



# ASK MONTY

March 27, 2013

Greetings! and horses everywhere,



The big word "desensitization" is proving challenging for Fergus the Horse! So he decided to seek professional help from Monty Roberts.

See the column below to read the exchange between Monty and Fergus. Maybe it will help you, too.

## IN THIS ISSUE

[Question and Answer](#)

[Equus Online Uni](#)

[Be a Leader](#)

[Where Is Monty?](#)

[Gentle and Elegant](#)

[Spread the Word](#)

## QUESTION AND ANSWER... FERGUS ASKS MONTY

### A Question from Fergus:

Dear Mr. Roberts,

I know most of your questions are from people, but I'd like to ask you something too, if that's OK, because I've heard, and read, that you know some things about horses. You see, **there's a big human word that I'm having a great deal of trouble with: "Desensitize"**. My people don't say it to me, they say it to each other. What they say to me is: "Easy, does, it Fergus, it's OK." But it's not OK! Because when they come to me saying that, **they are tense and nervous**, and I know they are going to show me something horrifying! It is going to be something that moves, makes suspicious noises, and wants to touch me. I'd rather leave, but I cannot because of **the lead-rope that they've named "relationship"**. Often, "relationship" is strained. I really want to relax and be an "Easy does it, Fergus..." but it is impossible because they themselves are not relaxed, and **they want to "desensitize" me every day with something new and dreadful**. I dream about it at night. This is really hard. Is there anything you can say to my people about "desensitize"?

Respectfully,



# Fergus

### Monty's Answer:

Dear Fergus,

## Monty's Principles

### LEARNING TO BE LOVED

Dear Monty, my name is **Rick Rikard** and I live in Springfield, Missouri. The purpose of this letter is to **thank you for a very special gift that you gave to me** and are not aware of how special and life changing that gift was. Just a quick version of my life might read that **I came from a broken home**; spent time in foster homes, but more importantly **never really learned about "real" love**. Not only how to love, but how to be loved as well.

You came to Springfield, Missouri, sometime around 2000, and I was invited by a friend to attend your program. Until that time I had absolutely no use for a horse. In fact I was terrified of them. At the beginning of your presentation, you said something like "We have a policy that if you don't get something from this performance that we have a no questions asked refund policy." I thought what a noble statement.

Little did I know what was about to take place. You did some amazing things that night. You loaded a horse in about 15 minutes that had taken 6 men half a day to drag into a trailer. You stopped a horse that had an issue with bucking in

Thank you for (somehow) writing to me with your concerns. Most people think I help people with horse problems, but **more often I help horses with people problems**. I hope to help you get past this confusion about what we humans are asking of you, and why. **When they say 'Desensitize', they want to help you worry less about spooky items you come across** on the trail and in the yard. That's a good thing, Fergus.

**Being spooky is one of the most natural conditions in the world of equine behavior.** Just as with so many terms in the horse world, it seems appropriate to define the term spooky. It seems important to me to be clear so that these words can be understood worldwide. We horsemen in America tend to say things like, "He sure is spooky." We expect everybody to immediately understand that this means, 'to be frightened.'

There is a big word in psychology for your fear of unfamiliar things, Fergus. The word is 'neophobic' which is a persistent and abnormal fear of anything new. Horses are neophobic but people can be, too. Young children like their world to remain constant and elderly people often cope using long established habits and don't want to learn "new tricks". You are big and strong, Fergus, and people worry you might hurt yourself, or them, if you "spook". This is why they introduce you to new things. My goal is to help people learn to do this with adrenaline and heart rates that are low.

After my first book, [The Man Who Listens to Horses](#), was published in 1996, I was asked to conduct demonstrations on a worldwide scale. One of the remedial problems brought to me on a regular basis was "the spooky horse." While I had dealt with this sort of training for more than fifty years, I had no idea how serious the condition was until I began to travel extensively. Cases representing **fear of plastic bags, birds, airplanes, trucks, tractors, umbrellas, cattle, sheep, hogs, and even the fear of bicycles**, were brought to me on a regular basis.

