

Natural Horsemanship for Every Horse

Natural horsemanship is the philosophy of training a horse using its natural body language and movements. Practitioners use a wide variety of techniques to yield the same result: a bond of trust between the horse and its trainer or rider. The trust that develops between the horse and rider during natural horsemanship training techniques is applicable across all disciplines: eventing, working, dressage, and riding for pleasure.

Eventing

Horses trained for eventing, which includes show jumping, dressage and a strenuous cross-country course, are pushed to the limit of their physical and mental ability each time they compete. The horse must be 100% sound, and is tested at each step of the competition. The cross-country course is the most dangerous portion of the competition, as it is a course composed of miles of terrain traversed at fast speeds, and dozens of extremely solidly build jumps. Only a horse that has full trust in its rider can be highly successful at eventing. That is where natural horsemanship training comes in. Natural horsemanship techniques build the bond of trust between horse and rider so that when the rider asks the horse to do something new, challenging and potentially frightening, the horse trusts the rider enough to take the risk.

Working Horses

Working horses still play a large part in ranching and farming operations. While some herd cattle, sheep and other animals with ATVs or other vehicles, a horse is still the only method of safe transportation to the most remote areas. Out in the wide open spaces of pastureland, and mountainous areas, hazards abound. Holes, snakes, other animals, rockslides, and unstable terrain lurk. It is essential that a horse traversing such country is able to remain calm throughout the journey. It is also essential for the rider to be able to read subtle signals from their horse in order to avert danger. Animals can most often sense a change in conditions before people can. Only the rider best in-tune with their horse will be able to pick up on cues from the horse.

Pleasure Riding

The goal of most horse owners is to have fun with their horses. Fun happens most when there is no fear. Horses are large in size with powerful teeth and legs. For horses, humans can seem abrupt and unpredictable. Together those characteristics can create a culture of worry and fear. Natural horsemanship training helps absolve the fear and build communication bridges between horse and rider and horse and trainer. When humans learn to speak "horse," they will find that they can do almost anything with their horses.

Dressage

Dressage training builds muscle and balance in horses and riders. Some consider classical dressage to be the original source of natural horsemanship. Whether riding for pleasure or competition, balance and communication established through natural horsemanship techniques helps the dressage horse and rider achieve a higher level of precision and grace.

Natural Horsemanship for All

Whatever a horse's primary occupation, natural horsemanship techniques take the horse to the next level. The trust, stamina, strength and communication horses and riders achieve by practicing natural horsemanship translate from the ranch to the show ring, and every situation in between. To learn more about natural horsemanship and to connect with others practicing the techniques, visit <http://www.aanh.net>

About the Author

Jeanine Lowry is the President of the American Association of Natural Horseman. The AANH provides support, information and resources for practitioners of natural horsemanship--both novice and professional. For more information about natural horsemanship, visit <http://www.aanh.net>