

Andrew takes the natural approach to horsemanship

Natural horsemanship is becoming more and more popular as people realise to get the best out of an animal there has to be trust and respect.

Andrew Froggatt from Ohariu Valley has been training horses in this way for three years now and is strongly committed to getting the best from a horse and its owner. He first learned about the method when doing a horse business management course in Melbourne.

Andrew returned to New Zealand and was working on a farm near Cambridge when he got a call from Australia. The woman running the course had fallen and broken her wrist and he was invited back to work.

"I had a couple of years on and off in Australia and when I came back here I wanted to start up before anyone else got to know about it."

Andrew says one of the key elements of natural horsemanship is gaining the horse's respect and taking control of it on the ground before getting into the saddle.

"You have to look at how much time we spend with our horses with regard to the results we're getting. I take the horses through 'pre-flight' checks and you can tell by their reactions what's happened in the past. I teach them the ground work and then use that to test them to see if there's any niggly stuff that needs to be fixed," he says.

"That's really important that I test them - like on a windy day - in all sorts of situations. I test them before I get on them."

Andrew starts the horses off wearing a soft rope halter and single rope and says when he is finished a horse could be ridden with nothing at all. He says it is important that a horse is comfortable with one thing it is being taught before moving on to the next. Although it may take time for a horse to adapt to a new method of training, Andrew says no horse is beyond help. "I've never struck one that has never responded to this type of training. There's no real 'dirty' horses, it's caused by us. We get them so they become beautiful, really calm and relaxed and dependable. They know you're not going to ask them to do something they can't do or that's going to hurt them. It's all about reading the signs and the horse will let us know when it's ready and they will do it with a good attitude."

There are six 'pre-flight' checks Andrew takes the horses through during their training - backing up, facing up, lunging, moving the front end, moving the back end and side passing.

"We can use these to test the horse before we ride. When they're doing it well on a simple rope, say a 2.5 metre rope, we can go out to a 30 metre rope and just because they're further away from us or they don't have a halter on doesn't mean they don't have to listen."

Andrew says natural horsemanship teaches the animal patience, and it also deals with the physical, mental and emotional areas.

"Horses are very sociable animals. They live in herds and in a herd of wild horses there is a lead mare who keeps all the others in line. We're the



dominant horse - we take the place of the lead mare."

Andrew doesn't just deal with horses needing to be broken in, he also helps older horses that may have developed bad habits. An important part of the training is teaching the owner to spend more time with their horse and be consistent with them.

"Fixing the horse is the easy part, getting the owner to be consistent is harder." Andrew Froggatt can be reached on 479-9408 or 025-230-0881.

Andrew is pictured with Rocky, demonstrating how calm and relaxed his method of training can make a horse.