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**Who's Fault Is It When The Horse Has A Bad Habit?**

**By Andy Curry**

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Picture this. You go to pet your horse and he bites at you – and he does this constantly. Why?

Here's another one.

You timidly ride your horse hoping he won't get so spooked over the littlest thing this time. But sure enough, you ride past that same bush and you can feel your horse tense up fifty feet before you get to it. Not only that, he slows down before he gets to it. He swerves his body away from it and he's ready to jump out of his skin.

Suddenly, he bolts past it and you're hanging on for dear life wondering why you even bought this crazy animal.

These scenarios are fairly common for horse owners. I get lots of questions from people asking how to get a horse to stop doing some kind of bad habit.

Interestingly, the horse doesn't know it's a bad habit. He doesn't know if something is good or bad. He just follows his instincts and does what nature tells him to do.

If that's the case, why does he do it then? After all, if you have a horse that bites, balks, bolts, bucks, kicks, shies, spooks, etc., why does he do it in spite of your vigorous attempts to stop it?

The answer may surprise you. And if you're thin skinned, it may make you mad. But the truth is the truth. And once you know it, only then can you do something about it.

The answer, then, is mismanagement.

What does that mean?

## Who's Fault Is It When The Horse Has A Bad Habit?

In a nutshell it means that you or the previous owner have made or let that horse get into the habit of whatever he's doing.

Let me give an example.

Say you're teaching a horse to drive. Let's say further you've done the necessary prep work by teaching him to stop, move forward, getting used to the harness, and so forth.

Now you've got him hitched up and for the first time he's going to pull the wagon you have him hitched to. You get in the wagon, grab the lines, and tell him to "get up."

Eager to please you, the horse jumps forward and then stops. The weight of the wagon surprised him. It kept him from moving freely because he now has to pull weight instead of just moving his own body

without constraints.

Right about here is where most horse owners mess up their horse. It's here where the horse learns to balk.

As the horse pulls forward, the wagon moves an inch or two then stops. Then the handler raises his voice volume and says "Get up!" The horse may or may not try again. If he does try again, and the wagon weight stops him again, and the handler gets upset and starts tapping him with a whip and yelling "Get up" then this horse is on its way to balking.

When he balks, he'll just stand there. Often he'll turn around and just look at you. His senses even seem to be blunted...like he's in another world. No amount of harsh talk and hard tapping on his butt with a whip is going to get him to move.

Congratulations, you just taught your horse to balk.

Many horse owners would say "But I don't get it. Why did he do that?"

The answer lies in understanding horse behavior.

You see, the first time the horse has to pull a wagon he's never done it before. When he jerks forward and the wagon weight stops him from moving as freely as he's been used to, it's a shock. It surprises him. He doesn't quite know what to think of it. And knowing a horse's nature, it's probably frightening and thus confusing.

So what you must do is keep this in mind and help your horse deal with it. How you help him deal with it is treating him kindly when the wagon doesn't move.

Thus, when you're in the wagon and he steps to move but the wagon holds him back, you should get out of the wagon and go caress him. It may sound funny, but tell him you know this is a little difficult but that he can do it. Do it in a soothing tone.

## Who's Fault Is It When The Horse Has A Bad Habit?

Why tell him he can do it? Does he really understand words? No. I'm simply saying you must be sympathetic with your horse. Talking to him like this will help you be sympathetic and talk soothingly to him.

Being kind to your horse like this helps his confidence. It keeps him from getting confused and thus frightened – or at least it minimizes it. It's a big key to getting him to pull that wagon.

You see, when he pulls on that wagon the first time and he can't move as freely as he's used to, then it's confusing and frightening to him. If the handler is behind him yelling and striking him on the rump with a stick or whip then it's going to frighten and confuse him worse. Soon, he'll be so overwhelmed with confusion and fright that his senses will get blunted and won't do anything. He'll simply freeze.

That's why you want treat your horse kindly when he doesn't instantly pull the wagon. He needs reassured because he's a bit confused and frightened.

That, in a nut shell, is how a horse learns to balk.

But what about bucking, bolts, biting, spooking, kicking, and others?

Again, it's mismanagement. The horse doesn't arrive in this world with those habits. They are learned – particularly through bad handling.

