

## Equine behaviour part 1 Accepting responsibility

We have all experienced that issue where our horses won't or can't do what we are asking. Often this results in a level of force being used to achieve the desired result, leaving the horse with no understanding of what is being asked.

When a horse exhibits an unwanted behaviour this has been initiated from somewhere. Maybe a previous owner/trainer, a trauma, a physical difficulty a memory or even pain. This then turns into a pattern the horse can't break or control and it becomes normal. Force and strength in these situations doesn't solve the initial trigger, just in some cases the current issue. However that doesn't make it right..

As owners/riders of such big strong animals it is our responsibility first to understand them and to equip ourselves with the knowledge of how they work and think. Secondly to put the time into understanding why our horse is exhibiting this behaviour and then take appropriate steps to break the pattern and Re educate them.

In cases where pain is the cause despite all efforts to solve the behaviour it will keep returning in some form or another. It's always best to eliminate pain as a cause for the behaviour in the first place. If a horse has had some form of pain in the past and this has now been completely resolved, forms of the initial behaviour might be present for some time after. Pain memory and patterns in the body that are defensive to pain will need to be unravelled and new patterns developed before the behaviour will completely resolve.

I see many horses and riders on a level of acceptance whereby the horse has always done that so they let it continue. Breaking the pattern is the first step in order to do this the horse has to know what behaviour is required instead of the current one. Just telling a horse not to do something when it's stuck in a confirmed pattern is not enough. The horse has to be rewired with a different pattern of the desired behaviour to be successful.

Most often the initial stages of the behaviour will start in a very small way and progress to something much worse if this is not unravelled. We must remember we are training our Horses the entire time we are with them. This means sometimes we're responsible for inadvertently putting undesired behaviours there or making existing ones worse.

Discovering the root cause of a behaviour starts on a basic level with an assessment of the relationship between horse and human and whether a basic understanding of each other is present. It takes into account the horses management of its own body, where it carries tension, where the energy is directed, the balance of the body, what the triggers for stress maybe and how that comes out in the horse.

To be continued.....