



Frank Bell Horse Whisperer

Horse Refuses Bridle

Hi,

My name is Amber. My friend has an 18 year old paint that refuses his bridle. I mean last summer he wouldn't refuse and just this month he is. He has always shied away from his ears being touch but sometimes he does, and it's getting worse. Just a couple weeks ago he wrapped himself around a pole and was choking himself - he got free though. Only when nobody is home is when my friend can get the bridle on, but she doesn't want that to be the only time. He was trained at 12 because she (my friend), never really could ride. She's not very tall so when he puts his head up she can't reach him. She can get the bit in but can't get the rest on. For the first 12 years of his life he was a pasture horse and we think he a branch fell on his head from lightening which is why we also why we think he's scared of cameras. We are calm around him during the whole time but he doesn't respond. So please help us cure her paint "Star."

Thank you,
Amber M.

Dear Amber:

The very first thing the horse needs to learn is to drop his head. Using downward pressure on the lead, about 3-5 pounds, lower your stature and apply constant straight down pressure. When the horse gives the smallest bit, release and reward. Then start again. This time it will take less time, etc., until with very little pressure, a few ounces, he drops his head. This time place your hand just behind his ears and begin light pushing down increasing to 5 pounds. This will likely mean nothing, so move your hand to apply very light pinching on the skin in same area, upper mane. The pinching will increase again until the horse gives the smallest change. He'll try everything else, raising his head, off to the side, etc., but don't quit until that head drops a fraction of an inch. Lavish praise and let it sink in. Then begin again with very light pressure increasing to pinching. He'll drop his head bigger this time. Stay with it until that head is all the way down and you are on your knees. This will help dramatically when bridling the horse. No step ladder needed.



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As far as the bit into the mouth. Coat it with molasses. But before offering it to him, put a dollop on his lips so he's licking them with gusto. Then offer the bit while he's licking away. He'll begin to lick the bit. While doing so, ease it into his mouth and hold it there for about 15-30 seconds, then quietly remove. Recoat with molasses again and offer. This time it should be easier and get easier every time.

It's of utmost importance that the bit is not causing pain to the horse. Make sure his teeth are not interfering, wolf teeth are out, no sores etc. Maybe have an expert or vet check him out. Bits can be comfortable or torturous, so eliminate that possibility first.

Be patient, feel what he feels, and always ride in safety!

Happy Trails,

Frank R. Bell