

EQUINE NOTES for OCTOBER 2017.

One of the best pieces of advice I ever had was from a horse master. He told me to go slow to go fast. I think that applies to everything in life. We live life as though there aren't enough hours in the day, but if we do each thing calmly and carefully we will get it done much quicker and with much less stress.

Viggo Morterson.

Hello Again,

Those of you who regularly read this column will know that I have long eulogised about the wonderful bond that can be built between humans and horses and other intelligent animals. A pony which I bred went to a home where he became the trusted partner to a severely autistic child. When they first met the boy ran forward and hugged the pony's leg and the pony stood stock still and never moved. Some time later I heard from the mother that although the child had not spoken a word since birth, he was found in the stable making noises into the pony's mane. I had heard of this phenomenon before with an older child at an approved school here in Devon. He was found sitting on the stairs with the headmaster's dog talking to it. His first utterances since arriving at the school some months before. Also a great friend of mine used to take his llamas around Great Ormond Street children's hospital, The Royal Marsden and Tadworth Court, visiting terminally ill kids. He described the empathy between the llamas and the severely ill children as unbelievable.

Monty Roberts, the famous "Horse Whisperer," endorsed by none other than HM Queen Elizabeth has over the past few years worked with war veterans suffering from the deep psychological wounds inflicted by severe trauma and resulting in post traumatic distress. These warriors are often affected with anger issues, lack of self worth, inability to trust, social withdrawal, and a great difficulty coping with civilian life. He has recently started, with official military backing, clinics entitled Horse Sense and Healing and one was held just down the road in Plymouth.

Monty writes-

"The innate ability of horse to mirror the actions of a human makes them an incredible partner. The veterans very quickly learn how to adjust and manage their levels of stress, fear, energy and body language to cause the horse to be willing to engage with them in a "Join Up"- All skills that can be used in their own lives engaging with people, enhancing their relationships with family and the civilian world."

The feedback from two of the military attendees as follows

"If I can cause a horse to trust me, perhaps I am not that evil person I think I am. I'm starting to believe I'm not that bad I'm starting to believe I'm not that bad person."

"The first "Join Up" was so special as I have lost trust. I still cannot believe what has happened, and I feel so lucky."

At my age I feel so privileged to have witnessed the new way of thinking, handling and interacting with equines. I was brought up to insist on obedience from the horses and not to treat them as partners. Over the years I realised that I had a special way with a horse but it was not until the arrival of Monty Roberts's understanding and

methods, some of which I had already found for myself, that a “light bulb” moment occurred. I urge anyone interested in animal psychology to attend one of Monty’s demonstrations before age overtakes him. It is a truly eye opening experience and worth every penny.

This past summer, or what should have been summer was good for the hay crop in June but since then the straw which has been gathered seems to have suffered from all the rain and is not of good quality. For some time now I have bedded my horses on shredded paper, perhaps because I had access to free amounts of it and also because I had a horse with a breathing problem. It worked well. Wood chips were often dusty and straw, if not baled dry had fungal spores which would have made the respiratory problem worse.

There have been no welfare problems this month although I am still aware that the mare and foal grazing in a ragwort ridden, grassless paddock in the Bridport area has still not been rectified.

Please contact me in confidence if you have any worries concerning horses and ponies in your area. I am here on behalf of the British Horse Society, as a contact to help and advise.

Heather Lee BHS Contact for E. Devon and W. Dorset