



July Newsletter

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LETTER FROM CRAIG

Herd-bound horses are a common "problem." I've known many horses and riders that have struggled with this. The important thing to remember is, horses are a herd animal. Don't take their actions personally. Horses don't do things to spite you; they do what they think they're supposed to do. All horses are herd-bound, it is in their nature. As prey animals, horses find safety in numbers. The herd instinct is one of the most powerful and ingrained instincts of the horse. It is important to respect the horse's nature and understand how important the herd is to the horse.

The herd instinct is very powerful. From day one, the herd mentality is formed. A foal's mother is his security and the herd is the center of his universe. A foal learns from his mother, as well as from other members of the herd. Younger, inexperienced horses can trust older, more experienced lead horses. Because of this, it is the herd that gives the horse security. Within the herd there is a pecking order. This is important and gives the herd structure. Horses operate through leadership. Lead or dominant horses teach and keep discipline with other horses in the herd. As horse people, we

need to understand this nature, instinct and structure of herd mentality and its importance to the horse. This knowledge enables us to better communicate as teachers and trainers of the horse.

It is important to become a part of your horse's herd. When I work with a horse, I create a herd of two. I want the horse to feel safe in our herd, trusting me as the leader. Give the horse a reason to find solace and comfort with you like he would with the other horses in his herd. Spend time with your horse to help create a bond. If he spends too much time with other horses and not enough with you, his bond with them will be stronger and he will be more likely to display herd bound behavior toward other horses. As the leader, you must be confident, in control and clear with your cues and communication at all times. Being a good, fair and consistent leader is important to becoming a good horseman and developing a good horse. Always remember to be respectful of the horse's nature and recognize how important his instincts are to him. Like I always say, you need to give respect to get respect.

Great trainers create a learning environment of trust with their horses. It's not that their horses are not herd-bound it is that the trainer is part of the herd. The trainer is the leader of the herd. With this approach, herd-bound energy does not work against you, it works for you. As a horseman, I challenge you to create a no-fear environment between you and your horses. Do not be the predator stalking the herd. Instead, with effectiveness and understanding you become a member of the herd; the leader of the herd. Your presence should not represent the threat of a predator, but rather the understanding and respect of a good leader.

Your friend,
Craig Cameron

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