

Buck Brannaman Voghera (Italy) Clinic Oct 2011



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Introduction

These are the notes from the Buck clinic in Voghera. There are likely to be mistakes etc, so please bear this in mind while reading. Any mistakes and inaccuracies are my own 😊 I was writing very quickly at the clinic!

Clinic venue: Cowboy guest ranch, Voghera, 50 mins by train from Milano Centrale.

Participants: 27 to 28 horses & riders, about 20 spectators.

Duration: 2.5 days, Fri 10.30am to Sunday 12.30pm.

What I loved:

- Seeing Buck Brannaman ride a horse. WOW.
- Seeing Buck Brannaman answer questions from the audience, while still noticing and addressing his horse when his horse took his focus off Buck for 1 split second. Buck can concentrate perfectly on (at least!) two things at the same time.
- Buck Brannaman teaches the same exercises with the same concepts (soft feel always, get in time with the feet, feel of & for the horse, be precise, be fair to the horse, do as little as possible, etc) as Steve Halfpenny from Australia. <http://silversand.com.au/> I had never seen Buck teach before, but I had done 90% of the exercises he did in Voghera already with Steve, working on the same emphasis on feel, timing & quality that Buck teaches.
- Trying to improve my Italian, Spanish & French!! It was lovely to meet everyone from all over Europe who are passionate about good horsemanship and wanting to learn as much as they can.
- All of the riders who brought their horses. It is hard to ride when you are in the presence of a legend, and with people watching you 😊 You did a great job and I could have easily taken half of the horses home with me back to Ireland!
- Thank you to the lovely ladies in 'California' for the fun, madness & laughs!!

Clinic schedule:

- **Friday:** Working on yielding, soft feel, and control of the feet exercises with all of the horses. Trying to do them using soft feel, getting in time with the feet, feeling of and for the horse, keeping the rhythm, not rushing and being absolutely particular.
- **Saturday:** A quick catch up on Fridays exercises, some cutting of the cattle in teams of 3 (great fun!), and then the afternoon was spent practising roping.
- **Sunday morning.** 10 minutes of riding, practising the exercises from Friday. Then over 2 hours of questions for Buck from all the participants.

Day 1: Groundwork and riding

Buck is riding a big black horse and is working on backups. There are 28 horses, lots of chestnut & bays but not one grey horse.

Groundwork

- Keep your exercises light & soft.
- Everything does Buck in groundwork relates to his ridden work.

Exercise 1: Flag

Use a flag. The balance point in a horse is at about the cinch/girth line. So apply pressure ahead of this the horse will away backwards from it. Apply pressure behind the line and the horse will move forwards.

Problem horses:

2 problem horses were identified.

- Black stallion. He has serviced mares already. Buck said he would never allow his stud to service a mare until all of his training was done & the horse had proved himself.
- Piebald horse who is leading the person around.

Buck works a little with his black horse. He wants to desensitise the horse to the flag. He walks towards the hindquarters flapping the flag without intent until the horse stops moving. Then he stops waving the flag as a reward.

Buck lifts up the rope, still with some slack in it, to ask the horse to walk on. He wants the horse to move off a feel and always offers the horse a good deal first. There is no reaction from the horse. Buck then reinforces the cue with the flag. The horse has learned to go backwards as an evasion, so Buck asks him to move forwards. Buck gets him to do some hindquarter yields. Buck says it's all about the hindquarters. The hind leg near Buck is crossing in front of the other hind leg. This shows what he will be like when he's ridden.

You need to understand – the end game is that when you offer your horse a soft feel, the horse should follow it. So when you pick up the rope which is still slack, your horse will move and follow a feel. The final result is that your horse follows a feel.

1. Offer slack in the rope to ask the horse to move for the first time.
2. Only use the flag if needs be afterwards.

Exercise 2: Yields

1. You want to separate the hind and front ends.
2. Move the hindquarters (HQs).
3. Then move the forequarters (FQs).
4. This will result in a change of rein.

Originally the horse wasn't separating the hind and front feet. The horse was a little stuck & bracey. This is much better now. The hind leg closest to the human should step in front of the other hind leg.

Some horses may try to crowd you. A flag can help you with that. How to do the exercise:

1. Stand facing your horse.
2. Do NOT put your hand out to pull your horse into walking forward.
3. Tip your horse's head to one side a little.
4. Ask your horse, from halt, to yield his shoulders 90 degrees away from you using a loose rope.
5. As your horse turns away from you, he will put you behind the balance point, so you are in the correct position to send the horse forwards.
6. Your horse will now be walking in a small circle around you.
7. There should be some space between you and the horse. The horse should not be crowding you.
8. After a few steps, the human should step towards the horse's hip to ask your horse to hind quarter yield. Do not bend down while you do this. Stand up tall.
9. Again, do not pull the horse forwards. A lot of people are used to doing this & it's a hard pattern to break.
10. Have your horse 5 or 6 feet away from you the whole time in this exercise.
11. This is like Steve Halfpenny all over – the 10 to 2 / 11 to 1 exercise. Physically it's an easy exercise for the human, mentally it's really hard for people to reprogram their brain. Also never take a step back.

All riders & horses now work on this on the ground. This is difficult to do mentally for the human if they are used to pulling on their horse to ask them to start to walk. Some people are doing this nicely, some people are still pulling on the lead rope to get the horse to start to move, instead of yielding the horse's front shoulders away from them.

You need good timing for this. You need to be in time with the horse's feet. Roll the hindquarters over when the hind leg near you is just about to leave the ground. During this exercise some people were asking their horses to backup by shaking the rope and putting braces into their horses and losing the softness, horses heads in the air, etc. Buck watched this going on for a few minutes, then he asked everyone to stop what they were doing and to watch him.

Exercise 3: Backup

You want your horse to follow a feel of a lifted slack lead rope, to back a horse. Some people are doing it in a way that is causing braces in the horses, heads up in the air, losing softness by shaking the rope. Buck said – Please understand, what I am showing you is what Ray & Tom has in mind.

See how little you can do to get a result. If you don't get a result, then do as much as necessary.

Do not shake your rope to get a backup. (When people do this, watch the horse brace up & lift his head & hollow his back, all things you do not want your horse to do).

Exercise 2: Yields

Back to the yielding exercise. Buck said the front end of the horse has to go 90 degrees before the horse moves forwards. Some nice work with horses here, but some also still not yielding the horse and instead pulling on the horse with the lead rope to ask him to move forwards. If your lead rope is tight, then you are not doing this correctly. It is difficult for people to get their head around this, if they already have done this another way & have patterns already established.

- Halt horse, and human to stand in front of the horse, loose lead rope. Horse not to be standing right on top of the human, keep a distance.
- Yield FQs (forequarters) 90 degrees with slack lead rope, asking horse to follow a feel.
- Then ask horse to walk on in a small circle for a few steps, 5 to 6 feet away from you.
- Then HQ yield in time with the feet.
- Then FQ yield and horse should now be on the other rein.
- Be particular, be exact.

Question:

Why is hindquarter disengaging so important? Impulsion comes from the hindquarters. Get good at taking the hindquarters offline and this will help to stop the horse bucking / running away and will get the horse out of trouble.

