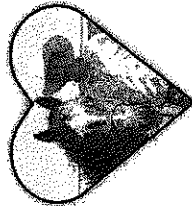


Hey Neighbor



For The Love Of Horses

By Frank J. Buchman

Low-Stress Handling Of Livestock Emphasized During EquiFest 'First Saddling' Demonstration

Humane treatment of livestock is more essential than ever.

While he was working with a horse, Curt Pate emphasized that whatever livestock is being handled must be managed with the lowest stress methods possible.

Before going into the pavilion for his first presentation at the recent EquiFest of Kansas in Wichita, Pate said, "I have been conducting an increasing number of low-

stress livestock handling seminars around the country.

"All of the recent news about cattle diseases and slaughter has brought livestock abuse to the attention of media and consumers.

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acclaimed Horse Whisperer movie.

Unlike some clinicians who start riding their colts during the first session, Pate conducted his colt starting seminar in three one-hour segments progressing from Friday's saddling through riding the filly on Sunday.

Broke to lead, the filly was worked extensively with the halter and lead. "I have changed my techniques from the way I used to start these colts and the way others often still do it," Pate evaluated. "I have my hands on her, and I will continue to work to get her to relax, respect me and respond to my requests."

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I'm asking her to do," Pate recognized.

Although groundwork is required before saddling and riding a young horse, there can be too much of that, Pate explained, contrasting opinions of some clinicians.

"A colt can become too relaxed and passive. Then when you are on their back and want them to move, they'll tend to resist or sulk up," he explained. "The horse must move, yet not buck, rear up, lie down or back up, such that they can hurt you or even themselves. It takes a balance of the whole deal."

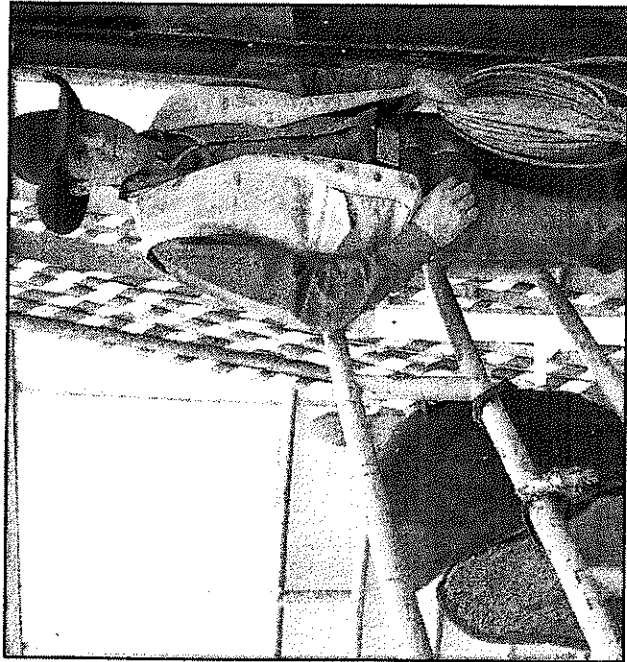
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ing, Pate did not reprimand her. "I've learned to let these things work themselves out. She'll decide that it's not necessary and no fun really," he insisted. The filly was never trotted or loped around the pen.

Although he would immediately jump on a colt when he was training as a teenager, Pate noted, "As my years have increased, I try to use my mind more instead of my body."

The filly was perspiring and tense from the exposure to the crowd and new environment. "It will take her a while to get used to all of these strange things. Right now, she's worried that the boogey man might get her. She's not really paying attention to what

Continued on page 13



Flying in from his ranch near Helena, Mont., Curt Pate is in demand around the world discussing low-stress livestock handling techniques. In his "First Saddling" session at the recent EquiFest of Kansas in Wichita, Pate continually emphasized low-stress in all work with the two-year-old palomino filly.

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away from him on request and coming forward and leading on command. She was calm as the clinician rubbed her neck and back. "Now, she's starting to bend, flex her neck and soften up not to be so tense," he credited.

Working on both sides and asking her to move all four feet in different directions when requested, Pate related, "She must learn to yield both ways.

"However, I'm not too big on bending horses. It takes their mind away. Any horse performing a speed maneuver is straight, not bent. I want to control her mind, not have to do it physically," he critiqued.

Appreciating her calmness, Pate credited, "This kind of horse is good for me. She has the manners most people want and need."

Pointing out that many who work with horses use whips and abusive methods, Pate ordered, "We do not need violence when we are working with horses or any kind of livestock. There might be a place for a prod sometimes, but it must be used in the proper manner."

