

## **Brains vs Brawn**

**By Pete Dillingham**

**For a few moments he sat still on the ground.....this was a tough decision for “Bean” (our Jack Russell Terrier). Several weeks earlier, the puppy had been grazed by a hoof on one of these trail rides.....and now he was being asked to venture out again. Out in front, my wife, myself and “Moon” (our older dog and veteran of many rides), beckoned Bean to follow. Finally the little guy moved slowly forward and we had a safe, short ride. Our next outing was similar, but the moment of indecision was shorter and the ride was longer. Today, when Bean sees the saddle hit the horse’s back, he’s ready for the trail.**

**When a dog, horse or human makes their own conclusion as opposed to being forced into a decision, the outcome is more permanent. In developing a horse’s attitude, it’s imperative that the rider be the “decision maker” but a trainer gets better results if the horse feels some ownership in the process. Let’s put this into a “real” life situation.**

**Your objective is to get a horse to put its head into a halter when you go out into the pasture. Create a puzzle for the critter and help him find the correct answer. First, let all the other horses into a barn (or other pasture) except your pupil. Stand at the gateway with halter in hand, accessible to your horse. The rascal will probably go crazy for a while trying to figure out how to get to the other side of the gate.....eventually they will look to you for an answer to their predicament. Show the student its halter, if he pulls away from the halter, let him go....don’t chase after him. When the horse comes up again, repeat the process until your animal stands perfectly still while the halter goes on. Then go through the gate.**

**Next time stand further from the entrance way to the gate and repeat the process. Eventually work your way to the center of the pasture and stand there until the horse walks up to you and asks to be haltered.**

**The horse lover has provided their steed with several options, but the only decision appealing to the horse is the choice they want the horse to make! It’s important that the critter have a motive (the gate) to choose an option. However, the motive can eventually be shifted to grain, physical affection, or verbal praise. Once this routine has been established, it will become a “conditioned response” for the horse.**

**Developing passive teaching takes**

- 1. Time and patience**
- 2. An insight into the “clockworks” of a horse’s mind.... It’s fears, affections, and interests and**
- 3. Creativity to formulate a plan that motivates a horse to get the desired results. In other words.....more brains than brawn!**