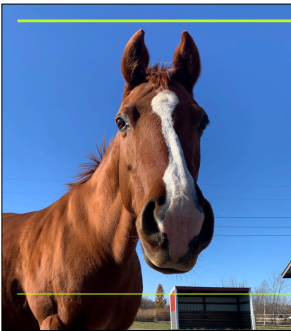




1



Equine Behavior
What does it tell us, and why is it important?

- Behavior is communication
- Horses are unerringly honest
- Safety for participants & volunteers
- Knowing when a change may be needed
- Reciprocal respect & trust
- Work partners can't ignore each other!

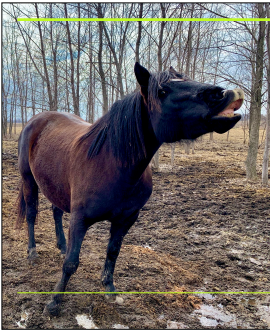
2



Signs to look for:
Progression from calm to stressed behaviors

- Slow blink, yawning, lick & chew
- Tension in face & muzzle
- Stiffer body, turning or leaning away
- Flared nostrils, tucked tail, “snatching” grass
- Tail swish, walk away (if able), paw the ground
- Vocalizing, pinned ears
- Threat to kick &/or bite

3



How can we help?

Noticing, explaining, and addressing what you see

- Be honest (you're educating everyone)
- Acknowledge & share the positives!
- Recognize that each horse's thresholds may differ
- Learn to recognize the smaller, subtle stress signs
- Include "horse talk" in volunteer trainings
- Be willing to explore a change (humans, environment, other equines, equipment, etc.)
- Humor can be a great de-stresser for everyone!

4

Nudging thresholds

Supporting our equine partners' capacity for the mental & emotional workload.

- Meet the horse where they're at.
- Learn to recognize the "tipping" point, and stop before you get there.
- Remember that horses are individuals, and they may not show up the same each day.
- In a safe, controlled learning environment, add a layer of stress and then help the horse process & decompress.
- Have an equine partner with higher thresholds to be your training partner!



5

Arena "Talk"

How can we interpret for our horses?

- Include the horse's "words" in our teaching/coaching/facilitation in the arena.
- Relate participants' and volunteers' actions to the horse's response.
- Compare human experiences to what the horse may be showing us.
- Assume the best of our equine partners, and uphold an expectation of compassionate interpretation.
- Accept, share, and emphasize our equine partners' natural honesty and capacity for empathy.
- Continue to improve our own "horse language skills!"



6



Let's TALK!

- **T: THINK** about what you see.
- **A: ANSWER** the "why?"
- **L: LISTEN** to any concerns in the arena (you, volunteers, participants, families, horses...)
- **K: KINDLY** interpret the horse's behavior.

7



Let's TALK!

Practicing our interpretation skills for each other with some real horses

- Explain the same behavior for at least 2 different audiences.
- Come up with a few different "stressor" ideas we can try.
- Create a parallel to human thoughts/behaviors.
- Assume the best of our equine partners, and uphold an expectation of compassionate interpretation.

8
