

## "The Three Second Rule"

I love my Horses with all my heart. My Horses are members of my family. I prefer their company to most people I have met in my life. That being said I realize that this is not that unusual of circumstances when it comes to Horses and their owners. Just about every Horse owner I know feels the same as I do about their own horses as I do mine. It is this close bond and feeling of family that gets in the way of truly understanding your Horses perception and the way the Horse views the world around them. In simpler terms, how the Horse thinks and feels is very different than you and I. Our love and affection for the Horse is what stands in the way of our ability to understand the Horses behavior and steps in changing the types of behavior we as horse owners do not like. We tend to give the Horse more intelligence and the ability to rationalize a situation than what their minds are capable of doing.

What this means is we give the Horse more credit than they are do, when it comes to training and discipline. As a parent you can tell a child who has done something wrong that later that day there will be punishment and a lecture on their bad behavior. The child can sit and think about their actions and the punishment all day long wondering what is to become of this situation. Horses do not have that mental capability or understanding. Horses think in a fast short very narrow type of thought process. Horses cannot multitask or focus on several actions at once. The perfect example is how easy it is to distract a horse with a bucket of grain, or how a plastic bag in the wind is perceived as a monster on the attack out to get them.

A great example of how people react poorly to Horses actions is the accidental injury. You are standing next to a Horse holding onto the lead rope. The Horse steps on your foot, reaches around and bites you or kicks you. All of these are very painful and tend to make us mad at the Horse. By the time we have gathered ourselves and stopped yelling in pain, or checked to see if anything was broken. Many minutes have gone by and the horse is just standing there looking around like nothing has happened. The first reaction is to hit or slap or do something that lets the Horse know what it just did is wrong. The problem lies with the time interval rather than the reaction. Horses react and think very quickly and do not stay focused on one subject for very long. By waiting a few minutes to collect yourself after being hurt, then punishing the horse for their actions, the Horse thinks you are mad or do not want the horse to just stand there quietly. You have about three seconds to react after an incident. If you do not react that fast to some sort of behavior or action that you do not like in the Horse. You might as well forget about it, because the Horse has moved on to thinking about other things. Our Horses do not have the mental ability to retain incidents and information in the same way that you and I do.

By treating them as if they do, you do the Horse a great disservice and make training and correcting the horse much more difficult than it needs to be. This "THREE SECOUND RULE" for reacting to the horse's actions and behavior can give you a better understanding of how a Horse preserves the world around them. An easy way to figure this out and put it to use is by counting in this way.

"One Mississippi & two Mississippi - three Mississippi" This type of counting can tell you just how fast of a reaction you need to convey your thoughts to the Horse. Any slower chances are the Horse does not really understand your feelings or commands. Horses by nature have a short attention span for learning. Training routines are usually kept to 20 to 30 minutes in length do to the Horses lack of long term memory retention of new information so quickly over a long period of time. Short focused new information given to a Horse regularly everyday does more for memory retention than several hours once a week. Remember that the "THREE SECOUND RULE" can be applied to all areas of communicating with your Horse. Most of the time

when communicating with a Horse we as humans tend to love them so much we forget they are a sub-species animal to us. Not just like us.. Actually that is to the Horses credit that they are not just like us. They're better!

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