Stepping over the fence, Pate described how working from the opposite side of the pen allows one to safely handle a horse with poor manners. "It might save you from getting kicked, pawed or run over," he advised. "I can get up on the fence and move my hands over her back, head and neck, exposing her to movements that are similar to when I'm riding."

Bringing out his lariat, Pate rubbed the filly all over and placed it around her heart area, simulating a girth as it was tightened. At first, the filly flinched

and hopped with the pressure around her middle, but she was soon pacified and walked at ease upon command.

Opening the round pen gate, Pate lead the filly outside and started to pick up his pad and saddle when the palomino lunged to tighten the rope. "That was my fault, not hers," he quickly responded. "I was talking too much and not paying attention to my horse. We must be real careful where our mind is. The main focus should be on our horse."

Carrying the saddle and pad into the pen, Pate first rubbed the pad all over her back without alarm from the filly. Then he gently moved the saddle onto her back as she moved in a circle around him. No reprimand was made toward the filly, although she continued to move while he was adjusting the saddle and

tightening the girth.

Moving her around himself at a walk, Pate analyzed, "She probably doesn't even know she has the saddle on yet. She may still think it's the rope around her heart girth."

As he again expressed appreciation for the manners of the filly and her acceptance of his first steps of training, Pate commented, "She's licking her lips in relaxation."

An experience involving rough handling of livestock had occurred just a few days earlier. "There was a truck accident near our place, and I was asked to assist with getting the cattle moved around," he recalled. "Those truckers and cattlemen there were just like the ones we have been seeing on television.

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The point was recognized periodically throughout his hour-long session while introducing a filly to her first saddling. Mike Mikos, Eskridge Quarter Horse breeder, brought his two-year-old palomino into the portable round pen set up in the pavilion for Pate to present the training demonstration.

"The reason I do these clinics is for the horses," acknowledged Pate of Helena, Mont. With a lifetime of livestock experience, Pate, making a repeat appearance at the EquiFest, is in demand throughout the United States and Europe for his advice. He was a technical advisor for the acclaimed Horse Whisperer movie.

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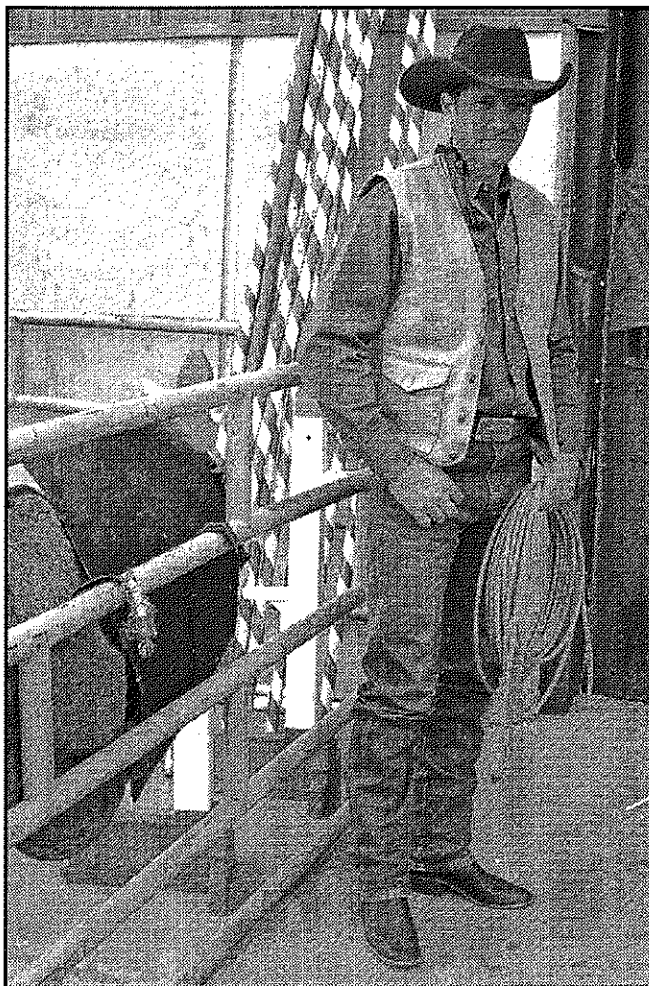
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Horses And Handlers Are Each Part Of Partners Who Form A Partnership

Horse and rider are each individuals as a part, but are also partners with each other, forming a partnership to have a successful and pleasant experience together.

Bob Jeffreys and Suzanne Sheppard of Middletown, N.Y., emphasized that in their combined Teaching Two as One presentation called "Part, Partner, Partnership," during the EquiFest of Kansas in Wichita.

A ten-part learning system was defined by Jeffreys so horse and handler can communicate with other. "It all starts in the horse's jaw," he pointed out. "Every action of the horse relates back to his jawbone."

