

It's Never Too Early To Train

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Let me make the first and most important statement - it is never too soon to start with your young horse and give him or her their first lesson. Unless you are dealing with a foal born in the wild, then they can be made used to human contact from birth, easily achieved if the foal is born in a stable or barn, but a little more tricky if born outside when it may be some days before you can approach them.

Some owners have been known to use a special foal halter shortly after birth, so they can be held and led to and fro. Bear in mind that the halter must be soft, and must fit well to avoid it catching on anything, but remember to remove it at night. Another point to bear in mind is that being young the foal will grow rapidly, so you need to check the halter regularly to ensure it still fits.

Now although newly born and small by comparison to their mother, foals can be surprisingly strong so do not underestimate their power. The way to hold a foal properly is to put one arm under his neck near the chest, and the other arm behind his hindquarters. In such a position it is then easy enough for a second person to slip on his halter, but ensure they are talking to him soothingly to gain his confidence.

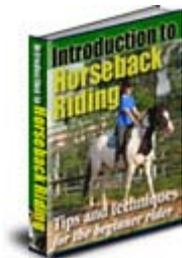
Getting your foal used to human contact is essential so start by touching him all over, starting with his neck, back and quarters. Whilst this is unlikely to be successful the first time around, keep going until he is happy for you to touch him at will. During this process teach him to pick up each foot as this is key for later hoof and foot care. However difficult he becomes during these early stages, keep your calm and never become angry or impatient and always reward him with kindness.

Some people even start grooming their foal, which whilst it has merits in terms of handling removes grease from their coat and is not advisable if your foal lives outside,

If there are times when you want to tie up the foal, but limit these as much as possible, make sure he is attached by a string which is fine enough to break should he pull back, otherwise when he struggles, he may injure himself, and will undoubtedly be frightened. Better to tie up the mare rather than the foal if particularly when they are feeding together in a stable or shed.

Once halter-broken, the foal should be taught to stand still whilst being held and to move over when asked.

So, with these few simple tasks you are well on the way to training your foal. Remember, it is never too early to start the training process.



Roger Bourdon is the author of "Introduction to Horseback Riding" and owner of the site www.anyhorsebackriding.com. If you are interested in horse riding, then sign up for Roger's free mini course and news letters at www.anyhorsebackriding.com