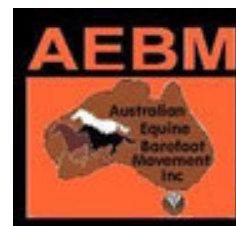


HORSEMANSHIP KEYS TO SUCCESS FOR TRIMMERS

By Cynthia Cooper www.naturalhorseworld.com



1. Keep the horse as close to its comfort zone (herd or friend) as possible – usually just the other side of the fence is about as far as most can cope, especially if they're not frequently used to going away from their herd/friend.
2. Sometimes, making a hay net available is a good way to relax the horse – avoid bucket feeds as some horses become 'dominant' around hard feed. The hay should always be off the ground so it is easy for the horse to reach while you hold a leg up.
3. Be careful not to position the horse up against a fence or building – always give them somewhere to move to if they get a fright so they don't run over you.
4. Place the horse in an area away from possible hazards such as another horse that may be more dominant, machinery, wire and junk, un-safe fences etc.
5. Before starting to trim, check and clean all four hooves to make the horse comfortable (they may have a stone or abscess) and to assess which hooves might be best to trim first.
6. If the horse seems uncomfortable on the surface you've chosen to work on, move to another place that offers softer footing eg. from gravel to grass. You may even need to pad a sore hoof to trim the other opposite hoof.
7. Ask your handler (if you have one) to please stay on the same side of the horse as you are for safety, to look at how the horse is balanced and make small adjustments to position the weight off the hoof you want to work on. They should also warn you of things that may worry the horse (tractor starting up etc.) so you can put the leg down.
8. If the horse remains fidgety with a handler or being held too loosely/firmly, then it may be better to control the horse yourself.
9. If the horse is fidgeting or un-happy, stop and step back from the situation to try and find the cause. Has the horse's friend moved too far away, is there some other action causing them to move about (other horses being fed/ moved), is the horse in pain? Are you stressed or feeling rushed?
10. Try holding the leg in different positions to determine where is comfortable – some horses can't cope with their leg between yours if you're a big person as it pulls their shoulder out away from the body causing pressure on a nerve. Older horses often have trouble holding their hind legs up and out behind them. Keeping the hoof low and in line with the other leg can help them be more comfortable.
11. Remember if both you and the horse are comfortable physically and emotionally, your job will be easier today and in the future.

