

## **QUIET TALK**

**By Pete Dillingham**

I couldn't count the times that my wife, Bambi, and I have glanced at each other and instantly knew the feelings or thoughts of the other. Our subtle form of communication has matured with love, patience, and consistency. A rider can also establish "quiet talk" with their horse. "How in the world did you tell that horse to do what it did?" reflects a stellar relationship between horse and rider. We use four basic ways to establish communication with our horse; voice, reins, legs, and balance.

1. **Voice.** Half of the horses in the world think that their middle name is "Whoa".....whoa means "stop", "I'm scared!", "Look out" and is occasionally confused with "Whoopee". However, used with discretion and consistency vocal aids can be a very effective. "Easy", "good", "step!", and "whoa" can be super signals because; 1) voice aids can be used in the saddle or on the ground several feet from a horse and 2) they travel through the air "faster than a speeding bullet".

2 and 3. **Leg and rein communication.** These tools used together and independently can teach a horse to backup, move sideways, turn on its shoulder or hip, move each foot independently, stop, go, and many other maneuvers. A rider using rein and leg cues effectively can waltz, jigger-bug, cha-cha, and "houchie couchie" with their horse.

4. **Balance is the key to good horsemanship.** I know,... I know,... I know you are saying "Hold up 'buckeroo' you just told me how to do 'hand stands' with my critter.....how in the world can communications get better!?". A balanced rider uses the controlled movement of their weight to "whisper" the signals for all that fancy footwork.

A horse that is grasping the "where's and when's" of riding, needs the "rein and leg" to understand. When good communication is established, the rider starts to use weight signals as primary cues and leg and rein for reinforcement. The rotation of a rider's head, shoulder or hip can eventually be interpreted as a turn, pivot, or stop. Developing a subtle language with a horse requires two-way communication. A horse lover listens to their steed's fears, misunderstandings, achievements.....and than acknowledges with love, patience, and consistency with "quiet talk".