



# HOOFBEATS

EDITED BY HEIDI YOUNG, ENTRIES FROM CLUB MEMBERS ...

Membership forms and previous newsletters and articles are on our website : [www.gaitedhorseclub.com](http://www.gaitedhorseclub.com)

Facebook: Search for "Southern Comfort Gaited Horse Club" or click <https://www.facebook.com/groups/636027703108388/> and request to be added. Here, club members can post pictures or share quickly and easily.

Lifelight Insurance: If you missed the group sign up, contact Lifelight and they will prorate your membership to bring you to our annual renew date of July 1. This gives us all \$15 off the \$60/year cost. [www.lifelight.org](http://www.lifelight.org)



**Holiday Party 2016:** a wonderful evening. Thank you Nick and Catherine; the house was beautiful !



Boy were there some awesome gift in our exchange: hand-painted wine glasses, a carousel, a bridle, and fleece blankets (for humans). With some very creative husband/wife stealing; folks really worked the system. It was so much fun.



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## When Being Negative is a Good Thing

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*From [www.besthorsepractices.com](http://www.besthorsepractices.com) October, 2016 by Maddy Butcher*

When it comes to working with horses, our very humanness can get us in trouble. Take our use of language: Do you consider “negative” to be bad and “positive” to be good? When working with horses, the opposite is often true.

I’m talking about negative and positive reinforcement, two avenues of learning that stem from operant conditioning, an umbrella theory popularized by B.F. Skinner. The American researcher was preceded by the Russian physiologist, Ivan Pavlov, and others.

Briefly, negative reinforcement is applying a negative stimulus until the subject acts or moves in the requested manner. Then, the stimulus is removed. “Pressure and release” is an example of negative reinforcement. Positive reinforcement is rewarding a subject when it acts or moves in the requested manner. Clicker training and training with treats are examples of positive reinforcement.

Why is negative reinforcement appropriate and positive reinforcement less so? Watch horses with horses. Watch almost any prey animal with any predator. In both instances, negative reinforcement is what you see. Horses understand negative reinforcement and they understand the related idea of increased pressure, which Ray Hunt described as: “Be as soft as possible and as firm as necessary.”

Example: You’re a new horse in a herd. You approach the alpha mare. She pins her ears. You don’t move away. She pins her ears, purses her muzzle, and turns her head to you. You still don’t move. She spins and double barrels you. You move away and the alpha mare takes away the pressure.

The beauty of negative reinforcement is that the stimulus gets smaller and smaller as the horse learns what is being asked. The alpha mare will likely not need to double barrel the new horse again. A good ear pinning will yield a sufficient response. The new horse understands what comes after an ear pinning and will act to avoid that event.

It should be noted that many horse **folks** never see indications of negative reinforcement (between horses or between horse and rider) until it becomes glaringly obvious. “When it comes to negative reinforcement, there’s escape and avoidance,” said clinician Warwick Schiller. “Horses use mostly avoidance, but most people see only escape.”

Tiny shifts in leg, seat, and hand position can all be quickly and accurately interpreted by the horse as pressures. When the horse quietly and willingly reacts, it feels release. “Negative” is not bad or cruel or mean here. It’s natural.

Here's another red flag on being human: We tend to think in linear terms. Schools of thoughts and training models are all linear concepts. You do A and your result will be B. But horse work is more like weather. It's not linear or necessarily predictable. It relies on the ability to be in the moment, to adjust to different conditions and different horses, and to be able to think outside any scholarly box.

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## Don't Put Human Values Onto Horses

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*from [www.fearfreehorsetraining.com](http://www.fearfreehorsetraining.com) September, 2015. By Neil Davies*

Every horse person puts human values onto horses in some way, shape or form. We think some horses are better than others and some are prettier than others. We become attached to our horses and then we think that they love us back. We think our horses love to work for us and enjoy competing and winning prizes.

Human values are put onto horses in other ways as well. Horses are often labeled: quiet, wild, mad, bad, to name just a few. Fancy new labels are constantly being invented. These labels are just another way to blame your horse instead of blaming yourself, when things go wrong.

