



Natural Trailer Loading

By Tim Hayes

Along with sitting next to a crying baby on a flight to California, having your horse refuse to go into the trailer ranks right up there on life's top ten list of "Things That Make Us Want To Scream!" There's not too much you can do with someone else's crying baby for 6 hours, but there's a lot you can do to eliminate your trailer loading problem, forever! Natural Horsemanship teaches us to look at trailer loading from the horse's point of view.

The reason some humans have difficulty getting their horse into their trailer is they don't realize that horses are born genetically hardwired to actually resist going in at all costs. A horse trailer looks like a big metal cave on wheels to a horse. Horses know that predators live in caves. Predators (Mountain Lions, Bob Cats, Wolves) eat prey (Horses'). It's not natural for a horse to go into a trailer (cave).

Trailer loading problems can occur at different times for different reasons in the life of a horse. Horses who have never gone into a horse trailer or learned to feel safe and comfortable (physically and emotionally) are going to resist. The reason is fear. They are genetically claustrophobic. They naturally know to avoid places that inhibit their ability to run from danger. If they feel forced to go into a trailer they will refuse if their life depended on it. In their mind it does. They don't understand why their partner/leader/best friend (YOU!) doesn't know this.

Horses who have learned to go into trailers and are not afraid will sometimes refuse out of disrespect or to challenge the pecking order between themselves and their human.

Whether it's fear, disrespect or a combination of both, the natural principals and methods that are needed and work successfully, are the same. *(Note: If a horse seems to fluctuate between fear and assertive disrespect, teaching him can become quite tricky and will sometimes require professional assistance.)*

1. **FIRST ESTABLISH YOURSELF AS A RESPECTED LEADER WITH THE HORSE.** This is accomplished with groundwork. Using body language, touch and feel, communicate in their language (speak horse) to become the leader (better horse) by getting your horse to move his feet first (dominance games). When it's time to begin, don't walk your horse ("lead him") into



Step One



Step Two



Step Three

the trailer. Stay outside the trailer and direct him forward ("drive him") into the trailer. It helps your horse become more confident and it's much safer for both of you.

2. **COMMUNICATE WITH LEVELS OF COMFORT AND DISCOMFORT.** Make the desirable behavior (going into the trailer) comfortable and the undesirable behavior (staying outside) uncomfortable. Learn and use the effective natural methods of varying degrees of direct and rhythmic pressure. These will enable you

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to make your horse uncomfortable without becoming fearful, angry, or resentful. Don't wait until you have to take your horse somewhere. Start practicing months before when there's no pressure. You don't have to complete the whole process in one session. Some horses take longer than others. You can do it over a couple of days. Always stop on a good note and come back when you're ready to begin again.

3. DO NOT USE FORCE, PUNISHMENT OR PAIN. When a horse is afraid to go into a trailer, using any type of force (3 people pushing, 1 pulling, pulling him with a rope behind his butt, etc.) will cause the horse to become more fearful and increase his resistance. (i.e. your friend tells you to jump off the high diving board. You tell him your afraid and you don't want to. He says there's nothing to be afraid of and starts to pull you out to the end. You use all your strength to resist and become angry with your friend for not listening and forcing you). The worst thing you can do is hit your horse. It convinces him his instinctual fear was correct because now he's not only fearful, he's experiencing pain making him even more afraid.

4. DO NOT TRICK OR BRIBE THE HORSE.

Using bribes (food, treats) to obtain desirable behavior from a horse is totally counter productive and usually ineffective. Horses do not consider food a reward. In fact when they are afraid, they will not eat in order to have a lighter stomach, enabling them to run further and faster. Natural rewards for horses are rest and reassurance (petting, stroking). Whether it's horses or children; using bribes to get what you want is dishonest, manipulative and destroys the foundation of all healthy relationships; love, trust and respect.

5. USE POSITIVE PATIENT PERSISTANCE AND STAY ON HORSE TIME.

Horses have no concept of elapsed time. They live in the moment. In order to stay relaxed and calm while being assertive, we must have no schedule and live in that moment too. Both humans and horses learn by: 1.) Advancing outside of their comfort zone, 2.) Remaining there as long as possible 3.) Retreating back inside their comfort zone. Repeatedly ask the horse to advance a little beyond his comfort zone (into the trailer). Allow him to stay as long as he can. Allow him to retreat back into his comfort zone (outside the trailer) reassuring him as he continues. If you patiently persist with no predetermined agenda (I have to get my horse in the trailer now!) his comfort zone will increase in size until it becomes the whole trailer! (Note. Once he finally goes in, don't put up the butt bar or close the door. Allow him to go in and out many times until he will stay inside totally relaxed without stepping out for at least 60 seconds. Then if he continues to calmly stay when you make noise and rattle the chains, close it up).

