herd leader.

In essence, the alpha horse gives another horse a series of directions it knows beyond a shadow of a doubt it can make the horse comply with until the other horse says, "This horse is giving me a series of directions and I am obeying them. Therefore, this horse must be a leader and I must be a follower." Those directions may say...

- Get away from my food.
- Get away from me.
- Get away from the herd (or herd member).
- Stay where you are.
- Follow me.

... and so on.

The horse that is the most determined to be the alpha horse, or leader, will be the leader.

You Can Become A Herd Leader

We talked about how a horse herd does not have to be more than one horse. It can be another being of another species, for example, one horse and one human can be a herd.

A horse will get the same type of benefit from a mixed herd relationship. Horses are very intuitive they can read humans every bit as well as they can horses. When a person is nervous, afraid or confused, the horse picks up it and reacts accordingly, just like in an all horse herd. If the person is angry or impatient, the horse picks up on it, just like in an all horse herd.

Just like in an all horse herd there will be a leader, there will be a leader in a mixed species herd. If there is a leader vacancy in either kind of herd, the horse will seek to fill the position. It will...

- Move into your space.
- Show displeasure.
- Go where it wants.
- Lock up and refuse to move.
- Threaten to kick.
- Refuse to cooperate.

... and so on.

If there is a leader vacancy you can fill it as well as the horse can. If you are not the unquestioned leader in the horse's mind, there is a leadership vacancy. The horse does not make the best leader in your relationship because the horse is only interested in what it wants. You have both your best interest and the horse's best interest in mind. In order to protect both your interests, since the horse is several times bigger than you are and subject to unpredictable reactions, you must be the herd leader. You pay all the bills and you do all the work. If anything happens to you, chances are the horse will be sent on down the road where things won't go as well with it.

Remember, harmony in a herd comes from the law, "Take all the rights you can and honor all the rights you can't?" This means horses are genetically predisposed to react in a set way to set actions. If a horse cannot resist a leadership action it must honor it.

By presenting a horse with irresistible herd leadership actions we can become a herd leader for practically any horse very quickly.

To become a herd leader we simply present the horse with a series of directions we know beyond a shadow of a doubt we can get the horse to obey without touching it until the horse realizes it is being presented with herd leadership actions it cannot defeat. At that point, it will acknowledge our leadership and look to us for further direction.

Your Whole Family Can Become A Herd Leader

It doesn't matter how large your "herd" is. The horse knows instantly who is the real leader of the herd. It also knows the ranking of each of your herd members. We see this all the time. Horses who get along good with one person are unmanageable by another person.

It really doesn't matter where the horse puts any member of your family or the people who interact with your horse in the pecking order ranking as long as the horse puts every one of those who interact with above it.

I'm often asked how many people in a family or at a barn can present leadership actions to a horse. My answer is, "How many you got?" They all can. In fact, it's best they do present leadership actions to the horse.

As long as someone can physically present the actions and make the horse comply they can do the Bonder. I've taught some pretty young kids how to do it and they always learn how quicker than adults.

If I trained a cat to present the actions to the horse the horse would respond. It is not the being the horse is responding to, it is the actions of the being.

Herd dynamics dictate there are going to be rankings. There is only room for one leader and it controls everyone else. The second highest ranked horse controls everyone below it. The third highest horse controls everyone above it and so on all the way down to the Omega horse that controls no one while being controlled by everyone. There is only room for one horse in a position in the herd rankings.

Why You Want To Be The Herd Leader

The reason everyone in the herd wants to be the leader is because leaders have perks.

You never move into the leader's space without permission.

You never bite the leader.

You never kick the leader.

You let the leader do whatever she (usually always a “she” in a herd) wants as long as the leader doesn’t hurt you.

You do what the leader wants as long as you have the ability to do so.

You let the leader have whatever she (usually always a she in a herd) wants.

The leader is the leader and every one else is a follower. The late Lewis Grizzard is quoted as saying, “Unless you are the lead dog on the sled dog team the view never changes.”

Here is the leader’s mantra, “Being the leader is good. Being the leader is easy.”

Once you experience being a herd leader you won’t ever want to go back to being a herd follower.

The Equipment You Need To Be A Herd Leader

You will need an enclosure. A round pen works best because it is round and the horse is less likely to “hang up” in the corners because it doesn’t have any, however you can use a wide variety of enclosures. You will just have to adjust.

Whenever anyone asked me in the early years what size round pen was the best I always replied, “Sixty feet.” Now that I’m a little older I lean more toward smaller enclosures. Since I have a portable round pen made up of individual panels I can make mine from eighty feet across on down to pretty small and still have it round. Most of the time I use a forty-five foot pen for herd leader presentation work. A smaller round pen cuts down on the amount of moving I have to do and allows me to get where I need to be quicker.

While you can become a herd leader in any size and shape enclosure the best size is one large enough to keep the horse away from you yet small enough for you to control the horse until it shows you the respect you deserve. Horses will sometimes try aggressive displays and you’ll want to be able to keep a safe distance from them during their displays. A safe distance is far enough away so the horse can’t connect with you. It doesn’t matter what a horse does as long as it doesn’t do it next to you.

Any size enclosure will work, you’ll just have to make some adjustments. If you have a thousand acre field plan on doing a bunch of walking or figure out some other way to direct and control the horse. If all you have is a stall you are going to have to figure out a way for you and the horse to both be in it as you direct and control the horse. Sounds real hairy now, doesn’t it? But once you have the leader concept down in your head, and it won’t take long, you’ll be able to establish leadership even on the end of a lead line or in a stall.

It is the size of your mind and not the size of the enclosure that’s important. Once you have the leader concept in your head you can apply it anywhere.

The footing in your enclosure should not be slippery like mud, covered with ice and snow or deep like beach sand. Surfaces like these can cause injury to the horse. After you have presented leadership actions to about a dozen horses and are confident you can totally control the horse the enclosure surface becomes a minor concern because by then you will have discovered it is not the speed that is important, it is the obedience. Once you have become practiced in leadership actions you’ll be able to successfully present the leadership actions at a snail’s pace should you decide to.

In addition to an enclosure you will need an extension of your being. Huh? In language you can

understand, a whip, preferably a longe whip. While everyone else refers to this extension of your being as a “whip” which carries a negative mental impact, we are not going to be “whipping” anything, so we call it an extension of our being. When I did some Linda Tellington-Jones studying we were introduced to the “wand.” The wand is nothing more than a four foot long thin whip with a quarter sized button on one end and a short three of four inch tassel on the other. What made it a “magic wand” was how it was thought of and how it was used. It was thought of and used as an extension of our being. Your mental thoughts are everything when working with horses. If you think of it as being a “whip” the horse will think of it as a “whip.”

At clinics people will stop me, “You aren't going in there with that whip are you??? He hates whips and he'll go berserk.” I thank them for the warning and then go in with the whip and the horse ignores it. Why? Because I don't think of it as a whip.

Until I need it to be a whip.

While it is rare, some horses can become somewhat threatening and aggressive. I have had horses back toward me mule-kicking with both hind hooves. I have had them rear up and come hopping toward me striking. I have had them rush me. I have worked a lot of horses and while horses like this are relatively rare, they are out there. I have had people report horses chasing them out of the enclosure.

Many of the gurus teach using a lariat, a stiff work rope, to move the horse around the enclosure. If you are using a rope and a horse comes in on you you have one throw before it gets you. You will not be able to re-coil the rope for another throw.

I can slash repeatedly with the longe whip while avoiding the horse and I won't care where I hit it. I can slash, quickly pull it back, slash again and again. If it attacks a lead horse in the herd it will run into a flurry of hooves from the lead horse and the lead horse won't care if it maims or kills the attacker. If I have to use the whip on a horse moving in on me with the apparent intention of doing me harm I loudly and wildly take the battle to it while trying to keep it from coming from its side. There is little the horse can do to me if I can stay at its side, in order to come at me again it has to move away to line up with me.

There is little I can do to get safely out of the enclosure before it gets me so I really have no choice but to fight and I have to make it think I'm more determined than it is. Screaming and hollering while moving slashing at the horse from the side usually unnerves it to the point it calls off the attack.

Make no mistake. There is nothing more dangerous than an attacking horse. You have to do what you have to do to stop the attack. Whatever you do needs to have all you can put into it regardless of what it might do to the horse.

If it gets you, it will likely end up down the road where life may not be good to it at all. It is in both your best interests to come out the winner.

There is an anti-Marv Walker article that floats around the Net where I suggested to someone they might consider using a stun gun on an attacking horse who was determined to eat their lunch. Drop it, wait for it to get up, if it makes ANY aggressive move, drop it again, repeat until the horse makes no aggressive moves.

Severe? Yes. If you have a horse who brazenly and determinedly attacks you MUST stop that for the good of yourself and for the good of the horse.

Now back to our regular programming...

A longe whip is a flexible thin rod roughly about six feet long with a braided nylon wrapping that extends another 6 feet off the end of the whip.

I'm roughly 20 inches wide if I stand in one spot with my hands at my sides. I can make my self instantly wider by sticking one arm out to the side. If I stick both arms out to the side I can become even wider. With a longe whip I can extend it and my arm and control even more area. If I need to, I can extend myself out about 14 feet in any direction with the longe whip. If I have one for each hand (for advanced liberty work, but we're talking about the basics here) I can control nearly thirty feet of space.

Longe whips are often called lunge whips but the proper term is longe whips, like in LonJa with the "a" being silent. They cost anywhere from reasonable (somewhere around \$10) to ridiculous (you'll know that price when you see it). Longe whips are pretty tough but they are not indestructible. I always make sure I have a number of them around and I chuck the broken ones (you'll know when they are broke). After you use one for awhile you'll discover you can send your energy down the whip as needed. Your energy stops at the break with a broken one. You can find longe whips at your tack shop or on the Net. Try your tack shop first, shipping one of these whips may be costly because they are outside of normal shipping dimensions.

The longe whip is used to direct the horse from a safe distance. When I first started teaching I used to teach using only your mental energy to direct the horse. I was instructing a woman in the round pen working with a feral horse at a clinic in northern Wisconsin when she moved in to put a little more pressure on the horse. As she moved in the horse mule kicked at her with both hind feet. It looked to me like both feet caught her square in the face. It could not have been any closer. I immediately changed my teaching and began using a longe whip as an extension.

I now use a longe whip every time I work a horse in an enclosure even though I don't need one.

In another section we are going to be explaining the difference between what I do and what the media darling "natural horsemanship" guru and guruettes do. Many of them use a rope as their extension of being. They coil and throw the rope to direct the horse. Once a rope is thrown, it has to be pulled in and recoiled before it is ready to use again. A longe whip can be pulled in and used again much faster and much easier than a rope. This may seem like a moot point in the grand scheme of things but if a horse decides to come in on you in a manner you do not like you can light it up twenty times faster than you can with a rope if the need arises. With a little practice you can build a whip wall between you and the horse very quickly. A horse can come in quicker than you can pull the rope in. The whip can come in quicker than the rope can and it can also come in quicker than the horse can.

Your two main pieces of equipment to present leadership actions to a horse are the enclosure, preferably a round pen, and a longe whip.

How To Become A Herd Leader

You become a herd leader by giving the horse a series of directions you know beyond a shadow of a doubt you can get the horse to obey without touching it until the horse says to itself, "This being is acting like a herd leader and I am acting like a herd follower. Therefore, this being must be a herd leader and I must be a herd follower." And we do this as much as possible from the center of the pen.

Simple enough, isn't it? Let's go through the basics...

We start out by telling the horse, "Go in that direction (whichever direction that happens to be, doesn't matter). We use only as much energy as it takes to get the horse moving. We start low key and if the horse ignores us we step up our energy. We use whatever energy we need to use to get the horse to respond. If it takes making a loud screaming, flapping rush (without too close for it to kick), so be it.

Making the horse move is the first direction, or command in our dry run scenario. Clockwise, counter-clockwise, it really makes little difference.

Once the horse goes in whatever direction we want the only thing we can do now is stop the horse from going in that direction. While there are actually a number of commands we can give the horse other than “stop” and make it obey and still have it continue in the initial direction, we’ll keep it simple and say there isn’t for the sake of argument during our simple scenario.

(Presenting leadership actions to a horse can be as simple or as involved as we want it to be. As our experience grows we can refine our technique to the point we can send very subtle cues to the horse. Right now we are just going through a rough, down and dirty session to help us understand the concept.)

If the horse goes away faster than we like then we give it the next direction we know we can get it to obey and that is “Stop!” It does not matter how fast the horse is going we can stop it. The second we make the decision to stop the horse we move to where the horse was when we decided to stop it. When we get to that spot our presence and demeanor tells the horse when it comes around toward you, “If you and I end up in the same spot together, one of us is going to come out second best, and I will do everything in my power to make sure it isn’t me.” The horse will usually head back around the other way and we tell it the same thing and it will usually go back the other way. After a couple of full circle attempts the horse will go to the opposite side of the enclosure and stop.

At that point we move back to the center of the enclosure and calmly begin controlling the horse from there. If it races mindlessly around again, we stop it again just like we did before.

If we accept the speed the horse is going we may let it go around for a time or two, or three, or four, how many times is up to us, then we tell it to change its direction. Before we can get the horse to change directions, we have to get the horse to stop before we can tell it to go in the other direction.

The way to stop the horse in both the calm circling and reckless circling situations is the same but the energy level for both is different. For the out-of-control horse we need to use attention getting energy. For the compliant horse we use “A new direction is coming” energy.

If the horse is traveling clockwise around the pen and you want to change its direction it cannot change its direction without stopping, if only for a second it takes to whirl. We stop the horse by directing our energy at the front of the horse.

Stopping the horse is the second direction in our dry run scenario...

Now we need a third direction. We have the horse stopped after a few laps in one direction. Moving it in one direction was direction #1. Stopping the horse was direction #2. Now, direction #3 is getting the horse moving again so we make it go in the opposite direction.

Sending the horse around in the opposite direction is our third direction in our dry run scenario...

Stopping the horse after sending it around is the fourth direction in our dry run scenario...

Sending the horse around in the opposite direction after stopping it is our fifth direction in our dry run scenario...

Stopping the horse after sending it around is the sixth direction in our dry run scenario...

By now you probably are thinking, “Whoa! Waitaminnit!” That’s only two directions! Starting and stopping!” It is to you, yes, because you have the ability to lump things together as a collective. Horses are creatures of the now and live in the moment. It does not realize it had been given an identical command a few moments before, all it knows is that is being given a new command and is being made to obey it.

These two commands can be used to string together a series of commands of any length. The horse will view them as a series of commands rather than two commands repeated over and over again.

You become a herd leader by giving the horse a series of directions you know beyond a shadow of a doubt you can get the horse to obey without touching it until the horse says to itself, "This being is acting like a herd leader and I am acting like a herd follower. Therefore, this being must be a herd leader and I must be a herd follower."

We'll go through an in depth, detailed bonding scenario a little later on.

The Importance Of The Right Mental Energy

Perhaps your mother told you "The Little Engine That Could" fairy tale or perhaps you may have even seen Disney's animated movie, "Dumbo, The Flying Elephant." The idea in each of these is you can do a lot of things you normally wouldn't think you could do if you would just believe you can do them.

You may have heard the old saying, "I'll believe it when I see it!" In horses the idea you need is, "I'll see it when I believe it!"

Animals are incredible mind readers. They know what is going on in your head and they react accordingly.

If you head a horse towards a trailer and you are thinking, "I hope Mitzy doesn't refuse to load because I'm running late for the trail ride," chances are very good she will not load because she picks up on your uncertainty and reacts accordingly. After all, if you're uncertain and you are supposed to be the one calling the shots she is justified in thinking, "Ooops! Something isn't quite right here! I'm not going in there!"

I can't even begin to tell you how many times people at clinics have warned me while I'm showing them the longe whip and how we're going to use it by proclaiming, "Oh! S/he goes nuts when s/he sees a whip!" They are almost always surprised by the horse's non-reaction to it when I go in with it. I don't think of it as a whip and as a result the horses don't either.

By the same token I have been at barns and inside stalls scratching a horse and had people come up yelling, "WATCH IT! SHE HATES MEN!" I try to be polite and thank the warning party for saving my life because I never would have known if I had not been told. Because it never occurred to me I'd have a problem with the horse I didn't have a problem with the horse.

At a New York clinic an auditor remarked a number of times about "Lightning" and how he would be a match for me. Close to the end of the second day my clinic partner said, "I'm sure someone here would haul him here for you, go get him." He was a rather large TWH/Quarter cross. I took him into the clinic enclosure and worked with him a few moments and saw right away he wasn't going to give me any trouble, mostly because I didn't expect any.

I turned to his owners and said, "The only problem with this horse is his name."

Surprised, they asked for a suggestion. I replied, "Buddy. He looks like a big ol' buddy."

Two weeks after the clinic I got an email from his owners. They said that they had been having trouble with him right along since they got him and had been trying to sell him before the clinic. They said he had become the nicest horse since then and everyone in the family was crazy about him and he was no longer for sale. "What a difference a name change makes!" she said.

When people walk up to a horse named Killer, Rebel, Diablo or is named after a weather pattern such

as Lightning, Thunder, Tornado or Hurricane, they are not thinking the name just popped onto the horse out of the clear blue sky. They figure there was a reason the horse got that name and they approach the horse accordingly. Approach a horse warily and it will react warily.

When people walk up to a horse named Honey, Buddy, Sweetums, Lovey, Precious or the like, they are not thinking the name just popped onto the horse out of the clear blue sky. They figure there was a reason the horse got that name and they approach the horse accordingly. Approach a horse openly and it will react openly.

The right mental image is everything when working with horses. When you want them to do something, picture them doing it in your mind rather than picturing them refusing to do it like they have done so many times before.

The calmer your mind is, the calmer the horse's mind is. If you are nervous the horse will be nervous. Controlling your mind is the first step in controlling the horse.

Picturing in your mind what you want and simply taking slow lung-filling breaths will go a long way toward calming you. Clearly picturing in your mind what you want tells your body what to do. Your body will give your mind what it wants.

How To Get The Right Mindset

Any suggestions on how to get the right mindset? I really need some help on getting a confident mindset that overcomes the nervousness I might feel. Thanks.

Since the scope of the question seems to be directed to horses and placing yourself in the herd leader position or at the top of the pecking order we can answer the question in three parts.

The first part in developing the right mind set is to not worry about what might happen. There is a common saying, "98% of the things I worried about never happened." The percentages vary depending on who says it but they are always very high. The reason for the percentages are always very high because the saying is true.

Notice I didn't say not to plan for things that might happen, I said, "Don't worry (fret, stew, dwell) about something." We simply say, "If this happens I will do this." That way we are prepared to deal with the possibility and it won't stop our progress because we will still be moving forward. This attitude is the US Marine credo: "Improvise, Adapt, Overcome."

Moving forward is the key.

The second part is to build our confidence.

Confidence allows us to move forward. Confidence is knowing no matter what is expected of us we can fulfill the expectation. This is why the Bonder is so successful because it exercises the horse's confidence by showing it it already knows exactly what to do because it has been doing it all its life.

