



Frank Bell Horse Whisperer

What About Biting?

Hello Frank,

I am just now starting to use your 7 step program with my 6 year old Kentucky Mountain horse. He is a very sweet horse, but he is spirited and very mouthy and nippy. He's not at all mean. It's a game to him. He has never actually bitten me. Elbows don't deter him. The only thing that stops him from this mouthy behavior is pinching his nostrils. But that seems as if it would be defeating purpose of the intimacy aspect of your program. I guess my question is: What do I do when he nips at me while I am exploring parts of his head, flexing his head, etc. Also, I was bucked off a horse (not one of mine) and broke my hip back in February. I am now just getting back to riding and I was wondering if you had any tips about how to get your confidence back after such a serious injury. I am an avid trail rider and ride in the desert and mountains here in Arizona.

Thank you for your help.
Helen S.

Helen: Just caught me in the office. Biting? Using the back of your hand slap the horse under the jaw the moment he offers to even sniff your hand while making a shhhhhhhhhhhhhhh noise. The slap would be fairly light the first time, twice as hard the second, etc., until it ends. Make the shhhhhhhhhhhhhhh noise at the beginning and it will build louder and louder then be followed by the slap. Before long when the horse hears that noise he'll know he's getting out of bounds and needs to stop the unwanted behavior immediately. Eventually it will transfer to all unwanted behavior and all you'll have to do is make the noise.

Confidence building: My 7 Steps is about confidence building for the horse and rider. Once you have that one-rein-stop down cold and have done it dozens of times, you'll both understand there is a safe place to go whenever uncertainty creeps into you or your horse. It's a matter of practicing it over and over until it's as rote as your foot hitting the brake in your car. This is exactly what I do with all horses and build it even more solid with the difficult ones. I begin in the round pen or arena, but definitely in an enclosed area. Only when it is solid do I leave the safety of enclosure, then head out to the trail and do another couple dozen in each direction. Before long you and your horse have a safety option that you both understand. Don't hesitate to read the three [Western Horseman articles](#). Everyone learns differently. Where a video works well for one person, it's the audio tape or written word that sinks in the best for another. Safety is everything and you cannot ride 'in confidence' without your safety procedure firmly in place.

Good Luck and Safe Riding,

Frank R. Bell