The horse is to yield to the human. The human is not to take any backward steps. Buck gave a demo of the right and the wrong way to do this. For the wrong way, instead of the horse circling Buck, Buck ended up circling the horse. It was quite funny and got some laughs from the audience ☺ The lady with the piebald has this issue and has to learn how to take charge and be the boss.

Demo: Buck spends about 15 minutes with the piebald horse. Everyone else watches.

The piebald is very defensive. He is kicking at the flag in Bucks hand. He is bargy and trying to run Buck over a bit. Buck does circles, HQ yields, and desensitising the horse to the flag. The horse is trying to kill the flag, and walk all over Buck. Buck is not accepting any of this behaviour. Horse also tries to back away as an evasion tactic. There is no bend in the horses body on the circle. On the circle in fact, his head is pointing outwards, to try & get more leverage to be able to pull away from Buck. Bucks hand is tight on the lead rope. Bucks goal is to be able to control the horse without having his hand closed over the rope. This horse is good at dropping his inside shoulder trying to run Buck over. Buck is using the flag to block the horse from getting too close & running him over. The horse is worse on the right rein. The horse kicks at the flags, rears and throws a strop. He hasn't met someone like Buck before who doesn't allow him to behave like this.

However, no matter what the horse is, Buck always offers each horse the same respect as he would do to an educated soft light horse. He wants the horse to follow a feel, from a slack rope, and disengage the HQs.

Buck explained why it was important to get the horse used to a flag around his body, without the horse feeling he had to kick and strike at the flag. "Imagine if you ever got hung up in a stirrup..."

On the circle, the horse is trying to brace up and tense and put his head to the outside, instead of softening and giving, which is the opposite. Stop the horse coming on top of you before he ends up on top of you. The horse doesn't know how to yield his hindquarters. The horse thinks that a HQ yield actually means move your FQs and walk on the human.

A few minutes have passed, and the horse is now getting much better. He is much more comfortable with the flag now, much less kicking, striking etc at it. Buck can touch him with it now and he's not too bothered. Also, instead of being like a motorbike with no bend going around the circle, with his head stuck to the outside, the horse now has a nice bend, same way as the circle and is starting to move and yield from a soft feel (slack lead rope). Do not pull your horse.

As an aside, on the last day of the clinic, Buck said that after the piebald demo, one man asked him why he didn't use more force with this horse. Buck explained that you should always use the least amount of pressure, to get the job done. Always do the least amount possible, and try to always reduce this. Buck said the guy sounded like he would have preferred for Buck to get more rough/violent with the horse. The guy would have been more satisfied if Buck has been more rough. Buck said he had to think about how to answer the question, because what Buck really wanted to do was punch the guy.

Buck explained that training horses was never personal. At the end of the demo the piebald was completely accepting of Buck. If Buck had been too rough, or unfair with the horse, the job may have got done but the horse would not have accepted it mentally and the issue would not have been resolved. You want to create an accurate movement in a decent frame of mind. This is what is called supporting your horse.

The horse is to tip his nose inwards a little, but Buck still has the flag there to stop horse coming in too close to him. The horse is now getting soft at the end of the lead rope, you can see the change in his whole body.

"Any time you get bucked off, or run away with, I guarantee you I would have found it at the end of the lead rope before you ever got on" Buck.

A horse rears up because they don't know where else to put their feet.

If you make a mistake, and your horse tries to get you off, unless you're a bronc rider it's usually not a good idea. If there are issues, solve them before you get that far, using groundwork.

Buck says the piebald horse has a people problem, not a horse problem. If a horse has his head tipped to the outside on a circle, he is in the perfect position to kick you in the guts. Do not take 1 single step backwards from the horse. Nice HQ yield just there.

Buck has 1 hand blocking the horses head from walking in on Buck. The other hand has the flag and is asking for HQ yields. Buck is constantly trying to do less. Now he is trying not to touch the horse with the flag at all. Always try to do less. Another nice yield just there from the piebald.

If the horse crowds you one inch, address it. Do not ignore it. This is exactly the same as my horse. You cannot let the horse do even one inch of something you do not want to happen.

You have to get his mind back when it goes 1 inch away from what you want. With my horse, when his mind is 2 inches gone, then I am in trouble.

When working on a problem, stop when you get something accomplished, not when you get tired or pissed off.

Do not take any backwards steps.

Buck described the piebald horse. "This horse is not broke to lead, he is broke to drag".

Be very careful where you quit. The work Buck has just done with the piebald is the same work Buck would do in the first ten minutes of the first session when halter breaking a colt.

There is now a huge difference in the horse. Always offer a soft feel, only drive with the flag afterwards – if you need to, in the hopes of not having to use the flag one day.

Buck said "If the horse was riding now, like he is doing on the ground, you would be proud of him".

The horse is given back to the owner. Buck said 50% of what he just accomplished there will be gone now straight away, because now of the new handler. Buck gave the horse back and told the owner her job for now was to keep the horse looking straight at her, while standing still. The owner now has to change how she handles this horse. The horse straight away is trying to see has the owner changed, and are the rules Buck just put in place valid for his owner? After 20 or 30 seconds, Buck has to step in again as the owner is allowing the horse to crowd into her and into her space.

"You don't need to be aggressive but you do need to be assertive". Buck.

"Being kind to a horse means having an idea and a plan". Buck.

"You have to earn respect. You don't respect the horse is you don't approach him in a way that's fitting to the horse". Buck.

The demo with the piebald is over now.

Exercise 2: Yields

All riders & horse go back to doing exercise 2. Some people are getting ahead of their horse when doing the FQ yield and are then pulling on the horses to get the to walk forwards. Some are doing it well as well.

- Yield horse 90 degrees.
- Once you are behind drive line move horse off ahead of you on the circle.
- Push the horse / ask the horse to follow a feel. Do not pull on the lead rope.

Instead some are:

- Yielding horse but either not enough or are repositioning themselves.

- Human ending up ahead of the drive line / girth-cinch area, and then are pulling on the horse to ask him to move forwards on a circle.
- Some are also not separating the hind & forequarter yields. Instead all 4 legs move at the same time, rather than being particular and getting an exact fore or hindquarter yield.
- Do not pull on your horse..... (This is really hard to stop doing if it's your pattern).

Buck talked about how important skills & experience is with a difficult horse. "Sometimes I can get something done with a horse, but the owner can't. Like in the film [with the stallion]. I have to tell the owner that they don't have enough experience".

"The horse can always change. Age doesn't matter. The human... hmmm" Buck.

The groundwork exercises everyone is doing this morning will be the same exercises as everyone will do in the saddle this afternoon.

Question:

Someone asked Buck where is the best place to work with an aggressive horse, a large area or a round pen?

If the horse is very aggressive, Buck will rope a hind leg and get the horse to yield like this. He would do this in a round pen. Buck would be on horseback. When this was done, then he'd get a helper on foot to work with a flag.

Goal for exercise 2:

Keep slack in your reins to ask horse to move. You don't have to drive your horse to get him to move, instead he follows a feel. On the circle, walk your feet towards the back of the horse's front feet.

One person is pulling on their horse to get it to come forward to them, and at the same time walking towards the horse from the front, which is actually asking it to move backwards. So the horse is walking backwards and the human doesn't know why.

Buck wouldn't be a fan of doing lots of riding in a halter with a horse. "The more you ride a horse in a halter the more he will lean on your hands, the farther away you will be from a hackamore horse".

