



ZONE ONE ARABIAN HORSE CLUB

August 2016

Volume 2, Number 8

Dates to Remember:

Show Dates

May 15th @ REACH

Dorchester Fairgrounds: June 12,
July 10, July 24, August 14 **Rain
date Sept 11th**

Sept 25 Championship Show @
REACH

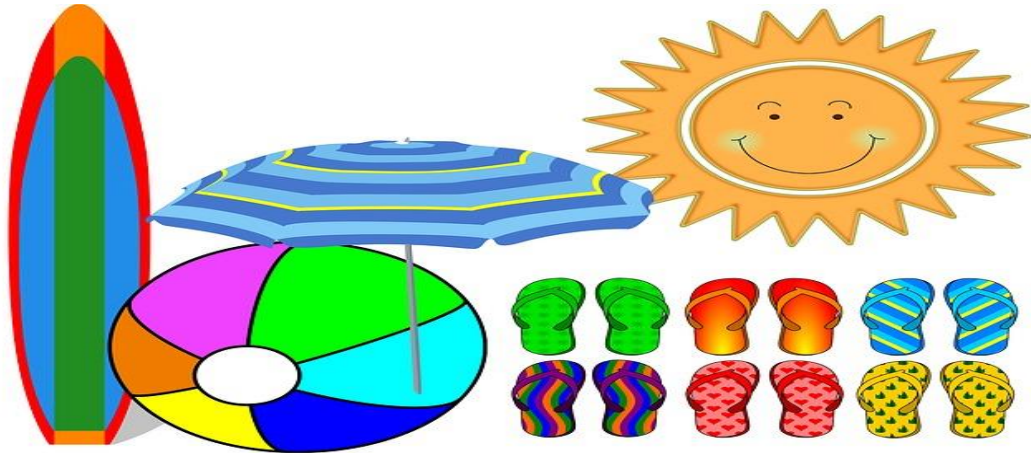
Show #5 - August 14th
Judge = Sam Soepboer
from Goderich

Judge for
Championship Show is
Tyler Teichert from
Toronto but originally
from Goderich

Contact Us:

Facebook

<http://zoneonearabianhorseclub.weebly.com/>



Zone One

We are 4 shows into our season with 2 more to go! We hope that everyone is having a fun and rewarding season. It has been great to see the support from family and friends for our riders.

Do you have any suggestions or ideas? We would love to hear them!

As our Championship show approaches, have you been able to gather a donation prize or sponsorship? This shows success depends on the support of its members. We are hoping that all classes will be money classes!

It has been decided that we will continue with the Continental Breakfast but will NOT be doing the BBQ lunch. Therefore, please arrange your own lunches for the day.



Murray Straus is that you?

Fall Fairs

Shedden Fair - Saturday
August 27th

Thorndale Fall Fair –
Saturday Sept 24th

Awards Banquet

Sunday, Nov 20th
Ironwood Golf Club
Exeter, On

**It has been decided to NOT have
door prizes this year at our Awards
Banquet**

Horse Play - How do you play with a horse?



“Play with a horse” - They are words frequently used in the horse world. For example: Don’t work with your horses, play with them; We play at liberty together; I play with my horse before getting on to make sure he’s in the right frame of mind; My horse likes to play at liberty with me. Some trainers or trademarked methods even have ‘games’ you can play with your horse. Sounds great, right? Let’s face it - for most people, playing and games beat work, any day. But I’ve seen many people ‘playing’ with their horses (at liberty, during groundwork, horse agility etc.), and I’m here to say sometimes the only one playing is the human. Play between two parties should be fun, and often the horse isn’t having any part of that.

It can be hard for people to step back and objectively assess how they are working with a horse, and it might seem to some that calling it ‘play’ rather than ‘work’ is just semantics. But I’d like to put forth the idea that as horse trainers (and if you are working with a horse, you are a trainer), we should understand how the horse views the methods we use. It follows that we should also understand that what WE perceive as play may not be what the horse perceives as play.

Play is fun, it’s healthy, and animals (including humans), generally won’t play unless their primary needs are already being met. Play can be solitary, or mutual between two or more animals.

