

M-m-m-m-m!

*By Suzy Hopkins*

Someday I would love to ride an extremely well-trained horse again.

A horse trained as a jumper has to be steered and encouraged to find 'the spot' which will get him over the jumps without knocking them down or falling into the rails that make up the jump. The jumps are from 3' to 6' high. The horse must trust that you won't ask him to do anything that would injure him.

A dressage horse is so completely in tune to your commands that you perform as one unit. The commands should be so subtle that they are invisible to the judges. The performance is complex and full of movements a horse never would need to know in the wild. They do what we ask because horses value their riders as much as the riders value their mounts.

A park ranger's horse must be calm, obedient and patient, all attributes not found in the wild horse. Besides being trained to carry an injured person, as well as the rider, it must stand calmly in one spot, not wander off, when the rider dismounts to perform her job. The horse learns what you need and becomes a valued partner.

An extremely well-trained horse is more than a partner. The relationship is as if you are one living creature.

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