

## BATHING: AFRAID OF THE HOSE

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It's a hot day and Denise has been walking her horse, Timmy, for the last 15 minutes of her ride, but he is still hot, sweaty and sticky, although his breathing is normal. Denise decides this would be a good opportunity to give him a bath, so she takes off his tack, puts on his halter and lead rope and takes him over to the hose. She turns the water on, but when she picks up the hose and starts to spray Timmy, he runs backward away from her. She has to drop the hose to keep him from getting away, and when she tries to lead him back he wants no part of it. She ends up sponging him off with a bucket, but it is time consuming and she doesn't feel as though he is really clean.

### WHAT YOUR HORSE WANTS YOU TO KNOW

- ⊖ *That's weird, and cold and scary.* Even though it seems like cold water would feel good on a hot day, cold water on a hot body just feels cold. That, combined with the experience of having something coming out of nowhere and hitting his body—the horse doesn't even realize at first what it is—is pretty disconcerting.

### WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

- ⊖ First use the friendly game (page 30) to introduce the horse to the hose, with the water turned off. After he has looked at the hose, felt it on his body and accepted it, he should see it being dragged and flipped around as one does when using it. Allow him to move around if he wants to, but keep doing whatever made him move until he stops, or begins to stop, then stop your motion as well. This tells him that standing still works better than running around. After a moment, run the hose across his body again in a nonaggressive way, smiling, to remind him that the hose doesn't hurt and your intention is not to hurt, either.
- ⊖ If at all possible, use warm water at first, rather than cold. Leaving the hose sitting in the sun will make at least the first few minutes of slowly running water nice and warm. In any case, when you use the hose the day should be warm and the horse should not be extremely hot.
- ⊖ Turn the water on so it is running slowly. Hold the hose away from the horse at first, so he can see it. When you bring it toward him, keep your eyes soft and your approach casual. Smile. Let him put his nose up to it and see what it is, and let the water run over his lips so he licks it and finds out what it is, but be careful it doesn't get into his nostrils. Next, using advance and retreat (page 27), let the water run on his front feet and lower legs first, allowing him to move but praising him when he stands. Be careful he doesn't step or get tangled in the hose if he moves.

Gradually move up to his chest, back to his hind legs, up the underside of his neck, across his barrel and over his back and croup.

- ⌚ Unless he seems to be enjoying his shower, wait until another day to do the remainder of his head, between his hind legs and under his tail, using warm water on the latter two if at all possible. When using the hose on his head, be very careful not to get water in his ears, which, besides being very uncomfortable, can lead to ear infections.
- ⌚ Let the horse tell you if he is enjoying his shower. Most horses learn to love it if given a chance, but if you are pushy and inconsiderate you may make him fidgety and uncomfortable instead.

## WHAT NOT TO DO ABOUT IT

- ⌚ When you're trying to get the horse to like something, try not to think you're going to "win" and *make* the horse accept it.
- ⌚ Don't be impatient. Even though you know the shower will feel good, it may take him some time to figure it out.

## BITING PEOPLE

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Tom is getting ready to ride his new horse, Red. He is near the stall getting his grooming tools organized when Jane comes by, leading her horse, Billy, through the stable on her way out to ride. As she passes Red's stall door, his head snakes out over the door with his ears flat back. His mouth is open and he snaps viciously at her shoulder! Fortunately, Billy sees him coming and jumps to the side, pulling Jane with him. She is unhurt but upset by the incident. Tom apologizes and promises to do something about it. He is quite surprised by Red's behavior, since he had not seen it when he was looking at Red in his previous home.

True biting, as distinguished from nipping, is intended to hurt! Since horses are not naturally aggressive in most situations, something pretty serious is going on. Besides charging at the stall door, other times the horse may bite are when the girth is being fastened up or tightened, or when he is eating.

## WHAT YOUR HORSE WANTS YOU TO KNOW

- ⌚ *I feel extremely threatened!* Because he is in new surroundings, the horse may fear that he will be driven away. He feels he has no friends and no one to protect him. He has almost surely been treated roughly, so he expects this treatment wherever he goes.
- ⌚ *I have to show myself as very strong in order to survive.* Horses who have been abused by clumsy or uncaring people sometimes decide the only way to survive is to be stronger and more aggressive and "do it first."