



Let's talk about horses

By Jennifer Barr

Introducing a new horse to your herd is always an interesting experience. We had a lot of laughs lately when Moses came back to stay for a while. This rambunctious Welsh pony visited us at Christmas and created quite a furor. He was not then introduced to the gang but exercised in a separate paddock.

However, now that he's living with us until pasture time, it became necessary to let him run with our horses—something he's been shrieking about at the top of his lungs.

No weapons allowed. The day of introduction dawned foggy and damp. We made sure all Moses' shoes were off—no lethal weapons allowed. Our horses are also unshod. The herd was put out first and given time to settle down.

If Moses had been a timid pony he would have been let loose before the others and each "old" horse introduced to him, thus giving him the advantage. However, timidity was not one of Moses' problems—our horses needed the advantage!

After everyone had meandered to the back of the three-acre pasture Moses was led through the gate and released. I stood armed with a 15' lunge whip in case any battles ensued. Moses didn't wait until the others came up before he stamped his front foot and screamed his stallion challenge (he's a gelding but apt to forget that fact).

Male Antics  
All the mares' heads shot up. "Ooh" they sighed, "a man!" and trotted up to show off. Tails plumed, necks arched, everybody rose on tiptoe and minced around on springs. A few squeals rent the air and his legs were waved but Moses was the noisy one, literally hurling himself around crowing. Wasn't He The Gorgeous One—such peacocking.

Moses took off and disappeared into the fog followed by all his new mares. Moses' owner, Katrina, peered after them and jumped as we heard crashes, shrieks, and dull thuds. Immediately dashing out of the fog, Moses had met Mark, his old enemy from way back. Lots of sound and fury, fortunately signifying nothing. Mark is a big chicken and stepped out of character to bellow defiance.

Wee Ringo, the tiny Shetland with grandiose ideas, had to get his licks in. Finally the way was clear and Ringo marched up to Moses with ears back growling. Look here Buster, these are MY mares."

Moses screamed, struck out with all four feet at once, and snapped his teeth—somewhat of an over-reaction. Ringo was completely nonplussed and stepped back grinning sheepishly. "Okay, Buddy, I don't mind sharing."

From then on Ringo and Moses have been bosom friends.

What is the moral of this encounter? Belligerence pays? Attack first? The bark is worse than the bite? Who knows.

I only know that this sort of thing happens every time we go through the introduction business.

You can learn a lot from horses.

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