

LESSONS FROM THE WILD, Part 2

The stallion's idea of proper mating etiquette . . .

From "Equine Notes" by Dr. Robert Leonard, DVM

Last week we discussed the sexual habits of the wild horse. These were observed and chronicled both in the wild and in free roaming herds within controlled areas. There are several ways we can use this information with our breeding stallions and in our own herds.

The foreplay and breeding process in the wild are a little different from the stallion that is hand bred. The mare does a great deal of the teasing and uses body movements to demonstrate this to the stallion. In turn, the experienced stallion will mount the mare a time or two without an erection, just to be sure she is not "teasing" him. The repercussions can be quite humbling if the mare is not ready to be mounted. After mounting and ejaculation, *the stallion will remain on the mare until she walks away.*

How does this apply to our situations? If the stallion is a young inexperienced stallion or an older stallion who has been injured or is especially cautious, he may be reluctant to attempt breeding the mare. *Taking time to let them become acquainted should be rewarding:*

A gentle mare in strong heat should be walked back and forth in front of the stallion, eventually passing so close that she brushes against his chest with her rump.

As his confidence grows he may wish to mount the mare, but without an erection.

If you still have control by now, let him mount and stay on until he is ready to dismount.

He may do this a time or two before achieving an erection.

Once he does enter the mare and ejaculates, *let him stay mounted until he slides off or the mares moves away.*

The stallion has a very sensitive ego, which probably comes as no surprise to any female. If he is jerked away from the mare because he is attempting to mount without an erection, or if he is jerked away from the mare immediately after ejaculating, or is being bred on a slick surface, the stallion will have trouble concentrating because he is anticipating negative feedback. It may not bother him for the first few times or even for a year or two, but the effects apparently accumulate. *He will become progressively harder to handle due to these psychological effects.*

When organizing accommodations for a stallion, keep in mind that he is a social animal, and in the wild is in constant contact with mares. The stallion stalled alone will have only one half the testosterone level of the stallion stalled or boarded where he can see mares. If you have more than one stallion, stalling them so they can see each other and see mares will provide the ultimate stimulation. Boarding side by side is probably not a good idea psychologically as the competitive spirit may become overwhelming and the stallion will stay hyperactive patrolling their common border. *Of course the best way to train the young stallion is to let him watch an experienced stallion breed mares.*

Here in the Ozarks we do not share the concern over sexual vices with our neighbors in other areas. In Kentucky where tradition runs deep, there is a serious concern over masturbation in the breeding stallion. The fear is that masturbation will deplete the sperm and he will not have enough left to breed. In a thirty year period at the turn of this century, there were 46 devices patented with the purpose of stopping this habit. You can use your imagination to picture these horrible things. Recent studies have shown the stallion will masturbate, without ejaculation, every ninety minutes, 24 hours a day, without going blind or deaf. *If attempts are made to prevent it, the stallion's behavior will often start deteriorating.*

There are few topics as interesting and challenging as the sexual habits of the horse. I hope the above will be a benefit, as you prepare for what should be a very fertile and trouble free breeding season!