Now then, if confidence is knowing you can do something, the way to increase your confidence is to increase your "knowing." Simply speaking, you increase your knowing by increasing your knowledge. The more you know about something the greater your confidence is in that area.

We build our knowledge, which is the foundation of our confidence, by learning all we can about our subject.

We build our confidence, our mindset, by using and testing our knowledge. By testing our knowledge

we can see what works, what doesn't and what needs to be modified.

This testing increases our knowledge and as our knowledge increases our ability to use the knowledge should grow as well.

We have studied the herd dynamics and we understand how they work. We have discovered horses reacts to certain actions in set ways. We have discovered we can present those actions to the horse and have it respond in a way that is to our advantage.

Now then, having acquired knowledge we further develop our mindset by being determined to use that knowledge to our advantage.

Here is the third part of developing the right mindset - how we look at things.

It is to everyone's benefit that we control what happens in the herd when we are in it. The horse only has one goal; to do whatever it can to fill its needs or desires in the now regardless of what others think or do. Ten minutes ago means nothing, ten minutes from now means nothing, it is only the minute the horse is actually in that it is concerned about.

Since we are the life of the herd we must be its leader. If anything happens to us chances are very good the herd will be broken up and sent on down the road where who knows what will happen to it. So therefore, we must be the herd leader.

Since we understand the future and its importance to the survival of the herd and we also know how to control the future, as much as it can be controlled, our knowledge gives us the ability to think in ordered steps. Since we have this ability and horses don't, this gives us the confidence to use our knowledge. All we need is the determination.

Determination means we have already determined what is going to happen and we are not going to accept anything else. We have, in effect, seen, or visualized, the result. Contrary to conventional wisdom, it is not, "I'll believe it when I see it!" it is, "I'll see it when I believe it!"

Developing the right mindset is merely setting our mind on the outcome we want to obtain our goal.

We tell ourselves, "It's my way and there is no highway!" We tell the horse, "You will do what I want!" "I pay the bills! I do the work! I call the shots!" "I AM THE HERD LEADER! Period. End of story!"

Another list member writes...

Reading this post this morning was just the subject I needed to see. I spent 3 hours trailer loading yesterday with my Mare and could only get her half way in. I actually took a break half way through and put the Mare into the round yard and did a bonder. She responded quickly and followed me as her leader but when I went back to the float I still couldn't get her to follow me in. I have previously floated this Mare without incident until one day I was picking her up from agistment (Some sort of Aussie word – MW) and she hesitated when loading as she always did. She was slow going in but would always go in of her own accord and when I say slow it's only a matter of a few minutes. I would just use the fluid reins and she would load.

But, on this occasion there was a crowd, oh no the dreaded crowd watching and waiting.... Soon enough one of the people there started to hurry me up and telling me what to do. My anxiety went up and then the Mare started to show the whites of her eyes.

Finally this person came into the float and grabbed the lead and tried to take over. I asked her to just leave me alone but she couldn't understand why I didn't want help. Finally she ended up grabbing a whip and hitting the Mare on the rump. She flew up into the float with panic and I knew from that instant I had a PROBLEM...

Oh yes, next time I went to float she wouldn't load, no surprise to me, so I spent 2 weeks every day training her to self load. I put the float in her paddock and fed her inside, she would run up the ramp happily and eat in there. I then trained her to load up so I could stand by the side and clip the tail latch on. All good! But, a month went by and the next time I went to load her she would go in but then rush back out. It took half an hour to finally get the tail latch on quick enough. But she now has the panic in her that she is going to be locked in. So, now I'm back to square one! It's so frustrating I could cry. Any suggestions???

My response was...

First, let's look at the sequence.

One, a crowd gathered. *"oh no the dreaded crowd watching and waiting"*

Two, *"My anxiety went up and then the Mare started"*

Three, *"this person came"*

Four, *"I knew from that instant I had a PROBLEM..."*

Five, sure enough, we have a problem *"next time I went to float she wouldn't load, no surprise to me,"*

This sequence shows a mental attitude development. A negative one, but a mental attitude none the less.

You continued loading when the task became dealing with the crowd. You kept on loading when the task became dealing with insistent unwanted help. You continued loading when the control transferred to the "helper." You continued the loading while focused on the distractions.

And, you convinced yourself you had an ongoing problem. Remember, it's not "I'll believe it when I see it!" it's "I'll see it when I believe it."

It was your trailer, your horse and you had every right to calmly and confidently say, "My trailer (float). My horse. You WILL stay out of this or I WILL call the police."

Any suggestions???

Throw time out the window. If you only have five minutes to do something, it'll take you all day. If you have all day, it'll take five minutes. Forget time and focus on the goal.

Redefine the goal. The goal is not to load the horse in the trailer. The goal is to control the horse at all points and move the control into the trailer. Lead the horse to the point of resistance and stop. Get the horse under control there then matter of factly ask it for forward motion and accept whatever forward motion you get. Control the horse then ask again. It is sometimes helpful to bring the horse almost to the resistance point and then say, "April Fool! We weren't going to go there." After a few false starts to the resistance point go into the resistance point and come back out before the horse can react. What you are doing is "Lead here. And here. Now here." You want the horse to get in a pattern of following the lead.

Look at it as a leading, control exercise and not as a loading experience. If the trailer ends up being one of the points, well and good. If she gets halfway in the trailer then backs out think of it as partial success and be happy with it. If she does this repeatedly learn to anticipate her back up time and back her up before she gets the idea. Take the control away from her.

Make it leading practice. I once had a young girl tell me she trained her horse to load without it ever seeing a trailer. She said she knew the horse would load anywhere. She said she looked for hard places to lead the horse, she even brought it into the barn bathroom. She said, "I knew he would follow me anywhere and a trailer is somewhere."

Stop trying to load the horse and start teaching it to lead.

Reading The Horse's Progress Signals

Here once again is the essence of becoming a herd leader...

You become a herd leader by giving the horse a series of directions you know beyond a shadow of a doubt you can get the horse to obey without touching it until the horse says to itself, "This being is acting like a herd leader and I am acting like a herd follower. Therefore, this being must be a herd leader and I must be a herd follower."

I have always had somewhat of a reputation for getting inside the head of any horse. When I analyze the process now I can see it always resulted from presenting leadership actions until the horse acknowledged my leadership.

Sometimes it was a long rocky road. I could only guess how far along in the journey the horse and I were at any point. There would come a day on down the road when it would dawn on me that somehow we had arrived and we were a team.

Then I read an angst-filled hype book by a media darling horse personality and only found one phrase of value in the whole book. Being a voracious reader I read to read which is why I kept reading. The phrase I found was about the acknowledging ear and instantly I knew how to duplicate in mere minutes what took me months, sometimes years, to accomplish.

I had noticed the acknowledging ear and some other signals in my cowboy days but for some reason didn't make the connections.

Again, you are giving the horse a series of directions you know beyond a shadow of a doubt you can get the horse to obey without touching it until the horse says to itself, "This being is acting like a herd leader and I am acting like a herd follower. Therefore, this being must be a herd leader and I must be a herd follower," the horse is giving you clear signals of its progress.

There are three kinds of signals. (1.) There are the everything is going cool signals. (2.) There are the "forget you" signals and (3.) there are the "a change is about to happen" signals.

Let's go through the "everything is going cool" signals.

The first thing to look for is the horse keeping its inside ear directed at you for the most part. The inside ear is the ear closest to you when the horse is going around you or at a right angle to you. There is always an inside and an outside of a horse and which is which is determined by the horse's movement in relation to you whether you are on the ground or on its back. Horses seldom travel straight and if we were to extend their direction we would see it forms a large circle. All the horse's parts on the "inside" of the "circle" are "inside." All the other parts are "outside." As you are standing in the enclosure the ear closest to you is the inside ear. When this ear is aimed at you it tells you the

horse finds you important to watch out for. As time goes on, combined with some other signals it will tell you the horse finds you important enough to pay attention to. There is a big difference between “important enough to watch out for” and “important enough to pay attention to.”

The next thing you’ll be looking for is head lowering as it moves. Any head lowering is head lowering and is a sign the horse is both beginning to relax and accept the process. The lower the horse carries his head from its carriage at the start the more relaxed and accepting it is. It may even put its nose close to the ground as it moves. This is usually a “I’m just ol’ harmless grass grazer, you can back off,” sign and is different from relaxing and acceptance head lowering.

The next sign you want to look for is over all relaxation. In the beginning of the leadership presentation the horse’s abdominal muscles will be taut. Once it begins to grasp what is happening it begins to concentrate on your directions and focus on you it begins to relax. As it moves its stomach will begin to move from side to side with the horse’s movement. A couple of paragraphs up we mentioned how the ears will indicate how much importance the horse is giving you. The ears will also indicate relaxation and acceptance. When we first start presenting the leadership actions the horse’s ears are straight up. We may even think of it as “got its antenna up.” As the horse accepts our direction it begins to relax and the distance between the ears increases and they may even seem to flop to the side some. This shows the horse feels there is no real need to be vigilant and the horse is showing relaxation.

The next sign is faster, improved obedience. It takes less effort to get the horse to respond to your directions. The horse may even seem to anticipate your directions. It is at this point the horse is accepting your leadership and is merely following your directions and waiting for you to tell it what to do next.

Reading The Horse’s “Forget You” Signals

The second set of signs you need to be aware of is the “forget you” signals. Some, or all, of these signals may pop up and they usually occur after it dawns on the horse it is being presented with leadership actions.

Remember when I said there is one rule in a herd - you can take all the rights you can take and you honor all the ones you can’t? Sometimes the horse is just not going to accept leadership actions without challenging your right to give them. If you can overcome the challenge, you have taken the right.

And also don’t forget that I told you the enclosure needs to be large enough to keep the horse away from you until it shows you the respect you deserve and small enough to control the horse.

It does not matter what the horse does or how it challenges you as long as it is not close enough to reach you.

The following challenges, or the “forget you” signals, are not listed in any special sequence because a horse may use all, some or none of them at any point up until all of its challenges have been defeated. Usually, it only takes one defeat for the horse to give up the challenge, but I have had horses repeat a particular challenge several times. Repeat challenges are uncommon but they occur. It is almost as though the challenge has worked so well and so often in the past it takes the horse a few defeats to give it up. I also have had horses go through the herd leadership action presentation without a single challenge.

Ignoring you, snaking it’s neck, showing teeth, shaking head, pinned ears, stomping foot, striking the air, rearing, cow or mule kicking in your direction, squealing and just generally tearing around the pen

wide open are “You’re making me mad, you better back off!” signals.

I usually ignore them because I’m keeping the horse away from me and there is no way it can reach me anyway. I don’t care what the horse does as long as it isn’t near me. It can flop on its back and pound its feet on the ground screaming and hollering like a toddler for all I care. My “I am the leader” mental attitude has me, and the horse, convinced it had not better come into my space without being invited and I’m not inviting it to come into my space unless it shows me the respect I want.

Let’s just say the horse decides to come into me with its “forget you” attitude becoming a “get you” attitude. I will deliver the mail on it! It will quickly realize it has committed a grave tactical error. I will do whatever it takes to stop the approach and keep it away from me. I will work the longe whip as fast as I can while making all the noise I can and if the horse runs into it, so be it.

“Whoa! You actually whip the horse?” you ask. No. Whipping is holding the horse and preventing it from ending the intrusion. What I’m doing is EXACTLY what the lead horse in the herd would in a similar challenge. The leader would unleash everything it had on the challenger and wouldn’t care where or how its blows landed. The challenger can immediately call off the intrusion by honoring the leader’s defense. If the challenge is defeated the challenger holds no grudge. It realizes the defense against the challenge is the natural, accepted, herd way.

Horses have an extremely well developed sense of justice. They realize all infringements on another horse have consequences. If they are unable to back up their intrusion they accept what they get. At any time they can call off the consequences by calling off the intrusion. If they intrude and suffer consequences they accept it. If they suffer consequences and are unable to call the consequences off by complying, they resent it.

Since I do not have big enough teeth or have feet like sledge hammers I have to use what teeth and hooves I do have and they are on the end of my extension - the longe whip. I very plainly tell the horse, “Don’t do that near me! If you do I will bite and kick!”

Usually the “forget you” signals are nothing more than exploratory threats from a safe distance for the horse. If they work, all well and good. If they don’t, the horse is far enough away to avoid any retaliation.

I have been presenting leadership actions to horses for so long I can do it and be mentally baking a cake at the same time. It is instinctive on my part. I pay little, if any, attention to the “forget you” actions. I am in the process of changing my way of looking at them that way. If I think about it when a “forget you” signal comes my way, I immediately give the horse a new direction. This defeats the purpose of the signal and takes the horse’s mind off what it is doing and puts it on what I’m doing - being a leader.

“A Change Is About To Happen” Signals

When you see the horse’s mouth working in what some call licking and chewing the horse is processing what is going on. We often hear people say, “I’m going to chew on that awhile.” When they are caressing their chins, they are mulling something over or thinking about it. They are giving extra thought to something. Horses are the same way. When you see a horse’s mouth working you can expect a change of some sort.

Any mouth action is mouth action. Some horses leave no doubt as to what they are doing. They lick and chew as though they have a large piece of juicy bubble gum in their mouth and you can sometimes actually see some or a lot of their tongues. With some horses you have to be very vigilant to see anything. The mouth action usually lasts a few moments. It doesn’t last long but you’ll have time to

see it.

There will be a change shortly after the mouth movement. Whatever the horse is doing when you observe the mouth action will be followed by something else. That something else can be anything. It can be a "I tried that trick and it didn't work, perhaps if I tried this trick..." Or it can be a "Hmmm... Nothing has worked, I wonder what will happen if I act like I would in a herd..."

The greater percentage of the time mouth action is a positive sign. Whenever I see a horse "licking and chewing" I leave it alone while its mouth is working. Sure, the horse might be saying to itself, "I haven't just gone in there and kicked the daylights out of him, wonder what'll happen if I do that?" More than likely it'll say to itself, "Hmmm... I wonder what'll happen if I just act like a horse, after all he's acting like a herd leader."

The title of this page says "signals." It says signals because a horse may do this several times during the bonder session. Each time will bring about some sort of change. Watch closely and you will see it.

When you see the horse is pondering, look for the change in attitude and behavior.

Working Aggressive Horses

An aggressive horse is one who is willing to close in on you and force you to act the way it wants you to. It will use whatever force it feels will do the job from threatening to actually coming in contact with you. Some bite, some kick, some rear up and try to strike you down, some will rush.

Usually by the time you get them into the round pen or enclosure they have pretty much demonstrated aggressive tendencies. Some of those demonstrations may have been low-key, perhaps at feeding time, while devoting time and energy on another horse. They may have been tolerated, even cutesied by a "Oh, you naughty horse! Behave yourself."

Most aggressive horses won't go out of their way to bring the fight to you and are quickly put in their place by herd leadership actions.

I say again, most aggressive horses won't go out of their way to bring the fight to you and are quickly put in their place by herd leadership actions.

Most aggressive horses.

There are two kinds of aggressive horses.

One kind exhibits warnings - ear pinning, freeing a leg, shaking its head, showing its teeth and so on - during something it doesn't like. If you back off it'll usually let it go until the next time. If you persist it may ramp up the aggression and carry through with the threat. If it does carry through with a threat it's attitude says, "I warned you! You got what you deserved!"

The other kind of aggressive horse will eat your lunch while you're eating it. These horses usually have a "AWC" (Approach With Caution) reputation built up around the barn. People are extra careful around it, some, even the owners, are scared of the horse and avoid it at all costs. These horses don't need a reason to be aggressive. There is a short window between their warnings and their actions. They carry through with their threats and their attitude says, "I fixed you!"

I call them super-aggressive horses. I have only met a handful of these types of horses.

Presenting herd leadership actions to super-aggressive horses requires extra caution and care. You have to convince them you are tougher and meaner than they are. And you have to do it quick and you have to catch them off guard.

If you had a super-aggressive horse in a herd and it attacked another horse, one of two things would happen. The attacked horse would give way or the attacked horse would defend itself and we'd have two horses going head to head, or butt to butt, trying to take a plug out each other or kicking each other to pieces until one horse gave up or became too injured to continue. The strongest, the most determined, the most capable horse would likely win. In some cases both horses could even become mortally injured.

The best way to deal with an attack is a very strong offense. The fight must be taken to the aggressor. Now that is much easier said than done. The horse usually outweighs us by two, okay, three, times, has large teeth and rock-like feet at the end of its legs. When all that is unleashed on you you probably would rather be rolling in cactus somewhere. Yet, a strong offense is required to defeat the aggression.

A head to head, horse to human, knockdown drag out is not going to come out in the human's favor. You can pretty much plan on that. In these situations one has to adopt the Marine slogan - *Improvise, Adapt and Overcome*.

You will want to do everything you can to stack the odds in your favor. If the enclosure is small enough and you can get completely around it you may want to give the horse its directions from outside the pen. You may even be able to find three 55 gallon barrels - plastic is easier to work with - to place in the center of your working area and fill them with water for a defensive barrier. Keep the barrels between you and the horse while you work it.

When I go into an enclosure with an aggressive horse I'm going in hot. I will leave it no doubt that I fully intend to kill it. 'Course, armed only with a longe whip, there really isn't any way I could kill it but I don't want it to know that. I want it to think death is a very likely possibility. I will quickly advance on it while loudly saying, even yelling, something along the lines of, "WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE????!! I GET AHOLD OF YOU, I WILL KILL YOU!!!"

I want my approach to be sudden and loud. I want to quickly surprise it and catch it off guard before it has a chance to make the first move. If I come in hot enough, quick enough, loud enough and convincing enough, its instinct will take over and it will flee in self-preservation. At that moment it has acknowledged that I am more powerful than it is. This then is my first direction - "for your safety, get moving!" - and it has obeyed.

Since the horse is busy keeping its eye on me chances are it'll take off on the path of least resistance, away from me, and not go over the fence. There is another reason it won't usually go over the fence and that is I'm coming along that fence. I'm coming along the fence because if my plan goes bust and the horse decides it's going to make the first move, I can head over, head under or even lay up against the fence as a last resort. Some protection is better than none. Needing the fence hasn't happened yet but I want to keep my options open. In order to go over the fence the horse has to stop its flight and turn sideways to my attack. If I see it doing that I speed up my approach to change its mind.

I also want to keep coming at it from the side. As long as I can keep at its side away from its hooves and its head I'm in a position of relative safety. When I approach from the side it has to turn into me to get me and it has little defense against a side attack. It can flee, face and fight or back up and fight. I don't want to put myself in any of those positions.

Now, I've given the horse its first direction and got it to obey. Because I want to keep it off balance I quickly give it its second direction which is to "Stop!" I turn around and go in the opposite direction the horse is traveling. It is heading toward me and it doesn't want to run into me because I'm still in "kill mode" so it stops. Then it immediately gets the third direction, "If you are there when I get there..."