How riding in a halter started:

Ray Hunt had started to do clinics. He had people riding colts. Ray said to the people, don't pull on the horses. But the people did pull on the horses. So Tom Dorrance said "put them in halters, then they'll do less damage".

Colt starting:

- Do the first two rides in a halter and lead rope, just doing simple stuff, halt and go.
- Put a snaffle bit on as soon as you can (day 2 or 3) because now you usually have some kind of job you want to do with the horse.

After Ray Hunt caught on & became popular, after some clinics the notion of riding with a halter and lead rope took off to an extreme. This wasn't what Ray had in mind.

Both Ray Hunt & Buck start horses with nothing on their heads, to illustrate what people do too much with colts and it kills their impulsion. But now it's turned into a circus trick.

"A true bridle horse can be ridden without a bridle. But that's just showmanship. I wouldn't do that to the horse. It's all about the horse. It's not about being a court jester." Buck.

Buck then invites anyone who wants to come in this afternoon without a bridle to do say, but advised them to say their prayers during lunch.

A horse should be able to do dressage to level 4 / 5 US, jump, cut a cow, rope, and haul around a baby and take care of it.

The progression to the bridle is a graduation process. You leave the snaffle stage when it is all perfect, not because you've failed with the snaffle.

"[Some] jumpers ride with mechanical hackamores, tie downs and drugs. I'm not going to listen to anything those clowns have to say". Buck.

"This style of riding relates to the old style of dressage. Going into battle to ride with one hand, so you can hold the sword in the other hand. Otherwise you just go to battle one time. The advantage was in those days, all the bad dressage riders were killed". Buck.

The vaqueros took the style of horses trained for battle, took away the sword and used them instead to manage livestock. That's where this traditional was born.

"If you are a weekend ride, your goal in life might be to make one good snaffle horse. You won't make a bridle horse. You have to take horsemanship to an art form to ride at a bridle horse level. You're not just a passenger anymore."

"A true bridle horse is very special indeed."

"As you get your horse more advanced, they get more confident. That's because when they get distracted you bring them back to you. Then they want to be with you".

"Things are easy to understand, but they have to be done with feel and timing."

It's not just about practising, it's about practising the right thing.

Buck: Ride your horse like you are riding one of my horses.

Ray Hunt said, do less than what you think its gonna take to get the job done. Then after a second or two, do what it takes.

"Most people don't realise how little it takes to get a horse to move".

"You're wearing a spur properly if you don't need to use it".

"You see these people always riding around with whips. It means their legs are useless. A whip should be temporary. Always try to do less." Buck.

“Most of it is common sense. Why do they call it that, as it infers it happens all the time. It should be uncommon sense.”

AFTERNOON DAY 1.

Overview of bringing on a young horse – lesson 1:

- Halter break the horse as a weanling. This is at 6 to 8 months of age.
- First put a rope around the horses neck, put the end of the rope around the hindquarters and ask the horse to move its hindquarters towards you, away from the rope.
- Ask the horse to move around the stall and move HQ away bringing the front end to you.
- Circle the horse once they can step their hindquarters away. If they try to get away, move the hindquarters until they stop, then rub them all over.
- Once you can touch them, ask the front feet to come to you, but do not pull straight on the colt. Be very careful not to get them resisting.
- Move HQ & FQ should be able to move laterally. At the end of the lesson all 4 feet should come towards you a few steps.
- The lesson is over now, approx. 15 mins after it started.

The next day, do the same things but maybe use a flag, By day 2 the colt should be leading well. Get them to give using a hind foot. Get them used to their feet being handled in the future. This is also very useful in case they ever get their leg caught in something.

Buck would usually do this in autumn / winter. Then he'd turn them out to the spring. Bring them in a few times, do the same work.

Observation:

Even when Buck's horse is standing still and Buck is explaining all of the above to the group, every single time Bucks horse loses his focus on Buck, and turns his head a little, thinks about taking a step forward, etc, Buck knows it and corrects the horse. Even though he's explaining everything to us, Buck is still totally focused on the horse.

Overview of bringing on a young horse – lesson 2:

At this stage the young horse still has not been tied up. Instead you do everything you can to teach hem to give to the halter and lead rope first.

Most of the first two years of his horses lives are spent in the hills. They are a bit wild but respectful of the lead rope once caught. Buck might ride his horses for 10 to 14 days as a 2yo.

“It doesn’t take a lot of talent to rope something from 5 feet away”.

“If you can put your socks on by yourself, you should be able to catch a horse in a stall with a rope”.

Snaffle bit stage:

Riding really starts at 4 or 5 years of age. At this stage you are looking for 1.5 years of steady ridden work.



List of tasks to do in a snaffle:

- Walk trot & lope on a loose rein or collected
- Good stop from any gait
- Stop with proper flexion
- Move FQs around HQs
- Move HQs around FQs
- Back circles
- Leg yield
- Sidepass
- Half pass
- Half pass towards the bend
- Shoulders in
- Simple lead changes should be perfect
- Start at flying lead changes, more so from a gallop than a canter
- Counter canter
- Lope a circle no longer than the length of the horses body
- Cut a cow

- Rope off the horse
- Brand calves, rope horses
- Do it all gently
- Then die of old age ☺

Raw hide hackamore stage:

- 5/8 inch
- Go through every exercise you did in the snaffle bit, right from the beginning. Reteach it all, take nothing for granted.
- The hackamore needs to fit exactly, like a hat on your head.
- Buck said, people come to a clinic in a halter thinking they will impress me. They don't realise I grew up with Ray, Tom & Bill.

Going to a clinic and being sold equipment is a racket. A \$20 halter and a long lead rope can be turned into a \$175 hackamore. They are just trying to pick your pocket.

Rawhide hackamore – ride in this for 3 to 4 months. By then all of the moves you taught in a snaffle will be retaught in the hackamore. But everything you need to teach your horse should be taught in the snaffle.

Soft / kangaroo hackamore:

The hackamore stage is about a year for Buck. Each stage should be a graduation. Only leave the snaffle because you succeeded in it, not because you failed.

The 2 rein stage takes 1.5 to 2 years.

4th Stage: Bosalita

You must show respect to the bridle horse. The spade bit is designed to send a very quiet signal to the horse who has reached a very high level of education. The angle of the spade bit is intended to be 85 or 86 degrees. SO when you take hold of the horse, its 90 degrees. Over years of training you develop muscle in the neck for the way the bridle horse will carry himself. But you can go back to the snaffle bit at any stage and be just fine. This is because you left the snaffle bit because you succeeded with it, not because you failed.

Whether you get this far or not, depends on whether you want to bring your riding to an art form, or do you just want to ride.

“Have your first goal to make a good snaffle bit horse.” Buck.

“Our country is full of them too – posers. Just ‘cos you got a bridle on doesn't mean you have a bridle horse” Buck.

At the snaffle and hackamore stage, learn to use your legs properly, not just as a gas pedal. Otherwise you'll never make a bridle horse.

“If you are operating your horse correctly your legs should be invisible to anyone watching.” Buck.

When you start to ride in a hackamore, hold your hands out wide so the horse can differentiate between lateral and longitudinal flexion.

