



Mechanicsville Riding Club

The Hitching Post

Issue 77

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Notes from the President

Show time is getting close!! Thanks to all who have volunteered to help at our annual fun show. If you haven't already volunteered, you can still do so. We also need baked goods wrapped and priced. Joan Blackmon is our team leader for the concession stand. Come out and support your club.

Our trip to JRSP was a little soggy, but we prevailed. Awnings and tarps are wonderful things!!!

The Graves Mountain trip was a success. Those who attended had beautiful weather. I think it got a little chilly Sat night but that is what campfires are for.

We will need to fill some important positions in our club for the next year. Think about what committee you can head up or at least help out. We will be calling you for suggestions or help. Hope to see everyone at the show.

Debbie Middleton

Next Club Meeting will be Oct. 28th at the Mechanicsville Little League Bldg. Clint Arrington from Lonesome Dove Equestrian Center in Powhatan will be telling us about their therapeutic riding program for war veterans. Social begins at 7 pm. See you then.

PLEASE MAKE NOTE THAT NOVEMBER MEETING WILL BE ON THE 3RD WEDS (NOV 18) DUE TO THE THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

CHUCK WAGON:

Determined by membership roster order

Oct: Judy Hailey and Judith Harris

Nov: Karen Hasbrouck and Wanda Hazzard

Please let us know as soon as possible if you can't supply Chuck Wagon.

Oct Birthday: **Bethany M**

Heads Up:

ANY MEMBER OF MRC MAY SEEK APPROVAL TO ORGANIZE AND CO-ORDINATE A TRAINING CLINIC OPEN FOR THE FULL MRC MEMBERSHIP. GUIDELINES WILL BE DISCUSSED AT MEETING. .

HALLOWEEN FUN SHOW

OCT. 24TH AT DOREY PARK

FOR MRC PLANNED EVENTS

AND PICTURES FROM OUR PAST EVENTS

PLEASE CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE:

WWW.MECHANICSVILLERIDINGCLUB.NET



Roundup News

Welcome to our new club member:

JOAN HUGHES

FROM OUR FRIEND KATHLEEN:

What's WHOA Worth to You?

Part III: Setting the Parking Brake

Kathleen Dill, copyright August, 2009

I had been a "horse holder" for a long time, a confirmed lead rope grabber-and- puller. For years, I had done pretty well about expecting reasonable whoas from my horses when I was spending time with them without any restraint, simply in the interest of my own safety. But once I put the halter and rope on, I forgot all those habits. They evaporated. I didn't just touch the lead rope, I latched onto it, and I mean, grabbed it with a death grip. If you are like me, you can probably relate to this. I snatched that sucker up just below the clip, stiffened my arm,

and prepared to haul on it. My horse, thinking maybe I was offering up some World's Strongest Woman competition, decided that if I were grabbing, he might as well, too, and the game was on. I just figured that a horse was meant to drag me around, and I might as well get the first licks in and at least get us heading in the right direction.

Then I met a Texan, a cowboy who later became my husband. He was boarding at the barn where I was teaching. The first time he saw me grab that rope, his eyes got wide, and he just shook his head and walked away. The second time he stopped and considered addressing my habits in his inimitable Texan way, but restrained himself and didn't. By the third time, though, he couldn't contain himself, and he frowned at me and said, "Darlin', where do you think that horse is going to go?"

While I was trying to look around to see who Darlin' was, he gently took the lead rope from my hand, gave the horse a whole bunch of slack, and with that lead rope drooping loosely between them, kissed softly, said "Let's go, Buddy," and walked off. My horse instantly got at his side, and with an ear on the man, marched beside him. No yanking, no pulling. The cowboy stopped after a few steps, looked my pal straight in the eye and said, "Whoa." He tossed the rope over on his neck just in front of the withers, turned around and walked off. Horse stood stock still and watched Man walk back a few steps toward me, just watched, a look of total relief on his face. I stood stock still and watched both, just watched, a look of total amazement on my face. My cowboy looked at me, just the teeniest grin on his face, and then said simply, "Why are you holding that horse? That's his job. Quit doing it for him."

When you are practicing a good whoa in the stall at feeding and turn-out, you are laying the foundation for your horse to hold himself. Your work has convinced him that he needs to watch you and wait for your release, and his work has convinced you that he can do this, all without touching, grabbing, yanking or pulling. More simply, you have told your horse to hold himself still, without your help, and he has done it. You

have made whoa a good thing for both of you, because you get to create a job which is safe and productive for both of you, and he gets to eat or play after he completes the assignment.

But what about when you are out of the stall, where you often feel you need to hold on to Whoa, and where Whoa often feels you don't have the faith that he can hold himself? Here, it is prudent to have on a halter and a lead, just in case some stupidity happens. So how do you convey to Whoa that what you both learned in the stall is what you want out here, all the while having a way to correct any misunderstandings either of you may have about what whoa really means?

You use the “parking brake.”

