

Equine Behavior Statement—Understanding Horses

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From the denouement of the upcoming book—THE LANGUAGE OF NATURAL HORSEMANSHIP published by Eclipse Press, Lexington, KY Bloodhorse Inc

<http://preview.tinyurl.com/Language-of-Horses>

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Understanding Horses: In Consideration of Horses

In consideration of the horse's nature and behavior horsewomen and horsemen are obligated to provide horses an appropriate environment, proper nutrition, sufficient sociobehavioral circumstances, as well as ethical training and horsemanship modalities. By nature the horse is a grazer of the plains, a social and herd animal, and flighty. Horsemanship and training are best accomplished through behavioral understanding of the horse and facilitation of the horse's nature, rather than by force or coercion. Horses are best trained in a relaxed, calm state. Training that puts the horse into the

flight or sympathetic state generated by fear and contained by ropes or pens is discouraged, and not in accordance with acceptable standards of well being.

Horses graze and walk together 60-70% of the time under natural circumstances, eating and moving from spot to spot independently but within a few meters of the next horse. Stabling should make every effort to accommodate or recreate these long-evolved grazing in motion preferences for proper physiological function and mental health.

Horses require other horses for proper health and prosperity. Horses require the constant companionship of other horses. A horse should seldom be kept alone. Horses being mixed with other horses and expected to share resources should be properly acclimated socially, and be given the required space to adjust to new herds without injury or undue stress. Every effort should be made to provide horses with the social benefit of appropriate companion horses through times of stress and illness.

Horsewomen and men need to appreciate the sensual nature of the horse, and understand the physiological needs of the horse. Horses prefer the open view, and if they cannot be with other horses, they need to see and smell other horses for proper behavioral functioning and responsiveness.

Water is the most important nutrient, and must be provided in consideration of equine behavioral preferences.

Grazing is the preferred and predominant equine activity. Horses did not evolve to metabolize grains and non-structured carbohydrates, or to remain stationary for even short periods of time.

Play and sleep are naturally occurring preferences that require accommodation however horses are housed or stabled, as deprivation results in behavioral deterioration.

Horses are physiologically dependent on shared social grooming and sensual contact companionship. If stabling precludes these preferences from fulfillment, then every effort need be applied to replace or recreate these needs on a daily basis.

These behavioral considerations apply to horses in transport, and for those horses too, however unwanted, man is obligated to provide the proper environment, social functioning, nutrition, medical care, and exercise to sufficiently assure health and comfort.

As to performance, every care and precaution need be taken to avoid exceeding the adaptability of the horse. All of the horse's normal natural sensation should remain fully intact and functional without undue pharmaceutical influence. The horse's metabolic, physical, medical, and behavioral limitations must be monitored by equine veterinary professionals on an intense comprehensive basis.

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