**The plastic shopping bag has become the definitive object to assist me in desensitizing** the horse to objects that cause him to spook. They are extremely light and therefore can't physically cause the horse any harm. I attach several bags to one end of a discarded rake handle (a small wooden pole approximately 1.5 meters or five feet in length). **You can train the bag to go away Fergus.** Here's how.

After you and your human have accomplished a [Join-Up](#), they show you the plastic bag on a stick. It will be scary at first, but when you relax and accept it, they will take the bag away and relax. You can too. When I do this with horses, soon I can swing a massive collection of plastic bags at the horse evoking no flight response. And soon **the horse will accept other scary objects if I stay relaxed** and he trusts that nothing painful will happen.

Recognizing that we are dealing with the true nature of the horse will soon produce a non-spooky individual. It is important to eliminate blame from the mind of the trainer. I instruct my students that the horse can have no fault in these matters and with that mindset one can expect positive results.

Over the past 20 years the more than 8000 horses I have dealt with in front of public audiences have virtually all come to me with a spooky mindset. I think that it is fair to say that there have been no failures. **It's important that we humans respect your nature, Fergus, and your right to fear unfamiliar objects while you journey to overcoming spookiness.**

 [Forward to a Friend](#)

**THIS WEEK IN MONTY'S EQUUS ONLINE UNI**

about 20 minutes. You started a colt in 20 minutes that had never been ridden. All pretty amazing to me. However; **there was one horse in particular that truly touched my heart** and life forever.

Before every horse that you worked with you would visit with the owner in order to find out a little about the horse. This horse was brought into your work area with cross ties and you had the audience move back in order for him to get into your round pen. You asked the owner to tell you a little about his horse. First I will describe to you that **the man was a large man with a full beard** and had a very gruff voice.

He told you that the colt had been born 3 years earlier and that **he had broken out of the pen** of his mother. He and **the vet had caught up to him 2 days later** and had managed to give him a shot. **That was the last time he had been touched.** You then asked him what the horse's name was and he replied "Well, I haven't named him anything."

At that moment that little horse touched my heart. **He was 3 years old and didn't have a name.** Wow! He was terrified. You could not get close to him at first. He was so skittish. You said "you are sure a skittish little bugger, I think I will name you Bugger." He had a name! You did Join-Up with him but you didn't do anything like ride him in 20 minutes, or load him in a trailer, but you did something more amazing than all of those things.

You introduced him to "LOVE" for the first time in his life. **He experienced more love in 30 minutes than he had his entire 3 years of life.** When you were finished working with him he did not want to leave you. Well, guess who else "got" it. I went back to work as usual on Monday, but caught myself thinking about Bugger so many times throughout the day.

I had watched love manifest itself right before my eyes. How beautiful that was. A friend of mine came into my office and asked me what I was thinking about as I was starrng out the window. I told him the story of you and Bugger. He said "Are you thinking about buying a horse?" I thought for a second and said "You know, I am."

That has been 13 years ago. I don't know how many horses I have owned or how many I have now. (ha that is

## THIS WEEK IN Equus Online University

### DUALLY DANCE WITH FOALS LESSON 1: FITTING THE X-SMALL DUALLY HALTER



Did you know that there is an extra-small Dually Halter made for foals and ponies? Learn how to fit it on [Equus Online University](http://www.montyrobertsuniversity.com) this week!

Current students log in here: [www.montyrobertsuniversity.com](http://www.montyrobertsuniversity.com)

Not a student yet? Click on: <http://montyrobertsuniversity.com/sessions/new>

Join-Up Now!

Or go to [www.montyrobertsuniversity.com/about-the-uni](http://www.montyrobertsuniversity.com/about-the-uni)

## BE A LEADER

"It is true that many remedial horse problems happen because of the infliction of pain and the assertion of dominance, but about as many problems occur because of the lack of leadership."