The parking brake is what my Texan showed me that day at the barn. It's a signal to the horse that he needs to be still, and to stay still until the rope is removed. It's a tangible way for Whoa to feel your presence even when you are not touching him. It reminds him, quite simply, that Mama is watching him, whether Mama is or not.

So, here you are, walking Whoa somewhere. Ready to try the parking brake? Get rid of any death grip on the rope before you start; give Whoa some slack, so you are asking him to get with the program, rather than dragging him along. What you do is tell him to get ready, give your walk command and make the kiss sound, which means, quite simply, move now. The words don't matter, but the consistency does, so use the same sequence and the same words each time. Prepare him for your next move. I say, “Easy, now,” and straighten up a bit, getting ready to step out. Then say your walk word and kiss. Walk off briskly immediately.

If he moves with you, great. Keep going. If not, jiggle that slack rope until he figures out where he needs to be for you to leave him alone, all the while walking at a forward speed. For me, this is with his head at my shoulder. With him in the right place and focused on you, walk on for a minute or so. Where you go doesn't matter. That you go, does.

Next, prepare him for your stop. I say “Easy, now,” and slow my walk down, straightening back up just a tad. Then say whoa and quit walking. Make sure everything stops, with his head in the right spot. When it does, flip the rope over his neck in front of the withers and wait. When he holds still, pat him and step back a step. If he moves, take the lead rope back and make him move back to the exact place he was told to be, jiggling that slack rope to beat the band. Don't correct harder; respond sooner with more jiggling.

When he is there, quit jiggling, and ask for that whoa again. When he holds still, pat him again, flip the rope up, step back and let him stand.. In no time at all, Whoa will figure out that whoa means more patting and less jiggling, and that when the parking brake is set, he gets left alone to snooze.

Here's what you have shown Whoa: that you have a plan which has three clear phases: a preparation, an activity and a release. That paying attention to you sooner gets the job over with faster. That he gets to stop only after he walks with you awhile. That you will give him a reminder about holding still, the reminder being the lead rope draped over his neck, but that, if he wants to be left alone, he has to do it by himself when and where you say, completely, with only the parking brake as a reminder.

Here's what Whoa has showed you: that when you ask with a specific sequence and consistency, he can figure out what you mean. That when he has worked a bit, he enjoys a break, and that he can figure out what you want in order to get that break sooner. And that bothering him when he doesn't listen is enough to make him try harder to figure out what you want, so you will leave him alone.

Two things to remember: First, remove the lead rope from his neck each time you ask Whoa to walk off again. If you don't, you will be telling him to go and stop at the same time. Like driving off in a car with the parking brake on, this only confuses the situation.

And second, the kiss sound only means "Get moving now." It does not tell Whoa which movement to make; you must specify that as well, if you don't want Whoa to choose. If you want movement, be sure to tell Whoa what you want him to do first, and then kiss to get him started. Now, some people kiss, some cluck, and some do some hybrid of the two. Doesn't matter. Just pick a sound and stick with it to tell Whoa to get his feet going.

So practice using the parking brake, and use it as often as you can. It's a good tool. Walk enough that stopping feels good, jiggle enough that getting in the right position is a relief, and work enough that whoa is a nice thing to do. The faith that you both develop in communication and each other is well worth the effort you each have to make to develop the habit.

"HORSE QUOTES"

One white foot - buy him; Two white feet - try him; Three white feet - look well about him; Four white feet - go without him.

- [Old English Rhyme](#)

A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!

- [William Shakespeare](#)

There is no secret so close as that between a rider and his horse.

- [Anon.](#), *Old equine expression*

Let us look beyond the ears of our own horses so that we may see the good in one another's.

- [Anon.](#), *Old equine expression*

There is something about jumping a horse over a fence, something that makes you feel good. Perhaps it's the risk, the gamble. In any event it's a thing I need.

- [William Faulkner](#)

**I am the Turquoise Woman's Son,
On top of Belted Mountain
beautiful horses--slim like a
weasel!**

**My horse with a hoof like a striped
agate,**

**with his fetlock like a fine eagle
plume:**

**my horse whose legs are like quick
lightning**

**whose body is an eagle-plumed
arrow:**

**my horse whose tail is like a
trailing black cloud.**

**The Little Holy Wind blows
through his hair.**

**My horse with a mane made of
short rainbows.**

**My horse with ears made of round
corn.**

**My horse with eyes made of big
starts.**

**My horse with a head made of
mixed waters.**

**My horse with teeth made of white
shell.**

**The long rainbow is in his mouth
for a bridle**

and with it I guide him.

- [Anon.](#), *"The War God's Horse
Song", Anonymous Navajo poet*

"Riding a horse is not a gentle hobby,

to be picked up and laid down

like a game of Solitaire.

It is a grand passion"

---Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Many people have sighed for the 'good old
days' and regretted the 'passing of the horse,'
but today, when only those who like horses
own them, it is a far better time for horses.**

~C.W. Anderson

HAPPY HALLOWEEN!!!!

