MARK LANGLEY

CALM CONNECTED
HORSEMANSHIP

trust through understanding

If you act like a horse, expect to get treated like a horse

There is a lot of emphasis on being the alpha horse and using this approach to being the boss horse; many horsemanship techniques out there use methods which push horses around.

The scenario that I want you to imagine is this: There is an alpha horse walking along, that goes to push another horse off its hay. Does the other horse go away feeling happy or sad?

Over the years of training a lot of horses and running horsemanship clinics, I notice the horses that are unhappy. Funnily enough, these horses have usually had more handling and more foundation through various horsemanship methods, than others.

Something that I started to try to get people aware of on my clinics is *quality control*. I have said this before: it's not about how many things a horse can do; it's how well they can do them. And how well a horse does things is purely determined on how it feels whilst it's doing it. If a horse is choosing to do something and feeling good about it, then the quality of its movement is far superior to that of a horse which is holding tension.

The more we push our horses around, the more we make ourselves look like an alpha horse, pushing our horse down the pecking order; most commonly the horses that have been yielded here, yielded there, sent here, pushed there, show body language to their trainer that is similar to that of a horse that is moving off away from the alpha horse in the paddock.

When you are training a young horse to lunge or teaching a horse how to move its shoulders, I think it is more important to guide your horses as oppose to push them. Your guidance should allow room for your horse to make decisions. This allows them to choose to go in the direction that we chose.

This type of training approach offers more stimulation for your horse – and hopefully for many, many years, you will have an open and interactive horse as oppose to an unhappy, dull eyed horse, that just moves away from the undesirable pressure that you create.