Notice I said "three directions" but in reality was only two - Stop and Go. I can repeat this two

direction sequence as many times as I want and link those two directions into as long a chain as I want and the horse will not catch on. As far as it is concerned it is one direction after another, after another, after another. The first time I give the two directions they are one, two. The second time I give the sequence they are three, four. The third time, five, six and so on.

Once I get the horse moving at my direction, I have it made. At that point the horse is convinced I'm important enough to be obeyed. I give it a few more "aggressive" commands to anchor the importance. Once I am convinced the horse thinks I'm more leader material than it is I then tone my volume way down and work towards it fully accepting my leadership.

There has only been one super aggressive horse I couldn't overcome and that was because his owners didn't see his aggression as aggression and I didn't want to have them think I "was beating up their horse."

He was a 2,200 lb. Percheron. He was massive. His owners had brought him to one of my clinics to develop a better connection with him. They circle-led him everywhere they wanted to take him He'd go off in whatever direction he felt like going and they'd go off to the side and pull his head in the direction they wanted to go. After a good number of circles they'd end up where they were heading.

His owner and I were in the round pen with him and I explained the herd dynamics procedure along with an overview of what we were going to do and how it would work. I then gave him his first direction and he simply ignored me. I upped the pressure a little and he still ignored me. I upped the pressure some more and this time he responded. He focused both eyes on me, lowered his head and very deliberately advanced on me. I backed up and increased the pressure even more and he continued advancing. Nothing I did stopped his advance or made him go away. There was no doubt in my mind he was stalking me. When he was two feet from me I sent him a "Okay, you win," mental image and stopped my pressure. Immediately he put his head down and began nibbling at the grass.

Since he had no regard for the longe whip at all I decided to go get a 1/2" thick long leadline with a large ring on the end of it and use that for my extension. It was the same story. He paid no attention to it either even when the ring spun against his side as he deliberately stalked me around the round pen. I can outrun any backwards traveling horse forward but I can't outrun any forward traveling horse backwards Everything about him said it wasn't going to work out well for me so I started sending him, "Okay, you win," mental images and he immediately took to grazing again.

I told the owner he was super aggressive and the signs he exhibited that told me that. Naturally she couldn't see any of it. She admitted he had an attention problem but that was it. They didn't challenge him at all beyond circle leading, and I'm not real sure he was even aware they were doing that, so he didn't see any need to put them in their place.

By using the hot, quick surprising approach I certain I could have even dealt with him. Since the owners were oblivious to his aggression I let him go his merry way hoping that when he did go off on someone I would get a second chance.

A strong offense is the best way to deal with super-aggressive horses.

The Four Causes Of Aggression

Here is an email I received...

Dear Mr. Walker:

Well, thanks to your help we got through our gelding's injury, but now we are having a very severe problem with him... respect.

He does not listen or react to what I ask of him at all, just walks wherever HE wants to. He was respecting my Mom until today. She walked past him and his hay, and he reached over, laid back his ears and bit her... hard. To me, this sounds like a respect problem, but I could be wrong. This is really concerning to me, don't want a bully for a horse, and I'm not sure how to address this.

Any advice you could give would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks,

My reply...

“Mr.” Walker doesn't know enough about horses to be any help at all so I guess I'll take a crack at this. This is a very difficult thing to address over the puter. In my experience, aggression (biting is aggression) has one or more of four causes.

1. Fear. The horse is super afraid. He's like a bully in a school yard. He has no idea how to deal with and react to people so he immediately seeks to put you in your place BEFORE you do anything to him that may make him uncomfortable or harm him. It is a question of doing it to you before you do it to him. When fear bullies are confronted they usually immediately align themselves with the confronter. When bullying doesn't work, they turn into a cajoling buddy... “Hey Buddy, you and I are friends, right? We can handle any troublemakers who come our way, right?”
2. Disrespect. Occupying your space, punishing you for not doing what they want when they want, paying more attention to some petty distraction than you and a number of other things that make you feel meaningless when you are around the horse. If you are doing something he doesn't like, he can, and often does, bite, or threaten to bite. You may gain some insight from my video [*Dealing With The Aggressive Horse And Determined Challenger*](#)
- 3.
4. Pain. Suppose for a moment that you have a twisted back or neck and every movement sends a spear through you... would you bite if someone crossed your path? Sure. In the case of pain (physical issues) you may gain some insight from my video [*"How To Troubleshoot For Physical Issues In Horses Before Riding Or Arranging A Pre-Purchase Exam"*](#)
5. Mental illness whether caused by hormones or what have you. These horses are exceptionally dangerous because logic doesn't work with them. If a horse is mentally ill, it usually exhibits some additional symptoms as well such as irrationality, inconsistency or total unpredictability.

Regardless of the reason, I *WILL NOT* tolerate biting. I will retaliate immediately if there is the slightest threat to bite.

At my 11/14-15/98 clinic I had a weird group of horses. I say weird in that there was a very high percentage of aggressive horses. One of them was quite bad. He tried to eat people up when they got close. His owner said that when she did anything with him she hurried to get his halter on because then he was fairly easy going ONCE HE WAS CAUGHT (confronted). Even haltered he would still nip if he had the chance. He had even grabbed the owner by the chest and flung her OVER the stall wall

when she first got him. She did nothing with him until he was haltered.

The clue here is the halter. Once caught he buddied up for the most part. Fear was the main reason he was so nasty. It's hard to believe a 1500+ (oh he was huge!) could be so fearful, but he was. I told his owner the cure was to treat him in the opposite way she had been. Instead of letting him drive her out of HIS space she should allow him to stay in HERS. See the difference here? She told me, in effect, it was much easier said than done. I picked up a wand (a small white dressage whip with a plastic button on the handle) and went into the stall. He immediately pinned his ears and whipped his head to bite. I curtly told him "NO!" and thumped him once on the bridge of his nose just below his eyes. He was stunned and stopped in his tracks. Then he whipped around in the stall, aiming his truck-sized butt at me and began to kick me into the corner. I had left escape room in the stall door but wasn't able to get out as his mule kicking legs went by me on both sides. Each time he would lower his butt to spring it up I'd rap him hard on the butt and tell him "NO!" Three times and then he turned and faced me and that was that.

I reminded the owner that SHE paid for the stall, it was HERS and not his, she was merely allowing him to share it with her as a team that she directed. She informed me later that she had gone in and picked his stall as he ate unhaltered and "even let him get between me and the door which I wouldn't have even considered before."

In this case a fear bully was confronted to get past his aggression and get him started on his way toward discovering most of the things he was concerned about would never happen.

Another aggressive horse didn't respond to the bonder in exactly the way I expected. It took far longer to complete it than I expected. I performed a despooring scenario in the afternoon but while there was marked improvement, it took longer than I expected which is normally about 10 minutes. Surprised to hear his stall manners were still somewhat atrocious I went to help his owner deal with him. As I went in I saw a suspicious bulge on the side of his neck and when I examined him I saw he had 4 cervical vertebrae out. I was able to be in the stall with him but he wasn't very friendly at all. Judging from the discomfort he was in, I would expect him to be ill tempered. Follow-up after chiropractic care I'm certain will find him a whole new horse.

In the case of that horse pain was undoubtedly the culprit.

Now then, about your horse...

If I remember right, this is a horse that was really easy going then a few days after you got him, he changed to a pain in the rear. I felt then it was physical and your follow up messages said you had indeed found serious injuries. Now, he appears to be worse tempered but physically better.

Any time a horse makes an abrupt change I suspect a physical condition. The first thing I would *suspect* is that he is not completely better. He still is in some degree of pain - and I say that based upon the fact he was obviously in pain a few weeks ago.

Could we have respect issues as well? Oh yes. If he has singled out one person to bully - definitely yes. But you report he is starting to annoy everyone so let's assume he has a major disrespect problem as well as pain issues.

If he is not *obviously* in pain I'd perform the bonder on him and then if he still exhibits the same aggression (and I really doubt he will) I'd be even more convinced there is a strong physical cause. Performing the bonder with him, even if he has undiagnosed pain, will make him more compliant and allow you more freedom to uncover any pain problems.

My gut feeling from here based upon some computer messages is that your problem has a 70% pain, 20% respect issues and 5% handling cause. Perform the bonder with him and then let us know how he

is doing then.

Working Young Immature Horses

By young horses I mean foals, weanlings and yearlings. These horses are given a lot of lee way by the herd. They are not held as tightly to the “take all the rights you can and honor all the rights you can’t” as adult horses are.

If a foal annoys an adult horse the adult horse may give it a threat but seldom carries through with it. The foal gets its understanding of herd dynamics and is controlled by herd dynamics through the mother.

Weanlings are still controlled to a large degree by the mother but it is also beginning to show its independence and interact with the herd. The herd shows its intolerance with a “I could kill you if I wanted to, so watch it!” signal. For the most part the adult does not carry through with the threat.

Because the herd members do not consider the younger horses to be any threat to them. They know the younger horses are no competition and as such have not yet developed the ability to take rights.

The bonder works on all age horses, even young ones.

The bonder is best performed with an “I am in charge here. This is my area and you are in it because I am allowing you in it,” matter of fact, that’s how it is, mindset.

The only difference is the way you present the leadership actions to them. You present the leadership actions in an almost indifferent way as if you don’t care whether they get them or not. With adults you use the energy you need to get them to obey quickly. With young horses you simply move your presence into their presence - you matter of factly claim their space.

For example, you are in the enclosure, or anywhere else with them... You say, by your movements, by your actions, “I want that space.” Then you wait for them to stop and after a few moments you matter of factly say, by your movements, by your actions, “I want that space.” Then you wait for them to stop again and after a few moments you matter of factly say, by your movements, by your actions, “I want that space.” If they should start running pell-mell around the enclosure you simply claim a spot in their path and say, by your movements, by your actions, “This is my space. Don’t come into it (stop).” You want to keep your movements and actions low keyed as though you aren’t really doing anything other than what you want to do - leaders can do that, you know. You simply keep claiming their space as your own - leaders can do that, you know.

Pretty soon you’ll notice they are a lot more respectable, compliant and approachable.

Beginning To End Bonder Session

Establishing a mental connection with a horse is absolutely necessary for bringing out the best in both horse and human. The more mentally connected they are to each other (or as we humans like to say, “bonded”), the better the communication between the two. In a mentally connected relationship the constant exchange of information overcomes fear, confusion and anxiety. When these barriers are dealt with, rapid progress can be made because the time wasted on the “just doesn’t seem to get it” obstacles is spent far more productively. Since a mentally connected relationship improves as it ages, camaraderie and learning speed increases.

“Bonding” to use that term for an awesome mental connection is an area of differing opinions both in what it is and how to achieve it. Some point to their horse’s nickering to them, walking up to them, hanging around them while they are in the horse’s area or the fact that they “just feel such a rapport” with the horse as proof their horse has bonded to them or is in the process of bonding to them. Many feel if they are able to get along with the horse with a minimum of hassle they have bonded.

I believe a VERY HIGH percentage of horses are not “broke”. Most horses do not have a bonded sense of partnership with humans. This is evidenced in any number of handling & training problems. You may be able to get the horse to accomplish all sorts of things and it still might not be “broke.” If a horse has disrespect issues (moving into your space, improper leading, moving away from saddling, bridling or grooming in the apparent absence of injury, barn sour, herd bound) for instance, it is not “broke.” You may be able to fling the horse to victory or do any number of things with it, but it is not “broke”. Most horse problems I deal with are the result of a horse not being “broke”.

How can you end up being able to get a horse to the point where you can ride it and accomplish things with it and still not have it “broke?” I’d have to say it’s success. Success is the number one reason, as I see it, that so many people have problems with horses. How can that be? Well, we start a horse on Monday and he lets us put the bridle and saddle on and even lets us get on him and go twice around wherever. Success. On Tuesday we start teaching him to steer and he goes around fairly well. Success. By Saturday, we’re all the way up to proper leads, canter departs, roll backs, what have you. Success.

We get rolling along on our wave of success. Sometimes luck holds out and we’re able to get all the way to the ribbons or wherever else we’re heading. Many times our success turns on us when we least expect it. We may be going around a barrel or doing a shoulder-in and wham! We then get focused in on the turn or shoulder-in as the culprit when in actuality the initial biting “success” months before may be the problem. The horse accepted the bit under optimum conditions only to have it fall apart down the line. He was never “broke” to the bit... he accepted it but he wasn’t “broke.

“Bonding” or connecting with a horse works the same way. Just because a horse *appears* to be bonding doesn’t mean it is. For the purposes of this discussion, I define “bonding” as that state where both horse and human are of one mind with the horse willing to be, and content to be, the mirroring partner. Expanding further, it should include what I call the “mother mentality”. The horse should ACT like a mother. Not BE a mother, ACT like a mother in that a mother pretty much tolerates anything a kid does. The kid can climb on her, play, do whatever and the mother pays no attention... until the kid says, “MOM!” I want the horse to tolerate whatever I do (within reason of course) and only give me his attention when I mention his name by giving him a direction or cue. Since horse human relations consist of streams of directions and cues, he gives me his attention constantly.

When I can do whatever I want to the horse short of hurting it or demanding it accept something it is unable to do, the horse has “mother mentality.” When the horse has mother mentality toward another being, it is bonded, or connected to that being.

Bonding can be predictably, rapidly and verifiably accomplished in less than an hour with practically any horse by utilizing eons-old horse herd dynamics in a psychological pattern that unifies the horse with its herd or human acting as the herd leader would act. The horse willingly gives its compliance in return for a sense of place and belonging - a productive member of the herd.

For eons and eons horses have been herd animals. In nature, the horse MUST be part of a herd to survive for any length of time. In the herd is his life. There is safety on numbers. He has more eyes and ears available to watch for predators. He can sleep and eat more because predator watch is shared by other herd members. If a predator comes, he only needs to be faster and warier than the least capable member of the herd. If he is alone, he is as good as dead when danger threatens.

In return for this security, he must comply with a very rigid scenario - either lead or follow. When presented with the actions of a leader, the horse genetically has two options - become the leader or become the follower. When we use herd dynamics and exhibit leader actions, the horse reacts to the leader actions.

Because we have greater reasoning ability than the horse we can set up a situation where he has only one reaction when presented with leader actions and that is following the leader's lead. If he chooses to comply quickly, good. If he chooses to try to become the leader we defuse that by refusing to comply with his actions. If we don't comply, he is not a leader. Since a horse is either a leader or he's not, and we deny him compliance, he is left with one option - since he was unable to become leader, he must become a follower.

In any relationship there always has to be a leader. The one who is the most capable of making decisions must be the leader or confusion reigns. Since the horse is incapable of making beneficial decisions in the human world, the human must be the leader. In order for the human to lead the horse, the human must be able to communicate with the horse. There must be a flow of information between the two beings. This flow opens up wide avenues for both parties. Both parties become one unit. When that happens, they are bonded.

What follows is my herd dynamics bonding scenario. It is a narration of the results I get 100% of the time. This bonder is, in essence, the sequence I use to develop initial bonding. There are some variables in the length of time between stages and how the horse acts between the stages, but, so far it has not failed to produce bonding and a strong willingness toward submissive cooperation in a VERY short time for me.

This is ONLY the bonder which is but a small part of the [*Mind Meeting Mind - Awareness Horsemanship techniques*](#). The bonder is the foundation on which everything else I do is based.

While the idea enclosure for this procedure is a round pen, it is NOT a round pen exercise. Any enclosure large enough to keep the horse away from you until it shows you the respect you want and small enough to be able to control the horse will do. The object is to control the body by controlling the mind NOT control the mind by wearing down the body. Ideally, the slower and calmer you can perform the procedure the better.

There are many extras I would do in a clinic. There is quite a bit of theory involved in what I do. Nothing complicated or involved, just fairly intensive. I cover pre-evaluating the horse. I teach knowing what the horse is like before we begin bonding so that we have something concrete to compare to afterwards. We look at the shape of its head, facial features, eyes, length of mouth, position and location of ears, how it is moving, its apparent mental state and so on. All of these factors have a bearing on the way the horse is going to go through the bonding process, not whether or not it WILL go through, but HOW. Some horses take longer to between the stages, some are more cooperative and so on.

You will want to be aware of tension signs before you begin the procedure; expanded eyes, tightened lips, drawn up stomach, jerky movements, rapidly flicking ears, quick blinks, etc, and to look to these areas for signs of acceptance; eyes soft, lips "flopping", stomach swaying to the stride, smooth movements, steady ears, etc, to help you gauge your progress.

This bonder as presented is also intended for horses who have reached a somewhat mature mental state. It is not for weanlings or babyish acting young ones. Those animals are susceptible to the bonder, but require a different bonder application. Foals and yearlings rely on throwing themselves on the mercy of more dominant horses. They communicate this action by popping their gums which is saying, "I'm just a little baby, be gentle with me!" Adult horses, when confronted with the same action that promotes

gum popping in young horses, tend to respond either with, “Okay, I’ll comply,” or “I will overpower your action”. Two year olds are like teenagers in that they mentally bounce between being a child and being an adult. The trick in dealing with two-three year olds is to be able to tell which side of maturity the horse is on at any given moment which may be difficult.

Using the bonder on young horses requires a very laid back, almost indifferent approach. The bonder is best performed low-key and matter of factly with all horses but young immature horses require an almost feather light approach.

If you have a horse that is exceptionally anxious you may want to adjust the bonder accordingly. The bonder does not need to be done all at once. With a highly agitated horse, you might increase the initial distance by staying on one side of the pen and gradually claiming the middle as the horse accepts your presence. If you have a horse that is blindly circling or racing around the pen erratically you can stop the circling by claiming a wedge of the pen for your own and not allowing the horse to enter it. As soon as you decide to stop a wildly circling horse, quickly get to the spot it was leaving when you made the decision so that when it comes around again you’ll be there. Let the horse know that is your area and if it comes into your area there will be trouble. Leave yourself enough room between you and the pen fence so that if the horse’s momentum carries it into your section, you can let it go by.

Taking a wedge means thinking of the RP as a pie and the wedge as a piece of the pie. You stand in the wedge halfway between the center and the fence and prevent the horse from entering the wedge. If you prevent it from entering your wedge it will retreat in the other direction. If you keep the horse from anxiously circling by controlling a wedge the horse will ultimately stop as far from you as possible on the other side of the enclosure. Occupy the wedge until the horse calms. Then you can resume the bonder from the center.

This bonder as it is set up, is for 3 year olds and up. (I don’t know why the first draft said yearlings. Performed low key it works on them and foals, just isn’t as predictable.) It is for horses of all levels of training. It is designed to instill a mental bonding between horse and human. It puts you one with your horse... it is a platform, a spring board to a mind boggling unity.

The bonding process itself is pretty concrete. It is a sequence of achieving and passing through different stages of herd dynamic negotiation that establishes a leader/herd member relationship where the horse looks for and accepts the wishes of the leader. The bonding aspects are also pretty straight forward. This bonder *WILL* mentally join you to your horse. It is up to you to recognize and maintain that bond. You recognize the bond by the changes in the horse and in you. You maintain that bond by tuning yourself into what that horse is saying and doing and acting accordingly in a positive manner.