Question:

Someone asked Buck whether you need to use more hands or more leg for collection. Buck just smiled and said 'Yes'. Then he expanded:

"For collection, you need perfect harmony between the hand and the leg. Sometimes you need more of one than the other. This changes every second".

"It is impossible to have the horse light to the hand if he is dull to the leg. If he's light to the leg, he could be light to the hand, but it's not guaranteed."

"If a horse is dull, timing means nothing to him."

"If you miss the beginning, the basics, then you are destined to go back and visit the basics."

"There is not one horse here who comes close to my horse on the end of the lead rope. "

Do backup with a soft feel. Offer the horse a good deal, then firm up. Its not just backing up, its backing in the proper form. Horse to bend at the poll between the 1st and 2nd vertebrae.

3 positions of your pelvis:

1. Roll over on the flat part of your pelvis, like you were going to jump something or hurry your horse up.
2. Pelvis centred, with floating seat bones. Nice line from your seat through your legs. Active riding position.
3. Sit on your jeans pockets on your tailbone. Use this position to stop a horse.

When you are at a halt, to ask for a walk, go from position 3 to position 2 and open your legs with a little vibration. If there is no response, come in with your legs and send the horse forward. So the goal here is that you will just roll your seat at to ask your horse to move off.

Demo of how to ask a horse to go:

1st time:

- Offer a good deal at halt. Just move your seat bones and open your legs a little.
- No response from the horse.
- Use your legs effectively once to get your horse to move off. The horse trots off.

2nd time:

- Horse is now focused on & listening to Buck.
- Some absolutely beautiful balance changes at halt with the horse working to figure out what Buck is looking for. Buck does the least amount possible, offering that good deal.



Backup:

- Take a soft feel of the horse.
- Open your legs a little / open the door for your horse to go back.

Circle with a bridle horse:

To do a circle with a bridle horse, you won't need the reins to guide him. Instead out your inside leg back, your outside leg forward. You can use your inside rein but your goal is not to need it.

Riding exercise 4:

All riders are to separate one end of the horse from the other. Use the HQ and FQ separately. Like in the groundwork this morning.

How to ride a green horse:

- 1 leg on girth area = sidepass
- 1 leg behind the girth = HQ yield
- 1 leg forward of the girth = FQ yield

Bucks black horse which he borrowed for the clinic is a little stuck & bracy in his HQ yields on the right rein. Buck wants everyone to do 180 degree yields with both ends of their horses. Buck is going to work on freeing up his horse over the next few days.

Exercise 4:

- Ride on the right rein at walk.
- Move the HQs to the outside.
- Then move the FQs to the outside.
- You should now be still on the right rein, walking around the outside of the arena.

When doing FQ yields, slide your hand out to direct the shoulders. This is the most basic way to teach horses to move the HQ up and under him. You are actually engaging the HQs.

Buck just did a stunning HQ & FQ yield. WOW. That took my breath away. I still can't believe I'm watching Buck ride.

When doing FQ yields, move your hand out from your hip. Do not move your hand forwards and out as that means go forwards in a circle.

"If they don't move correctly with the HQs, they won't move correct with the FQs".

"Keep lateral flexion in the horse when you bring the front through. Call it half flexion."

This move is like leading your horse in a dance.

When doing this move, start on a straight line up the arena / paddock, and when you are done you should still be on that exact straight line, going up the paddock. Be at the same distance from the fence after the move, as you were before the move.

Everyone practices this now. Some very nice moves, some not quite there yet. Some people were walking into each other as there wasn't a lot of room in the arena. One horse got kicked.

Buck said your responsibility to your horse is to keep him out of trouble. If your horse gets kicked it's your fault.

Buck also remarked that a lot of horses in here are more influence by the other horses than by their riders. That will change in time.

It should be noted that there's not rally enough room for everyone in the arena, and with people stopping to do 360 degree yields its all getting a bit messy. They are doing well considering I think.

"It looks like they are killing snakes right now" says Buck.

Buck tells everyone not to over bend, and not to just do circles. They need to separate both ends, and do a HQ yield, then a FQ yield.

"Stay as busy as a 1 legged man in an ass kicking contest" he says to the guy on the stallion, who was standing still in the middle of the arena.

Buck advised people who were having problems with the FQ yield. Your outside leg is forwards. To get the FQ yield your outside leg might need to do more.

Some people are doing very well. Some people are rushing through this move and replacing precision with speed. So they are just doing little circles more than anything.

Very nice move by the girl on the bay horse. Some more nice moves as well from others in the arena. You can see improvements.

“Don’t go in a hurry doing it. I want you to feel the feet”. Buck.

Some more nice moves there.

Also do not forgot to ask for these moves in time with the horses feet. It makes all the difference.

For the FQ yield, have your hand go straight out from your hip. That will help to minimise the unwanted HQ end movement. In time, you should be able to fold your arms and get this exercise done.

“When they’re tight in the HQs, that’s why they buck”.

Exercise 5 walk & soft feel:

- Walk with a soft feel.
- Do a few strides on a loose rein
- Then pick up the reins and ask for a soft feel
- Keep your hands wide
- Then release asap, don’t try & hold it.
- Walk out with life so there’s a chance your horse will be soft to your hands
- Have your pelvis in position 2
- Do transitions in walk – normal walk – slow walk – normal walk – fast walk, etc.
- Soft feel, slow down your body. Use your body first, not your hands.
- Get soft feel in a fast walk.
- Get him soft like he’s walking on eggshells and not breaking any.
- Get a soft feel from walk to halt. To do this, get a soft feel in pelvis position 2, then move to pelvis position 3 to ask your horse to stop.
- Backup with a soft feel.
- The objective is to get the horse to feel the persons body, to slow them down, not to have to pull on your reins to go slower.

The piebald from earlier is showing a lot of high energy. Buck says to use it in a good cause. So walk, HQ yield, Fq yield, walk. Piebald just got kicked. Buck says “keep your horse out of trouble. Don’t ride like a victim. Don’t be unhappy if your horse needs to move. Just direct it”.

One horse is over-flexing at the soft walk because the rider is not releasing fast enough.

Buck doesn't like what he sees.... "When I saw you backup your horses I threw up in my mouth a little. You've got to do it in time with the horse's feet."

We want a straight backup, not a wobbly one with the HQs going everywhere. You want them to feel of you when you liven up your body.

"Be aware you possess the very thing that means more than anything else in the world to the horse. It's peace. Relief. Comfort. So you have potentially the perfect situation. The horse will always trade you the perfect movement if you give him this. He will never not be interested in trading you for that. Based on that, if you are willing to release and reward the horse, he will be willing to give anything in return, once he knows he will get it".

"When riding, ask yourself what will my horse get out of it if I get what I want? Human nature is to take and to not give anything back."

How to ride in 1 hand in a snaffle bit:

- Ride a circle with the correct bend using one rein.
- If you can't get the nose to stay in, let the outside rein go longer.
- Then you have a shorter inside rein which you can use.
- Try this again this without regathering your reins.
- At this stage you've prob got quite long reins, so you can shorten them up and try it again.
- Your legs are a major factor to help guide the horse when riding with one hand in a snaffle bit.

Bucks borrowed black horse braces when switching from 1 rein to another. Buck works on this a little and gets some more magical soft moves from the black horse. Wow.

