



Newsletter May 2012

Edition No. 2

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Welcome to this edition of Abi's Natural Horsemanship newsletter

It has been a while since I have written and lots has happened in between times.

Highlights over the last 6 months include:

- Competing with Ollie both In-hand and at his first ridden show.
- Teaching my first 2 day clinic in Alexandra, Otago.
- Preparing to travel to the Chatham Islands for a week to teach and train horses
- Coming up with my official logo !!!
- Seeing the enjoyment people get when their four legged equine friend does something for the first time.
- Partnerships between horse/pony and riders growing more solid through trust, respect and leadership.
- Adding new equine members to the Team



Update on the team

Some of you are aware that I have added another pony into the team and his name is Lucky. He is a small standard bred who has had a varied life so far and is about 6 or 7 years old. As usual in a horse herd, the newest member gets chased around a bit until they respect the others space and this was no different when Lucky arrived. After a while they all settled down with each other and Ollie, as usual, was the first one to 'make friends'. They all get along really well and Lucky is now involved in lessons with several riders loving their time with him. I always enjoy watching them all interact with each other and you can always learn something new by just sitting back and



observing. Try it sometime and learn how to put your observation into practice when you are playing with horses.

Ollie has matured a little more now and is turning 5 this year. He has stopped investigating everything with his mouth, including nipping other horses on the bum to see what reaction he can get from them! No longer does he play 'chase me' with a stick hanging out either side of his mouth and generally acting like an overgrown toddler! He's now a confident relaxed laid back teenager. That said he still cracks me up laughing every so often with one of

'his funny moments' and is the most friendly towards other horses. I am now riding him and have competed with him a few times leading him round the ring at shows on the ground. Last weekend he took part in his first ridden show. In all of his 'outings' he has been very calm, relaxed and level headed particularly in the latest ridden event where a helicopter landed only a couple of hundred meters away !!! He has also taken a couple of people for lessons and is growing into a very versatile gentle tall horse.

Bash is turning 19 this year and often older horses find it harder in the cooler months just like us humans. For him this means a little extra food, nice warm rugs and lots of TLC. He is still a valuable part of the business and loves to be a part of what is going on.

Alfie is firmly entrenched in the herd now, the boss of everyone else particularly when food is around and he wins the longest hair award and the most fat on anyone at the moment !!! He is a little star for my young and older riders alike. Recently one of my regular young riders was trotting around happily with her arms out to the side 'flying' as well as touching her knees, head, eyes, ears, etc, with her hands smiling and laughing while she trusted in Alfie to look after her and myself who was holding onto him.

!\$ Package Deals \$*!*

Want to buy more than one lesson at a time and save money? Consider buying a package deal. I have put these together to help those who would like to indulge in their passion getting the maximum amount of teaching out of the money paid. The package deals must be paid for before or on the first lesson, last for 4 months starting from the date of your initial lesson and work out to be slightly cheaper per lesson than the casual rate.

Great as a gift for that special someone or as an indulgent treat for you passionate horse or pony mad folks out there !!! Family discounts are available on all package deals which range from \$125-\$450 dependent on the amount of training/lesson time paid for and if you have your own horse or are using one of mine.

Alexandra Clinic

I really enjoyed teaching my first clinic down in Alexandra over 2 days in March. Kate was a wonderful host, the weather was pretty warm and sunny for both days and everyone attending was really keen to learn more about extending their skills with horses.

We did a mixture of ground and ridden games learning the basics first then adding in challenges along the way with tarpaulins, balls, poles, cones, etc. Some of the great games included hiding your horse, horse soccer and musical horses (Yes truly!! Come along to a future clinic to experience this for yourself!)

Some of the riders involved were 11—12 years old and had this to say:

“I didn’t know what to expect but it was great, especially the soccer!”
“I was not expecting that I would learn so much.”

When asked if they would recommend Abi’s Natural Horsemanship, responses were:

“Yes because it was really fun and lots of challenges”
“Yes because Abi is a great teacher.”
“Yes, it was heaps of fun.”