Since the bonder involves horses and requires some horse handling abilities, it is important to know that if you engage in horse handling activities you accept the risks involved. Having personally known people who have both been killed and vegetated by horses, it is my desire to lessen these occurrences. Your safety is the first concern. The safety of the horse is a close second.

I want to stress again that I have yet to have a problem, or to have the bonder fail, from the moment the nuances of it fell into place for me. But I am VERY, VERY experienced with horses and this procedure. Properly performed, this procedure goes so smoothly it is very possible to be lulled into a false sense of security. You must keep in mind, horses are known for unexpected and unpredictable actions. Be sure you take all possible safety precautions.

I used to say, “The ideal bonding area is a 60 foot diameter round pen.” That was when I was relying on mental measuring. Having since worked tape-measured 60’ pens, I’ve revamped my ideal. The ideal bonding area is a round pen large enough to keep the horse a safe distance away from you for as long

as you wish, yet small enough you don't get exhausted moving around in it. My new ideal is somewhere around 50'. (Oh yes, those 10' DO make a major difference.)

The smaller the round pen, the more centrifugal force and physical strain there is on the horse as it moves. Since we hope to keep the horse's speed to a minimum, joint strain is usually not a factor to worry about. Larger breeds are at a disadvantage in smaller pens and cannot move as freely as smaller breeds. The larger the round pen the more difficult it is to control the movements of the horse. The pen does not have to be "round". In the absence of a round pen I have used other enclosures and even made temporary ones in the corner of a larger arena using jumps, boards, pallets, ropes, whatever I could find to keep the horse contained. I have no problem with corners, others may. If the horse sticks in the corners find something to put in the corners that will prevent the horse from "hiding" in them. Ideally, the horse should be unable to get farther than 30 feet from you at anytime and you should be able to keep a similar safety distance between you until the horse asks if is okay to approach you.

We Begin The Bonder...

I take the horse into the round pen and set it free. Nothing on the horse - no halter, no leadline, nothing. I move to the center of the pen and wait for a few moments. I allow the horse to do whatever it wants. If it wants to stand, run, hang over the rail, whatever, so be it. I try to not look directly at the horse during this time, but I usually watch him out of the corner of my eye. I want to give him every opportunity to acknowledge my presence even though I know he's not likely to. And even if he does acknowledge my presence and comes over and acts buddy buddy, I'm not going to accept that anyway... because it is an action he chooses to suit his own whims. I don't want buddy buddy. I want "What is your wish?"

My goal is to have the horse obviously come up to me and patiently await my directions at the end of the herd dynamics / bonder procedure. If through some quirk of fate, the horse does do that initially without any previous herd dynamics before, I will still insist we go through the bonder so that the horse and I both have the memory of the sequence and effects. I want the horse to discover I *KNOW* how to be a leader and I have the ability to lead.

Now then, if the horse has been through the bonder previously (either with me or someone else) and the horse obviously comes up to me and patiently awaits my directions, I will accept that and act accordingly until it demonstrates it's having second thoughts. But since we're talking previously unbonded horses here, I don't accept apparent acceptance of my leadership.

THE HORSE MUST *DEMONSTRATE* ITS ACCEPTANCE BY GOING THROUGH THE PROCESS. It simply must go through channels, to use a cliché.

The horse ignores me for the most part and I ignore him. This is as far from bonding as we can get. I don't think he really cares because his actions say he doesn't. I'm the last thing on his mind. There are far more important things around than me. "That's my buddy, Bosco, over there! Hi Bosco!!!" The rails on the pen are more important than I am. Heck, something moving on the next farm is more important than I am. If he does have any interest in me, it's usually "Anything in this for me?"

He may be content with this situation, but I'm not. And if he was in a herd ignoring the higher members of the herd so blatantly, they wouldn't like it either. Even though he and I are the only ones there, we are a herd. Every herd needs a leader (that's nature's way, actually, nature's law) and since he and I are the only two candidates, one of us better step up to the plate and hit the ball or we will be out.

Chances are good people have been letting HIM hit the ball all his life. But people, as a rule, don't

understand the leader game and act unpredictably. The horse acts like a horse, the human acts like a human. Two different species. There is no unity there. No bond. The human has no idea what the horse is saying when it enters the human's space without regard. The human does not react in a manner the horse expects. The result is confusion. The horse does not respect the human because they have not gone through the respect or bonding interaction ages of genetics have instilled in the horse. It may tolerate the human all day long, day in and day out, and still not respect the human. It has not worked out the ranking order in an instinctive manner, therefore, it is not totally certain how to act toward the human.

As I said, he's ignoring me and I'm tapping my foot (figuratively) in annoyance. Since I'm not happy and have greater reasoning abilities than he does, I want to fix this problem. First, I have to make him aware there **is** a problem and that I'm not happy about it. So, I mentally cloud up and rain and tell him, "I am NOT happy. You are ignoring me and because you are doing that, I want you to leave now!" I will do whatever it takes to get him to move away and keep moving. I look into his eyes and glare at him as I advance toward him in an "I'm just going to chew on you awhile" manner. If he is moving already as if looking for a way out of the pen to greener pastures, I let him move and keep looking directly at him. As long as he's moving the way I want, I stay in the middle of the pen. I only leave the middle to signal him to do something and then return as quickly as I can.

MOST of the time I need nothing other than my mental energy and body language to get the horse to move away and keep moving until I say otherwise. There are those horses who require a little more effort to get moving for whatever reason. For those, I do what it takes to get them to move around the pen. If a horse does not move without serious physical pushing (waving a whip, tossing a rope, etc.) it is doing more than ignoring you. It is ignoring you AND challenging you to do something about it at the same time. You then have to step up the energy and the body language to the point it takes to get him to move away.

Previously it was not real clear about the use of whips, ropes, etc, to direct the more "resistant" horse. I personally seldom had to resort to a rope, or whip and in the interest of striving for perfection I preferred to down play their use. However, in the round pen teaching someone how to do it, I discovered having something they were used to and understood handy gave them more confidence.

During a clinic in Wisconsin I was working with an experienced horsewoman, who wasn't using a whip, and an off the range mustang. As she moved toward it to make the horse move it backed toward her and mule kicked at her head missing her so close I thought she had been kicked in the face. After that, I make sure everyone has a whip, (and use one myself to demonstrate its use) and get them to use it as a physical extension of their arm. Use whatever you need to use to control the horse while keeping a safe distance. At all times you want to strive toward using JUST the amount of pressure needed to get the job done. If he's moving, stop exerting the pressure. If he stops doing what you want, apply the pressure.

Usually, his eyes get big and he acts surprised by me telling him to get out of my sight, which he is, and since he's surprised and caught off guard by my displeasure he complies with my wishes. This is his way of saying, "Forget you! You are nothing! I will just leave you here all alone to think about **your** attitude! Humph!"

I said earlier that the horse has only two options when presented with the actions of a leader and those two options are become the leader or follow. If he chooses the become the leader option he may immediately move in on you with a "I'll show you who is the leader, let's you and I duke it out for the job" attitude. In nature the two leader wannabes would close in to each other and start exchanging blows until one gives up or is severely injured. You don't need to be rocket scientist to figure out that isn't too smart for a human to do. So you move around and come at him from the side and apply your

pressure directly into his side. When he moves to set up again, you move to his side again. This defeats the duking it out option, you're doing all the duking. Since he cannot over power you (hopefully) you have removed his leader option. The only thing left is follower. At that point he retreats to reassess the situation

My visual (eye to eye contact mixed with focusing just behind his shoulder) & physical pressure at this point says, "No, you will not leave me here, I will just follow right along behind you! I'm not quite done with you yet!" Since I am standing pretty much in the center of the circle he's making, I am always the same distance behind him no matter how long or how fast he goes. He is not able to leave me in the dust.

Since horses are pretty intuitive he soon thinks, "Oh! Oh! I am not getting away! He is still the same distance behind me! I have a problem!" At that moment, I have become something very important to him. So important, he dedicates one of his ears to me. The other ear whips and wanders, the ear closest to me focuses on me. The ear closest to me does not have to be on me continuously to focus on me, just the greater part of the time. Yes, I am suddenly very important. I must be dealt with in some manner. If he does not get me to call off the chase, my displeasure will land on him. He is in danger of me catching him.

The purpose is not to wear the horse down or exhaust him. It is merely to set up thinking opportunities. I seldom let a horse go around more than 4-6 times in one direction before I change his direction. I change his direction by going to the opposite edge of the pen from where he's at when I decide to change the direction. As he comes around he'll see me moving to cut him off and he'll stop and go back the way he came. Each direction change is a stop, turn and think breather. If the horse is getting too warm and or tired, I don't let him make any laps, I turn him repeatedly on one half, or smaller, sections of the pen. I refer to this turning him back and forth along one small section of the pen as "arcing". If he is getting far too tired or overheated, I will even stop for the time being, the day, whatever it takes. There is no failing with this bonder. You gain something toward bonding no matter where you stop the session.

Often he will take a look at me as he's going around to see if he can pick up a clue on how to deal with me, he may even start making the circle smaller in a "You're joking, aren't you?" manner. When he looks at me I signal him to keep moving. That tells him there is no doubt I'm not joking and he keeps moving.

At this point he starts blaming me for his problem. He may pin his ears, snake his head at me, come closer and cow kick at me, flip his butt at me, any combination of threat signals to tell me he's not pleased either. He's saying, "This is all your fault! I think I'll just sail in there and mud pie you so easy!" I am not the blame for his problem, he is. He is in the presence of a horse-acting-like being who is insisting he follow nature's law often expressed as "Lead, follow or get out of the way!" and he is not complying with the law.

Let's examine lead, follow or get out of the way. He can't lead - he gave up that option by acknowledging I was superior enough to him to get him to leave in the first place. He can't get out of the way - the enclosure prevents that. The only choice he has left is to follow. Nature and his genetics and my will say that is his ONLY option. Nature has programmed him to follow. **AND HE WILL DO THAT.** I can take any number of horses who are not mentally-ill or hormonally unbalanced, set them up in a lead, follow or get out of the way situation and they ALL will follow. Some will follow more quickly and willingly than others, but they will all follow. Now, I need to backtrack a little... Do I KNOW it works on all horses? No. I haven't worked all horses yet. I do know that this bonder has worked on ALL the horses I've used it on.

I ignore his threats which tells him, "No, you won't do any of that, you'll just keep going." If it is a

fairly strong threat in that he starts for me, I glare at him and close in on him which says, "If you come into me, you will really have problems!" I only move enough towards him to convince him I am *willing* to mix it up. Since he told me he was uncertain of how to deal with me at the beginning of the bond and acknowledged that uncertainty by moving away, I can be reasonably sure he is *still* uncertain and will veer off at the first sign I'm prepared to retaliate. Under no circumstances do I put myself close enough to him at this point for him to reach me. If I feel I need to confront a halfhearted aggressive advance and enforce compliance, I will approach from the side, his least defensible area.

The threats, tantrums, aggression *displays* are a normal reaction on the part of the horse but some horses do not exhibit these behaviors. They go from fleeing to acceptance fairly quickly and cooperatively.

At this point he's ready for the next stage. He'll shake his head, mutter and mumble under his breath and then his mouth will visibly start working. You may even see teeth and tongue. Once you see the mouth movement he's thinking, "Sheesh! Tried everything I can think of to get him to do what *I* want him to do, nothing worked. Maybe I better try to get along with him..."

"I know! I'll just tell him I'm an easy going ol' grass eater and I really think we'd do better if he and I agreed to be a team and I'm willing to let him lead the team." He lowers his head as he moves, which in effect, tells me that. Head-lowering is head lowering. He may skim his nose along the ground, or may just lower it somewhere below his normal carry height. Once we have reached that stage I let him make another lap, maybe two and then I turn my back on him and wait a few moments for him to come up behind me and tell me he's there. I like to have him make an effort to come to me because it shows a little more determination to bond on his part. However, if he does not, I casually walk directly in front of him at a 45% angle from his shoulder. At that point he usually falls in behind me and follows me willingly around the pen. We have bonded. We are one unit, our spirits have blended, our minds have met and come to agreement.

A number of people have told me they got everything else but there was no licking and chewing. I have done this procedure so many times, I know what to look for and licking and chewing, like head lowering, is always there. ANY mouth action is "licking and chewing" because some horses do it so imperceptibly if you are not looking very closely, you will miss it. At a recent clinic, I had one horse that chewed constantly but the owner couldn't see it. Another horse was flicking his tongue out like a snake and everyone could see it. It is a matter of degrees. Any lip action is sufficient. If the horse is complying and you haven't seen mouth action, you probably just missed it

If the horse watches you attentively but seems reluctant to follow you, it may be that you have not convinced it that it is an accepted part of the herd. What I do if I feel that is the case, is short-arc the horse. I send the horse out and then change its direction as rapidly as I can until the horse stops and looks at me. I call this procedure "short arcing." I send him in one direction and as soon as I see he is committed to that direction I immediately send him in the opposite direction. As soon as I see he's committed to going in that direction, I send him in the other direction. Back and forth, back and forth, back and forth until he stops and looks at me and says, "Make up your mind!" While the ideal short arcing keeps the horse in one spot rocking back and forth on his feet, don't worry about the distance, just do it as fast as you can until he stops. At that point I nonchalantly walk up and slowly walk away. The horse will almost always follow me at that point.

Sometimes it helps to gently reach under the horse's jaw and momentarily guide it or "unlock" it as you move away. You should be able to tell within half a step if the horse is going to follow. If it doesn't, try another unlocking touch. Another tip that helps is to remember to initially lead in a direction that requires a one direction movement for the horse to follow. If you lead away too abruptly it may be too distracting if the horse has to move its front feet in one direction and its hind feet in another direction to

follow. Be sure you are in a leading position when you ask the horse to follow. Followers do not move into the space of the leader. Another little tip is to lean your upper body slightly forward as you start to move and to lead off with the leg that is on the same side as the leg the horse would need to move first to comply. This takes advantage of mirroring.

When this stage is arrived at he has accepted me as leader and will tolerate, for the most part, anything I do to him short of causing him pain. I say for the most part because if I grab a spook sheet and pop it on him he may get uneasy and move away. If he does, I send him out for a couple more laps. He often shakes his head side to side (Hmmm.. why did I do that? I'm back out here again!" or whips his nose in a circle ("Oops..screwed up, sorry.") After he does a couple laps, I ignore him again and let him come in. If he doesn't, I angle across him and he follows along. Then I flap the sheet again or do whatever made him leave. It takes more to make him leave each time he returns and he returns faster each time he leaves until he is leaving and returning so quickly, it is but a slight movement. Usually by that time, he much more willingly allows me to do pretty much what I want to do to him. I have free access to his mouth, his nostrils and his ears. This attitude carries over to other things as well, his first saddling, a new training bit and so on. As time goes on and you actively watch and listen to all of his movements with a "What is he saying when he does this?" attitude and then acting accordingly on that information, the bond you have forged will strengthen.

The rapport this bonder generates between horse and human is so moving, I have difficulty getting the human's feet back on the ground. A feeling I know all too well. I feel such an emotional connection to each horse I bond with that I almost zone out.

Seeing the look on a student's face when she gets on her formerly antsy horse all by herself with no one helping for the first time ever, having to threaten a rider off her horse because she is in Nirvana trotting her best ever 20 meter circle over and over, being able to take a highly agitated horse and with a mere touch having it calm immediately, is truly spirit blending and electrically mental.

This bonder should take less than one hour from start to finish. It does depend on the individual horse. Some horses will take longer than others, but 30 minutes is about average for me if I do not have to do a lot of explaining to observers. This bonder is but one part of a series of complimentary scenarios that are designed to build unity between horse and human. A unity that will enable them to work together as one in anything they go on to do.

The bonder is not an exercise and is ONLY intended to be done when you feel you and your horse are having communication problems and then it only needs to be done until the horse exhibits compliance. Touch ups, if needed will be needed less and less and will take less time to perform. My formerly nutso riding mare has never needed a touch up. One of the colts needed it about every three days but it got to the point where heading to the round pen was enough.

After The Bonder

Once the horse has performed the bonder and exhibits the behavior that tells me he has accepted the terms of our agreement, (he follows me, waits when I wait and does not object when I do whatever I want to do - lifting hoof, rubbing all over, whatever) I take him at his word. Until he tells me by his actions that he is unsure, changing his mind or has decided he doesn't have to do his part, I won't run him through the bonder again. He has to tell me by his actions that he's having second thoughts. Until he tells me he's having second thoughts, I'm not having any. Or probably more correctly, I'm not "supposed" to have any.

I have one mare who was a five minute bonder at the age of 19. That one bonding session is all it took. She is as trusting and easy to handle post-bonder as she was distrustful and difficult to handle pre-

bonder. I have another mare that needs a touch-up now and again, but the time between touch-ups has lengthened tremendously while the actual touch-ups have shortened to just a minute or so.

We have a 3 year old stud colt (at the time this was written) who is like a hormonally pumped teenager. He was pretty much unmanageable for awhile and just one phone dial away from the knife. Mechanics drive the junkiest cars, carpenters live in the shabbiest houses and horse trainers have the worst behaved horses. Unable to stand him anymore, he was run through the bonder last spring and has been run through about 5 times total for touch-ups since then. He has had a total of about an hour and a half's work. He loads, clips, bathes, leads, trims, listens and is rather quiet and respectful. He is the colt whose picture is in the bonder. I have not thought once of gelding him since spring. I thought about it several times a day before then.

I only perform the bonder when I need to. Once the horse and I have gone through it, we agree that we each have a job. My job is to do all the thinking, his is to do all the trusting. And we both do our jobs by listening to and considering each other. That in a nutshell, expressed in its basest form, is our agreement. Both of us have the right to question the other's depth of agreement. We can each say, "I'm not real sure about this." And the other can act accordingly. Ideally the other party will tell the nervous one, "See? No problem." Now then, let's say I... hmmm... ahhh... decide out of the clear blue I'm going to blanket him having never done it before. I approach with the blanket (normally, sanely), he goes nuts. He has broken the agreement to trust me. If he does not come to himself rather quickly, we, along with our friend, Mr. Blanket, are headed for the pen.

In the pen we do the bonder again. It won't take as long as it did the time before. When the horse tells me he's ready (he follows me, waits when I wait and does not object when I do whatever I want to do - lifting hoof, rubbing all over, whatever), I pick up the blanket and put it on him. If he becomes uncertain and leaves, I send him around a couple times in each direction then allow him to come back. I determine when he comes back. If he comes to me before I want him to, I send him back out. A couple times out and he's usually very compliant and the blanket means nothing. But horses are horses and people are people and sometimes things just go awry. If you're running yourself or the horse ragged, there is always another time.

Let's say instead of the blanket, we're talking first saddling. So far I have not had any problem getting a saddle on a horse in much less than an hour. The first saddling always involves complete tacking. I put the bridle on him mainly to start him getting used to having it. I leave the reins on but arrange them so that if he moves off he won't step on them. Ideally, by first saddling he should already be pretty used to the bridle and reins, but for whatever reason, they often aren't.