Ray Hunt said what you are trying to do is to hook the reins down to his feet. If you are not in harmony with the feet when the leave the ground, it's like you are trying to trip your horse.

"Horses only step on themselves when you are riding them, because you don't know where their feet are. If God thought they needed protection on their legs he'd have made them look like an armadillo."

Exercise 6 small serpentines:

- Walk on.
- Ask the horse's front foot to the side with deep lateral flexion.
- This is a supplying exercise.
- Head to be at 90 degrees to the side, the same way the front foot is stepping to the side.
- When changing the bend from left to right, or right to left, you want to brace in the neck and no change in the expression. This is all on small diameter circles. On Bucks ranch, he'd get people to do this by riding around sage bushes.
- The best place to work a horse is outside. So take the skills and qualities you have in the arena out with you.

- If your horse has excess energy, do small serpentines. Change your leg position each time you change rein. Inside leg back, outside leg forwards.
- You will never need to use a gimmick to get your horse to bend after this.
- In the short/small serpentines, reach for the foot, be smooth when you changes bends.
- Practise getting your horse soft with one hand on the reins. You may need the second hand for your rope.

When roping, going right is easy. A mistake made when going left, if trying to neck rein a horse who is not yet a bridle horse, and the horse is looking the wrong direction. Do not lose focus on the proper riding techniques just because you've got a rope in your hand. Instead, to go left, go under with your coils.

Exercise 7 rope exercise:

- Swing the rope at halt.
- Circle left, use your legs to guide the horse and swing your rope.
- Move from walk to halt. Release in halt only when you have a soft feel.

“You know you're on a small outfit when all the cows have names.”

The epitome of fine riding is to ride your horse in classical form and simultaneously ranch rope in classical form.

“Through all of the training and education, give your horse a purpose and meaning for all of the movements.”

“Try to get control of the horse's feet as if you and the horse are of one mind and one body.”

Ray Hunt said: I'm just trying to get my horse to operate like my legs, my feet.

“You have to ride a horse like he's your legs. Don't just let him take off on you.”

“If I want a certain leg to move, it moves. It's not a 1 in 4 chance. It's a guarantee.” Buck.

Day 2: Cutting cattle & roping

Lots of horses again in today, and lots of energy in the arena. Everyone was asked to repeat the exercises they had been doing yesterday:

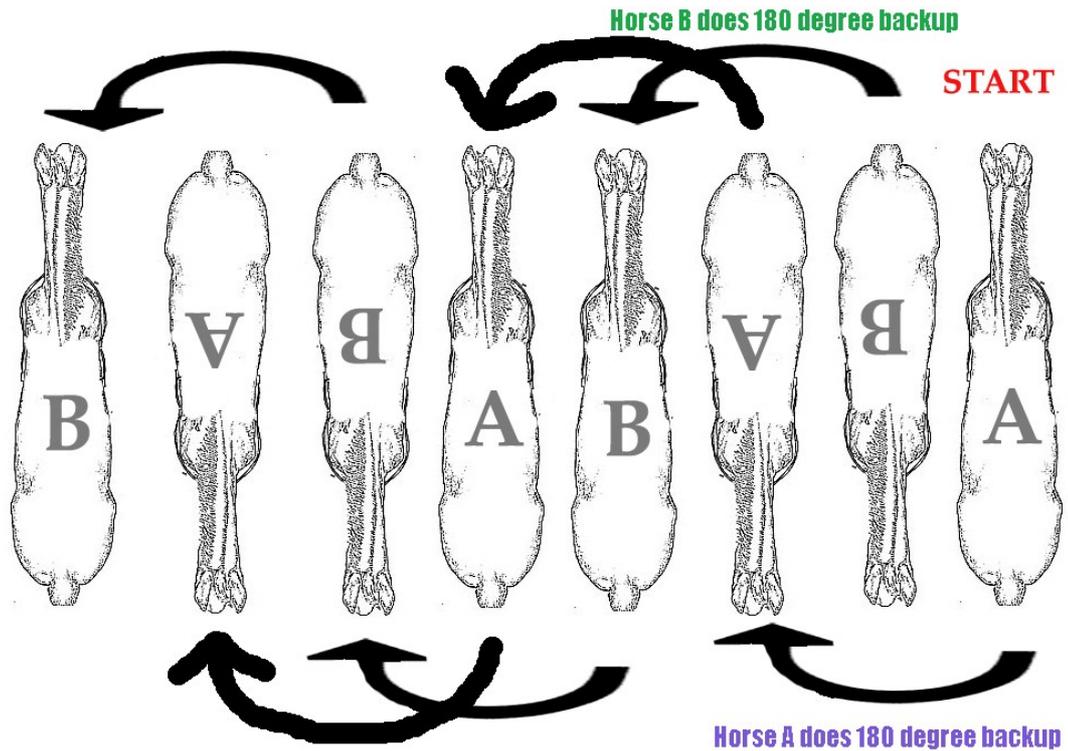
- Small serpentine
- Walk, HQ yield, FQ yield, walk
- Soft feel
- Different speeds of walk
- Backup
- Getting in time with the feet

The riders were going a great job. Some had some very nice moves. Some were rushing on the walk-HQ-FQ-walk move and weren't separating out each move. It was more like a small circle. One or two were rushing through the moves and changing the rhythm. Some very nice small serpentine, moving each front leg to the side to change rein. Really nice! Some nice soft backups. Some not in time with the horses feet. Some nice feet timing as well 😊 Some horses are more focused on other horses than the riders. Again though, there's a lot going on in the arena, horses are everywhere. Get a quality response, not a fast reaction.

Buck demo:

Backup half circles while tipping head to the outside. This is in preparation for the cow work later this morning.

Exercise 8:

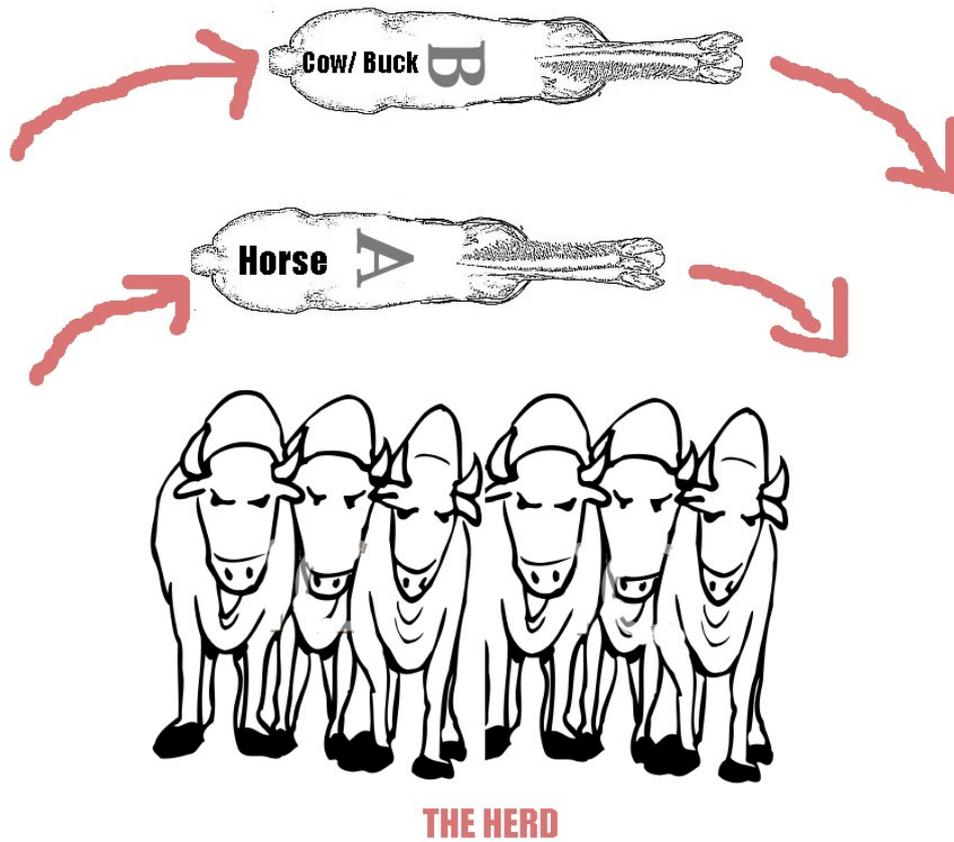


- Partner up with another horse & rider.
- Back half a circle around your partner.
- Then thy backup half a circle around you. Continue like this, each taking turns to do a 180 degree circle.
- Be sure you've got a soft feel before you start to backup.
- Release on every step of the backup to hook the reins down to the horses feet.
- Your goal is to back a perfect circle with using any lead rein. It's a big deal to be able to do that.

One person was sitting with their feet out of the stirrups. Buck said keep your feet in your stirrups unless you want to be a pig farmer.

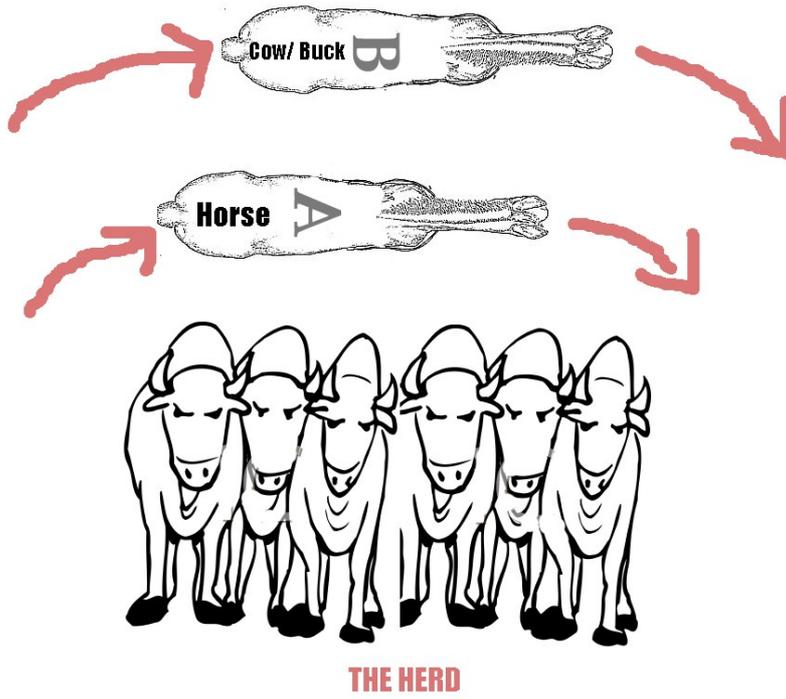
Use the indirect rein towards the mane to get lateral flexion if you need to.

Exercise 9:

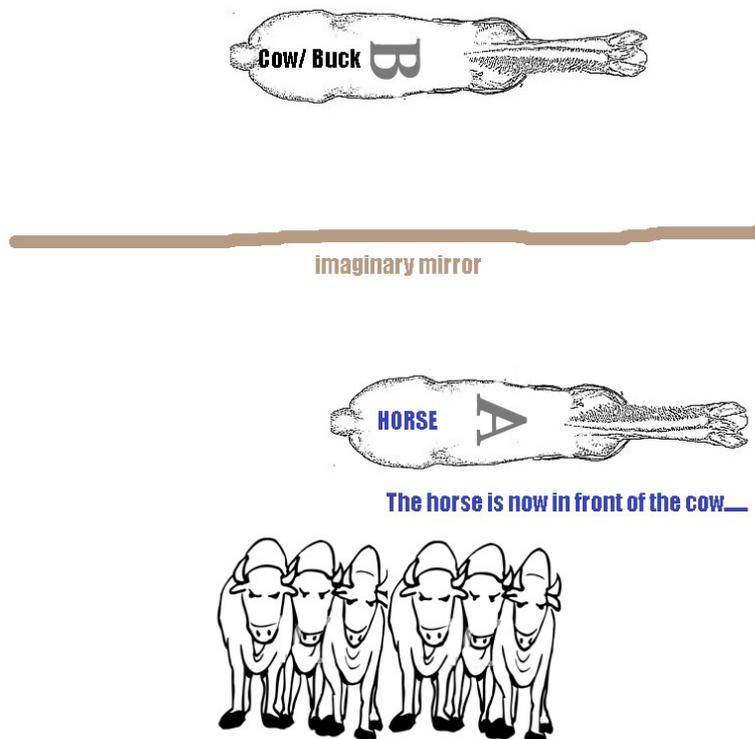


All the riders pretend to be a herd of cattle, and all stand together. Then Buck pretends to be the cow, trying to get back into the herd of cattle. One ride has to keep Buck out of the herd of cattle. So the cow is a little ahead of the rider, and the ride has to keep up. If the rider gets too far ahead of the cow, the cow will stop, turn 180 degrees, and gallop back the way he came. The ride must mirror the cow and change direction quickly too. Horse A is to be a mirror image of Buck / Cow.

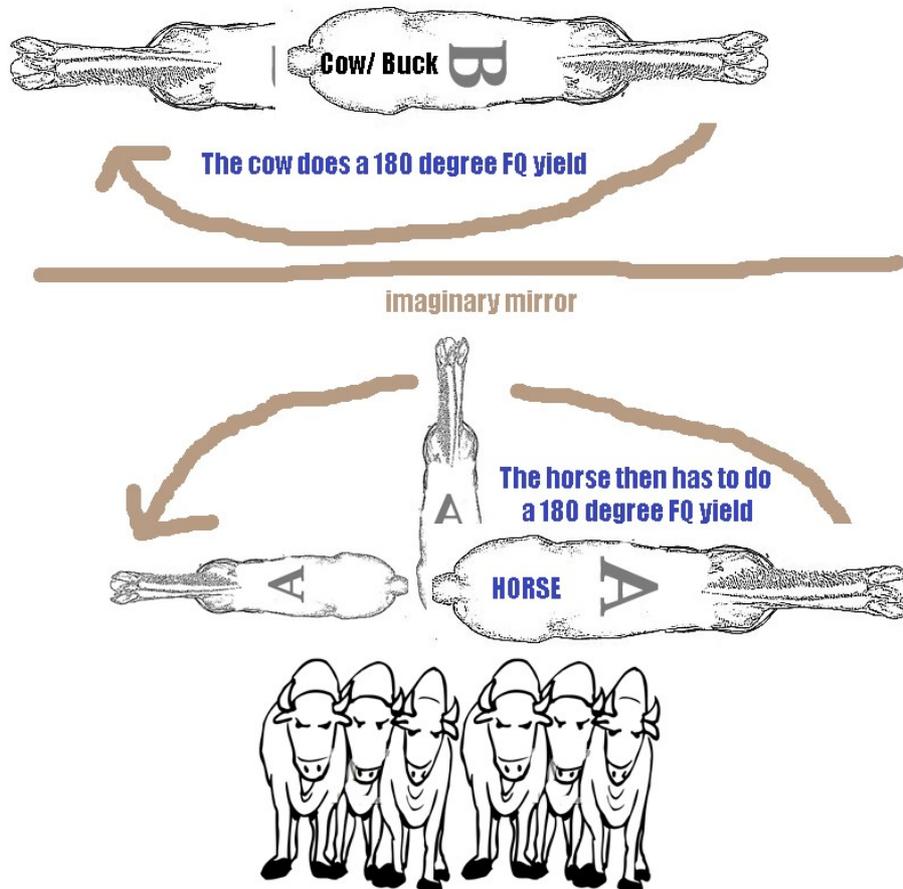
Step 1:



