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NATURE

Overcoming the Fear Factor: The Guide for Training Wild Horses
Tami Eddy Lewis
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The image of a wild mustang galloping across the plains has become an American icon symbolizing freedom, independence, and endurance, all the qualities on which our country was founded. Adopting one of those wild horses into a domestic barn is a complex process that can be dangerous and terrifying for both humans and horses. Tami Eddy Lewis, a lifelong horsewoman with a degree in equine science, helps make the various complicating factors—like fear—more clear and offers several techniques that may make the experience of taming a horse both enjoyable and successful.

All animals rely heavily on body language for most of their communication; horses are no different. Prey animals by nature, they are always on the watch for any motion that could mean danger, and can react to these sudden motions by fleeing, kicking, striking, or other forms of explosion. Humans can lessen their chances of injury—and increase their chances of successful training—by learning to approach their wild horses with non-aggressive movements and then retreat when the horse responds with interest or a relaxed manner. “Approach and retreat involves using body language. When the horse looks at me, I move or turn away. When he looks away, I move toward him or just stand still looking at him. Our bodies and presences are pressure enough for these horses initially.”

Lewis continues her book with discussions on clicker training, round pens and lunging, and the best way to halter a wild horse. She offers applicable case studies about horses and trainers she’s worked with to illustrate her ideas, and also delves into the topic of fear, an emotion that can have great impact on the relationship between horse and trainer.

Anyone considering a wild horse as their next equine project will learn many worthwhile strategies from Lewis’ book. Her techniques are based on a gentle, playful approach that keeps the horse’s health and happiness foremost in mind and which will increase an owner’s enjoyment of their horse.

One drawback to the book is the structure; this book is packed with information and occasionally the long paragraphs feel cramped and dense. The use of bullet points, diagrams,

charts or other graphs would have made the information more accessible. In general, Lewis maintains a welcoming, conversational tone, but the odd awkward sentence can be jarring.

Also, Lewis does best when discussing the hands-on aspects of training; when she strays into the philosophy behind human fear and the spiritual aspect of horse relationships, she may sound too esoteric to people who simply want to learn how to better handle their wild horses.

Wild horses deserve the respect and kindness of anyone trying to tame their inherent vivacity. Lewis shows that humans and horses can exist together in the best kind of symbiosis.

Andi Diehn