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For Albertans About Albertans

Here are a few things I have learned over the years when dealing with young horses.

- 1) Take time when you work your young horse. It is so important that you never start a work session when you are in a rush. The horse will know it and it will never end well. If you don't feel like you have all morning to devote to the work, it may be best not to start. Ultimately, not getting to experience something is better than experiencing something badly.
- 2) Do a lot of things when the horse is still small. For example, teach them to lead early on, so you can take the horse from place to place and not the other way around.
- 3) Don't be afraid to separate the young horse from the herd every so often. The sooner they learn to be comfortable on their own, the easier it will be for you later.
- 4) Manners - Demand manners from the beginning. There is nothing harder than trying to teach a large three year-old to keep their space from you and move off when you tell them to. It is important to teach this before their size and power puts you at a disadvantage.
- 5) Clipping – If a young horse happens to be sedated for something, take the opportunity to run the clippers near or on them. This helps make their first clipper experience a good one. After a positive experience to get started, you could try holding the clippers while doing other things like grooming to get them used to the sound and vibration.
- 6) Farrier – It is so important to find a farrier that is patient and firm. The young horses must respect them, but they must take the time they need so the horses stay relaxed and the whole process becomes a great experience.
- 7) Do everything from both sides. This means clipping, using spray bottles, leading, jogging, mounting, and going by spooky things. Sometimes things can appear different from one side to the other for horses, so train everything from each side.
- 8) Trailering - Get the young horse on the trailer – early and often. Hopefully the youngster's mother is good loading on to the trailer and can go for short trips when they are young. Having their mother along can ease their stress. This will make for a good shipper later in life.
- 9) Use common sense. If something looks spooky, then it probably is – be careful so that you don't get yourself in a bad situation. Always present things to your young horse from a place of confidence, whether it's a waving bag stuck to the fence or a black mat on the floor of the barn. Put yourself in a position of safety and strength so that you can exude confidence to them and they likely won't even blink at the scary thing.

Working with young horses takes time and patience. They are fast learners and for the most part want to do what you ask, so give them a minute to think and make as many good experiences available to them as possible! Hope this helps as the young horse starting begins!