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Horse Journal makes every effort to provide information on horse health, care and treatment that is authoritative, reliable and practical. It is not intended, however, to replace diagnosis or treatment by a veterinarian or other qualified health professional. Horse Journal does not assume any legal responsibility. Readers should always consult qualified health care providers for specific diagnosis and treatment.

True Stewardship

When we accept ownership of a horse, we also accept stewardship.

We all realize horses have the strength to overpower us and gain their freedom if they so choose. It's only by the horse's cooperation that we can ride, drive or even touch him. And when we accept our horse's willingness to be used, we also accept stewardship of him. Stewardship is different from ownership. When we own an object, it is ours to do with as we please. With stewardship, we are bound to take good care of it, too.

The fact a horse is alive and breathing doesn't mean he's well. A true horseperson doesn't need a course in horse psychology or a battery of lab tests and radiological scans to tell if a horse is mentally and physically well. The look in his eye, the way he carries himself, his interest in his surroundings and his work, and the health of his coat and feet tell the story.

Stewardship isn't just about feeding and routine health care, although that's a big part. It's also about serving the horse's needs as well as our own. Far too many violations of stewardship occur every day, and they're not all situations that would fall under the umbrella of obvious abuse.

Performance- or personality-altering



Our horses deserve the best care we can give.

drugs or tying horses in uncomfortable positions for hours on end before a show to break their spirit, blocking pain to allow a horse with an injury to work and risk injuring himself further, or sending a horse to a killer auction to squeeze those last few hundred dollars out of him are all breaches of stewardship.

The contemporary veterinarian's oath is a good example of stewardship:

"I solemnly swear to use my scientific knowledge and skills to protect the health and well-being of all nonhuman animals, to relieve pain and suffering in nonhuman animals, to strengthen the understanding of the inherent needs and interests of all nonhuman animals, and to promote the preservation of wildlife and their natural environment."

Notice there's nothing in the oath about financial gain or treating the horse to achieve the goals of the owner. We should all take a similar oath and live by it. Our horses don't owe us. We owe them.

Eleanor Kellon, VMD

The goal of the Horse Journal is to provide practical solutions and hands-on information our readers can take into the barn and use. We work to make bottom-line recommendations on products we believe will best serve our readers while standing firm with a back-to-the-basics philosophy on training, nutrition and horse care. We base our evaluations on field trials, research and experience. Horse Journal does not accept commercial advertising.