

Is Permanent Worth Temporary?

Those who have done any remodeling know that temporary distress leads to permanent enjoyment. Refusing to deal with the inconvenience brought on by remodeling would prevent the permanent pleasure of new arrangements and décor. It would mean continuing to make do with the status quo and all that it entails.

A horse won't stand for farrier work, won't get in the trailer, won't stand for mounting, won't, won't and won't. You are not asking anything unreasonable or impossible but the horse is stuck in the won't mode. You would like to do some remodeling but the prospect of mess is either intimidating or just plain objectionable.

If you refuse or are afraid to remodel, don't complain about the status quo. Just because you don't know how to do the remodeling doesn't mean it can't be done. When the decision to remodel is made, there is the problem of who to hire. Just because somebody owns a wrecking bar, saw and hammer does not mean you'll turn him loose in your house. You investigate, get references and assure yourself that from beginning to end, this person can be trusted.

Sometimes temporary pleasure produces permanent damage. Most of us can testify to that in one form or another. Fortunately, permanent is not always permanent. Steps can be taken to reduce or maybe even erase the damage we inflict on ourselves or others.

When our horses misbehave and continue to do so, it is because we refuse to tear out the old walls and cupboards so the new ones can be put in. Nobody puts new cupboards on top of the old ones. Nobody puts fresh paint on a wall that has the plaster falling off. That is, nobody except some horse owners. Horses that have become chronic problems need a wake up call that includes a restructuring of their world view. They do bad things because for one reason or another, they have become bad. They could have

been caused to become bad but more likely they were allowed to become bad. They acted out of their own agenda and discovered that nobody seemed to care so their resistance to humans blossomed and caused all kinds of hand wringing.

When the horse realizes how easy it was, he is encouraged to quickly resist human attempts to correct the situation. When the human doesn't understand that remodeling gets messy, they retreat and give up their vision or dream of a cooperative horse. To stand and curse the mess shows that they don't know that the mess is unavoidable but is temporary. If, however, the mess never gets cleaned up, that is a horse of another color. Whatever amount or kind of mess there is as a result of "remodeling" a horse, it must be temporary. If making a mess is necessary, that is one thing, but leaving a mess is quite another.

There have been driving accidents that were basically the result of avoiding temporary mess that led to permanent mess or damage. Failure to properly prepare the horses for the eventualities of driving (temporary mess) left them vulnerable to the surprises of life and the permanent damages those surprises can bring.

This brings us to the matter of taking chances. When we are presented with a questionable situation with our horses we need to ask ourselves, "What could go wrong here and if it did, how bad could it get?" The problem is we don't know how bad it could get until after the fact. The sad part is that woulda, shoulda and coulda could haunt us for the rest of our life. If only we had taken the time and effort to do things carefully. Horses receive debilitating injuries because we were asleep at the wheel or by way of assuming we may be the recipient of the injuries.

When we do things with our horses that we have not prepared them for, we may be sacrificing the permanent good for the sake of tem-

porary folly. We may have a young horse that shows lots of potential and is very pleasant to ride. Those characteristics often doom the horse to an early physical breakdown and subsequent demise. We may become “bewitched” by all this fun and work the horse too hard, bringing about a shortening of the horse’s useful life. Our temporary enjoyment costs the horse permanent well being. This is often done without the person realizing what the sad possibilities are. Some people start a horse at two years of age. Some people wait until the horse is three years old. Which is right? The two year old is turning out to be your dream horse and you can’t wait to ride him. Another year to wait seems like an eternity. I would wait the extra year. That temporary delay will give permanent rewards. The horse’s mind will be more settled and the body more durable.

Now let’s look at the matter of farrier work. No farrier has an interest in working on a badly behaved or scared horse. A few moments of clearing up issues for the horse will yield long term benefits for both horse and farrier. The horse will be content to stand quietly and the farrier can concentrate on his work without worrying about getting hurt.

Instead of working on a misbehaving horse, why not take a moment and answer his questions? That is all he is asking. When these questions have been answered, he will stand quietly for farrier work. The questions that concern all horse are as follows:

1. What do I need to be afraid of?
2. What can I get away with?
3. What do you want?

If we don’t answer the first two, the horse won’t ask the third. The reason there are so many horses, owners and farriers who are frustrated is that the humans can’t hear those questions and therefore the horses can’t get any answers. The humans can’t answer questions they don’t hear and the horses’ can’t get answers that aren’t given. The resulting confusion often leads to the horses, owners and farriers feeling like victims of each other. None of the parties seem to know where the others are coming from.

The horses are not personally motivated to solve the dilemma. They have no immediate interest in relating to us and will do what they can to get out of it. The burden is on us to present the horse with competent and caring management. That simply means that we provide the environment and atmosphere necessary and then carefully and clearly answer those two questions. When that is accomplished to the horse’s satisfaction he will then have an interest in what it is that we want. He doesn’t know that temporary mess can lead to a more comfortable life. We must instigate the mess and then clean it up so the horse can relax instead of endure his time with the farrier.

Common objections are: He’s too jumpy, she’s too impatient, he doesn’t like his feet picked up, if you try to pick up her feet, she’ll rear, he kicks hard enough to really do some damage, she had a bad experience, etc., etc. Horses act that way because they can, or think they should. People don’t hear their questions so the horses quit asking and start acting on their own behalf. The whole thing escalates and the two parties go farther apart and give up on a solution. The problem could have been temporary but becomes permanent.

A horse can’t comprehend the temporary-permanent issue. He lives in the moment. We can comprehend it and it is up to us to implement whatever measures are necessary. If you don’t know what to do, find out. If you leave your horse in limbo and don’t seek out and find a solution, the horse has, by way of temporary resistance, pushed you into permanent defeat. You may lose sleep over the issue but your horse won’t miss a wink. He doesn’t care and he will not care until somebody requires it.

Our horse-human relationship can be a permanent mess because of our refusal to create a temporary mess. Or, because we are convinced that a temporary mess is worth permanent pleasure, we do what is necessary to bring the changes (remodel). It is our choice. What is permanent and what is temporary is up to us.

Just my opinion,

— Warren Bengtson