6. TEACH YOUR HORSE TO LOAD HIMSELF FOR LIFE.

Usually the first time you put a saddle on a horses' back he's anxious, suspicious, will often move and buck it off. Not long after, it becomes a non-issue. Saddling your horse becomes as second nature for him as being turned out to pasture. The same is true for natural trailer loading. Don't teach your horse to trailer load so you can get him to the Show. Teach him so it becomes one of the many things he learns to do in the human world and something he's happy to do for his partner. Natural trailer loading is not about getting your horse into the trailer. It's about your relationship with your horse. The principals of love, trust and respect are more important than the purpose of taking your horse somewhere in a trailer. Your horse knows the difference. You'll see the difference.

All my events are listed in the event section of this magazine and on the net at www.Llequine.com

To set up a trailer-loading workshop, host a clinic, demonstration or for more. Information visit: www.hayesisforhorses.com or call Tim at 631-329-5840.

• BARN NEWS •

OUTLAW ACRES; BAYPORT

Congrats to Michelle Muschenick; she won the Non Pro Novice Hunter Under Saddle Class with Diamond Collection at the 58th National Appaloosa Show in Oklahoma. Four 1st and a 4th under 5 judges, very consistant judging for this team. Diamond and Trainer Debbie Wilkerson also won the Sr HUS and reserve champion in HIH. Dually (Mr Dual Gunsmoke) took a 3rd in the reining futurity and a 3rd in Jr Reining with trainer Heath Wilkerson. Michelle and Clint Don't Forget Zippo took a 6th in Non Pro Western Pleasure and Michelle came out ranking 4th in Non Pro Novice Rider. Not bad, her first Appaloosa Nationals with Diamond and Clint. At present Michelle in Novice, Debbie in Sr HUS and Diamond are leading the Nation, Dually our Reiner with Heath Wilkerson is leading the Nation in Jr.

Congrats to Dominique Evangelista on the purchase of her new Appaloosa mare Ms Fortune Hunter, two time World Champion two year old HUS, and three year old Hunter In Hand. They make a great team and thank you our trainers Heath and Debbie Wilkerson in PA, for matching them up. This mares sire , The Hunter, is the sire of our 2005 Tardees Miss Cody's filly. We are happy to be working with this mare and will follow the same path, Hunter Under Saddle two year old and Hunter in Hand with our filly, her name, Hunting for Cowboys, and her picture is up on our web site. Many youth and adults rode Missy to High Point End of Years on LI both English and Western. She is 17 hands, almost all roaned out to white, and bred back again to The Hunter for a 2006 Hunt Seat prospect. Hunting for Cowboys our 2005 Filly, is a Chestnut with long legs and a snowcap. Also congrats to our Ms Dowdy Doc Bars, she is an official Fire Island Ranger Horse and they love her to death. They said she was everything we said she would be and more. Dowdy was our best Trail Horse and her fan club can go visit her when they go to Fire Island. June to end of September Fire Island is her home. We will offer Dowdy for lease for the winter months to a good home. My Junk Yard Dog, a 2005 QH colt, is weaned and on his way to do futurities in MD, PA and NY and is big and gorgeous, like his mother, a Ralph Martino mare, daughter of World Champion, Congress Champion twice Misters Premonition, Superior Halt mare Let's Get Cozy. His sire World Champion Statutory and we hope to take him to Congress and the World show. Most of all Congrats to all 14 Outlaws who went to Hidden Pond Western Pleasure Show, its like old times. Rachel Tanonka and Hottie won the Walk Jog Divsion Grand, Elizabeth won the Beginner Youth with Mucho Ramblin Rose and end of day Reserve High Point all around youth, Kim Acker with home with QH points in barrels and poles is officially in foal.



Michelle Muschenick of Outlaw Acres and Hot Chocolate Chunk at Mass QH show in July Circuit Champion Blue Ribbon Saddle in Amateur Western Pleasure with Trainer Jim Smith and our whole crew.