

## **FEAR**

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I seem to get a lot of responses when I talk about fear and training animals. Not to argue the point, but how can fear be avoided? I will say that abuse has no place, but fear is a natural response.

Understanding the levels of fear is tough, but think of your own reactions to fear. There is that response to surprise, like someone jumping out from behind a door and saying BOO! Then there is something that threatens your very existence. Your reactions are quite different because the levels of fear are different.

Realizing that fear is there and ready to unleash a response, gives us an opportunity to present a solution. Fears responses are fight or flight.

We have all seen a person who's focus is on their phone. That connection between the phone and that person is what I want. I want that connection between the animal and me. I want that animal to want to be with me and trust me.

I want to talk a little about horses to explain my point. We have all seen the person who starts a young horse by over desensitizing it. They have shown the horse every stimulus they can think of and the horse will stand, but when they step on and try to make it move, it's feet are stuck. The natural progression is to try to make it move, kicking harder or spanking it. Basically leaving fight as the horses only response since flight has been removed. Realizing how to connect to the animal prior to creating the problem would save a lot of effort in correcting the mistake. The horses responses are linked to instinctual behavior.

This removal of movement by over desensitizing is an effective tool for our stock. It interrupts the individualization and the chase sequence that a predator must have in securing its prey.

By using pseudo predators we present fear and a solution that suits our needs. By releasing pressure upon the stock reaching the Defensive Posture of the Herd Group we instill a reaction that is set to memory. Developing the Standing Solution.

Many people believe that repetition is how to train an animal. I'm not so sure of that. The training tool that I believe in, is pressure and release. By presenting the pressure and then immediately Releasing the pressure, you provide a trainable moment. Too much repetition leads to the animal seeking other answers to what you keep asking.

An example is the over-use of the round pen. Putting long hours of loping in a circle and then putting the horse away. The pressure is the long hours in the pen and the release is you turning the horse loose. Training the horse that getting away from the training session is its release.

We mentioned that person who is connected to their phone. I want my animals to have that connection to me. By presenting a problem (pressure) to the animal and removing that pressure you are instilling a behavioral response.



I said that I wanted to use horses as an example. So I have a young Mustang that I acquired from the adopt a horse program. This youngster was quite fearful when we first picked him up. Upon arriving at the ranch, he went into a smaller pen than he was used to at the BLM lot. This was all so frightening to the young horse and putting him in the smaller pen took away the response of flight, leaving only the response of fight.

In the first few days he would charge, ears pinned back, trying to bite. He was a serious threat. But engaging the youngster with a rap on the nose when he assaulted me and then disengaging immediately, he soon became comfortable within his own space. Beginning a partnership. Soon when I would pressure him, he would move away. When I stopped the pressure and took a step backwards he would bend his neck towards me. That small effort of pressure and release was an easy and comfortable solution to his reaction of fear.

By presenting fear with our pseudo predators, cattle soon become aware that the herd group is their relief from pressure. Then the Defensive Posture of the Herd Group becomes a sought after Safe Zone.

Understanding fear and it's responses, gives us an opportunity to present and develop a solution to the problem. Transferring that response to fear, which all animals have, from our stock to the predators becomes an effective deterrent.

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