I find for the most part the bonder sets up an attitude of trust that usually gets the horse into an acceptance frame of mind for whatever I decide to do next. After all, we have an agreement. He and I are a team aren't we? He accepts that I am not going to do anything out of the ordinary. Since I'm the team leader, part of his agreement is to allow me to handle him pretty much at will - WITHIN REASON. I cannot put the saddle on him for the first time then climb up on the pen fence and leap through the air onto him because that is not reasonable. It asks him to submit to a predatory type attack. It is reasonable to expect him to accept my weight pressing against him or to be able to touch him anywhere. If his herd buddies can do it, I have the right to expect him to allow ME to do it.

Do I ride the first saddling? Not usually, but only because I have no great need to. He'll be a riding horse a long time and I have no desire to hurry. I do put a stool beside the horse and spend quite a bit of time accustoming the horse to having me ABOVE its head. I put a foot in the stirrup and get him used to weight without committing myself in case he leaves. I lean over, I pull, I monkey, what have you. If he leaves, I let him go and send him around a couple of times both ways and then we go back at it.

I only get on him when he is indifferent to whatever I do and after having done extensive ground work; despooning, teaching him to give to pressure, to go forward when directed, to stop when directed. When I get on I get on just like I always get on a horse and get right back off just like I always get off. I will get on and off, varying the length of time I stay on so he doesn't get expecting a pattern.

Until he is indifferent about me being on his back, which shouldn't take long because of the despooning work, I make no attempt to get any movement. While it's way beyond extremely wise to have someone holding him during this initial mounting, I'm often by myself when I do this.

Okay, now I have him to the point where it's ho-hum for me to get on his back. I just keep increasing the amount of time I stay there until I can stay about a half hour or so and he just accepts it.

Depending on how he reacts to me being on him, depending on what I know about him in general, depending on a number of other things that escape me here at the moment, but more importantly depending upon how I feel I may have him led around awhile while I'm on him to change the pattern, give him a break or to relieve his or my monotony.

About this point I slip into little bit-yielding exercises while sitting on his back (transferring what I taught him from the ground to the saddle). If he moves I try to just sit there and let him go on his own influencing.

The key here is to be continually aware of his attitude. If he seems to be nonplused, unconcerned and tolerating I don't worry too much. If he's stiff, ears locked or appears to be unhappy with what's happening, I get off and send him for a few reminder laps to break the monotony and reaffirm our agreement. It also doesn't hurt one bit to take him back to ground work to re-enforce the basics.

I only use the round pen for two things. I use it for bonding - either the initial bonding or if the horse needs a touch-up. I use it for training for those times when I want him free yet confined. Once I'm convinced I can trust the horse and I think he has a halfway decent steer and stop on him, I don't ride in the pen for the sake of riding. If he and I are in that pen, we are working on a specific goal. It is not a punishment, exercise, riding or longeing area. It is a learning area. Period.

If you have a using horse the bonder serves as an attitude adjuster or connection cementer. It encourages the horse to be more receptive to your directions, more attentive and more willing to accept training.

Maintaining The Leader Position

I get a number of people reporting superb results inside the round pen but not so much outside the round pen and wanting to know why.

They usually leave their leader hat in the round pen.

The round pen is where you learn the concept and establish your leadership position while not being hooked to the horse. You apply what you learned inside the round pen everywhere else.

You have to keep the concept in your mind that you are the leader wherever you are.

The moment the horse appears to start having difficulty keeping to your agreement (you are the leader, it is the follower) you need to do whatever you have to do to re-establish the connection.

Sometimes a mere, "Excuse me?!! I thought we had an agreement!!" will do the trick. Sometimes it may require more.

If you can get it back to the round pen, fine, that is the best place to work because you can control

without actually being physically connected to the horse.

Sometimes you may be out on the trail or away from a suitable enclosure. For those times you may have to get out to the end of your reins or leadline and begin giving the horse directions where you are. Send the horse around you in one direction for a couple laps then change its direction by pulling it tightly into you as you step to its other side to get it going in the other direction for a couple of laps. Repeat the direction changes until you think the horse has gotten the message.

You want to address the leadership lapses when they occur no matter what you are doing. Being the horse's leader is Job 1. After that everything else becomes easier.

Round Pen Figuring

I get a good number of questions about round pen sizes. Some folks want to know far around it is for a sixty foot round pen, some want to know how to lay one out, some want to know how big they can make their round pen when they have nineteen 12 foot long panels, some want to know how to make their round pen panels come out into a round pen instead of an oval and so on. They want to figure the figures when they only know some of the figures.

Whether you have a portable round pen or you are going to put in a permanent round pen, you still need to know how to figure out the various distances and their relationship to each other. Otherwise you'll end up with an odd shaped "round" pen or end up having to be readjusting the panels to get them to meet up right.

If you know how many panels you have of whatever length you can quickly figure out how wide your RP is going to be. If you want a round pen of say, 70 feet, you can quickly figure out how many panels you need. If you want to know how far your horse travels per session, you can quickly figure that out as well.

First of all, a circle is a shape with all points the same distance from the center. It's nice if our round pen is a circle. If you have a circle of known distance around (circumference) and you measure the distance from side to side through the circle's center (diameter) and you divide the diameter into the circumference your answer will ALWAYS be a constant figure we call "Pi." Pi ALWAYS comes out to be 3.14 no matter how large the circle is. Actually, true Pi has a TON of numbers after the decimal point if you continue to work the math but for our purposes we're only going to use two places past the decimal - 3.14. Horses don't have much interest beyond point one four and point one four is plenty close enough for round pen figuring.

So Pi, 3.14, becomes our magic number. If we know how long our panels total (circumference) we can use Pi to find out how wide (diameter) our pen will be. If we know how wide (diameter) we want our pen to be we can use Pi to tell us how long our panels should total up to (circumference). Pi, our magic number also helps us when we're reading the "RP for sale" ads on Craigslist and the poster only lists the number of panels or only lists the diameter.

If we know the width, or the diameter, of the round pen we want we can use Pi to figure out the total panel length, or circumference, we need for the pen. Our formula for this is - width multiplied by Pi = total panel length.

- $45' \times 3.14 = 141.3'$ of panels needed.
- $50' \times 3.14 = 157'$ of panels needed.
- $55' \times 3.14 = 172.7'$ of panels needed.
- $60' \times 3.14 = 188.4'$ of panels needed.

- $65' \times 3.14 = 204.1'$ of panels needed.
- $70' \times 3.14 = 219.8'$ of panels needed.
- $75' \times 3.14 = 235.5'$ of panels needed.
- $80' \times 3.14 = 251.2'$ of panels needed.
- $85' \times 3.14 = 266.9'$ of panels needed.

Since round pen panels, and dimensional lumber if you are actually building a round pen, only come in even feet you'll have to round the panels out. If the number after the decimal is higher than 5 you go to the next highest whole number, i.e. 219.8 becomes 220. If the number after the decimal is 5 or lower then you go to the next lowest whole number, i.e. 188.4 becomes 188.

Round pen panels are available in 6', 8', 10', 12', 14' and 16'. with 12' being the most readily available from what I've noticed here and there anyway. The 12' panels are the most efficient in my estimation. Moving the smaller panels takes more trips, moving the longer panels takes more out of you.

You'll need a walk-through panel. Walk-throughs consist of a swing in and out entrance to get in and out of your pen. Using one of the panels for an entrance can get tense, save yourself the grief. Walk-throughs are usually 4' wide but I have seen them at one end of 8', 10' and 12' panels. Save yourself the grief and get a 4'. Carrying one of the round pen panels is job enough without having an 8' plus high gate swinging off one end of it.

When we know how many panels we have we can also use Pi to determine how wide the diameter will be. Since the panels come in a number of different lengths we can have a combination of lengths. We add up our total length of panels and then divide by Pi, 3.14, to arrive at the width of our pen. This gives us the diameter which gives us the radius of our circle. The radius is $\frac{1}{2}$ of the diameter. The diameter is the distance from one side of the circle to the other. The radius of a circle is the distance from the center of a circle to any point on the circle.

The radius is important to our round pen because it will help us make our round pen round and not pear shaped.

Now, let's use an actual application.

I have 18 twelve foot, 1 ten foot and 1 eight foot panels plus one 4 foot walk through in the yard. I want to find out how large a pen that will make and I only want to handle the panels one time; I want my pen to be round when I'm finished.

1. I total up the panel length...
 $18 \times 12' + 10' + 8' + 4' = 232$ feet. This gives me the distance around my circle.
2. I divide Pi into my circumference to find the diameter of my circle...
 232 divided by $3.14 = 73.885350$ Rounding the decimal places off to the nearest number and the diameter of my pen will be 74 feet from side to side.
3. I divide my diameter in half to get my radius...
 74 divided by $2 = 37$. The radius of my round pen is 37 feet.

Now, I decide where I want the center of my pen to be. Any point of my round pen must be 37 feet from the center to be round. To make it easy I take a long enough piece of twine, string, rope, whatever, and anchor it at my center then I tie a knot at the 37 foot mark. If the pen is going to be on dirt I hold the line tight then drag a boot scuff in a circle directly under the knot. Whammo! A 37 foot radius, 74 foot diameter line. I set the panels end to end around on my line and I have a round round pen. If the pen is set on grass, I use the knotted end of the line to make sure my panel ends are at the right distance from the center as I set them end to end.

Another handy figure to remember is 5,280. That is the number of feet in a mile. If we want to keep track of how far our horses travel during a session we simply multiply the number of laps by the circumference of our round pen. Using the 232 foot circumference of our example, 22½ trips around the pen would be 1 mile.

I use my cell phone to do my math for me. I think all cell phones have a calculator.

Bonder Success Sequence

Names of the beings involved have been changed.

He traveled well on the 6 hour trip, unloaded well, settled right in. I played some PNH games with him on Thursday and he did fine. All was going very well until Saturday when Jake was able to work with him for the first time. Jake tied him up to the fence to get to know him through the grooming process. I was remarking on how settled in he seemed to be - he was very relaxed and quiet, no tension at all. All of a sudden, while Jake was brushing his rump, he jerked backwards and pulled on the rope halter (pulling the fence into the corral with him).

It turns out that we had forgotten to turn off the hot wire we have around the fence to keep the horses from eating the fruit trees next to the corral. Royal must have touched it with his nose or something. Needless to say, that ruined the rest of our plans for the afternoon. It took a long time to calm him down, and he obviously still didn't trust Jake - braced every time he touched him. Yesterday morning he kept walking away from Jake or ignored him completely everytime Jake went near him. So we decided that after church it would be time for Jake to do some round pen work with him, try to bond with him.

We got out Marv Walker's bonding instructions (Jake's never done this before, and I've only done it once with Mike), and off we went to the corral, hoping Jake could undo the damage that had been done. Mike and I watched and kibbutzed from inside Mike's pen. Royal completely ignored Jake at first, turned his head away to stare off into the desert, so Jake began to move him off around the circle. Jake did so well, was firm but not aggressive, gave him lots of opportunities to come in or to let Jake approach him He wholeheartedly refused every opportunity at first, so Jake sent him off again.. and again. He finally began to give the ear, started slowing down and dropping his head, did some licking and chewing. Jake turned his back and waited. No response. Jake would walk towards him at an angle, he would walk away. So he repeated the process again... and again.

It took about 35 minutes, but worked just the way it is supposed to for an alpha horse that had been very resistant. The end result was that Royal, sweating and tired (he's very out of condition), never did come in to Jake, but at least he stood quietly and didn't move away when Jake would go to him. Jake touched him all over and he didn't brace or try to walk away. You could tell he'd decided to let Jake be alpha, even if he wouldn't follow him yet. We thought he'd come a long way, enough for that day. So I brought Mike into the corral, and we let them stand together. We turned our backs on them and walked away, and THEN IT HAPPENED! Royal followed after Jake while Mike followed me. Whew!

I'm on my way out to work with both of them this morning. I'm curious to see what kind of reception

I'll get.

I am not the writer I would like to be which is a problem when I'm addressing something over the 'puter. Also there is the matter that two people can read the same thing and come up with two different opinions as to what was said. And to make it even more difficult, I sometimes use less than the perfect word to describe an action.

Sweating in and of itself is no problem as long as the horse is not exhausted. But it is possible to do the bonder with minimal sweating. Even though there is seldom any reason not to complete the bonder once you start it, you do not *have* to finish it. You CAN go back at it later. If you do have to stop, simply start it over each time and you'll get through the stages you reached before faster each time.

At my clinic last weekend (this material was written years ago) twelve people performed the bonder with twelve horses. Each horse completed the bonder with no sweating and no stress with exactly the same result. The sequence of the bonder for each horse was:

1. ignoring the presence of the operator;
2. complying with the operator's wish for the disrespector to leave his presence;
3. and finding no other "herd" available began to try to align himself with the operator using threats (I could really thump you, you know.), deceit (I'll just slide on back like nothing happened.) and lies (Okay, here I am just one of the group.);
4. then when that was rebuffed, would begin looking for other solutions which was demonstrated by his mouth action; and
5. finding no other solution would fall back on natural horse interactions and show submission with head lowering;
6. and asking permission to become one with the operator (herd).

Events mixed into the sequence are merely events mixed in and they are not counted as part of the bonding sequence. While each and every one of the operators achieved the same results with the bonder there were variances as to the length of time between the stages, placement and intensity of aggression displays and the manner at which the horse was picked up after asking for permission. Some shot to the operator as soon as they turned their backs, some needed angling to, some needed a little coaxing, some just needed standing by for a few moments, but they all successfully completed the bonder in spite of the fact the operators were first timers concentrating more on themselves than the horse.

The events need to occur in the above relation to each other NOT in the exact order laid out. When you have reached one stage, you have reached it. You then go to the next stage, no matter what the horse does before he reaches it. A couple of the horses we worked showed extreme aggression by rearing, hopping and striking immediately after being told to leave when they ignored the operator in the beginning. When confronted they complied. Here you have ignoring, aggression, leaving compliance. Not the literal order, but the first two stages - he has ignored, he has left - NOW we look for him to aggress, beguile and/or lie. When he does that again, after he has complied with the banishing, we count the aggression as a completed stage because it came AFTER. THEN we look for the mouth action. He may aggress some more, he may even stop and ask your permission to become part of your herd, he may decide to ignore you again. You don't need to start the sequence over. WHEN you get the mouth work, you have reached the next stage and so on.

Now then, if you become uncertain, or the horse becomes too overheated or anything else happens to disturb you to the point you are concerned for the health or well being of either you or your horse... stop! Whatever point you are at in the sequence will be much easier to arrive at when you go back. You have lost little, and no harm has been done. Do not run yourself or your horse to any kind of a

frazzle. Wearing down the horse is not the idea. Controlling it while it is at liberty is the idea. The control and interaction at liberty is what brings about the connected state. The first thing *I* would do before I did anything else with a new horse would be the bonder. At the completion of the bonder, it WILL let me groom it, pick up its feet, pretty much handle it anywhere, and do many other things with little or no concern.

One participant brought his stud colt to the clinic for its first saddling, “He just goes nuts when he sees the saddle!” He didn’t. He showed no concern, none. His pre-clinic apprehensive owner led him out to the trailer along a busy road in the afternoon and saddled him in mere minutes and then led him in and worked him in the bond enhancing exercises while he wore the saddle flipping and flopping all over him.

Another horse couldn’t be shod without twitching and fighting. At the conclusion of the bonder I asked if there was a hammer on the grounds. There was, a farrier’s hammer even. I picked up her foot while she stood untied and hammered, slammed, poked and monkeyed with her shoes like a farrier and she did not move. Several times during the clinic I heard the ringing of that hammer coming from the mare’s stall.

Another HUGE ill-tempered Oldenburger tried to chew me up as I looked at it in the stall. He was probably the nastiest horse I’ve seen in a long time. If challenged he would turn his truck-sized butt to you and start firing. He had once grabbed and flung his owner out over the stall wall. His owner claimed as long as she got his halter on him as quickly as she could “he wasn’t as bad”. And he wasn’t. She only did the minimum with him with great caution. After his bonder I went in there while he was laying down sleeping and he opened his eyes and looked at me then went back to sleep. I scratched his ears and he didn’t object. I called his owner in and she said she couldn’t believe it. The next day she said, “I picked his stall without him haltered and I even had him between me and the door. I’ve never even considered doing that before!”

Of course, if a horse is in pain, it will affect how he reacts to and after the bonder. You cannot expect a horse with vertebrae out, pelvic problems, dental problems or any other number of physical ailments to be as good natured as one who has no physical ailments. The bonder changes the mind, not the body. The mind change the bonder produces makes it easier to find the physical problems.

Doing The Bonder On Babies

By Kellie Sharpe

We are frequently asked how long to wait after birth before trying the Marv Walker Bonder with foals. We advise waiting until the foal is completely dry.

Just kidding. It is unnecessary to try and “bonder” babies under three to six months of age. The baby’s mother will do all the bondering the young foal needs until that foal reaches adolescence. Once the foal has some solid and consistent independence from its mother, whether or not it is completely weaned, you may establish a connection with that foal anytime under one year of age.

In a herd situation, babies fall into the “anything goes” category. They have all experienced herd dynamics in terms of the “group mothering” that a baby gets when it is turned out with more than one mare and/or foal. Kind of like when you and your sister and your best friend and all your kids go to lunch together... ALL the mothers “mother” the kids - it doesn’t matter whose kid is whose. They all get yelled at when one of them squirts ketchup across the restaurant! Likewise, other herd members will tolerate almost any behavior from any foal, correcting only when the baby becomes truly

obnoxious, annoying, or hurts an adult with teeth or hooves. At that point, a sharp and definitive correction is delivered and the offender runs back to his mama with a bruise, and some seriously hurt feelings.

Bob Sharpe states: “The single biggest point to remember is you are working with a foal. In fact, think of it as a very young child.”

If we choose to do a simple, modified “Bonder” on this baby, we must allow him to act and react any way he chooses. We must remember that the basis of the Bonder is to give the horse a series of commands he can obey easily, quickly and with no problems. We must take the guesswork out of the process for the young horse. And we must not expect the same reaction from the young foal that we do from the adolescent or older horse.

Acceptable reaction from a three- to six-month-old foal in a “Bonder” situation would be: obeying a simple command to change direction. If that is all you get, that is more than enough. You, the human, have established yourself as a leader to that infant by simply getting him to obey a command you gave him. And this command can be given and obeyed in a pasture, in a round pen, in a paddock, in a stall, in a barn aisle.

Yes. It is that simple.

Additional reactions that would be nice but are not necessary would be: looking at you and not through you; turning to face you, walking up to you and following you. I repeat - these would be nice reactions but they are not necessary. This young three-to-six-month-old foal does not have the life experience nor the interest in you at this point, to obey many of your commands. Do not set this foal up to fail at this - it is unfair to the foal.

As our foal is weaned, and begins to assume more and more independence, his herd’s expectations of him change. The youngster is approaching young adulthood, and is expected to act thus. In a perfect world, this stage of our youngster’s life would take place in a large pasture in a large community of horses; and would include showing respect to adult herd members, avoiding the “alpha” members and forming friendships and bonds with other younger members, or members not as far up in the hierarchy as the youngster himself. If our youngster dares to offend or insult an older herd member with status, once again he will be subjected to a stinging rebuke but this time, his mama doesn’t want to hear about it. He’s on his own.

