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Horse Training Voice Commands

By Andy Curry

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To the uninitiated, voice commands for the horse are nothing more than words. But to the horse they are only sounds.

Obviously, horses cannot speak our language. Since they cannot speak our language we should think through what we say to them when we want certain responses from them.

Take the word "whoa" for instance. I have no doubt this is the most abused word in the human/horse language. When the rider says "whoa" then the horse should know to stop.

But the problem is this. Often the word "whoa" is said when the rider wants the horse to slow down...not stop. Before you know it, the rider has conditioned the horse to slow down at the word "whoa" instead of stopping. Then the rider can't understand why the "stupid" horse won't stop when he says "whoa!".

Telling your horse a command when you mean for it to do something else is lying to your horse. You never lie to your horse because the results you get will not be what you want. Jesse Beery, a famous horse trainer from the 1800's, knew this well and was the first to say "don't lie to your horse".

Thus, when you say "whoa" to your horse, you must only say it because you want to stop...not slow down.

Also, when using voice commands be sure to use simple words with as few syllables as possible.

Thus, if you want a horse to back up then say "back". If you want him to walk then say "walk". If you want him to trot then say "trot".

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Next, when using voice commands be sure to associate an action with the command. For instance, let's say you're teaching your horse to gallop at the command "gallop". So while in the round pen you use one of your aids to teach him to gallop. So first you say "gallop" then bring in the aid to motivate his movement to a higher speed.

If you want to teach your horse to walk then start your horse around the pen in the opposite direction from which you taught him to gallop. When he's gone around several times, stop him, and pet him. If he goes too fast use the word "walk" and have him go slower by making a slight move to the front of him.

Lastly, I'm a big advocate of being careful how you talk to your horse.

If you use commands that sound threatening (by yelling a command), you can actually increase your horse's heart rate, frighten and confuse him, and he may take longer to learn.

For instance, a popular command to teach a horse is the word "step". When driving a horse, using this command means for the horse to move forward...take a step. When teaching it, be careful not to yell the command because it may be perceived by the horse as a punishment.

But if you calmly say "step" you will get better results than if you yell it. Often times, when a horse isn't "getting what you want", there's a tendency to get frustrated and thus, mad – and your voice volume can escalate. Then you're back to sounding threatening and perhaps your horse will take even longer to understand what you want.

I've seen where horses were being taught to drive where the owner taught the word "step". When teaching it, he would loudly say "STEP!". It wasn't long before the horse was actually balking. Then the owner was getting frustrated and kept repeating his command even louder...as if the horse couldn't hear him.

It reminds me of a show I once saw on television. One english speaking man was talking with a spanish speaking man. The spanish speaking man knew no english. The english speaking man was trying to communicate with the spanish speaking man. After a minute of obvious noncommunication, the english speaking man spoke slower and louder. Unfortunately, the spanish speaking man didn't understand english whether or not it was spoke loud, soft, fast, or slow.

In summary, use short words. Use the word when you want a certain action – only say the word when you want that particular action. If you want your horse to slow down then say something like "easy". (Don't say "slow" because he may take it for "whoa".)

Next, associate actions with commands and calmly talk to your horse. Horses can hear very well and yelling command will not make the command any more clear – if anything, it will frighten and confuse him.

Andy Curry is a nationally known horse trainer and author of several best selling horse training and horse care books. For information visit his website at www.horsetrainingandtips.com. He is also the

leading expert on Jesse Beery's horse training methods which can be seen at www.horsetrainingandtips.com/Jesse_Beerya.htm

Horse Training Techniques From The 1800's–

By Andy Curry

Was he the world's greatest horse trainer of all time? Would his picture be in the horse trainer's Hall Of Fame? Perhaps.

His name was Jesse Beery. Before he was twenty he became a world class horse trainer. He was so well known, there were more people who heard of him than didn't.

Jesse Beery learned how to train horses almost entirely on his own because there were few people who knew how to train a horse.

Beery's parents discouraged horse training as a career but later okay'd his passion. From then on there was no stopping Beery from achieving greatness.

Beery's first inclination to train horses happened when he drove a horse and buggy to a friend's house. As Beery exited the buggy the horse spooked and ran home. During that long walk home Beery was determined to make his horse stay put.

As he worked with his horse he discovered ways to get a horse to do what he wanted. Although nearly killed in training incidents and laughed at from friends and neighbors, Beery soon became THE authority on horse training.

Beery's methods solved numerous problems with horses that seemed unsolvable. If a horse was hard to shoe, ran away, pulled while tied, spooky, and more...Beery knew how to fix it.

As if his accomplishments weren't enough to keep him busy, Beery wrote a Horse Training manual describing how to do what he did. Unfortunately, few copies exist today and those that do may be hard to read due to the poor condition of these very old books.

Beery's book may be available in used book stores if one is motivated to search. Be prepared for a time consuming search – but if a Beery book is found in good condition, be ready to pay a handsome price.

There may be an alternative. Beery's book was recently revived by horse trainer Andy Curry. Curry discovered Beery's book in a used book store by accident.

Curry says, "This is one of the most amazing books I've EVER read about horse training. Beery explains his methods so clearly it's like he's there with you...holding your hand...showing what to do. Every responsible horse owner should have a copy of this book – period!"

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