Reining is a slow, long-term effort, but your horse can learn what is expected of him. "They learn by the process of elimination. When the rein is picked up, a movement is expected," Jeffreys contended.

Horses are creatures of habit, and repetition is the key to learning. "A horse must be exposed to an experience a minimum of 500 times before he starts to understand," Jeffreys evaluated. "It takes at least 1,500 times before a horse can begin to become consistent.

"Many expect their horses to be perfect, but that's an impossibility. Nobody is perfect. Yet, a handler must always be patient and reward effort," the clinician continued.

Head set determines where the horse is going. "If his head is up and out, then he's ready to go," Jeffreys insisted. "We don't want a horse too high-headed or too low. Actually the head should move in about a six-inch range of the withers."

Ears are the third most important part in a horse's learning system. "The ears will tell you if your horse is paying attention to you or something else," Jeffreys detailed.

The neck is the telltale sign if a horse is relaxing. "When the neck muscles are flowing and wrinkle-free, it is an indication that one can ask for control of the other parts," Jeffreys recognized.

Front feet guide must move before the horse can advance. Jeffreys commented, "A horse has to be soft on his feet to perform. There is nothing learned from stiffness."

Withers carry the saddle and are used in directing the horse. "One can get movements with less bend in the horses through the wither," he said.

A horse must be balanced in movement to be athletic. "Cues with legs help in balancing the horse," Jeffreys admitted. "We only use snaffle bits on the horses and add leg and body cues to motivate the desired response from our horse."

Hindquarters control the forward movement of a horse. "We have to guide the driving force in order to get anything done," Jeffreys noted.

Next part of importance in the training system is the shoulder. "The stop, the spin and all maneuvers actually begin in the shoulder," he realized.

Final part of the system is the poll. "A horse has to break at the poll to advance and maneuver in a soft manner," according to Jeffreys.

"All of these specific parts make it easier for the horse and handler to become partners," inserted Sheppard.

Horses in nature establish a pecking order. "Likewise, in handling there must be a leader and a follower," Sheppard emphasized. "You must be the leader and guide the horse in what you expect from him."

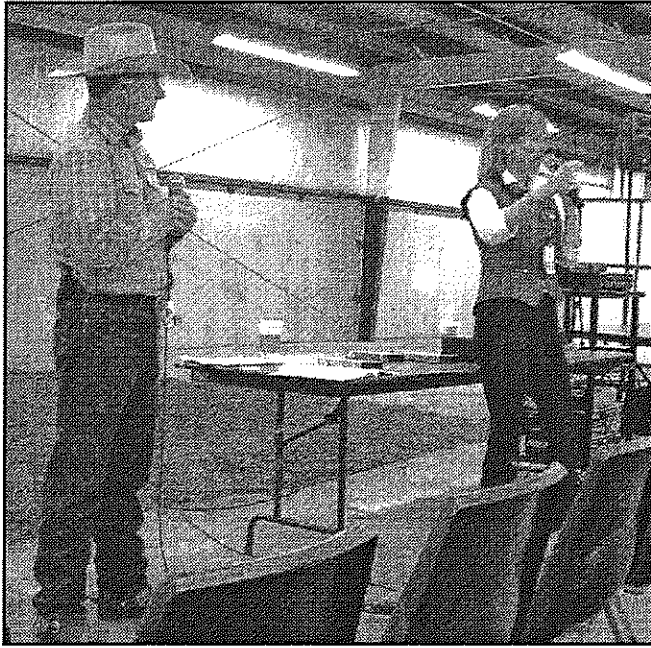
There are some horses who will always test to see if you are being a leader. "It's your responsibility to always ask your horse for his response," she demanded. "If he's allowed to lead, that's when trouble can occur."

However, the horse must be taught. "You can't expect a horse to know what is expected of him without training," Sheppard clarified. "People often blame their horses for doing something wrong, but how is the horse supposed to know if he hasn't been educated and then requested to react upon that training?"

Horses are stronger and quicker than their handlers. "We must be alert to our horses at all times, or they can hurt us and themselves," she critiqued. "We will always tell our horse what to do and mean it.

"Yet we must be a fair and consistent leader," Sheppard added.

Respect of handler by the horse and admiration of the horse by the handler are essential in the partnership. "The better teacher we are, the better horse we will have. They will get in the habit of saying yes to our request," Sheppard concluded.



Bob Jeffreys and Suzanne Sheppard conduct Teaching Two as One horsemanship clinics around the country. The Middletown, N.Y., team presented a "Part, Partner, Partnership" session at the EquiFest of Kansas in Wichita.

