

## Dangerous Defiance

*By Suzy Hopkins*

At nine months old the draft horse colt Brutus had gotten in the habit of not allowing his owners to catch him. This proved to be more than annoying. You have to feed young horses several times a day – hay, alfalfa and grain mixed with molasses – in order for them to reach their full physical potential. He ran around the enclosure basically non-stop.

They hired me to catch him. I began by approaching him from behind which unnerves most horses. He turned but stood his ground. Speaking to him sweetly and continuously to keep his focus on me I repeatedly tapped him with a dishtowel all over his back working my way to his neck. I laid the lead line over his neck. He never even noticed. I clipped the line back on itself. No reaction. I buried his halter deep into a bucket of grain. He dove his head in the bucket anxious to eat since his owners had cleverly not fed him that day. I wrapped the halter strap over his head before he knew what had happened.

He realized too late he was caught. He bolted away and careened around the pasture where we were working – one very irritated nine-month-old colt. Brutus ran flat out for several tense minutes almost trampling me more than once.

I waited. He finally realized the game was over and let me pick up the lead line. I told him how brave he was and he followed me quietly. The owners were thrilled. I said, “Don’t take the halter off for weeks. Work on obedience from him every day. This was only one way he can defy you. Let it be his last.”