What defines play is also very personal. My husband is an avid white-water kayaker, and sports a big grin when he’s surfing a standing wave. I, on the other hand, dabbled in the sport, and we laugh (now) at my white-knuckle, stomach churning brief foray into kayaking. But I love mountain biking with my husband, and you can hear me whooping it up as I ride down single-track in our town. No matter what sport or activity you or I consider play, it always involves a sense of pleasure when it happens.



Time
to
RELAX
in
the
SUN
SHINE

How do horses play?



What do they do that gives them pleasure? We could place most horse play activities into three categories: locomotory, interactive, and manipulative play. Horses run, and buck and fart, and bite each others knees in mock battles. They race, they posture, and mouth one another, and my horses even pick up objects like traffic cones or sticks, and swing them at and into one another.

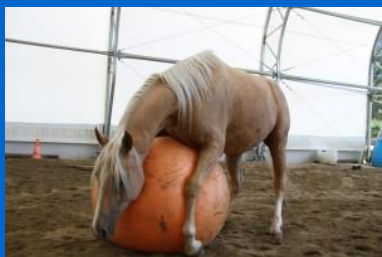
They express themselves in play in a very wide range of ways that even cross social hierarchies. Play can be a time for a lower-ranked horse to have mutual fun with a higher-ranked horse. Good play between parties is fluid, responsive in the moment, involves communication and give and take, and is enjoyable for each individual.

Unfortunately, sometimes when people ‘play’ with their horses, it doesn’t meet the above description. It can involve excess levels of pressure, e.g., using excess pressure and release (what’s technically known as negative reinforcement, -R) to convince the horse to stay with them at liberty, or to cross an obstacle in horse agility. It can also involve threats, coercion, or withholding reinforcement to achieve results. Now, if I came over to your house to play, and I had to wave my stick and string or flag at you with threats of more pressure every time you failed to kick the ball back to me, just who would be having fun with this kind of play?

This mindset isn’t restricted to those who just use -R, it can also be seen in those who use mostly positive reinforcement (+R) methods (e.g. horse trainers who clicker train) to achieve their training. There are just as many videos on YouTube of happy-looking +R clicker trainers having their clearly unhappy horses put a foot on a pedestal as there are of -R natural horsemanship trainers doing the same thing.

Can play be a re-inforcer or reward for the horse?

Another misunderstanding that people have when training horses is that they think horses are motivated by the act of playing together, as dogs can be. The opportunity to play can be an excellent re-inforcer and motivator for some dogs - just watch an agility or fly ball competition sometime. Many of those dogs aren’t going through the pattern for a piece of hot dog - they’re doing it because they find the activity itself rewarding. But - and this statement might be controversial for some of my readers - this usually isn’t the case for horses. Horses are not large dogs, and horse trainers need to work with them in ways that respect their species-specific needs and differences.



How do you play with a horse?

Short, blunt answer that might get me angry emails? You don't. You are not a horse, and your horse knows this too. But that doesn't mean that you can't have fun with your horse, because you can - and I'm a big believer in doing things with our horses that they find enjoyable. After all, they give us much joy, so shouldn't we try and give them the same?

Instead of playing with your horse, why don't you:

- Take him for a no pressure trail ride (if it is something he enjoys)
- Spend non-demanding time grooming him (not just when you want to ride), and scratch his favorite itchy spots, if he enjoys those things
- Turn him out with other horses that he enjoys interacting with
- If it's something he enjoys, provide him with safe objects to play with. Check out the video of my horse Cactus at the top of this blog. He loved playing with the four foot tall ball.



Perhaps most importantly, make sure his species-specific needs are met, so that he can play - with his own kind. Horses who are deprived of the basic 3 F's (friends, forage, and freedom) find it hard to play. Once those basics are met, grab a cup of coffee, lean on the fence rail like I do, and enjoy horse-play vicariously from your position outside the pasture.

****written by Lauren Fraser Horse Training**** - See more at:
<http://goodhorsemanship.ca/play-with-a-horse/#sthash.QegZ71jY.dpuf>

