

Clear, Consistent, Fair

*By Suzy Hopkins*

Over the years I earned a reputation for helping people with their 'problem horses'. The 'problem' is usually the owner. The worst situations are people who have raised the horse from birth. They spoil the foal because they are cute and funny. When this cute and funny animal reaches 900 pounds and disobeys you by trampling you or not letting you saddle or mount the horse or running away with you to get back to the barn, the relationship has become dangerous. The horse is not at fault. People need to treat a horse with clear requests and expectations, consistent responses of praise and discipline and most of all you must be fair with your requests and discipline. Horses know when you are being mean. They become afraid and will try to avoid doing anything for you.

Some men treat their horses like motorcycles. You get on. You ride. You get off. You put the horse away sweaty. Their horses remember this disrespect and become resentful.

Horses that have been disobeying because of lack of respect can become useless as they won't do anything you want like standing tied or standing still when you want to mount or stop walking when asked.

These horses and owners have one basic problem – the horses are unaccustomed to obeying. I would teach the owners that if they would change their negative behavior, starting over with the relationship in a clear, consistent and fair way luckily their horse would forgive them. Something the owners didn't deserve.