

the quarterly journal of wholistic equine care

H *natural* **HORSE** M A G A Z I N E

ESSENTIAL OILS:
Building TRUST,
RESPECT &
PARTNERSHIP

dedicated to your horse

NO SWEAT??
Acupressure to
the rescue!

HOOF
DEHYDRATION:
Strategies & Solutions
for RE-HYDRATION

HEADSHAKING:
RELIEF at last! with a
WHOLISTIC APPROACH



Etiquette for All Cultures

by Barbra Ann King



Remi and Brandie. Our own rules of etiquette seem quite normal and logical to us, until we start seeing our behavior through the eyes of another culture... such as our horses.

Photo by Redline Design

Every culture around the world has etiquette, rules and manners to make it easier to interact and communicate with one another. It is often recommended that we learn some of this etiquette before travelling to another country in order to not offend our host and to avoid getting into trouble. For example, in some cultures you shake hands by using one hand for work related activities and the other for greeting someone or eating. Hand shaking, when greeting someone, originated as a way of showing that you were holding no weapons and intended no harm or injury to the one you were greeting. In Japanese culture, when serving sake, you never fill up your own glass. You wait until someone notices that your glass is empty and he or she fills it up for you.

Our own rules of etiquette seem quite normal and logical to us. That is until we start seeing our behavior through the eyes of another culture. That's when we can begin to question their validity and wonder about their value.

Horse Culture and Human Culture are Different

When we are with horses, we enter their culture, which includes rules of etiquette and manners specific to the equine culture. If we wish to successfully interact and communicate with horses without getting into trouble, it is our duty to learn about their cultural "language", which is no different from visiting a foreign country that has its own set of rules and etiquette.

Time

In horse culture, time doesn't exist as it does in our culture. We seem to believe everything has a clock attached to it. We only have so much time to eat a meal, drive to work, have coffee with a friend and go on vacation. Time dictates our behavior, i.e. as we run out of it our stress level goes up and our behavior changes. Time robs us of magical moments. When our mind is relaxed, we can start seeing and hearing clearly the messages that are all around us, in nature, in animals, in our friends, spouses and children. When the



Horse kisses! Horses are good natured and never hold a grudge. We can do the same. Photo by Aeron E. King



NHE International Seminar 2012

September 22-23 St-Sauveur, Quebec, Canada

PRESENTATION BY MICHAEL BEVILACQUA AND DEAN OF THE ONLINE SCHOOL CLOE LACROIX

WWW.BEYONDTHE DREAMHORSE.CA

buzzer goes and snaps us out of our relaxed state of mind, we hurry off to our next task instead of contemplating the magical moments that were offered to us. Time governs our lifestyles, dictates what we are going to do in a day, and makes us feel guilty for not doing what we really felt like doing in the first place. In the horse world, time is only a means of measuring events that go by. It doesn't dictate how long a snooze in the warm spring sun should last. Nor does it stress out the whole herd because they are potentially late for grazing on a certain day. In the horse world, time is simply a day that goes by, followed by night and another day. It is seasons that flow; one starts as one finishes.

When we enter the horse world, with our agenda and time schedule, it isn't hard to see how foreign we appear to our horses. We show up out of the blue, with a sense of urgency about us that horses see as a sign of potential danger. Our grooming session, which is done with respect and pleasure amongst horses, is rushed and hurried as our rapid movements mechanically knock off the dirt and dust from their bodies. We pay no attention to that special spot that only a friend can reach nor do we slow our minds down in order to "hear" what our equine friend has to say. We quickly tack up and do a quick warm up in order to be on time when our lesson starts. By that time, our horses are confused, frustrated, scared, and/or mad at us for being so rude, but we probably won't notice. Some will stand still while we get on; others will have their say. Some will "perform" during the lessons while others will rebel. Some will be put back into training and be labelled as "difficult", "sour", "green broke needing more miles" and the list goes on. Would the outcome be different if we gave ourselves more time and started enjoying the quiet moments during grooming sessions? What if we had no agenda or schedule and just enjoyed whatever time we had together? All of my students who consciously started making changes in the way they spend time with their horses have all admitted that they enjoyed magical moments and better "performances" without having to do extra training. It is a conscious decision that only we can make.

Roles in the Herd

Another example of proper etiquette refers to herd dynamics. All members of the herd have an important role that they have earned based on their abilities, personalities and what position needs to be filled in the herd. They establish herd dynamics and constantly test these positions in order to make sure roles haven't changed. When one allows another to take his place in the herd, it is because he knows that horse has the ability to do a better job for the good of the entire herd. Once the "roles" of each horse are established, the

hierarchy stays pretty much the same until a new horse enters or leaves the herd. They are consistent and understand their positions well but constantly test each other as reassurance.

When we interact with our horses, it is very important that we also be consistent within our herd. We need to be the leader, not only when our horse is not "behaving" or on the days when we feel like it, but all the time, whether we are on the ground or in the saddle. We must learn the basic rules, manners and etiquette that our horses use when we "visit" their world. They are not the ones wanting to enter our world; we are the ones intruding in theirs. So let's try to be more respectful towards them. Because they are compliant, loving beings, they will gladly follow you out of the pasture or meet you at the gate, allow you to gently groom them and even give you the privilege of climbing on their backs. I guarantee your relationship will change as long as you are consistent and authentic with your horse.

Other Horse Etiquette to Consider

- Horses never pull or push on each other's head. Avoid doing this when leading and riding if you wish to keep the respect and trust your horse has for you.
• Horses never do anything without meaning and a purpose. Be in the moment and be clear about what your intentions are. Make sure your horse understands and doesn't have to play the guessing game. Do not be ambiguous by second guessing yourself.
• Horses are good natured and never hold a grudge. Do the same. Once again, be clear in your requests and if your horse doesn't understand, don't blame him. You are the one not being clear. Try asking another way.

Every moment spent with a horse is a chance to grow and learn to be a better human being. Don't miss out on these great opportunities; allow yourself to learn from a very knowledgeable and wise teacher: the horse.

Enjoy the journey! ♪♪

About the author:

Barbra Ann King is an internationally known horse behavior specialist, founder of the Relationship Riding© method, and a published author living in Alberta, Canada. She specializes in rehabilitating horses and optimizing performance. She travels year-round sharing her passion with like-minded horse guardians and offers video consultations for troubleshooting through her website, www.relationshipriding.com.

