

# Week 3 Summary – Regarding Horse

**What is the history of horse/human relations?** We met around 30,000 years ago and humans nearly hunted horses to extinction as a food source. Humans have used horses as farm equipment, transportation, weapons, tradable currency, sacrificial offerings, gifts to royalty, burial companions, therapist and entertainment to name a few. Around 5,000 years ago humans began to ride horses. We selectively breed for size, colour, speed, gait, temperament... Horses have captured the imagination of humans for millennia as shown by the many horse based myths and legends. Humans have only been sedentary, rather than nomadic, for around 6,000 years and we have introduced that lifestyle to horses too.

**What's Important to Horse?** Friends, Freedom, Forage

Join the horses in their world...

- My world is wide open spaces, constant threat from predators, sparse low energy food and my herd. My **body** has strength & endurance – I am nomadic covering over 30 kms per day – I move slowly to conserve energy. I have set routes I take to fulfil my needs – I know where to find water, food, minerals in the earth and medicinal plants.
- My **hooves** are water filled shock absorbers that I replenish each time I stand in a lake or river to drink. They expand and contract with every stride with a heart-like pump in each hoof – pushing oxygen depleted blood back and drawing new oxygen rich blood to each hoof. My hooves have the same density of blood vessels as my liver. I can feel subtle vibration from the earth which helps me stay safe from predators and acts as an early warning system for natural disasters like earth quakes.
- I have biting and grinding **teeth & continuous digestion** – as a grazing herbivore I rely on a high volume of low energy fibrous food. I continuously produce around 60 litres of stomach acid a day to digest this forage, regardless of whether I am eating or not. I eat about 60-70% of my time (15-17 hours) and the partially digested food and saliva buffer the acid. Digestion is also my main source of body warmth.
- My muzzle and eyes have super sensitive **whiskers**. There is a dedicated area in the brain for each whisker. The position of my eyes means I cannot see directly in front of, or below, my nose. My whiskers are extra eyes for me to feel where to graze and what to avoid. I adapt to my climate, desert heat to snow, by seasonally growing and shedding my waterproof coat of hair. Each hair of my thick coat has a muscle that can raise the hair to trap air for warmth. The hair on my fetlocks create a natural drainage point.
- Members of the cat and dog family hunt me as do humans. To help keep me safe I have excellent **vision**. My eyes are the largest of all land mammals, see 350° around my body, work well in the dark and are very motion sensitive so I am hard to creep up on.
- My keen sense of **smell & acute hearing** keep me alive. As a result I find stormy weather confusing as the sounds and smells are distorted. I know my herd members by their scent signatures.

- Because my predators also have excellent hearing I am a **non-verbal communicator** so as to not bring attention to myself. I use facial expressions, body postures and energetic vibration to communicate with my herd over very large distances.
- I can **sleep** standing up without using my muscles as I have a network ligaments and joints that can lock in place – I rest or sleep about 30% of each 24 hours and love to lie down whilst my herd members watch over me.
- **Speed** is my main defence. I can reach 40–48 km/h for a short burst. Mostly I walk to conserve energy but will trot, canter and gallop when I am being chased or I am playing with my herd mates. When I run away I need a lot of air to fuel the muscles that move my heavy body. I have large nostrils and I stretch my head & neck forward to open the airway fully – I cannot breathe through my mouth like a human can.
- I have a reactive **Nervous System** – pre-set to 'flight'. If I survive I shake and snort to release adrenalin and make my body ready to go back to grazing as quickly as possible – energy must be conserved. I go into shock due to trauma, illness, dehydration and my circulation shuts down. This is an evolutionary kindness at the moment of death – I leave my body, and if I live my blood loss is minimised. I can 'fight' also with my excellent balance & hard hooves that can deliver a powerful kick or strike. I will also use my teeth to bite.
- As a collaborative herd dweller I have a vibrant **social life**. We take turns sleeping and keeping watch and are curious.
- We have very sensitive **skin** and love mutual grooming to build bonds. We will also stand nose to tail and flick flies off one another with our long tails.
- I **play** with my herd mates to strengthen bonds, learn social skills & build strength – Play & socialising takes up about 10% of my day.
- I live by my excellent **socio-sensual awareness** – if I am banished I am much more likely to die. Herd is life – if I become separated I don't have their help to stay safe. This is hard on me as I sleep much less and am hyper-vigilant which will take its toll on my health. I am highly sensitive to emotional energy and intention – I have to accurately read predators and my herd mates to stay alive. I am sentient so I know love and grief.

**How do horses experience the world?** Without a large neo-cortex (logic & reason) like the human brain, a horse lives very much in the now and without the distraction of a false-self. They have 30 meters of intestine that acts as a huge energetic vibration transmission & reception chamber.

Electromagnetic energy has been measured 15 meters from their **heart** (as opposed to a human's at 3 meters – which is 5,000 times more than our brain's electromagnetic energy). Interestingly 15 meters is typically the first boundary of 'social space'. Horses may display discomfort if we bowl through their social space boundaries without permission. This often shows up as stepping back or turning their head away.

Horses have the same 7 main energy centres (*chakras*) as humans with an additional one on their shoulder for bonding with other species.

**Do horses thrive in the human world?** Generally, no. Sedentary 'civilised' human life does not meet the needs of horses very well. Horses are adaptable and tolerant – "I do not understand your world and why some things are important to you, but I will try to please you as I am hard-wired to connect because of my herd instinct". The main stressors are:

- Stables feel like *caves/cages* – these may feel safe to you as a predator but for a prey animal, whose trump card of 'flight', they can feel very trapped. This is also true of yards and small paddocks. *Claustrophobia* leads to confinement stress, even *laminitis* – inflammation of the velcro like corium layer that bonds hoof wall to bone.
- Lush green grass is the horse equivalent of *cakes and sweets* – full of sugar and potassium. This disrupts the digestion, immune and hormone systems. Horses become *inflamed* physically and emotionally 'high' especially when the grass is actively growing in spring and autumn. Also their stomachs are designed for continuous digestion but hard feed is fed in meals. Domesticated horses are susceptible to *ulcers* as the stomach is only partly lined with an acid resistant layer. The top of the stomach gets splashed when the stomach is empty as it is no longer buffered by digesting food and saliva. Ulcers can also be found in the intestines.
- *Colic* is the most common emergency condition in horses and one of the main causes of death. This is a digestive issue but food may not be the only cause – stress is also a large contributor.
- Social *isolation distress* is due to the herd mentally. Horses feel safest in groups otherwise they need to be constantly vigilant to watch out for predators.
- *Emotional insensitivity* also causes stress. Their outstanding socio-sensual awareness means they are anxious when around incongruence ie. a mismatch between actions and emotions. Horses are far more emotionally sensitive than westernised humans because their survival and herd cohesion rely on it.
- *Riding* is not natural. From the horses point of view a predator (human) throws the skins of a dead sheep and a dead cow on the weakest part of their backs, cinch up a girth where a lion would grab them to kill them and then jump on their backs into predator position. And yet so many accept it...

**What gifts are horses offering humans?** Horses are far more concerned with our emotional well-being than we may imagine. Because they are free of a false-self and live in the now they provide moment to moment *bio-feedback without judgement*. A horse will:

- *Merge* with energy that enhances their harmony & well-being
- *Mirror and amplify* an energy that needs resolving to come back into harmony. We have to ask ourselves are we:
  - Brave enough to ask?
  - Strong enough to listen?
  - Humble enough to learn?