However, all too frequently in this day and age of disappearing land for stables, babies do not have the opportunity to run in such a situation and are stalled alone, or enclosed in a paddock with one or two other horses at weaning time, and this does not allow the youngster to experience true herd dynamics firsthand. In a case such as this, you are working with instinct, not experience. So we have to remember that the foal is not going to react the same way, or as quickly, as the adult horse does in the enclosed area. In effect; we are “teaching” that foal what its mother did not teach it, or the herd did not teach it, or that it has not had time to learn yet. So, we apply the “Bonder” as we would to an inexperienced foal, only now that we are working with an older weanling or a yearling, we can ask for a little more. We only have to be careful and judicious in what we ask for, and in how we ask.

Bob Sharpe says, “In working with our ten-month-old yearling, Rio, we found that it took about 3 or 4 short sessions to accomplish what an adult horse would give you in one. Rio was weaned late, and we did not spend as much time as we should have handling her, so when we started out with Rio, it took a good five minutes just to catch her and put her halter on in a 12 X 12 stall. Lots of struggle just to get started. Getting her to the round pen was another big step taking one person in front to open gates, one person holding on to the lead line and one following behind, encouraging both horse and people to keep going, not to mention having a cell phone ready to call 911.”

“The round pen experience that first day was nowhere close to what I was expecting. Having done the bonder before, and knowing what success Kellie and Marv have had, I expected to accomplish much more that first day. It never entered my mind that working a baby would be so vastly different than an adult horse.”

“The first day was mostly taken up with not running over the human in the middle. To be more technical about it the first day was about getting her to change directions when I stepped in front of her and her learning to change speed in relation to where I was positioned. And finally, getting her to stop without turning and running away. That was it. And we had some difficulty catching her that day, as well.”

“The second time we kept the lead rope attached so catching her would be easier. This time the results were a little better. There wasn’t as much panic and running as there was in the first session and we were able to get right into changing her direction and keeping her speed down. No stopping and walking to the human in the middle but just turning, changing speeds, and stopping. Small step, but a good improvement. I was hoping for licking, turned ear, and facing me, but I settled for the simplest of reactions and obedience to my commands.” “This time with the lead line still attached it didn’t take as long to get close enough to be able to step on the lead line and catch her. We then took a walk back to the barn. Once again no “breakthrough” in getting something exciting accomplished, but again, I was expecting too much.”

“The third time working her we changed direction, changed speed and I was able to get her to stop and look at me. Just standing there looking at me. BIG SUCCESS!!!”

“Again I expected something more as with the adult horses, but Marv and Kellie kept reminding me that Rio was a baby and not to expect to get as far as quickly as I would with an adult. Then I tried a suggestion Kellie made in that I would walk up to her as if I were crossing a T - Rio was the long part and I was making the cross mark. So I got to the side and walked in a line right past her nose. I was able to “unlock” her feet and get her to move with me, maybe only for a few steps, but walking with me. I guess with babies they don’t approach the alpha horse, but if the alpha horse moves in a direction the baby will move with them.”

“By the 4th or 5th time working with this baby she finally got the message. She did at times come up behind me and other times I had to unlock her by “crossing the T.” But by this time she would change directions, change speeds, and stop; all without a lot of work on my part. When she started doing that I realized she was now listening to me and doing what I requested.”

When Bob was finally able to approach Rio, he walked up to her, touched her briefly, and walked away. Bonding babies is so very mental that you must be thinking clear, positive thoughts as you do this. It is guaranteed: - if you sidle up uncertainly to the baby, thinking “He’s going to split - I just know it...” he’s history. Walk up to the baby confidently, easily and assuredly, reach out gently and touch the baby with a firm yet gentle touch, and walk away. Maybe not even touch - just walk up, turn and walk away. Whatever you do - DON’T PAT! The “slap” sometimes scares a baby and they bolt.

Bob adds, “At that point, we could add new things: picking up the feet and grooming and such. Pretty soon, we were clipping her bridle path and teaching her to walk with us on a leadline, and back and stop and stand. Simple things, but important to her. So when working babies, just take more and smaller steps, and remember to keep baby sessions very short. Neither their mind or their body can take near as much as an adult horse.”

In our perfect “herd” world, babies “get” the bonder the first time, and it sticks. However, remember - these are children. Regression is a way of life for them. You may have some three-steps-forward, six-steps-back days, and it will be frustrating but can be overcome with patience. What we have noticed

with very young horses is a tendency to go through all the right motions - turned ear, licking, facing the handler, but they bolt when approached.

The way we have handled that is to let them leave, but only to a point. You have to watch and not let them decide that it's a game. "Claim a wedge of the enclosure," Marv says, "and just keep them turning back and forth in the wedge, keeping the youngster calm and quiet, and making the wedge smaller and smaller until the horse gives up and lets the handler approach." In this situation, if the baby is facing the rail when it is turning, it makes things a little easier. Pay attention - be aware - of the direction the youngster is going to move next, watch for the move, and move from side to side as needed so the youngster decides you are about 40 feet wide and gives up. This requires some finesse, and that your attention is focused one hundred percent on the young horse. By staying one step ahead, you can direct the youngster with a series of commands and turns that will encourage him to stop, face you and think about what is going on.

When you have reached this point with him, stop. As much as possible, you want to stay on the "submission" side and avoid the "domination" factor; although in a pasture and a herd situation, domination would be the way a young offender would be handled by adult horses. Working with such young horses will require some lesser degree of "domination" but if it becomes necessary to use it, use it judiciously and with awareness of your young horse's reactions.

If it takes a month to get the youngster to face you in the enclosure, that's okay. You are on no time schedule here. Take it as slowly as you need to but watch carefully to make sure you are always the one making the decisions and in control.

Marv note: When a young horse is unsure of what reaction it will get for whatever, it will immediately begin "popping" its gums. This is saying, "I'm just a baby, take it easy on me!" Adult horses are genetically bound to respect the display. Sure, there are a rare few individuals who won't respect the display, but overwhelmingly they do. The adult horse may make some sort of half-hearted signal that says, "I could kill you, lucky for you I'm feeling gracious this time."

Controlling The Horse's Speed During The Bonder

Hi Marv, When you get your horse to "leave" which gait do you usually get them in, walk or trot, or does it matter. Just a sidenote, when I'm round penning my mare Kelly, she will do just fine at the walk and trot, doing turns etc., but when I ask for a canter, she will start out fine but the first time I ask for a turn she usually goes bonkers and runs at high speed and jumps and rears and squeals, and does this until I can't get her to do several turns back and forth, and then she will settle down. Think we have a respect issue..lol... Thanks for your time,

I don't think it matters what speed it obeys initially. What you want is to give the horse an order and make it obey.

I don't think you have that much of a respect issue. I'm inclined to think you have a bit, and I mean, bit, of a compliance issue.

To me disrespect is when they step on your toes, bang into you or in general just look right through or over you. Compliance is when they do something you ask them to do. Non-compliance is when they do it in a manner different than you want them to.

I always deal with compliance issues in the same way - I make them comply by demonstrating to them that I am the leader and I am to be obeyed if it is physically possible.

The horse can do no wrong as far as I'm concerned. If it does something "wrong" I look at it as the horse is communicating something to me.

What is it communicating?

Could be pretty much anything. It is my job to figure out what it is saying and to reply to that. If she's saying, "You aren't the boss of me!!" I tell her, "Yep, I is!" by controlling her. If she is confused, I chunk it down even more.

It is very easy to control a horse in a round pen.

If it is running around like a nut, you stop that by quickly heading to the spot the horse occupied when you decided you wanted to stop it and you claim a wedge of the pen for your own. You then tell the horse by your attitude and demeanor, "This is my space! Come into it and hair will fly and I'm going to do everything I can to make sure it isn't mine!"

If you are convincing enough, it will stop and go back. If it comes around from the other direction, same story. (You might want to leave enough room for the horse to get by just in case you aren't convincing enough.) When the horse slows, you go back into the center. If it acts up again, repeat the same thing.

If the horse isn't moving fast enough you can up the pressure until it does. Now then, we come to cantering in the RP...

In my opinion this is something that should be avoided. This puts a lot of stress on the horse's legs as well as quickly making a banked rut that will encourage the horse to drop its shoulder for balance rather than use its weight.

Once the horse is compliant in the RP I would then begin longeing the horse. In longeing you can work in larger areas and longe in long ovals even rectangles and squares using gradual turns and lessening the stress on the horse's legs.

You want to be careful that you do not rely on the RP as an exercise yard. And for that matter, getting a horse to circle on the end of a line is not the purpose of longeing either, there is a whole lot more to it than that.

Longeing is a training / communication / assessment tool that is very involved. You train the horse to do from the ground what you want it to do from the saddle, you get it listening to you and you listening to it, you assess its physical condition, mood and movement and you can even use it to assess the rider's skills and balance.

Addressing Some Bonder Nuance Questions

Since you seem to be in town, Marv, at the hitching post, I would like to ask a horse question. When I see you doing bonder, the horses seem to be mostly turning out. What store do you put in the turning out or turning in? I am feeling the out turns are the result of greater pressure, and may be more convincing to the horse in the early sessions of bonder.

When I am putting a horse through the Bonder I don't really care which way it turns because I am basically presenting the horse with leadership actions and I want to do that as simply as I can.

I have played with the inturns by stepping back & "pulling" the raw recruit to me, (to do an in turn)

but in the early stages, of convincing, I am not sure that that is wise. For one, a horse that has not done the whole process, has then an opportunity to pass closer to me or suddenly decide to cut across in a 40ft pen, & conceivably, run over the human or aim a kick. Not all are going to do a lovely 180 rollback to the inside & go the other way. Especially ones who are getting initially bonded. There must be a nice place to insert inside turns, is it just when one is about to intro lunging? Or, is it a refinement of bonding? Could you expound a little on what you have noticed on this little dance, Marv?

I have noticed that you have hit on a nuance that I have overlooked.

As I said earlier, I simply do not care which way it turns during the connection work because I'm basically telling it, "Come into my space before you acknowledge I am the leader and there will be a major problem and I'm going to do everything I can to be it."

So if I ask for an inside turn and it comes close enough to reach me before it shows me leadership respect I do the lead mare thing, "Here's a set of teeth for you to think about! Do not come near me until you are showing me the respect I deserve!"

I have done the procedure so many times it is instinctive to me yet I am always learning. You bring up a very good point.

For increased safety when bondering horses one should always use outside turns by cutting the horse off until you are reasonably sure the horse is listening to you.

While free longeing a horse who is compliant one may use which ever turn one wishes to use to polish communication. Inside turns are made by pulling the horse toward the center or drawing them in as you have pointed out. When the horse is committed to the turn toward you you move toward it which then causes the horse to complete the inside turn.

One more thing, since you have bondered so many horses, Marv. Do you feel it is a longterm advantage to be verbal with the early bonder? Kind of as an extra garnish while working the horse? Saying things like whoa, back, come here, turn, go out, etc. just to begin to name the action for the horse. And of course, your indignant "excuse me". Or, should the first bondings to capitulation—yielding of horse—be all body language? What do you find gives the maximum effect? (I keep wanting to squeal like a mad mare) Or, does talking human talk get in the way of the initial experience for the horse?

The most important thing is the presentation of herd leadership actions. I can't think of any way to do that short of physically conveying to the horse what you expect it to do. Each person really does that in a manner that feels right to them after they understand the reasoning. Talking really isn't needed to get the idea across. Does it hurt to talk to the horse? Absolutely not. Can you talk to the horse? Sure, whatever floats your boat.

When you do the bonder once or twice while determined that you are going to be the leader and with an understanding of the concept, you can usually figure out your own style.

If you feel the need, or desire, to talk to the horse, do it. I only talk to the horse when there are humans around who need to know my thought processes. If there is no one around I never verbally talk to the horse but we have this streaming two way conversation with neither making a sound.

I personally don't see any difference in talking or not talking.

Whatever floats your boat. If you want to squeal, do it. I've heard enough horses do it and one needs

to be horse like to be a herd leader.

Here is a well said thought by one of my Horses list members during a discussion of this subject...

I think the reason they seem to understand better when you are verbalizing isn't really your words & voice..... I think when we "talk" & verbally are trying to explain to the horse what it is you want them to do.... you don't realize it but you are focusing, visualizing & actually expecting the correct response... when you do these things they carry over in your body language & physical actions which the horse is more apt to be responding too. For example you are leading your horse through the arena & there is a brand new huge tarp laying on the floor of the arena.. If you see the new obstacle & in your head think "oh a new tarp - no problem, & continue to walk right past it confidently like its been there forever... more than likely your horse will pass it with little suspicion... he has read your reaction & follows your confident lead... where on the other hand you see it & immediately begin to visualize it to be an obstacle that is really going to spook your horse.. your body language will give off hesitation & concern the horse in turn will pick up on that & again follow your lead & spook... the difference is when you are talking you are verbally setting up your own reaction,, just like when your hear a creak in the house in the middle of the night you talk yourself into being brave enough to go see what it is LOL.... hope this makes sense... KL

Yes, it does.

I am continually asked why I am not more demanding when it comes to "proper bonder form." Some gurus insist that you have to wiggle your fingers a set way while wearing a correct facial expression, your body has to be at exactly the right angle and so on. Bunk. I let people develop their own way of performing the bonder as long as they direct the horse to do what they want it to do and get the horse to obey the direction.

The essence of the bonder in a nutshell is this: You give the horse a series of directions you know you can get the horse to do until it says, "Whoa! This being is telling me what to do and I'm doing it! This being must be a leader. If this being is a leader, I must be a follower." How or when or if you wiggle your nose is not important.

Horse Regressing After Bonder

Marv, I purchased a 4 year old Arabian mare, green broke, in April. She had been started beautifully and would move flawlessly at liberty in an arena with her trainer. I was especially impressed with her reaction to fear. Instead of fleeing, she would just spread her feet square and drop down a few inches. It was great, especially under saddle. I've ridden her some, but she is very hot and quite barn sour, so the last couple of months, I've mostly been working on ground work and lunging since I didn't have a round pen until recently. I've felt it was wise to gain more control through these means before putting myself in danger on her back.

Wise choice.

I personally feel that dropping and squaring is but one split second away from fleeing. I actually feel it is more dangerous than fleeing because it often lulls the rider into a "Whew! I think it's over!" state and momentarily causes a drop in the guard.

I would expect her to move freely at liberty in an arena with her trainer. The trainers experience would play a huge part in this.

Generally speaking, many Arabs have a lot of body tension. Some have so much body tension that their whole body quivers and trembles when touched. This tension creates more tension and it continually produces the “crazy Arab!” persona held by many horse folk.

This also quite often causes them to “react first, assess later.” There is so much tension it pushes them to react before they would normally be expected to.

I don't know if this is a factor with your horse or not. I'm merely saying this could be a part of what is going on with your horse.

The problem I'm having with her concerns trust. When I got her, she was a big puppy dog and followed me everywhere. She's the only horse I have now and there are no others within several miles of us. She's in a 3 acre pasture 24/7 and seemed to be very glad to see me when I would appear in her pasture. She always galloped to me immediately from any distance. About a month ago, she quit coming so eagerly. She would still come, but it was more of a “Oh well, I have nothing better to do” attitude and she would mosey on over after awhile. Then, it went to “If you want me, come and get me”. She would come up to me after I got within 20 feet or so but not till then. I was excited to find your “bonder” online, and used it right away on her. It took close to an hour before she began to show me the mouth movement and lowering of head and when I let her stop, she did come to me and follow a few steps, however, once she was released from the round pen, she ran to the opposite end of the pasture again.

I'm a little fuzzy here. From what you write I'm assuming this was pre-bonder behavior and the bonder was performed after she began exhibiting this attitude.

So yesterday, I did it again. This time, she showed the “submission attitude” fairly quickly, and followed me well around the pen so I started working with her, again in the round pen, without restraints. When she would move away from me, I would drive her away until she again showed submission and then repeat the action I had been doing with her. I would keep this up till she would stand quietly for whatever I was doing. Today she wouldn't come to me again till I went to her. I took her to the round pen and groomed for a bit, which she stood quietly for, but when I started to work on lowering her head with pressure to the poll (which she knows thoroughly) she would move away from me. So I immediately chased her away and kept it up (seemed like forever) before she showed submission. When I quit and walked across in front of her, instead of following me, she ran from me and showed fear. I sent her off again and she showed submission within a minute or two, but again ran from me. It was quite some time before she let me get close enough to get a lead rope on her. When I did, I picked her feet and just moved around her calmly for a short while and then released her from the round pen at which time, she again ran to the far end of the pasture as quickly as she could. What do you think I'm doing wrong? I feel like I've utterly failed and stand a good chance of ruining a wonderful friendship with this horse.

I'm not sure that you're doing anything “wrong.” With herd dynamics you are only wrong when you don't gain anything from your experiences. In this case you learned that there are some things that need a little adapting so that they can produce the results you are after.

Once she becomes compliant that shows that she has the program. One of the beauties of herd

dynamics is the horse ALWAYS has the right to change its mind or test. This is one way the horse communicates (“I’m not sure I want, or am able to go through with this.”). It is up to you as leader to acknowledge this communication and act accordingly (Okay, let’s take a moment here to refresh our positions (Go that way a couple rounds. Now go that way a couple rounds. Stop. Now, do you want to try again?).

You will be stunned at how much your confidence and relationship improves when you realize that at any time the connection appears to be slipping or even broken, you can re-establish it.

At one point you said when you “released her from the round pen at which time, she again ran to the far end of the pasture as quickly as she could.” Since with horses so much of it is mental and literal, exactly what does release mean? If she is released isn’t she free to do as she chooses? In order to get horses to more easily do what you want you need to present very clear images of what you want. If you wanted her to casually walk away or whatever, you need to know what you want and if you don’t get it you need to think of the enclosure as a larger round pen and duplicate the leadership actions you used in the round pen.

Horses are herd animals who instinctively understand and demand herd dynamics. Herd dynamics is what gives horses a sense of place and builds confidence. Horses who have a sense of place are not barn sour. They are content wherever they are as long as there is an obvious leader. I think she is telling you that while you walk the talk there is some little part of you telling her you are unsure. You just need a little more practice to convince yourself that you are indeed capable of being a leader. Once you are convinced, she will be.

If I remember correctly you have some of my videos. Go through them again and I’m sure you’ll see the very situation you write about in there somewhere.

I received this update...

Thanks Marv, for your thoughtful answer to my question.

Yesterday, I took her to the round pen, but just spent the time grooming, tacking, etc. She began to calm down around me after a short time of this. I didn’t do any more bonding exercises. Today, again, I didn’t do any exercises, but when I was next to her, she was again, very calm and didn’t try to move away from me even with cinching the saddle which has always been a problem before.

