

A HORSE THERAPIST

By Nada H. Abdelmoniem



Ali Al Ameri is probably best known outside the UAE for his problem solving and staggering techniques with horses. He has worked mainly in the UK, France, Australia, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Chile with all types of horses. Those who have seen him on television will recognise his ability to train a horse to be remarkably obedient. Horse Times interviewed Ali on how he manages to carry out this extraordinary job.

HT: Ali, you have an amazing talent; when did it all start?

When I was 18, I would just sit and watch horses; watch their moves, watch their reactions and their activities. I watched their body language, and I grew to understand them.

HT: Can you provide an example?

A horse in the wild is completely untamed. I don't hit him, I convince him. The trick is to be able to convince him as if you are trying to convince a human brain. For instance, if you use a whip with a horse, trying to get him to lift his feet up off the ground, the horse is actually attacking this whip. He doesn't want the whip, so I convince him to act without the use of a whip.

HT: What pulls you towards horses?

They are by a long way more intriguing and sincere than most people.

HT: How long does it take you to sort out a horse?

From 30 minutes to an hour, at the most.

HT: From a performance point of view, if a show jumping horse has a problem with jumping, how do you think you can help?

A lot of horses are very intimidating, and there are areas where I can't help much. Let's say, I can make them jump, but not jump high. But what you must try to understand is that some horses have eye sight problems, and not everyone is aware of that. The horse knows something is there, but can't really see it. Once it's closer, he will see it; however, it would be too late to jump. Now I can't fix *that* (smiling).

HT: Have you worked with anyone who had a performance horse with a problem that you were able to make better?

All the time. In 30 minutes, I would fix the problem, with any horse and at any location. I'll break your horse, and in half an hour you ride him. Stallions, geldings, mares, you name it. You will feel as if your horse was untouched. The breaking of a horse should take 6 weeks; I don't have that time.

HT: How do you work with a horse?

I make the horse use his own power against himself. The horse is a very predictable animal, and the use of force will not help much. People know that, but unfortunately, many continue to use it.

HT: What TV channels will people have seen you on?

On the Discovery Channel, Dubai TV, Abu Dhabi TV, and South Africa TV. Arabian Knights was a documentary that followed my training of a horse that I had bought for 1,000 AUSS; no one else wanted him or could train him, and at the end, he was winning endurance races. He became a champion after I fixed his problems with kicking and biting. However, it's not about breaking the spirit of the horse, when I train problem horses they always keep their spirit.



HT: In your opinion, what is the most common problem with getting horses into trailers? What do people do wrong?

The biggest problem with loading is that people don't teach their horses to lead properly. Most horses lead the person, but can easily drag him off in the opposite direction because they are so powerful. Some people will try to push, shove, or even carry a horse into a trailer!

HT: If a horse has a problem of some sort and you are able to fix it, will the horse then trust you only?

My fee is big. Why would I charge so much money if the whole process is just getting the horse to work for me only? I would fix the horse, and the owner would know how to continue from there, and if it doesn't work, then I simply shouldn't get paid. ■

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