If you would like a clinic in your area then I am available for you and can travel anywhere within as well as outside of New Zealand. There is the opportunity to do one day or multiple day clinics just let me know what your requirements are and I can give you a quote.

Why not get a group of people together and learn life skills not just how to ride a horse !!!

Are you keen to be involved in group lessons?

I now have the opportunity to offer group lessons for those that would like to ride with others and preserve the bank balance a little more! There are lots of benefits for this type of lesson i.e. they are cheaper than individual sessions, enable riders to gain friendships with others in the group as well as their favourite horse or pony, and teaches about sharing as well as learning with others. Some have already mentioned to me that they would like to go ahead with this option and it is proving to be a popular request.

Individual costs for group lessons range from \$30-70 (see website for further details) dependent on whether you are using your own horse or mine and also the length of session taken. The size of groups will be 2-5 riders. Discounts for multiple family members are available for riding in the same group on the same day at the same time. I have put together the following times for group lessons however if these do not suit you, please feel free to contact me with times and days that you can do and we will try to get others involved.

Weekdays: Tuesday and Fridays at 10am and 4pm

Weekends: Saturdays 10am and 1.30pm

UP AND COMING EVENTS (also available on the Events page of the website)

Explore the local countryside with others and your four legged friend

The idea is to come along, meet others and explore the local countryside together with our 4 legged friends also to share in some food/drink at the beginning or end of the ride. My aim is to provide an opportunity for those with no one to ride with or horses that need some education while being in a group to meet and get to know each other. These will be guided rides with coaching available if requested, but Abi's Natural Horsemanship will take no responsibility for people, possessions or horses that take part in this event. If there is enough interest these will be run on a regular basis. Also if you would like to provide a venue for one or more of these rides please contact me and the rider fee will be waived. If you have anywhere you would like to explore please let me know and we will make it happen !!! The cost is \$15 per person (includes milo, tea, coffee, milk and sugar) with a family discount if more than one family member joins in.

Celebrate Spring and come to my Open Day

After the success of the first open day I will be holding another one to celebrate the arrival of Spring.

There will be food/drink available to purchase as well as pony rides for all ages. I will be demonstrating Natural Horsemanship and the special relationship you can gain if you have trust, respect and leadership with The Horse. For those that attend there will be a prize draw for a free lesson in Natural Horsemanship at my Court Road base. I would love some help with marketing this event, setting up and helping through out the day of the event and can offer you credit towards tuition in exchange for your work.

Date: Saturday 22nd September

Time: 10am until 3.15pm with Natural Horsemanship demonstrations at 10.30 and 1.30.

Prize draw at 3pm.

Mark it in your diaries now and spread the word to those who you think will be interested.

Natural Horsemanship Clinic at Court Road

Treat yourself to a day or two of learning with your horse, indulge in your passion for horses and learn about life skills, how to read horses, keep yourself safe and much more. Numbers are limited so book now to secure your place !!!

When: Saturday 6th and Sunday 7th or Thursday 11th and Friday 12th of October

Times: Day 1 - Registration at 9am with clinic start time of 9.15 and finishing at 4.15

Day 2 - 9.15am until 4.15pm

Costs: One day = \$130 per person for those with their own horses/ponies

\$170 per person for those using ABNH four legged friends

Two days = \$230 per person for those with their own horses/ponies

\$310 per person for those using ABNH four legged friends

Auditors/watching -\$30 per person per day.

Family discounts are available for those doing either one day or both either with a horse or auditing.

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Information Sheet 2

The Domestic Horse

Now that we understand how horses/ponies live in the wild (Information Sheet 1) we can translate that into life in our human world and start to think about how we can help them see us humans as friends not threats.

Why do they see us as dangerous or a threat?