The key to knowing how to stop a bad habit is to prevent it in the first place. You learn to prevent it from educating yourself about the do's and the don'ts of horse training.

But if you have a horse confirmed in the habit from either your handling or from the previous owner, then it takes stronger measures to stop it.

There is a horse training manual written in the 1800's that includes cures to stop bad habits and vices like the ones I mentioned earlier. The book was written by Jesse Beery. He was a famous horse trainer.

If your horse has a bad habit and you don't know how to change it then this book is your magical answer. It has directions to stop AND prevent bad habits. The instructions are so detailed and thorough it's like reading a recipe.

The other alternative is to take your horse to a horse trainer. You'll spend from \$400.00 to \$900.00 per month to fix the habit (if the trainer thinks he can fix it). Or, you could (and should) learn how to do fix the problem yourself. If you're going to be a responsible horse owner, you should learn all you can and Jesse Beery's information is one of the bible's of the industry.

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](http://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](http://www.horsetrainingandtips.com/Jesse_Beerya.htm)

## **The Cure To Stop A Horse From Kicking**

**By Andy Curry**

I get a lot of horse training questions about stopping a horse from kicking. The kicking habits of these horses range from the horse kicking at virtually anyone to kicking at only the husbands.

It's a daunting problem that lots of people have no idea how to cure. That being so, I want to share some insight to horses kicking.

First I want to relate some causes of horses starting in the habit of kicking. Because a horse kicks is no reason to think he is naturally bad or unmanageable. I don't think there is a horse alive that is "naturally" vicious. In fact, they're made that way due to bad management or ignorant handlers.

Admittedly, there are some horses that inherit the characteristics of their ancestors. But one should never start to break a horse without first taking into consideration the nature, disposition, and understanding of a horse.

For instance, there are some horses that are naturally predisposed to have a "not so good" disposition. There are certain physical characteristics you can spot on a horse that indicate what his disposition is like.

Jesse Beery, a famous horse trainer from the 1800's, was brilliant at deciphering a horse's disposition. He even wrote extensively about how to do it. You can read about it at

Anyway, now we can handle the horse according to its disposition. We can get it very nearly equal with a good dispositioned horse. All the difference in the world is due to the management and training of the colt. A horse with a "not so good" disposition will require more patience and thorough work.

All animals in nature have a self defense of some sort. A horse's self defense is kicking. After all, if you work with a horse that gets badly excited by some cause (such as ropes or chains coming in contact with his legs and those parts of his body aren't broken) his first inclination is to kick it out of the way.

The trick is to break a horse in a way that the habit never occurs in the first place. Too many people think a lesson will be enough to educate the horse to be ready to go. But if you're driving your horse and he gets caught under the tail or the cross pieces of the shaft touch his quarters...and those parts are unbroken, it would likely frighten and excite him enough to cause him to kick.

And the worse part is this: Once started, there is an increased inclination to go on kicking until confirmed in the habit.

So the cure is prevention. You must make all parts of his body submissive to sensitivity of his extremities. One way to do this is using a technique called poling. Essentially, you take a light pole

## Who's Fault Is It When The Horse Has A Bad Habit?

and start at a horse's nose, rub it over the mane, back, belly, quarters, and sensitive parts of the body, until all muscles become relaxed.

But what if you have a horse confirmed in the habit of kicking?

If that's the case, I can give you three possible answers.

One is to sell the horse. If you feel it's not fixable then it's not a good idea to keep the horse around. You're going to get severely injured if you're not extra careful.

Two, get a professional trainer to help you. A trainer will charge anywhere from \$400.00 per month to \$900 per month. Is that worth it to get your horse to stop kicking? Only you can decide.

Third, you can learn to do it yourself. There are solutions out there that are pretty good. Jesse Beery, which I mentioned earlier, has a permanent solution to stop it.

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

. He is also the

leading expert on Jesse Beery's horse training methods which can be seen at

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The Cure To Stop A Horse From Kicking

How To Use Horse Training Thinking To Solve Dang Near Any Problem With A Horse

The Importance Of Habit And Repetition During Horse Training

The TOP 7 Mistakes Horse Owners Make

Why The Horse's Eye's Are So Important When Training Him!

How To FINALLY Stop Smoking...Once and For All!

Cure Bad Breath

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