~ Monty Roberts

Please share your thoughts on leadership by emailing us:  
[askmonty@montyroberts.com](mailto:askmonty@montyroberts.com)

## WHERE IN THE WORLD IS MONTY?



**April 6, 2013:** [Monty Roberts Jubileums Show](#), Flyinge Equestrian Center, Sweden

**May 3, 2013:** [Tour Date in Germany](#), Neustadt/Dosse

**May 18, 2013:** [A Night of Inspiration with Monty](#) at Flag Is Up Farms in Solvang California. Open to the public with limited space. [http://www.montyroberts.com/ab\\_about\\_monty\\_calendar/night-of-inspiration/](http://www.montyroberts.com/ab_about_monty_calendar/night-of-inspiration/). Contact [admin@montyroberts.com](mailto:admin@montyroberts.com) or +1 805 688 6288

between 9 am and 5 pm Pacific Standard Time.

**August 5-9, 2013:** [Monty's Special Training](#). Read clinic description at <http://www.join-up.org/education/>. Contact [info@join-up.org](mailto:info@join-up.org) or call 805-688-3483.

For information about Monty's worldwide demos and the courses held at Monty's farm in California go to:

[http://www.montyroberts.com/ab\\_about\\_monty\\_calendar/see-monty/](http://www.montyroberts.com/ab_about_monty_calendar/see-monty/)

## GENTLE AND ELEGANT

bad) but you shared with me the greatest gift I have ever received. The love of horses. Again not just how to love, but more importantly, how to be loved. I have channeled my love to cutting but not limited it there. **I have gone from having no interest and being terrified of horses to making it my lifestyle.** I have lots of great stories to share from the last 13 years but as I said earlier I know you are busy. Thank you for taking time to let me share with you what you have done for me.

Sincerely,  
Rick Rikard

Dear Rick:

Thank you very much for your recent email regarding the 13 years since we first met. There is simply no way you could know how important a communication like this is to me. It is my life and represents my goals and aspirations regarding the challenge of reaching as many people as possible to share what the horses have taught me. I thank you for your words, not just for me, but sharing them with a global audience will, without a doubt, change the lives of many more aspiring horsemen.

Clearly my work touched you as a human being and I am finding that this is probably the most important part of my mission. It seems to me that the horses would be fine if human beings had never been invented. This being the case, it is far better for the horses if we get the people right first. After all, it is the human element in the lives of our horses that either cause them great grief or profound joy. I deeply appreciate your words. Please continue to communicate with us.

Sincerely,  
Monty

## Monty on HRTV



Watch Monty on HRTV Tuesdays at 6:00 PM ET.

**Special Offer** for Monty Roberts' Fans! **First month FREE** of HRTV.com when you subscribe now! Just use the **promo code MR13** when you sign up!

Please check local TV directories for your time and channel or the HRTV website where times are in Eastern Standard Time:

<http://www.hrtv.com/MontyRobertsShow/>

## Horse & Country in the UK



Watch Monty Roberts on Horse & Country TV (Sky channel 280) in the UK and Ireland. See:

<http://www.horseandcountry.tv/monty>

for more info.

## Monty's Challenge

Is there a significance to defecation when training horses in an enclosed area. ie. Is it nervousness or release?

## Photo Credits

**Christopher Dydyk**



Dear Monty,

The clinic with Charlotte Bredahl was wonderful. I very often see dressage as a sport in which **the rider asks the horse to do his/her bidding, and the horse complies**. Your input, along with Charlotte's, reminded me that there is a creature underneath who is worthy in his own right. It is important for us dressage riders especially to learn about the horse himself - his needs, wants, desires - as well as to learn how to ride him. Your input to the clinic really helped me understand this.

**You mentioned how harmony, as opposed to power, was the factor that helped launch the British horse/rider team to first place in the last Olympics.** I have an article on the blog I'm developing which talks about how to achieving harmony for dressage, using your principles. Go to:

<http://www.godrideshorses.com/35/enhancing-harmony-and-alignment-through-proper-groundwork/> to see it there.

Best regards and see you soon at another clinic,  
Carole Francis-Swayze

## KEEP IN TOUCH

Let us know what you are looking for in content from these emails. Send your comments and requests to [askmonty@montyroberts.com](mailto:askmonty@montyroberts.com).

Never miss an e-mail from Monty: To ensure you receive this email in the future, add [askmonty@montyroberts.com](mailto:askmonty@montyroberts.com) to your list of approved senders or select the Add/Save to Address Book function in your email browser and follow the appropriate instructions.



Sincerely,  
**Monty Roberts**

