Straight From the Horse’s Mouth: Teaching Trainers Principles of Behavior

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Horsemanship

- Method of communication with the horse

- 2 schools of horsemanship

Traditional Horsemanship

- Dominance oriented
- More likely to use punishment
- Frequent use of artificial aids

Natural Horsemanship

- Partnership
- Do not condone punishment
- Emphasize use of natural aids
Horsemanship

- Both methods rely primarily on negative reinforcement and habituation
- Newer methods may appear to have a more scientific foundation, but do not utilize scientific methods
- Trainers rarely take data
- Myths, folklore, and traditions are still prevalent in the general horse community
Rearing

- Break an egg over horse’s head
- Hit horse on top of the head with a 2x4
- Give him/her a big boot
- Smack him/her between the ears with your whip
- See website
  - [http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20090502224058AAc0TAI](http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20090502224058AAc0TAI)
Books

- Animals In Translation – Temple Grandin
- Animals Make Us Human – Temple Grandin
- Influencing Horse Behavior: A Natural Approach to Training – Dr. Jim McCall
ABA & Horses

- Ferguson & Rosales-Ruiz (2001), used clickers to shape trailer loading
- Warren-Smith & McGreevy (2007), used negative and positive reinforcement to shape the halt response
- The Domestic Horse: The Evolution, Development, and Management of its Behavior – Daniel Mills & Sue McDonnell (Eds)
- ORCA 2011
  - Alexandra Kurland – Hierarchies of Reinforcement
  - Steve White - Fluency
Animal Behavior Training

- SoCal = Autism
- Moorpark College Exotic Animal Training and Management Program
- UCLA animal laboratories
- Local pet stores & dog training facilities
- Began to look for a site
Bennett Farms

- Located at The Los Angeles Equestrian Center in Burbank, CA
- Head trainer Jim Bennett
- Approximately 12 staff
- 45 horses

Daily activities
- Training horses
- Exercising horses
- Riding lessons
- Show preparations
Training Model

- Observation and program evaluation

- Group presentations
  - Introduction and Respondent Conditioning
  - Operant Conditioning
  - Punishment and Differential Reinforcement
  - Function and Stimulus Control
  - Shaping and Chaining
Training Model

- Trainers lacked a reinforcer menu; reliance on food

- Alternatives to punishment and overreliance on negative reinforcement

- Conducted a reinforcer survey and a preference assessment
### Paired Choice Preference Assessment

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Clicker Training

1. Explained procedure during presentations
2. Shared videos
3. Modeled
4. Observed them gave feedback

- Training Amanda
Individual consults

- One-on-one work with trainers
  - Coco: Piaffe
  - Vegas: Catching, kicking
  - Love: Moving away from trainer
  - Abby: Stopping, side passing, turns on the haunches
  - Noel: Turns on the forehand, parking out
  - Rascal: Turns on the forehand, parking out
  - Fritz: Backing up
  - Who Dat: Canter departures
Vegas

- 7 y.o. American Saddlebred mare
- Couldn’t be caught in her stall
  - always wore a halter
- Began using the clicker to reinforce Vegas putting her head through the halter
Results

![Graph showing results](image)

- **Baseline**
- **Prompted**
- **Unprompted**
- **Incorrect**
- **M Latency**

**Average Latency**

**Number of Approaches**

**Sessions**
Challenges

- Horses are bigger than us
- Often, you’re on the horse’s back
- Working in a new direction
- Some trainers don’t buy into behavior analysis
- Treatment fidelity
- Taking data
- Not dealing with just a learner
- Funding
Future Directions

- Thesis
- Bringing more people on site to collect data
- Who Dat and Vegas
- Generalize positive reinforcement strategies across the horse training community
References


