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Gentle Dove Farm Obstacle Problem Solving!

The variety, challenge, and skill of achieving an obstacle can help build that horse and rider bond which so many of us are looking to attain. However, it's important we teach our horse to trust us and not just push him through. How do we do that? If you were kicked into doing something, it's unlikely you'd have a willing attitude. The same goes for our horse. We need to take the time to build his confidence and encourage him with a proven process that develops trust. The slower we go, the faster we'll get there.



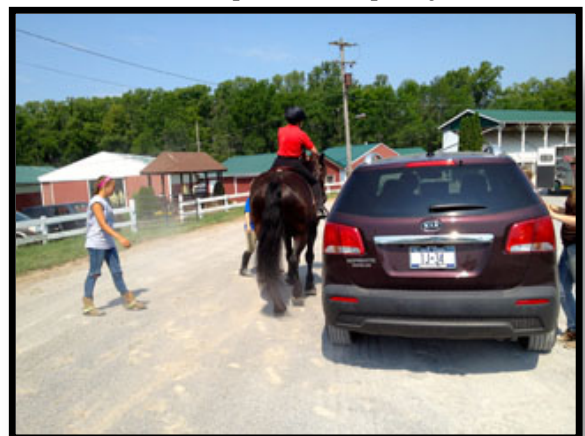
Shamrock demonstrating under the Parachute Tarp

Let's explain by sharing what was presented at a recent Gentle Dove Farm demonstration for the Livingston County 4H Horse Education Camp. After the demonstration with our police horse, Shamrock, we had an open question session from our audience to discuss the specific training issues they might encounter.

One spectator asked, "My horse is afraid of cars. What do I do?" With so many horses fearful of the road with cars whizzing by, we spent a great deal of time on this topic. Staying safe is of primary importance.

Using distance to create a comfort zone for

your horse is imperative and the starting point from the vehicle is dependent upon your individual horse. Making sure you have the room to keep your horse's attention and avoid any hazardous situation, you need to get your horse's focus by working your horse with turns, stops, forward momentum, and precision. He needs to be paying attention to you and you need to be guiding him for every step. He should stay in his comfort zone and the initial steps begin with the car stopped. Slowly the rider may decrease the distance to the vehicle until there's no apprehension from the horse. Spiraling in or using approach and retreat are good concepts to utilize. Upon success of the stationary vehicle, the rider can progress to a slowly moving car and making sure to begin again at a comfortable distance to the car and continuing to keep the horse's focus with requests for specific directional movements.



Shamrock training with cars



Shamrock and baby stroller training

Having a patient volunteer driver to help you work through the exercise is crucial. The car only moves upon rider command and the driver starts out slowly for only a few feet. The process is lengthy and patience is crucial to develop the building blocks of trust. As each step is successfully executed, additional complexity can be added until you reach the point of walking beside the moving car.

Other questions we received included: "How do I train my horse to drag?" "How do you get a horse to go over the tarp?" Joann explained some fundamental building blocks and strategies. We talked about everyday type obstacles riders might encounter. The simple act of someone pushing a baby stroller nearby may cause your horse to become unglued. Each question was broken down into the smallest steps and Joann shared her

philosophy on building trust while using patience, technique consistency, timing, and reward. The group gave smiles and nods of understanding as they learned the mounted police style step approach.

Everyone can train for obstacles and achieve individual success using specific mounted police style strategies. The presentation concluded with everyone receiving special prizes from the generous sponsors of Gentle Dove Farm. Along with the gifts, the kids took home practical strategies and methods to use at home.

Just yesterday we were talking to one of the 4Hers that had watched the demonstration and he delightfully shared that he went home and used some of the techniques and enthusiastically said, "They really WORKED!" The feedback is always so gratifying and



Shamrock loved the 4H group!

heartwarming! Helping horses and their people form a special understanding and trust towards a mutually rewarding experience is our goal!

Each obstacle has its unique training opportunities. We hope to see you at an upcoming Gentle Dove Farm event and discover more ways for you to partner with your horse!