



Classifieds Clubs & Calendar



Is your horse a people pleaser or a prize fighter? Alberta horsewoman profiles equines

by Wendy Dudley

Does your horse walk all over you, or is he shy and sweet? Do you have to push him along, or hold him back? Do the two of you waltz together, or fight it out like you were in a boxing ring?

Welcome to the world of equine personalities; all 16 of them, according to horse trainer and riding instructor Dessa Hockley who has just published her book, *Is Your Horse A Rock Star?*

Knowing which personality your horse has can help you develop a proper training program to suit his strengths and weaknesses, and determine in which activity he will most likely excel.

"After all, not all horses are suitable for jumping or cutting cattle. And you may have a horse that is great for arena work, but just can't handle being out on a trail," says Hockley, who teaches English and Western riding and trains horses at her Liberty Stables, west of Millarville, AB.

Hockley has developed a system of equine profiling that has helped her rehabilitate horses, and improve relationships between horses and their riders.

"Part of it is accepting who they are, just like we accept that people have different personalities. It's also about teaching people to have fun with their horses. Recognize who they are, and find the humour in them. Sometimes we forget to have fun with our horses."

Hockley's system, similar to the Myers-Briggs personality test for people, categorizes horses as dominant or submissive; energetic or lazy; curious or afraid; and aloof or friendly.

The various combinations result in 16 different personalities, ranging from the Rock Star (who flaunts the dominant, energetic, curious and friendly traits) to his opposite, the Lone Wolf, who is submissive, lazy, afraid and aloof.

It's not that one type is preferred over the other — each has its strengths — but knowing the personality of your horse can solve a lot of training and riding prob-



Photo by Wendy Dudley

Dessa Hockley has spent her life with horses, competing in a variety of disciplines from rodeo and racing to eventing and jumping. She now teaches and trains, and has also researched 500 different horses to develop training methods to match individual personalities.

lems, says Hockley.

"There are a lot of horses left to stand in fields because their owners have given up. They don't handle them."

And many of them are dominant horses, she notes. "If you are a dominant, controlling type of person, you may have a problem with a horse that is the same type. The two of you are going to be fighting it out, butting heads all the time."

This doesn't mean that the bossy, energetic horse should be allowed to side pass his manners, but he must be given the opportunity to display these traits or else he will be frustrated and continually be in battle-mode, she says. Try turning him loose with a herd so he can boss away; that way, he will be more willing to listen to you when saddled.

This approach often proves difficult for riders who believe the conventional wisdom that they must always be the boss of their horse, but if you occasionally surrender to the dominant horse and allow him the freedom to choose, the results can be worth it, she says.

A little less dominant is the Reluctant Rock Star. The only difference from the Rock Star is a

The 'just because' breeder Do you know one?

by Marcia King

We've all heard the stories about horses that are sold through auction and headed for slaughter — not just the broken-down, but healthy, registered horses, adults in their prime, and even youngsters.

So what chance is there of finding an appreciative home for the nicely dispositioned but untalented, plain-looking grade horse — the "just because" horse bred by a shortsighted horse owner from equally unassuming stock?

Why do some horse owners breed so irresponsibly and are so