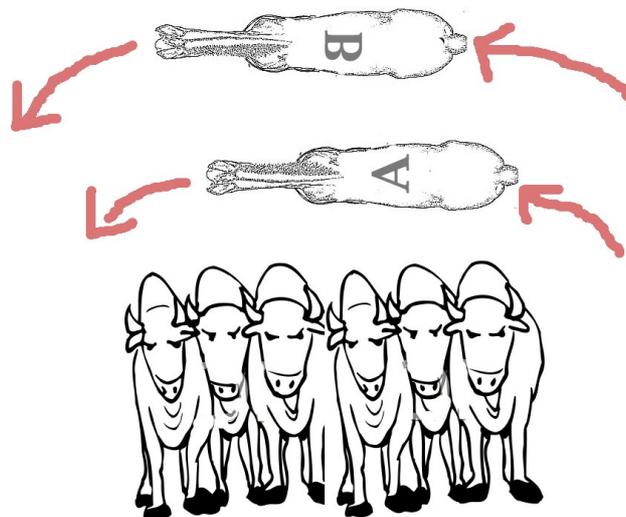
Step 2:



Step 3:



Step 4:



- Practise this in walk, trot and canter. This is great fun!! ☺

- Don't forget about our soft feel.
- Don't hold the horse at one energy level. Go up and down.
- When backing your horse in this exercise, do not turn until your horse is soft.
- "I'm always riding a horse like I'm working a cow."
- If you are turning left to do FQ yield, put your left leg back out of the way.
- Get on the correct lead when cantering around the herd. Otherwise the cow will beat you and get back to the herd.

People then paired up to do this. Lots of fun. Buck saw one girl spurring her horse on every stride as she cantered around and told her not to. When you are finished with the cows, stop. Backup and put one hand on your horse's neck to let him know you are finished. Then walk off.

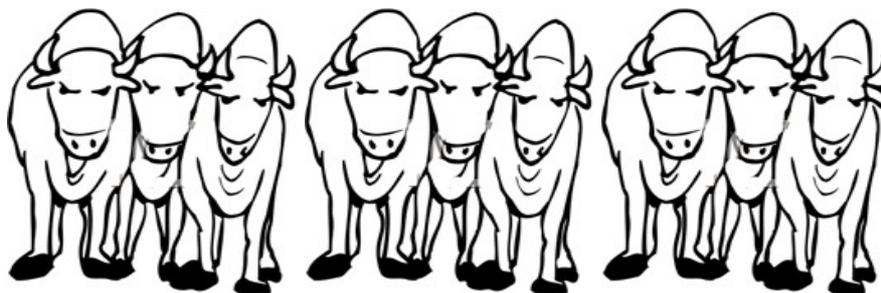
The stallion is being asked to backup but instead is resisting, head up in the air and is trying to put through the pressure to get a release. The rider is pulling and then releasing on the reins, while the horse's head is still stuck up in the air. Buck corrects him, not to release until he gets a try / the horse is not pulling the reins out of his hands.

While the folks are trotting & cantering around the arena, there are a few horses who are slow to move up to the next gait (eg. Trot to canter) and are clucking & kissing to their horses. One horse takes a full half of a big circle to get from trot to canter. Buck doesn't look too impressed.

"Don't click and kiss to get your horse to go. It doesn't work so I don't know why the hell you do it."

Buck says the stallion needs A LOT of backup on the ground, to address his pushing through pressure habit.

Here come the cows!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



Some horses have not seen cows before. Keep the horses facing the cows to give them confidence. When working cows, keep a distance between them and you. Don't ride straight at them. The cows are now in a herd group in the middle of the arena. The horses are in a larger circle all around them. The exercise was going to be for 1 person to cut a cow and them for the line of horses to open for that person to drive the cow to a corner. It was taking a while though as there were a lot of riders.

When cutting a cow, they'll make a few attempts to get back to the herd. After a while they accept they are away from the herd, and this is the stage when you can drive them away. When you are going to rope a cow, keep them out of the herd.

“When working cows, bring your horsemanship with you.”

The cows themselves are very quiet, relaxed and are not moving very much.

Exercise 10:

- The cows are all put down in one corner of the arena.
- 3 people have to go down and cut out three cows and bring them up to the top of the arena & hold them there. Cows are intent on walking, they don't want to trot at all :)



“Get your horse soft and ride with quality.”

Buck roped a cow and the cow just stopped gently and looked back at him, not at all bothered. It was quite funny.



“Watch your roper and wait to release the cattle until the roper is ready. Otherwise you will make a good rope look like he can’t rope at all.”



DAY 2 AFTERNOON

- Same exercise as this morning.
- 3 people cut 3 cattle out of the herd & drive them to up the other end of the arena.
- When the roper is ready, the cattle are to be driven at a steady pace in single file past the roper.
- The roper will then rope 1 cow on the way through.
- When cutting the cattle out of the herd, if they are all bunched up, ride up along the fence line to push them away from the fence / corner of the arena.

- If the cattle are in a corner, pointed at the fence, if you ride into them towards their heads you're just pushing them into the fence more.

“Never teach a horse he can refuse to go forward off your leg.”

“When driving cattle, stay in position. Don't keep crossing in front of someone. It's considered a big insult.”

Use of the legs:

Buck describes how some people are using their legs. “When you are using your legs, it's like you are only moving your leg from the knee down. Instead turn your toes out and lift your thighs off the saddle.”

When cutting cows, ride with the same soft feel you always do. When roping cattle, if the rope gets stuck on a hind foot you need to follow the cow.





Exercise 11: Heel shots

Everyone gets a chance to pretend to try to rope a cow's hind foot. Throw when your stirrup is in line with the cattle HQ – as you are walking past them. Don't throw too soon when you are approaching the cow. Keep on walking by, don't stop when you have thrown the rope.

When you rope, there may be trouble. When there is trouble, the safest thing to do is follow it. Then it can't follow you.

When you swing your rope, reach back.

Always start your rope swing with your arm being you.

Day 3: Q & A session

Everyone was asked to do 10 mins work on the exercises done so far in the clinic. Then there was a Q & A session with Buck.

