



Hey Neighbor



For The Love Of Horses

By Frank J. Buchman

Tips for loading

Loading a horse in a trailer for the first time is often a major ordeal.

"Do not pull on your horse's head and don't be in a hurry when loading a horse," warned Harry "Spud" Whitney, horse clinician from Wickenburg, Ariz.

"These are the two biggest mistakes people make when they try to load their horse for the first time," continued Whitney, a Manhattan native, who conducts his 'From The Horse's Point Of View' clinics throughout the country.

Whitney advised horse owners to slow down when trying to load their horse. "Work with your horse leading in tight quarters like along a fence and through gates before trying to load," he said.

Owners often take their horse right up to a trailer and start jerking on the lead. Frequently, the first thing that happens is the horse becomes scared, his front end comes up, he hits his head, gets cut and a veterinarian must be called.

"Definitely do not tie the

horse's head in the trailer and expect him to load," Whitney said. "Let the horse think about the trailer and figure it out first."

Once the horse has smelled, looked into and studied the trailer, he needs "motivation to think about getting into the trailer."

The horse can be encouraged to move forward with something behind him such as a broom, a bag on the end of a stick or two people holding a tarp.

"Do not put pressure on the horse when he starts forward," Whitney said. "That's when he requires the least pressure, and is a big mistake people usually make."

"Let the horse move away from the trailer. Take the pressure away and just wait for him to move forward again," Whitney continued. "The horse really doesn't know what his task is, but confidence is being built each time the horse comes back up to the trailer, puts his head in and lifts a foot in."

"Ask the horse to move forward. Always keep the

horse's nose pointed to the trailer. If the horse hesitates, cue him forward by tapping him on the hip with a dressage whip. As soon as the horse steps forward, even if it's only one step, reward or thank the horse immediately," echoed Kenny Harlow, Cumberland, Va., horse trainer.

"Never circle around once you have moved to the trailer," Harlow continued. "All of the horse's movements should be cued for-

ward toward the trailer or backwards away from the trailer. Circling teaches the horse that it is okay to run over you."

Persistence with a little pressure is necessary, according to Whitney, but "the pressure does not have to get bigger. That's when the horse will panic to save his life and accidents happen."

"Use repetition, not retribution. To get the horse in the trailer, you apply consistent directional pressures in a relaxed rhythmic way. You don't let those pressures get louder and louder or faster and faster," agreed Ron Meredith, Waverly, W. Va., trainer.

"Make the right thing easy, and the difficult thing hard," said Whitney. "But how difficult does the difficult have to be, to be difficult?"

"Often there isn't much difference, and the horse will always try to do what he

thinks will make his life easier if he can.

"Give the horse some time and he'll load. Usually, it's the hurry that gets a person in trouble," Whitney said.

"If your horse is scared, be patient. If your horse is disobedient and wants to fight, change the subject," Meredith added. "If your horse is calm and obedient, he will heed your cue, stay at your shoulder and walk right into the trailer."

Again, Whitney emphasized, "Don't be afraid to let the horse back out of the trailer and start over. Make sure he has all four feet out and flat on the ground, before you start trying to load again."

"Asking the horse to load when he is part way in and

part way out really gets you in trouble," Whitney noted.

Unloading can sometimes be a problem as well.

Accidents are much more likely when a horse is asked to come out forward. He will often jump and hurt himself and sometimes even injure the handler.

"The easiest way to train a horse to unload is while training him to load," Whitney explained. "One foot in, one foot out; two feet in, two feet out; then all four feet in and all four feet out."

"Once the horse has all of his feet in the trailer, pull on its tail gently and ask it to back out of the trailer," Harlow suggested. "As soon as the horse begins to move back, release the tail. It is very important not to rush this part of the lesson."

Slow Persistent Pressure Makes Horse Loading Easier

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Whitney's horse loading and unloading advice in summary: "Do not get in a hurry and let the horse figure out what is expected of him."