Horses tend to class anything that moves or makes a noise as dangerous or a predator. There are many examples of this in our everyday world some natural and some man made e.g. noisy trailers, plastic bags or any plastic flapping on fences/flying through the air, long grass moving in a breeze/wind (good for predators to hide in then leap out and attack as the horse is going past), dogs, pigs, etc. *What other 'predators' can you think of?*

Horses can also feel threatened when they are around humans and can see us as something that may not be trustworthy so we have to prove to them that we are. There are several characteristics that we all have which can be off putting to horses:

- We go directly for what we want.
- We can do things quickly with lots of energy and make sudden jerky movements.
- We smell like meat and can all eat meat even if we chose to be vegetarian or vegan.
- We have eyes in the front of our heads so we can see what is in front of us without much vision on either side unless we turn our whole head.
- When we get worried, scared or hurt we naturally tense up our bodies, hold onto things that are in our hands as tightly as possible and grip on with our legs (if riding).

So as you can see from the list above a lot of the things mentioned there are the opposite to the horse's way of living when they are in the wild.

Left brained versus a right brained horse

You may be thinking 'Hang on a minute a horse only has one brain doesn't it'. What I am referring to here is more the way a horse thinks.

A right brained horse is reacting to a perceived threat or danger, is only concerned about themselves and their survival into the next minute as well as getting to a safe spot as quickly as possible. Usually they are not thinking but reacting using their emotions and instincts to stay alive. Also the horse will not be concerned with you and this can be when a lot of accidents can happen, sometimes with serious injuries to the horse/human as a result. Most of the time they will not mean to hurt us but sometimes we do not give them enough space for an exit point or we act in a way which heightens their anxiety even more.

A right brained horse may:

1. **Be unable to stand still and feel the need to move their feet constantly.**
2. **Have their head and tail held high.**
3. **Swish their tail vigorously from side to side.**
4. **Have their body tense including their jaw.**
5. **Be calling out for other horses, company and/or be making short snorting noises.**
6. **Have a worried, stressed, anxious look in their eyes.**
7. **Have their ears flat back, to the side and/or stiff.**
8. **Nostrils flared/wide and possibly breathing quickly.**

If a horse is showing some or all of these signs then it is good to be cautious around them remembering your safety comes first and that you may need the help of someone more experienced to deal with the situation. *To put this into a more everyday setting: Would you want to get onto a train if you knew the driver had never driven it before, had had no training or a instruction manual to refer to, the rails between this station and the following one were buckled/twisted and/or the new person was not being supervised by someone who knew what they were doing?* Most of us would probably say no because we would feel unsafe.

A left brained horse is a lot safer because they feel protected from danger/predators, are able to survive things that might hurt them, also be able to think through/process information more easily and clearly. Horses will be working in partnership with their herd which needs to be you if you are around them.

A left brained horse tends to:

1. **Keep their feet still (except for when swapping over resting back legs).**
2. **Have their head down below their withers/top of shoulders.**
3. **Have a relaxed tail, sometimes with a gentle swish to keep the flies away in warm weather.**
4. **Have a relaxed looking body and jaw.**
5. **Not be worried about what is going on around them and not having company nearby.**
6. **Have a relaxed sleepy look in their eyes.**
7. **Have floppy 'soft' ears.**
8. **Have relaxed, soft nostrils.**
9. **Rest a back leg (must have a relaxed body as well otherwise this may turn into a kick).**
10. **Lick, chew, sigh, yawn and/or scratch.**

Using the same everyday setting: Would you want to get on the same train used previously if the driver had 20+ years experience, had been through an initial training course plus refreshers, also had an instruction manual on hand and the rails had been thoroughly inspected for safety on a regular basis? Most of us would probably say yes and find it easier to trust that we will arrive at our destination !!!

In conclusion we need to understand the horse's instincts/how they live in the wild, (Information Sheet 1), our own instincts as well as learn how to read horses which all helps to form a good solid trusting partnership between the horse and human. If this reliable partnership is not evident on the ground then it is unwise to try anything on the horses back, we need to know they are with us mentally, physically and emotionally before putting ourselves in this vulnerable position.

There are more information sheets following this one on various topics including ground games and ridden skills explaining why and how we do them.

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