

I believe when you set your mind to do something and deeply desire to accomplish it, it will manifest itself.

Several years back I made a decision to become the best horseman and stockman possible.

This was the only goal. I did not aspire to become a clinician or teacher, but looking back it was the only way to get where I am going (I am not there yet).

At first I was real interested in performance and cowboy skills. I worked on colt starting, getting a horse real handy and roping. I was getting better and could work with the folks I chose to be around, even getting as good or better than most of them.

This was all real good but I was not satisfied. I felt something was missing. We were all talking one thing, but really doing another. I started working on how to really get to working with animals to get what I was looking for.

This is the first thing to remember: horsemanship is a very personal thing. If what I do makes me happy, that's important. If it is not something you find appealing, no offense.

I don't compete, so the first thing I had to do was to learn that the training that is popular to win at competitions could be keeping me from my goal.

One of the big changes to my way of approaching horsemanship was getting introduced to what I have termed "Calvary Dressage". Most things that I have studied from the Calvary have been very practical and easy to learn. They had to have a process of teaching that got results quickly and taught low skill horseman to become accomplished horseman real quickly. This created a method of horsemanship that was simple, effective and practical that made good horses that would last.

The next big learning experience was pursuing what is commonly termed "low stress cattle handling". This is about handling stock in a way that is positive to the performance of the animal. It is about working with the animal to get it to do what you want rather than forcing the animal to do what you need.

The other thing that you should know is while learning I had very little fear of getting bucked off or hurt. I could ride real well and could think myself out of a situation. So what works for me may not be totally correct for you. Only you can make that decision, and it is always best to stay on the cautious side.

These are the things I think are real important to remember:

-The thing that has been most helpful to me is realizing a horse or any animal can only have one main thought at a time.

- Horses are most athletic when their spines are strait.
- Horses have a survival mode and a thinking mode. They learn and retain in thinking mode. If the horse is in survival mode or headed towards survival mode they don't retain.
- The way a horse works physically, his reaction time is much quicker than the humans so we must think way ahead or we will always be catching up.
- It is important to be able to take a horse from calm and relaxed to athletic then back to calm and relaxed. This will go a long way to creating a horse that is safe and productive that will last mentally and physically for a long time.

Whatever style of horsemanship you choose you can work with the horse or choose to try to overpower the horse. The horse is very strong, has great stamina, and is pretty good at surviving (that's why we ride them). From what I have observed it is very ineffective to try to overpower, outlast, or scare the horse into doing what we want. The opposite of ineffective is effective and that is my goal when working with animals.

So this takes us back to the goal of being the best stockman possible. The more effective you are at working with the horse or cow the better the results will be, so I always try to keep "Effective Horsemanship" or "Effective Stockmanship" in mind while trying to be my best.