She continued to be so calm, that I decided to ride for a short while to see how deep this new attitude was. I kept your advice of exhibiting confidence in the forefront of my mind and she did amazingly well. She stayed in a good forward moving walk with no hassles and when she would start to speed up to a trot, a quiet “easy” would slow her right back down. The reins were almost superfluous. I left the pasture then with her and rode toward the river and as usual, she became extremely tense as we left the comfort of her own area.

Again, I concentrated on staying totally calm and confident, not tensing up myself, and keeping my breathing slow and steady. When she would become overly agitated with rapid breathing and tensing to flee, I would stop her and make her stand still until she noticeably relaxed, at which time we would move forward until she would tense again. As the ride progressed, it took less and less of these stops and a much shorter time for her to calm. Finally, I turned her towards home, and instead of constantly fighting me for her head, she walked calmly all the way. What a difference!

Thank you so much!

The main reason for two day events is so that folks can see the easy rapid results they get from connection work carries over.

A secondary, extremely close in importance reason, is that if we have a horse that just doesn't seem to get it and shows no apparent improvement or on rare occasions appears to be worse (Or regresses, sound familiar?) there is almost always a remarkable improvement the next time. It is almost like someone or something got into the horse's head and laid out the program.

What has occurred here is an improvement in communication on a level most horse human relationships do not experience. I was not there but I can assure you it was the ultimate in give and take interaction.

Can More Than One Person "Bond" With A Horse?

Hi again ;-)

Can more than one person "Bond" with a horse?????? like both husband and wife?????? Any suggestions on getting to the side or touching more on a horse than just the bridge of his nose... well, he is a mustang and just beginning his education... is gentle, friendly, good natured, not aggressive or mean... eating out of my hand... but all i can pet or touch is the muzzle and bridge of nose.... any suggestions would be appreciated...

Yes. Horses can have a number of different relationships just like people.

A group of people can perform the bond with the same horse. Not only will the horse be able to tell who is higher than he is on the pecking order, he will be able to tell which of the group is the actual leader of the group.

You and your husband, and any children you might have, can perform the bond with the horse. There is a pecking in order in families as well. One member will be the leader. When the family is together the horse will know who is the actual leader and will respond accordingly.

I demonstrate this at events by taking the horse away from its handler by simply mentally telling the horse to follow me and it does. Since I am the ultimate leader at the events, the horse picks up on it and acknowledges it. I know that I am the ultimate leader at my events because if anyone gives me any grief I head on down the road and the event stops in its tracks. This gives me more confidence than anyone else at the event has and the horse grasps it immediately.

Take him in the enclosure and perform the bond. When you have him connected, do what you want. If he objects by leaving connect him again, then do it again.

Touch what it will let you touch. I'd touch its nose for a few moments then casually expand the touching area then come back to the tolerated area before he realized I had touched where he didn't tolerate it. By then, it'd be too late to respond.

If I wasn't pleased at its willingness to comply I might send it out for a few re-enforcing laps around the enclosure.

Picture the results you want in your mind. I cannot stress the importance of your thought processes

enough. Your body will give your mind what it wants: If you believe it you will see it.

Young Horse Behavior During “Bonder” & Other Times

Hi Marv—

I love your web site! You've given me such good information—I'm in the process now of doing the bonder with my yearling appaloosa colt. I say in the process because he lets me drive him any direction pretty easily and then he stands to face me when he gets tired of me moving him, but he has yet to come over to me.

Anyhow, he's a sweet little guy with me, in spite of the fact he isn't gelded yet. The problem I'm having is how he acts with my other horse. I also have a very large 7 year old tennessee walker who is a very macho horse and who is 'herd leader'. Well, baby just can't accept this fact and is constantly rushing the gelding from behind and biting him on the butt then running away—baby actually body slams the gelding from behind with his chest. I can't tell if it's just normal baby games or if baby is vying for the leader role. Believe me, this walker gelding isn't giving that spot up easily! Baby is like a shark and does “drive bys” constantly—he bites, gets chased, and circles around for another run at the gelding. When he's not harassing the gelding, they get along fine—they eat together without fighting over food and stand together most of the day—until baby gets a bug up his butt and is feeling playful.

Is this something I even need to worry about or does it sound like normal baby games? If I separate them, they just play biting and rearing games through the fence—if they can't be near each other, like if I separate them far apart, they stand and scream for each other. My only real concern is that the baby's constant body slamming will hurt the gelding's spine or back end. The gelding only makes minor attempts to kick at the colt when he sees him coming, but does turn and bite baby pretty good when he's had enough. Any suggestions?

Thanks,

What you describe between the two horses is absolutely normal. That's what horses do. The little one is just working out his status in the world. The time to worry about it is when he does it to you.

The Bonder is pretty hard to do “wrong” as long as neither you or the horse gets all worked up or injured. If you notice an improvement in behavior and/or communication, you're doing it right. Following, or coming to you, is not the goal of the Bonder. Improved communication is. You are communicating to the horse that you are the leader. As the leader you are to be treated with respect and your wishes are to come first.

Following or coming to you are by-products of the procedure, they are just further indicators of the horse acknowledging your leadership position, not signs that you have succeeded. A positive change in the horse's attitude and behavior is what tells you you have succeeded.

If the horse acknowledges your leadership but doesn't come to you or follow you it is because you have not clearly communicated to it that it may or you want it to follow you. It may be that you are out of position, such as asking the horse to follow while standing in the “stop” position at the horse's shoulder, or you are asking the horse to move into your space which one does not do to leaders.

Try some different things like gently encouraging him to come along with a slight pull under his chin, casually moving into his space at his head to cause him to move away then just moving right with him for a bit then gradually switch from moving him to leading him off.

I wouldn't be too greatly concerned about any damage he might do the gelding. His behavior is normal young horse stuff and the gelding will set him in his place if he gets too annoying. Or the gelding will simply accept the secondary position.

Doing The Bonder On A Leadline

Where do I find the bonder with a lead line (which tape?) I have a friend that is going to help me with my app and she also agreed that I should not get on his back unless I have the respect on the ground first. I also explained to her that he will not let me halter him and turns his butt towards me he is difficult to "catch".

In what I have read with marv's site that the bonder will solve this/these particular problems? Am I correct in that assumption?

Also what signs do I look for in detecting that he is too much for me to handle? I not experienced and fear is big with me right now in dealing with my horse. I would like to try the lead line bonder since I have no access to a round pen and that I am boarding on someone elses property and can't really build something in her pasture.

My final question is should I do the bonder else where other than the pasture. The barn owner has a side lot that I can use only if it is on a lead line do to no fencing in this lot. thanks for the suggestions!

Ideally you want to do the bonder in an enclosure that is large enough to keep the horse far enough away from you so that it cannot reach to kick, bite or strike while keeping it close enough to control until it obviously shows it is respectful, compliant and focused on you. Ideally the best enclosure is a round pen because it has no corners for the horse to hang in. A cornered enclosure can be used but you have to work a little harder to keep the horse from hanging in the corners.

Ideally you'll want the horse to be totally free and halter less. Horses seem to have a different mind set when wearing a halter. Even though nothing may be connected to it, they seem to feel its influence.

Now then, we have been whipping the word "ideally" around quite freely. Some times things are less than ideal and we just have to improvise, adapt and overcome.

If a leadline is all we have then a leadline can be used. It's better than nothing.

However, because the horse is so close to you you will have to be very careful that you do not get in a position where you are easily kicked or bitten. When doing the bonder on a leadline you should understand the concepts and the goal of the bonder more thoroughly than you would need to in less close quarters.

As you are directing the horse to go around you will want to keep the horse somewhat bent in the line of travel while staying at a sharp angle to the horse's inside shoulder.

When changing the horse's direction you bring his head to the inside across in front of you while you

quickly move across his path and send him around in the other direction.

For instance, if he is going to your right take the leadline in your left hand and pull the leadline to your left as you move back to you right. Once his head goes past you circle him to the left. Each direction change is two fold. You bring the horse across in front of you AS you move to the other side of the horse.

Since you wisely acknowledge that fear is a major concern for you, doing the bonder on a leadline should only be a last resort. I often construct temporary enclosures on the spur of the moment by using anything I can get my hands on - jump standards, boards, hay bales, rope, what have you. The object is to put obstructions that will make the horse think twice about going over or through. Since you will be distracting the horse by giving it directions, it **usually** is contained by the makeshift enclosure.

The bonder itself really corrects little. What it does is establish a leader / follower connection. It is the leader / follower connection that allows the leader to do things to and with the follower one would not normally be able to do. It is the connection that resolves the huge majority of problems.

The bonder allows the human to become the “herd leader” and reestablishes the leadership position when it becomes shaky, if it does. Horses do not display their butts or show disrespect to leaders.

Once you understand the concept of the bonder you will see that it can really be performed anywhere you can give the horse a series of directions AND make it comply.

I Believe My Horse Is “Lying” During The Bonder

This page deals with the horse who is giving you mixed signals in the bonder procedure.

He writes:

Marv;

I've e-mailed Monica and she said to nag you. I have a mustang Stallion nearly three yrs old, have done the bonder and I get all the visual cues from him. When I turn and walk away he follows, but still not enough for me to halter or do any further work with him. Before trying the bonder, I could touch him, although he was skittish. I have not been able to get the halter on since he got it off the first time. My question is; Is he just lying to me or am I missing something? There is no question of him 'fighting' me for dominance, but I don't seem to be getting any further.

Well, one thing about Monica, she catches on fast. Gotta admire someone who'll travel all day through the SW just to get to one of your clinics intending to sleep in the cab of her truck all weekend.

I know that you did not mean literal lying. I know exactly what you're talking about. The horse appears to say, “Hey, I'm on the same page with ya, Dude,” but won't get on the same paragraph. A lot of folks are convinced that horses **do** lie from time to time. I just refuse to believe that. I personally feel they are the most brutally honest beings on earth and that they NEVER lie. It is just that we as humans identify horse motives for an action based on **our** actions and motives. Let's eliminate another potential problem here ~ rope halters. Calm down now all you rope halter aficionados out there. Nothing against rope halters per se **IF** you have a horse that **WILL** halter. If you have one that won't halter, here's the problem with rope halters and web halters with no hookable throatlatch

strap - they are almost always a two hand hugger operation. Not only that but when you hold a rope halter in one hand gravity and the inherent limpness in the rope turn it into a wall that must be physically pushed against to enter.

You also have to encircle the horse's head to bring the halter up and then reach under and around to flip over the tie end. If you have a formerly feral horse (and even if you just have a head-skittish one) it is almost an unreasonable request to expect horse to make that kind of leap in one step, i.e. the bonder. Make no mistake, an AWFUL lot do but some don't.

A nylon halter has enough stiffness in it so that you can present an open "tunnel" with one hand for the horse to nose into.

When the horse is nylon haltering well, go to the rope if that is your preference.

When you are the point you're at you have to chunk the process down a little. You take it in steps.

Get a nylon halter with a cheek clip. Hold the halter in your hand and then put the horse through the bonder until it is giving you the signals you expect. Keep in mind at all times that there is always later. Don't overdo it to the point that either you or the horse has had enough. I'd say 45 minutes max.

When the horse follows, stop where you are and just stand beside it. Look off into space, talk to it, verbally or mentally, doing whatever you chose and just hanging out with it like a couple herd buds sucking up sunshine. Reach out and give it a caress. Try the halter holding hand and see just how close you can work the halter to its nose. Move nonchalantly like it's no big deal. Graduate toward holding the nylon halter by the poll strap using your fingers to keep a round open "bucket" for it to stick its head in. Practice just slipping it up to his nose and then on it. Use advance and retreat. If his actions say, "Not sure," then back off a little. If you go beyond his tolerance point and he says, "Can't do it!" and leaves just ever so casually send him around a couple times in each direction as a reminder and then walk up to him and go at it again.

****ALL**** you have to do with the nylon halter is simply get it over his ears. No need to worry about fastening it for this work. Everything is low-key.

The bonder is not getting the horse to follow. The bonder is for changing the horse's attitude. That change is what makes him follow, That change allows you to surpass your previous connection boundaries. Sometimes you have to go through those boundaries in a manner that doesn't raise too much attention.

Sometimes before you can do any further work with a horse you have to get it to where you can "be" with the horse.

Gelding often helps as well.

Bond Today Gone Tomorrow

This page deals with day to day "inconsistencies" in a horse that has completed the "bonder."

She writes:

Marv,

Yesterday Ben went out to work on Cheyenne and did the Bonder again. I am convinced Cheyenne has

a mind of her own. She would do nothing and all she wanted was to eat grass. Ben kept her in the round pen until he was ready to fall down having accomplished nothing. To me this says Cheyenne won that round and she's still the boss.

To me this says Ben wasn't able to demonstrate total control during the procedure. If he was ready to fall down I'd say he lost track of the procedure and resorted to running her around as opposed to controlling her. If you run a horse around a round pen you are just going to get a stronger horse - unless you run it to physical endangerment.

The purpose of the bonder is to establish to the horse that you have leadership ability and that's all. Once you establish that ability to the horse it will treat you like it would treat an actual lead horse.

At that point it is up to the human to act like a lead horse would act and lead. That sometimes takes a bit of practice and requires that we work to establish a two-way communication stream. It is not enough to talk to the horse, you must also listen to what it is saying.

When "all she wanted was to eat grass" she was saying, "This is more important to me than you are." At that point Ben then says, "Oh yeah? Then you need to get out of my space! Move in that direction now!" Her moving, and if I was in there with her she WOULD move, her moving says, "Okay! I will! I'll show you!" Then he says, "Changed my mind, go this way!" And so it goes - "I'm calling the shots here, horse, not you."

Then when he gets the negotiation signals he accepts them on his own terms. Ideally, his own terms would be when she plainly signals she's willing to cooperate.

His part is to be aware of what the horse is telling him. This *connection* business is based on choice. At any time the horse can say, "I'm not sure about this," "I don't like this," or "Nope, changed my mind."

This morning he went out to work her and did the bonder again. This time she went around the pen 6 times in one direction 6 times in the other and when Ben turned away from her she walked up to him (within a foot) and dropped her head. He put the halter on her, walked out of the round pen, she followed to a point then attempted to turn back. He jerked the halter and she went a few steps further (on her own) then he turned her back (on his terms) and went to the barn. She followed.

As I said earlier, the bonder is but a connector. It opens the line of communication - the lead following the directions of the leader. But the leader must be leading at all times. When one first starts this stuff one has to devote 98% of one's concentration to leading. In a very short time one finds that one only has to devote 2%, if even that much, of one's concentration to leading. It is an acquired skill.

In this situation, as far as I can understand it through email, one would slowly lead her toward the barn concentrating on seeing how little effort it takes to control the horse. I usually have the lead line draped over the horse's poll ready for grabbing if it moves off. It is standing beside me and I move one, two or three steps and then stop. All the time I'm seeing the horse complying in my mind. If it moves before I want it to, I merely wag a finger at it and go, "Uh unh!" Rather than leading the horse to the barn, I'm merely moving the control area a few feet at a time toward the barn. See the difference? Kind of each journey consists of single steps kind of thing.

Ben's question is.... why does she do this perfectly one day and the next day she is back to having a mind of her own and won't do a thing??

Combination of factors, but I suspect it's because Ben is still learning. Some horses never need a touch-up, others do. That varies among horses. Usually the time between touch-up increases while the effort and time needed for the touch-up lessens dramatically.

His second question is... when he leads her she will walk right along side him with her head beside his shoulder. Other times she tries to walk ahead and tries to lead him, usually a sharp yank on the lead or halter along with a sharp "no" will slow her up. Is this the right way to correct that??

Another learning thing. The moment her head moves further ahead than it should be he should lightly touch her neck and say, "Easy." The problem needs to be addressed the moment it is occurring and not after it is a done deal.

I think that as Ben learns more he'll be surprised to discover just how little force is required to correct. It is a world of nuances. Nuances that will blow you away with their power.

When, And How To Address A Problem In A "Bonded" Horse

She writes:

Marv,

Well, today was not so hot with Cheyenne. Ben went out to saddle her up and attempted to ride her just a little way from the barn and she was not coming on that at all. She would not stand still, she'd back up, she would fidget and head for the barn. Ben finally said to heck with this and took her back to the round pen. He ran her around the round pen several times saddle and all. She tried to show her butt some and he can run her around the round pen with no problems without the lead rope. When he puts the lead rope on and attempts to lunge her, she stands there looking at him, ears go back and she tries to present him her backside. Now what??

The best time to address a problem with a horse is the moment the problem shows up, not when the handler "finally" says to heck with this.

I'm a little uncertain what you mean when you use the words "ran" and "run" in connection with the bonder because running the horse is not the goal, controlling it is. I pay no attention to the horse "showing its butt" during the bonder as long as I am not in danger. I consider that to be a horse's way of saying, "You're not the boss of me!" To me that means nothing because in that pen, I am the boss. Period. Now if the horse gets close enough to me to possibly reach me with that attitude I will convince it that that is a grave error on its part. I will not allow it near it me until it is showing me the respect I want.

As far as the "grave error on its part" goes, I mean that if the horse comes in toward me in an aggressive or belligerent manner I will threaten it, even pop it with a whip. Originally I tried to get people to do without a whip under most circumstances but I soon came to realize that it was easier said than done for the inexperienced both for confidence and safety reasons. I now almost always use a whip when I perform the bonder more as an extension of my reach than anything else and to demonstrate how a whip can be used.

If the horse was in a herd situation and closed in on the lead mare in a disrespectful manner the lead mare would take a plug out of the disrespector and do everything in its power to stop the disrespect and would kick the daylights out of the offender until it changed its attitude. Both parties know that is the way such situations are dealt with and accept it. When one closes in on me to the point I am uncomfortable with it, I will retaliate FOR AS LONG AS THE TRANSGRESSION IS OCCURRING. As soon as the transgression is diverted or stopped, I forget it ever happened and go on.

It is important that the horse not be held during retaliation. It must be given the opportunity to reconsider and withdraw. The negative energy must be expended ONLY during the time the aggression is occurring.

I am also uncertain about the “lungeing”. That is not part of the bonder either. The horse may not lunge because it hasn’t been taught to longe. I am pretty much willing to bet the horse hasn’t been trained. Oh, I’m sure that it may have been extensively ridden by someone, but the fact that someone is able to ride it and do things with it is no proof that it was ever properly “broke” in the first place. I fail to see how lungeing would help establish control.

I do have some longeing DVDs available in my DVD inventory at <http://MarvWalker.com> you may find helpful.

But I digress, we want to get the horse away from the barn.

Since this horse has been through the bonder I probably would just tack it up. The moment it acted up I would say, “Annnnt!! Quit!”. If it did not, I would take it to the RP and redo the bonder. When the bonder was finished I would continue tacking. If it gave me any grief I would send it out a couple times in one direction then a couple in another and then give it the opportunity to comply again.

Since this is training, I would concentrate on establishing control and not worry about riding. When the horse is compliant and tacked, I would lead it out of the RP with the same leading skills I’d developed in the RP. I would be concentrating on moving my zone of control from the RP to down the block.

You have to visualize that horse moving with you as you move. You would want to see just how little effort it takes you to bring the horse where you want it to go.

