

ARE YOU WITH ME?

That's the only way to learn

By Joe Wolter

I was visiting with a friend of mine the other day about working with weanling colts for the first time. He said that instead of taking hold of them and getting into a contest of wills, he decided to pretend he was 85 years old and see what would happen. Older people, of course, are less likely to use force because they don't have the strength. He said his experiment worked. The colts came his way a lot faster without a contest. He also said their attitudes were much better, and he thinks it was because of his own frame of mind. He, too, was ready to learn.

Years ago I realized how important it is for the horse to have a good attitude when I am trying to get him to do something. I think if the horse wants to be somewhere else while I am working with him, my efforts are a waste of time. Learning to notice when a horse is truly with me was quite a step for me in my training.

I am still learning how to tell when my horse is wanting to get with me. One way to maybe see if your horse is with you is to try what my friend did, do less and see what happens. If your horse cuts out when you do less – in other words, if he's not paying attention and doing the opposite of what you are asking – he is probably looking for an escape and doesn't really care what you are asking anyway. At this point, it is critical how you respond. This is listening to your horse.

In doing clinics the past few years,

I have found that unless I really get with the person asking the questions, I can't answer correctly. The same goes for the horse; unless he is really with me mentally, and with a willing attitude, everything is just pretty much a

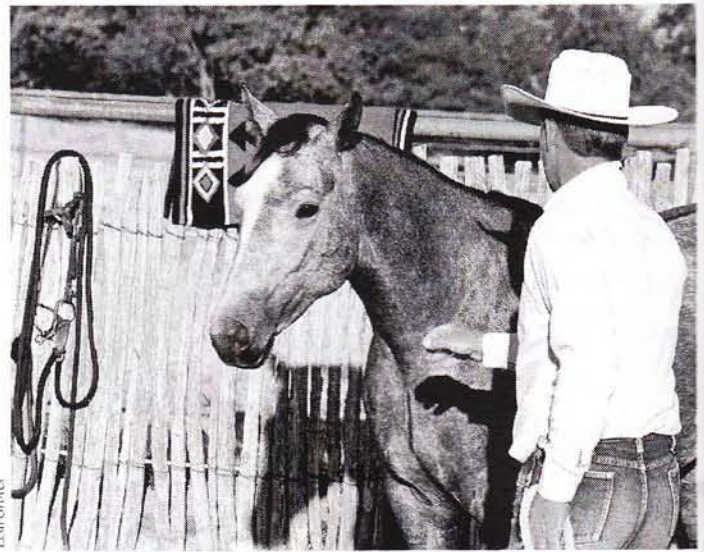
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drill. It is up to me to notice if he is with me or not before asking him to do anything such as loading, catching, saddling, roping, cutting, etc.

At my clinics, people ask for specific solutions to problems. It seems to me that it works better for both the horse and rider if I speak less on what specific thing to do, and more on what is really taking place. Then I let them work it out.

Many times it is easier than they thought it would be. For example, if someone is having problems catching his horse, I often suggest that he approach his horse like it is his only transportation, and he and the horse both are out in the middle of nowhere. It is amazing how, with that thought in mind, your whole approach toward the horse changes. And usually, if your pattern changes, your horse also changes.

I think often about the people who have helped me, and those who I thought were my best teachers. First, I liked them. Then I respected them.



Lesli Givens

When catching your horse, approach him like you are in the middle of nowhere and he is your only mode of transportation.

I'm not sure if the order is important, but I do know that once that respect was in place, I would do anything for them. I think the horse wants to do the same. ☺

There's roping to do

Joe Wolter's two-hour video, "There's Roping To Do," explains the intricacies of ranch roping that he has demonstrated at many of his Bayer's Best Remuda Tour clinics.

With some help from Bill Dorrance, Joe takes the viewer through

the basics, from building a loop to roping on a colt for the first time.

The video is available for \$50 plus shipping by calling Quarter Horse Outfitters at (888) 209-8322.



Four Sixes Ranch trainer Joe Wolter says he learns something about training horses every day.