The truth is that horses don't know or care what you think is good or bad. Horses simply do whatever's easiest for them. If you make it easy for your horse to stop, kick up, pull the reins and run home, then that's what he'll do. If you make it easy for your horse to listen to you, to walk, trot and canter perfect circles and to try his hardest for you, then that's what he'll do.

Left to their own devices, horses couldn't care less if their circles are perfect or not, or if they walk, trot and canter at the right time. However, every horse can learn to try his hardest. Every horse can learn to co-operate with you and to move exactly when and how you ask. And I'm sure that every horse will find this more enjoyable than resisting and fighting with his rider.

Horses simply learn what behaviors make life easy and what behaviors make life unpleasant for them. You must remember that a horse resists and fights because of inconsistent training or he doesn't understand what's wanted. It's not because he's bad, mad, naughty or lacks respect. Horses know nothing of being good or bad and they certainly know nothing of respect. Goodness, badness, respect and all the other labels are human values and horses have absolutely no understanding of them.

Always remember, there are no "good" horses just as there are no "bad" horses. Correct, consistent handling and riding will produce "good" horses. Incorrect, inconsistent handling and riding will produce "bad" horses. Horses never change from being "good" to being "bad". The only thing that changes is the horse's training and riding. It's always the rider that makes a horse behave "badly". It's never the horse's fault.

**From the  
Members**

Nick Weber has this saddle for sale on Ebay for \$950. Click link for more info and specifics about the brand:



[http://www.ebay.com/itm/122235862890?ssPageName=STRK:MESELX:IT&\\_trksid=p3984.m1555.l2649](http://www.ebay.com/itm/122235862890?ssPageName=STRK:MESELX:IT&_trksid=p3984.m1555.l2649).

Great looking, hand-made, not factory cookie-cutter saddle. It has new improvements, including a unique pad system, allowing you to velcro three different width pads to customize the fit to your horse. The tree is wood, and is the newest variation, built with extra flare for the wide shouldered or gaited horse for freedom of movement.

You can see typical markings of a handmade saddle, and different shades of leather, since it has not yet been oiled. You can oil/condition it to darken it to your desired shade.

Total length is 24", and total weight is just under 20 pounds. It's a solidly built saddle, with the cool Vaquero styling, especially the big, honkin' horn and pommel. The seat measurement looks like 15", but it sits more like a 16". The maker calls it a 16". I ride a 16" in most saddles and this one feels perfect. Included with the sale is a matching heavy duty breast collar also built by the Franco C Saddlery company. Club members; please contact Nick at [nixhorse@gmail.com](mailto:nixhorse@gmail.com) for actual pricing.



## 2017 Calendar of Events

### Prep for Horse Expo in April:

week of March 26th	Drill team practice
week of April 2nd	Drill team practice
week of April 9th	Drill team practice
week of April 16th	Drill team practice
April 8 or 9th and/or 15 or 16th	<b>CLUB</b> practice for those wanting to perform in demonstration by ENTIRE club. Catherine Weber is coordinating, contact her.
April 21, 22, 23	Horse Expo: Our club demonstration about all gaited horse breeds is Saturday, around 11 am. Drill team might perform one evening as well.

*From the Horse Council: The 2017 Horse Expo is a three-day event and will featuring Pat Parelli, a clinician that gives demonstration's all over the world. several local clinicians will also be featured. There is a trail challenge on Friday and Saturday in the Main Arena; along with new entertainment Saturday night.*

May 8 (Mom's day)                      Sandy has Birt arena already rented.

**Elections are held at the January 9th meeting** and you need to be a current member in order to participate.

**We need to know who is willing to be President and Vice President.**

Lois will run for Secretary and and Liane will run for Treasurer.

Please print a membership form along with a waiver form from our website and bring to the January meeting with your membership check. (or mail in!)

Club policy: Membership fees are due in January and become delinquent at the February meeting. Unpaid folks shall be ineligible to attend club activities. Dues for year 2016 are \$30/Single and \$40/Family. Applications and dues should be sent to the Club Treasurer or presented at a regular meeting.

Send to: Liane Kerting-Vick, 11457 Cloverdale Rd. Kuna, ID 83634

If you can't be at January meeting, please mail your form so you can vote by email.