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Respect Between Man and Beast

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Tour offers detailed knowledge of horse psychology

By JENNIFER BROOKENS
Sentinel Staff Writer

Sherburn

Horse lovers who long to work with their horses without the use of mechanical devices and fear will find some helpful information when the National Day of the Horse tour makes a stop at the I-90 Expo Center in Sherburn on Sept. 16.

"I can't remember a time when I didn't love horses," said Dennis Reis, founder of the School of Universal Horsemanship in Penngrove, Calif. "I had my first horse when I was 10 years old and we just rode and had a good time. That horse loved me, but it didn't respect me."

As Reis moved into his teens, he worked with horse trainers and rodeos and learned the traditional methods using mechanics and fear to combat the

problems most horse owners have.

"I was able to get the horse to do what I wanted, but then I lost that love relationship," Reis recalled. "Since then, I long to have that relationship with a horse where there is both love and respect; where the horse loves me, but I can also work with it."

Reis continued to work with horses and, in 1984, bought a ranch to train them. He also learned the art of using body language to communicate with horses, and using what some horse lovers refer to as "horse whispering."

"It's clear, but quiet," Reis said. "It's an attitude that also works outside the arena. It's really transformed me. I'm better now even in my personal relationships and I have fun through that knowledge. The horses taught me what didn't work, and what was just work is now a relationship."

After starting to train horses at his ranch in 1984, he also started teaching

his techniques to the people who bought horses from him and then complained about behavior problems.

"The owners were having trouble with the horses once they got them," he said. "Horses are dangerous. You hear about people being injured, even killed in horseback riding incidents or rodeos. It's dangerous when (horses are) misunderstood. My skills have helped me see things from the horse's point of view."

In 1988, Reis started teaching his techniques on tour.

"This time, we'll be touring 14 states through September and October," he said. "I'll have eight of my personal horses, and it's a five-hour show. But these are fun and educational concepts."

Some of the points Reis highlights in his "Day of the Horse" tour include herd dynamics and creating an invisible round pen. There are also performance horses, and what Reis refers to as the ultimate trust between horse and

human.

Reis is also concentrating on another feat during his tour: to have a recognized National Day of the Horse.

"I want to increase the awareness of the importance of the horse in our culture," Reis said. "The horse industry contributes over \$112 billion annually to the American economy, and the horse is a common bond among all the people who led the way in building our country. Our past rides upon the horse's back, and it's a living link to the heritage and history of our nation."

Last summer, Reis was successful in getting his home state of California to recognize the second Saturday in December as the official Day of the Horse, and now Reis hopes to make it a nationwide event.

"It would just be a day to honor and love," Reis said. "The work we do with horses is work for the common good, and currently, we're seeing urban

sprawl creeping closer and closer to our ranch. The horses need to be protected, and there needs to be a higher awareness. In our area, horses are the biggest industry next to the wine industry. There's numerous horse clubs out here, as there are spread out across the nation."

The Day of the Horse tour also will have petitions available for participants to sign for the National Day of the Horse recognition.

Tickets for the Day of the Horse seminar are \$65, or \$36 booked in advance for groups of five or more. Tickets will be available at the door for \$100.

On the Web:
Reis Ranch Universal Horsemanship:
<http://www.reisranch.com>
I-90 Expo Center:
<http://www.i90expoctr.com>