EQUINE GUELPH
helping horses for life™

The Modern Day Horse

Teaching Notes for Powerpoint Slides

SLIDE #2 MODERN HISTORY

The first record of riding came from Persia in the third millennium B.C. By 1580 B.C. this trend had spread to Egypt, and 250 years later it was found in Greece. In fact, the first horse training book, the Kikkuli Text, was written in 1360 B.C. The founder of modern horsemanship was a Greek by the name of Xenophon (430 B.C.). He was the son of a man of the equestrian class in Athens.

As a youth, he served in the Peloponnesian Wars under Cyrus, son of Darius II. When the Greeks were defeated, he elected to lead the retreat from the Tigris River to the Black Sea. He then retired to a country estate near Corinth, Greece.

He had learned much from his associations with Armenian and Persian horsemen during his career in the Greek army. From the Persians he learned "leg up" mounting -- a grounds man would help the rider mount the horse by holding the rider's leg and boosting him up. From the Armenians, he learned to tie pieces of cloth onto his horses' feet to protect them from ice and rocks.

After his retirement, Xenophon wrote the definitive book on horsemanship, which is still used, in modern form, by trainers today. (The Art of Horsemanship)

In the 1400's, body armor was invented in Persia. Its use quickly spread to the north and west, where the Europeans seized on the idea and developed the suits of armor used during the Middle Ages. Since soldiers were then too heavy to move effectively on their own, horses were needed to carry this extra poundage into battle, and the European charger was developed. The Andalusian is the modern descendant.

Meanwhile in everyday Europe, the farmer and his wife needed a horse that could carry them to and from the local market at a comfortable pace. Since the roads were little

more than pounded strips of dirt, they needed a riding horse. As the roads improved, harness breeds with a "hard trot" were developed.

In England, during the reign of King James I (1603-1625), Arabian horses were imported and crossed with native light horse breeds. King Charles II (1660-1685) imported the so-called Royal Mares. Between 1689 and 1728, the most famous Arabians (aside from The Black Stallion!) were imported. The Byerly Turk, the Darley Arabian, and the Godolphin Barb are the foundation sires of Thoroughbred horses. Justin Morgan, the foundation sire of the Morgan horse breed, was a descendant of the Byerly Turk. Eclipse, one of the sire lines of modern Thoroughbreds, was descended from the Darley Arabian, as was Blaze, the foundation sire of the Hackney. Messenger, the progenitor of the American Standardbred and the American Saddlebred, was also descended from the Darley Arabian.

SLIDE #3 **THE PHYSICAL HORSE**

The horse is built for speed and travel. He is meant to graze all day, while constantly moving. He is a selective grazer, taking a bite here, a bite there, and moving in between bites. Because of this pattern of eating, he has a small stomach; an animal heavily laden with undigested food would be an easy target for a predator.

SLIDE #4 **WHAT IS A HORSE?**

A horse is a mammal just like you. A few distinguishing characteristics of mammals are that their young are born live; they have hair or fur somewhere on their bodies; they nourish their young with milk; they are intelligent; and they breathe air.

Horses are “monogastric herbivores”. (Mono = one) That means they have a single stomach, unlike cows, sheep and deer – ruminants – who have more than one stomach; and they are vegetarians.

The horse’s lower legs (below the knees and hocks) do not have muscles. They are made up of bones, ligaments, tendons and blood vessels. In order for the blood to flow properly, the leg must be in motion. The cushion part of the sole of the foot helps to drive the blood through the leg.

Horses have very sensitive feet. They can feel vibrations from vehicles and earthquakes. The cowboy saying is “No foot; no horse”.

Horses have a “fixed” pelvis. They can’t do the splits! They can, however, scratch an ear with a back foot.

The jaw strength (masseter muscle) of a horse is about 500 psi (pounds per square inch) Humans are usually less than 200 psi, while a Pit Bull measures 235 psi (#3 dog breed in jaw strength).

SLIDE #5 **PREY ANIMALS**

Horses are prey animals who eat low protein food – grasses – all day long. They have small stomachs, large lungs and long legs so they can escape predators. As with most prey animals, living is a group is safer than living alone. A solitary animal is fair game for a predator.

Prey animals do NOT make much noise when they are injured. To them down = dead. Horses are also non-reflective. Their hair refracts light so they cannot be seen at night by enemies. They also can’t be seen by vehicles on a road.

SLIDE #6 **HOW HORSES EAT**

Because they are grazers, their faces are elongated to reach their food. Their lips are mobile and very sensitive.

The horse's lips pluck grass blades and pass them to the incisor teeth at the front of the mouth where they are chopped off and passed by the tongue to the molars which grind it up and send it on its way to be digested.

There are no teeth in the middle of the horse’s mouth, which is convenient for carrying a bit.

Because the horse's eyes are set so far from his mouth, he can't see what he is eating, as anyone who has had his fingers mistaken for a carrot can tell you! The combination of the whiskers on his muzzle, his mobile lips and his sense of smell tell the horse what he is eating before he takes a bite.

End of Section