

Craig Cameron

Double Horn Ranch—The Making of Great Horses & Horsemen

TRUST

A big part of horsemanship for me is trust. This trust is a two-way street. It is a trust I must have of the horse and the horse must have of me. Trust, however, is an interesting concept. Almost any relationship needs a foundation of trust. A friendship or marriage needs trust. A relationship between man and dog, even from country to country, and certainly between man and horse- trust is a must.

To have or develop trust one must know exactly what trust is. If you look the word up in the dictionary, it talks about faith, hope and the reliance on another. It also mentions confidence and the ability to do something without fear or misgivings. These are all qualities that I want and try to develop in my horses. To me trust is a belief. In our interactions with horses, it is easy to destroy the trust or belief that the horse might have in us, the human being. If you are training through pain or fear you are destroying the trust in the horse.

Trust, like confidence, can only be gained. You cannot make something or somebody trust or respect you, you can only gain this trust or respect by the way you work with or train your horse. I owned a big beautiful buckskin gelding named K-Boy. When I say big, I mean this guy was big. As handsome as this horse was, I bought him cheap. The reason being was the same old story. K-Boy had been abused and bottom-line, he had no trust of the human being. I was aware of these circumstances when I made this purchase, sure I would be able to help this buckskin horse. Regaining trust is always a slow process, but just the simple awareness of that reality makes it an easier process for me. I knew it was going to take time and time is always what I am willing to give the horse. K-Boy responded to constant handling and riding and the long reschooling process began to pay off. He became a top using and ranch horse. In time, K-Boy became my most trusted and favorite mount. Whether chasing wild cattle in heavy brush or working colts, K-Boy was my main stick.

One August day while on the trail of an outlaw Brangus bull, I tried to cross a deep muddy slew. Lo and behold, there was no bottom in this quicksand and we bogged down fast and deep. I dove from the saddle and scrambled to higher ground on the bank. Out of breath, I looked back at my buckskin partner, sunk and stuck in this mud with nothing but his head shoulders showing; but worse, he was still sinking. The other cowboys I was with offered to ride for help and maybe even a tractor, but I knew by that time it would be too late. Cautiously I eased my way back to my horse, as my compadres whispered and shouted different ideas, cautions, and instructions for help. I took hold of those reins and got after K-Boy with verbal and physical commands for all I was worth. It was a now or never. You hear horseman talk about horses with heart. Believe me that big horse found some and with all his strength and heart he powered himself and got out of that bog and up to the bank to safety. To this day, I believe it was the trust between that horse and me that gave him the heart to get out of that bad situation. K-Boy and I lived to ride many a mile and make many a horse track after that day.

One morning, however K-Boy did not come up with the other geldings at feed time. I rode down in the pasture and sure enough there stood old K-Boy just grazing by himself. Upon closer

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examination my heart jumped, as it was easy to see that his front left cannon bone was broken plumb in two. The skin was not broken but that leg was just dangling. I knew what I had to do. I sent one of the hands for the gun. I spent some time talking with that old horse until the inevitable had to be done. At the final moment, I looked into those big brown eyes and even then, I only saw trust.

—*Craig Cameron*