Get the horse compliant next to you in the RP. Then move her closer to the gate and get her compliant there. Then out of the gate. Then down the pathway away from the barn. You just keep stretching your boundaries. I also call it controlling the horse where you are at then moving the control toward where you want it to go.

Try to keep your leading like that pictured in chapter “I Want My Horse Back!”

All that is between you and success are a few nuances.

Controlling The Out Of Control Horse During The Bonder

He writes:

Today I decided to try the bonder on my 5 year old gelding. I was very happy with the results I got with my mare at the New York Clinic. The gelding has been giving me some problems when its time to be caught in the pasture, so I thought I would give the bonder a try. This is a horse that already has been round penned quite a bit and that will follow me anywhere when we are working together. I run barrels with him and when I am setting up barrels or poles I allow him to walk at liberty while I do

this, he follows like a big puppy.

Anyway I put him in the round pen and started moving him around, he began to move at a very rapid pace with very little pressure from me, I let him set his own pace. I kept just enough pressure to keep him moving. I began to turn him and to short arc him, hoping to slow him down. He kept going, kicking out at me, throwing his head being very belligerent. After getting himself fairly well lathered up he began to lick a little bit but his lips were very tight, his ear was on me all the time from the start but he began to ask to come in. I knew that he was lying to me so I kept him moving, then when he asked to come in I let him. He came to me and as I began to lower his head and rub his ears he threw his head up in the air and my hand totally by accident hit him on the nose. He became like a freight train racing around the pen, I was starting to get concerned at this point so I stepped out of the pen and let him slow down on his own.

When I stepped back in he began to move but at a much slower and sane pace. I kept watching for him to relax but his lips were tight and his head would not come down yet he kept asking to come in. Each time I let him but as soon as I reached for his ears, he was off again. Then he got to a point that when I asked him to come in he would walk up just out of reach and bob his head up and down as if to say I don't trust you yet. He then began walking over to the gate, looking back at me and bobbing his head up and down. I stood on the far side of the round pen looking to the outside and waited and waited and waited, after about 10 tries he finally came over to me and let me put my hands on him but not his head. He finally came to me after almost an hour of this. I was getting concerned that I wasn't going to be able to catch him to put him up.

I just couldn't get over how this horse that I have been riding for 3 years now that has a heck of a handle on him already, that will follow me like a big puppy, just seemed to lose it.

I don't feel that we bonded at all in any sense of the word. It felt more like he figured out the only way he was getting out of that round pen was to let me catch him. As soon as I opened the pasture gate, he tore out across the pasture and looked back at me as if to say "screw you buddy" The one action he was making that had me totally confused was the head bobbing up and down, he never did drop his head he just kept getting just out of reach and bobbing his head at me. I felt more like he was trying to dominate me. Any ideas guys??? Marv???

Thanks

The first thing you do when you have an out of control horse racing around like a lunatic in the round pen is to stake a claim to a wedge of the pen and tell the horse by your actions, "If you come into my wedge, I will kill (figuratively) you!"

This is exactly what a lead mare in a herd would say to him.

You let the horse have every other part of the round pen pie but yours while you stand in your wedge just close enough to the pen fence that you impede the horse's movement but not close enough to where it cannot get by you IF IT IS DETERMINED TO DO SO. You stand there brandishing your "stay away from me" implement, letting him do what he wants in his part of the pen.

Each time he comes around to your wedge of the pen, he HAS to stop or take a beating (not talking a

literal beating here, just using the force you need to use to keep him from your spot also known as showing you respect). When he stops, he breathes and he has to turn and go back where he came from if he wishes to keep running. When he goes back in the direction he came from, he runs into your wedge from the other direction and again he has to stop (let's call this action, "long arcing").

Sometimes horses zone out, they just keep moving as if they were in a different world. They will zone out during a properly progressing bonder and one that has ended up like this one has. The direction changes force them to stop if only for a moment and their mental energies are directed in a new direction.

After a few back and forth laps, horses tend to stay in their section of the round pen pie as far as they can from the operator, which is the other side of the pen.

Once the horse is more settled then you can work your way to the center and resume the bonder in a less strenuous manner. If things get hectic again, reclaim your wedge until the horse settles. Threats such as snaking its head, kicking out at you and so on are usually just that, threats. As long as you keep your distance by insisting the horse keep his until it demonstrates connected behavior, they are relatively harmless and are just temper tantrums. No one I know has been threatened by more horses than I have and I have yet to have a horse carry through with one *****ONCE***** it leaves when I direct it to. Humans can rationalize, "Why am I running from this moron? I'm going to stop this nonsense and run over there and bust him in the eye." Once a horse acknowledges you may be a little more stronger than it is in the pecking order scale by "fleeing," it is very difficult for it overcome that impression.

When a horse cow-kicks at you from 10 feet away, there is NO way he can get you, ignore it. ***IF*** he backs toward you cow-kicking, THAT is going beyond a threat, that's an attack, dash off to his side and light him up from longe whip distance. I have had a rare few do that to me and I do not ignore that.

Protect yourself at all costs. Use the force that is necessary to insure your safety. **THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT ANOTHER HORSE WOULD DO TO HIM.** It's herd-dynamics in action and he will accept what he gets with no hard feelings. He will not accept your wailing away on him for no reason.

Life as we know it is not dependent on finishing the bonder at any time. There is no goofing it up as long as you don't wear yourself and/or the horse to a frazzle. There is always another day and backing off and re-thinking what you're doing when you are in doubt is NEVER, NEVER, NEVER wrong **NO MATTER** where you are in the bonder sequence.

Anyone who has seen me do the bonder at an event **RARELY** sees me perform the bonder from start to finish. We go at it for a few minutes then we stop, and ignoring the horse for the most part, turn toward the owner or the spectators and begin jabbering at them for as long as it takes for us to run out of breath (which in my case can be considerable) and then we resume from where we left off.

Also, coming to you and following is **NOT** evidence of a successful bonder performance. It is ***part*** of the results of the bonder and the horse may need to be guided into doing that. The evidence of a successful bonder is the compliant attitude the horse exhibits afterwards. And that state may not be fully evident until the next day.

I use the term "bonded" for lack of a better term. I'm not talking about the horse being glued to your butt, I'm talking about the establishment of a two-way connection between horse and human - the horse sending information to the human, the human sending information to the horse with **EACH** acting on that exchange.

You know what is the most amazing part? The harder the horse is to work, the more dramatic the change.

Try it again.

Bonding & Respect Questions

Here are parts of some emails I received and since they address the same issues, bonding and respect, I have combined them into one page in hopes they may help someone...

*My Peruvian Paso gelding is 'broke' within the meaning you describe in all cases but one—which since he is the ultimate chow-hound means that he still isn't there yet! The only time he crowds or acts disrespectful is when he's being fed. I go into the pasture to feed my two horses, and ***** has his ears down and his head in his feeder—and I have to shove it aside to get the cubes into the feeder. In EVERY other situation, he is perfect. The other horse stands beside her feeder and waits until the feed is there before she puts her head down. So—is this something that I'm making too much of, or is this the last hurdle before we have gotten where I, at least, want to go with my horse skills? I have no real idea what your situation is with your horse beyond what I read in your email. I'd have to watch the dynamics of this situation or discuss it with you at length to determine if there is anything *I* would be concerned about.*

I help people become closer to horses than they already are. But there are a significant number of people who do not need (or, egad, *want*) my help... they are satisfied as all get out with the way things are. And there is nothing wrong with that. It is strictly up to the owner handler to make that decision. I will point out what I see in the horse and if they want to live with that, so be it... I'm happy as all get out for them.

Here is my take on this... if this action does not bother you or cause you any concern, I'd say, you have no problem. I do not know what "has his ears down" means. Are they flopping or are they pinned back? If pinned back, I'd say you have a respect problem.

If you have to use considerable force to move his head from the feeder so you can feed him rather than using minimal effort to move his head, I'm certain you have a respect problem. The other horse who won't put its head down until the feed is in the bucket... SHHH! Don't say anything!

Since you brought up my use of the word, "broke," Let me splain what I mean, Lucy. I used the word "broke" simply because at the moment I had no other word to denote what I call the "mother syndrome." That is the state a mother adopts with her youngster. No matter what he does, she ignores it. He climbs all over her, he plays, he generally makes himself a nuisance and she ignores it. Until she hears, "Mom! Mom!" At that moment she instantly pays attention.

This is the state that I want to reach with the horse in that I want the horse to act like mom. Not *be* mom, *act* like mom. I want that horse to accept whatever I do and really pay no attention to what I do until I address him. When I address him, I want his attention, immediately.

I can get this state by implementing bonding techniques that bring the horse and I so close to each other mentally it tolerates and accepts what I do and it pays attention when I ask for it's attention. This is a simplistic view of a complex situation that occurs so rapidly it is mind boggling. One of the things I want my students to do is to REALLY examine their horse *before* we begin work. I want them to know exactly how it acts when they ask it something. I want them to know how eager, how willing, how accepting their horse is before they begin.

The attitude change in both the horse and the human is profound enough when they are only vaguely

aware of what their horse was like before. When they have concrete memories of pre-bonding experience it is spectacular.

In my view, for what it's worth, the horse is either bonded or it isn't. If you and the horse are not one-minded to the point others can obviously see it, you probably aren't. You can have an outstanding rapport with a horse and still not be bonded.

Both of my horses are very polite and respectful of me on the ground, due entirely to a lot of patience on my part. I find that this doesn't translate well under saddle though. They both make far too many decisions on their own for my taste, often ignoring what I want them to do, unless I get real serious. In the arena, they are gems, quiet, responsive, willing, on the trail they all bet are off.

Is this just a horse thing? Or have I left something out in their training. Secondly, what is the best way to make the connection to which you are referring in a remedial horse. Meaning, a horse that has been mis-handled and you want to initiate the connection and "re-start" the animal.

I want my horses to be my partners, not my employees. I want a willing volunteer not a draftee.

You have reached a happy medium with them. You're both able to work things out without getting the other ticked off.

Horses like these are not bonded. For the most part, you can handle them and get along with them, but they are not bonded to you. Training takes a lot of patience, bonding with horses doesn't take much. By using natural herd dynamics one can bond with a horse in mere minutes. If you do not KNOW whether or not your horses are your partners and willing volunteers, they aren't.

My round pen scenario that has come to be known as the "Bonder" can be used establish a very strong mental connection between you and almost any horse in minutes. Once you have established this connection and learn to work within it you are able to accomplish things much faster and easier. The bonder, when performed correctly according to the sequence and manner I have attempted to set out, will bond you and the horse you do it with so quickly, you will be stunned. Once bonded all the other stuff gets so much easier. Communication is so heightened, it is spooky. And communication is key to prolonging and deepening the bond.

Can you saddle your horse, throw the reins over its neck and walk off and have that horse follow you willingly & quietly while you make abrupt turns, starts and stops, without training it to do that? If so, your horse is bonded.

One evening at my riding lesson (learning to ride English after 47 years as a cowboy) my instructor, a 20+ year former manager of a Polish State Breeding Farm, told me, "It is awesome what you can do with a horse." *I* did not teach her, or my other saddle mare, or any other horse to do what he was admiring (exactly what I described in the previous paragraph)... they do it on their own.

I want my horses to approach me with an "I'm ready to do whatever you want," attitude when they see me coming. Then I want them waiting patiently and alertly for us to whatever it is I want to do, not zoned out like a zombie

I Have Done The Bonder, It Doesn't Work

This writer requested the bonding scenario and after receiving it sends the following reply...

Dear Marv

I have done all this, but i still don't know if we are bonded. The problem we have is once he starts running, he seems to keep running.

I have the picking up of the rear feet problem. I have the moving while i mount. If i round pen him, he will stay still till i mount then take off at a trot for a few rounds. I get him to stop for a round but then he takes off again. He used to stand for minutes at a time when i first started riding him (which was only Nov 1)

He is also a BLM mustang which i have had since March of this year. He seems nervous, but does not show it always. He just goes bang, and runs off

He has never been a threatening horse. No biting or kicking, never aggressive either. I don't know wether he doesn't understand or just stubborn.

Sometimes he Round pens himself. He just goes out and runs. Most times if we are in the rp with nothing on he will stay by me and move with me. If i have the saddle on he goes to running right away.

Thanks for any help. We are buddies most times, but he seems nervous most times too.

If I were there we would have all these problems taken care of in less than an hour. It doesn't matter if he is a green BLM horse. Some would say this horse is different and won't respond to herd dynamics techniques like domestic horses. While I have actually only worked off the range horses a few times I have seen them worked numerous times in videos, documentaries and the like. He is a horse and he will respond to horse interactions just like any other horse. And because his instincts aren't as clouded by humans as domestics, he will probably respond much faster than domestics.

There are things in this message that tell me this horse is pretty much compliant, just uncertain as to how to react to the human things... i.e. he will stay and move with you at times, he used to stand still while mounting and you are big buddies. These problems are really nothing, hopefully we can give you some things that will help the two of you communicate better.

First of all, I don't think you have performed the bonder with him. I think you have the bonder I sent confused with round penning. I say that based on the fact that you say the horse "seems to keep running" and "sometimes he round pens himself". Not if the bonder is performed properly he doesn't.

The thing to do now is to read and reread the bonder. Get the concepts and the sequence down pat in your mind. Memorize the signals that show the transitions between the stages. Study the explanations for controlling the horse's movements and directions.

The only connection the bonder has with traditional round penning is that a round pen is used. The

bonder is a procedure of control. That control brings about a mental change in the horse that causes the horse to seek and become part of a herd situation. Lacking an actual herd, the horse will accept and become part of a herd simulation. At that point there should be no doubt he's bonded to you.

In performing the bonder, you MUST take control of the pen. When you control the pen, you control the horse. If you are unable to control the horse from the center of the pen, which is the ideal control point for the ENTIRE pen, you have to take control of a slice of the pen and then build to the whole. If you are in the middle of the pen and he's racing around you like a nut and you cannot control him turn and quickly move to the opposite edge of the pen from him. He should turn and go back when he sees you but don't try to stand directly in front of him because you never really know if he will. That should stop his going around.

If you maintain your position at your slice he will eventually stop as far from you as possible. That will be at the opposite side of the RP.

Then if you want him to go to the right, you move to the left and as soon as he starts off, move to the center. When you want to stop or change his direction do what you have to do to stop him from going completely around. That is how you change his direction when *YOU* want to. One you have performed the bonder and he is beside you, pick up the problem foot. If he leaves send him around a couple times in each direction then allow him to come back and then pick it up again. After a couple times he should allow you to lift it at will.

Same with the saddling. If he leaves with the saddle, forget he's wearing it and do the same thing you did with the foot. Send him out a couple times both ways and let him come back. In fact, *if* you wanted to, you could run him through the bonder while he's saddled, I often do.

A very helpful exercise is to "act" like you're going to mount. Don't give him any predictable actions. Lift your foot to the stirrup, take it away. Get halfway up, get off. Get on, get off. Get on for a minute and just sit there get off. Vary what you do. Get him to the point where he has no idea what will happen next and he waits because he doesn't know what's next. Once he gets in the habit of waiting you can dispense with the variety and just get on.

You also say he takes off at a trot when you mount. If you can, just sit there and let him trot. While he's trotting, use that as rein training time. When you turn him, just hold the rein until he gives into it and when he does, release it. You can steer him straight at the fence so that when he gets to the fence he'll either stop or turn. If you can sense which he is going to do, give the cues for stopping or turning.

Another great exercise is to just sit on the horse and let him do what he wants to do without any urging of any kind from you. Just relax up there while he dwaddles, moseys or just stands. This will teach him that your presence on his back does not always mean go.

As I said earlier, I'm almost certain you haven't performed the bonder I sent with this horse in the manner it is laid out. And that is crucial. Study it over a few times and give it another shot. You'll be amazed at the difference it makes.

What It Means When Horses Lick And Chew

The "bonder," herd dynamics, leadership actions, whatever you want to call it, never fails me. I am so skilled and experienced in it it has become instinctive to me. I could probably do my taxes while doing it.

But it doesn't work that way for some. They "fail." (The bonder cannot "fail" because you always learn something from it.)

One of the most common things people tell me when they “fail” is that, “I got licking and chewing, but...” s/he wouldn’t follow me, wouldn’t let me touch it, wouldn’t wall paper the bathroom, or what have you.

When it doesn’t work for some it’s usually because they don’t understand the goal or the underlying concept...

The goal of the bonder is to get the horse acknowledging that you are the leader and that it is to look for you for direction. The goal is to establish a herd leader / follower relationship. This requires a learning curve for both the horse and the human. The curve is wider for the human than the horse because the horse already knows it. It is the human who may be confused and has to get the procedure down.

Every time I have had a young person (read, child) in the RP with me I have told them, “We’re going to do this, and this, and this, and this, and this and then this will happen.” The child nods and in 10 minutes it’s all over and the parents are wide-eyed in surprise. I get the parent in the RP and say, “We’re going to do this, and this, and this, and this, and this and then this will happen.” And the parents almost invariably say something along the lines of, “Well, I’m hoping it will, we’ll see.” And a hour later I often have to tell them to stop and face me and I engage them in idle chatter. Almost immediately the horse comes up behind them and waits patiently. I then ask, “Where is your horse?”

The goal of the Bonder is NOT to get the horse to follow you. The goal is NOT to create some magical mind melding. The goal is NOT to get the horse to suddenly let you do whatever to it, or with it.

The connection (looking to the leader for direction) the bonder produces can bring these things about and they often are a by-product of the bonder, but they are not the goal.

Licking and chewing ONLY indicates the horse is mentally processing what is happening at the moment. It’s sorting out things - usually for the better - that is all it’s doing. It can be saying, “Oh, I understand this.” “How can I get around this?” “Let’s see, I did this and this happened.” Pretty much anything.

The main significance of the licking and chewing is there will be a change in the horse’s actions or demeanor. Whenever I see a horse licking and chewing I try to back off and let the horse think. I try to not intrude on its thoughts.

If the horse reaches a good conclusion I’ll see that in its efforts to understand what I’m doing. If it reaches a bad conclusion (Hmmm... I wonder what will happen if I just go by him and cowkick?) I will defeat that as well and he will likely “chew on that for awhile.” A bad conclusion corrected or changed is a good conclusion.

Licking and chewing is nothing more than the mirror of a human thinking something over unaware that s/he is massaging their chin. Licking and chewing with horses is simply giving some thought.

The purpose of the bonder is to establish, or re-establish the leader follower relationship - that’s it. It is the horse’s responsibility to look to the leader. It is the leader’s responsibility to lead. Being a leader doesn’t mean you’re a good one. Even leaders back up once in awhile.

Success is determined by one thing - is the horse looking to you better after than it did before? If the answer is yes, it’s a success. If it is not as good as you want keeping working at it - calm, cool, quietly. Not necessarily in the same session. Don’t wear or frustrate yourself or the horse out.

If the horse won’t follow you, for example, it is because

1. He doesn’t know he’s allowed to or
2. you aren’t telling him to do it correctly or
3. he can’t because of his position in relation to you.

Licking and chewing will have little to do with it.

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