“Think about offering these things with feel. Don’t go too fast and get your horse operating from self preservation. If your horse can’t do it slow, speeding it up with just make him do the wrong thing faster.”

“When you take hold of the horse it shouldn’t be something he dreads. Go real smooth and let the horse feel back to you. Don’t try to make it happen. You can’t make it happen. You fix it up for the horse and you let it happen.”

“Feel for the horse. I can’t stress how important it is to learn how to operate a horse on a feel at the end of a lead rope.”

About the piebald horse: He was giving you a hard time. He doesn’t want it to be like that, but it’s the only way he understood.

Short serpentines are very important to get your horse soft. Then work the HQ and FQ. Then go for a ride. Lateral work is always done before longitudinal work.

Backup:

- Release every step.
- Backup in time with each foot.
- Release to be done before that foot hits the ground.
- When you reach for the horse, always ask the horse, are you reaching for me?

“To make a good horse you’ll probably have to pick up a soft feel 4000 or 5000 times.”

“Every time you pick up two reins, ask did my horse give to me? Did he get soft? If he didn’t don’t let go”.

“Soft feel isn’t correct unless it goes all the way through his body and down to his feet. Its not just about tucking his chin in.”

“Don’t stay firm when your horse makes a change. Instead you have to make a change.”

“You need to see what happens before what happens happens.”

“Be fair to him and offer him a good deal always”.

“The amount of life and responsiveness you need in your horse is relative to your ability to direct it.”

“You have to get creative.”

“Wherever I am, I give them a job to do.”

Goal:

“Take a barrel. Put a rope around the barrel. Lope your horse around the barrel, holding the other end of the rope, and wrap the rope all round the barrel. The rope is never to touch the ground. Use soft feel. We talk about the basics. This is the basics.” Buck.

If you can’t do this, what will you do with a pissed off cow?

Buck: I didn’t need the great Ray Hunt to tell me there was something wrong with beating a horse with sticks. It makes me sick.

“Usually the first thing people master is blowing smoke up their own butt.”

Question:

How to retrain an ex-racehorse? Go back to the basics. On a leadrope, doing groundwork. Desensitise the horse to flags, plastics sheets, etc. Do all the lateral work. Don’t pull on 2 reins for a while. They’ve got to be supply first.

Question:

An Arab mare wants to be at the front of a trail ride all the time and wants to trot. What can I do?

Trot half a mile ahead of the group. While the rest are catching up, do lots of exercises. When the groups catches up, trot off again another half mile. Do more exercises till the rest catch up again. Spend the energy in a worthy cause. Don’t just try to run them around and make them tired. Soft feel, yields, different speeds of gaits, precision work. When the horse offers to walk quietly, just accept it.

Question:

What about horses who spend all the life in box stalls?

Buck doesn’t usually use box stalls / stables. Horse don’t belong in stables / box stalls. In 40 degrees below zero, Bucks horses are outside. God grows them a coat of hair so I don’t blanket them ever. “Show horses, kept in stalls/stables all the time, who are brought out and

then kicked and spurred, nagged and picked at, and then put back in the box, those horses have to think: What did I do to the human? What did I do wrong?"

Buck mentioned briefly the wooden stood methodology of which leg your weight should be on when you are moving HQ and FQs.

Question:

How do you address herd bound horses?

If its not severe, the horse is just looking for support from the other horse. When you get more accurate with the feet, you'll give your horse support. You will be changing the subject.

If its severe/dangerous and your horse is about to attack another horse, I'd change it straight away.

Another way, is put the herd together and youre goal is to have your horse at the far end of the arena. When your horse is near the herd, make him trot. Make it uncomfortable. Pet and reassure the horse when he leaves the other horses. You set it up so the horse can find it. You don't make them leave. If you try to physically make them leave, they will not mentally leave. Every horse should do this exercise actually. Whether herd bound is a problem or not. Then you will know you're horse is happy to go alone anywhere with you.

"Keep your horse with you."

Here are some reasons people don't get along with horses: jealous, envy, spite, greed. You need to strip these off if you are a human. You can't blame the horse. The horse didn't ask for this.

Question:

How do you deal with people mistreating horses?

If people are that inclined to fight with their horse, they are not very happy within themselves. I try not to put them on the defensive, where they will take it out on the horse.

Ray Hunt: You need to do less sooner, rather than more later.

"In a lot of ways, horses are a hell of a lot more logical than humans."

"If your horse did a move, but he did it out of self preservation, he won't remember it tomorrow". Buck.

Question:

When do you do groundwork?

"Where I come from, the objective is to ride the horse. When they are ready to ride, you ride them."

Question:

A vet asks how he can ask horse owners to train their horses so he is safe doing his job.

When you are with the horse, just do a little on the lead rope to get the horse softer. But you need to keep safe as well. That is a priority.

Question:

How do I tell my vet I don't want him to twitch my horse?

Well then train your horse so they are safe for your vet to treat.

"Don't get on a horse that's moving."

END of Q & A

Rope tips:

Bring your elbow up when the rope is in front of you. That will bring your thumb down.

Sweep the rope like a brush along the ground straight in front of you, like a brush from left to right.

A log is brought out to the middle of the arena.

Dragging stuff is good for any horse.

- Get the horse quiet with this.
- Start out backing up.
- Don't get too close to the log and putting it in your horse's blind spot under his chin.
- Start by just barely moving the log. See if it troubles the horse or not.
- When backing, the horse is to stay straight between your legs.
- At first don't go very far.
- Its important the horse stays straight. Backup from the log.
- Your horse will get used to this.
- Backup with a SOFT FEEL.
- If horse gets scared take the dallies off and face the log.
- If there's trouble first throw the rope away. Second bend the horse and roll the Hqs.
- Keep your horse accurate. Encourage a soft feel.

From the very first ride, I never get off to open a gate I could do from the back of a horse. I don't care long how it takes me.

Someone asked where they will go from here. Buck said "Remember all I said from the last 3 days and you will be fine."

Lungelines are one of the most dangerous pieces of equipment. Hard to fold up nicely, they get wrapped around your hand. A lot of horses won't bend and give to the line. Use a lariat instead and call it as western united states lunge line.

"Get your horse comfortable with things around his legs. It might save him 1 day from getting his leg cut off if he gets caught up in something".

Gimmicks

Gimmicks are all a bunch of crap. Things like raw reins and running martingales are all used to force the horse to bend. They are used to make one stronger on a resistant horse. Gimmicks are pullies. The problem is they force a horse to bend rather than teach a horse to bend. The problem is when you make this stronger, you need to be twice as fast to release. No one has that timing. There has never been a gimmick invented to make up for sorry horsemanship.

Tiedowns

Horses don't need them. Horses do not need tiedowns to brace into. High goal polo players do not need them. Buck played polo in a snaffle and at the end of the season, one of the top polo players in the world bought every single one of his horses.

"Before I met Ray, I had probably used every gimmick known to man. Now it's been 35 years since I rode like a caveman."

Restrictive nosebands: (flashes and grackles).

I hate them. Stupid. You are driving a car, and a light comes on to say you need oil. Do you punch through the glass panel and break the light, or do you buy some more oil? People who used grackles and flashes on their horses are the people who bash through their instrument panel. The problem is inside the horse, not outside.

On a colt when you do something new, there may be agitation, but when they understand it goes away. It is part of the horse expressing himself.

