

# Horse Time VS Human Time



HAYES IS FOR HORSES.COM

By Tim Hayes

**SOMEONE** once said that God invented time to keep everything from happening at once. In fact humans invented time in order to help bring order, meaning and understanding to their unique existence.

As humans we are the only animal with recognized self-awareness, rational thinking and therefore a mental concept of time. Other animals may be aware of the physical changes in day and night, summer and winter and thus able to respond to these changes but it is only us humans that will ever know if we are "late." A horse for that matter never thinks, "oh my, I'm running out of time." Understanding and remembering this significant difference will have an enormous impact on how you and your horse get along and the success you will achieve in your horsemanship and riding.

Today more than ever humans live by the clock. We fit every minute of our lives into a schedule.

We create agenda's with predetermined requirements as to how much time it will take to achieve satisfaction in everything we do. However whenever we think something must happen within a certain amount of time and it doesn't, it is always a set up for stress, tension, anger, frustration or disappointment.

Being "late" is one of many examples that can illustrate both the difference and the importance of Horse vs. Human time.

EXAMPLE: If I ride on Wednesdays at 4pm and don't get to the barn until 3:55pm, I may rush to groom and tack up my horse so I can get in as much riding time as possible. Knowing that I am "late" I think I'm using up valuable riding time while getting my horse ready to ride. This thought makes me anxious and tense. Instead of presenting myself to my horse as a happy, calm, relaxed friend and leader, I show him a partner who is anxious and tense. The quality of my physical interactions in grooming and saddling, usually a nice way to reconnect with each other, are now a signal to my horse that something is not right with his human. My horse does not know I'm late because "being late" does not exist in his world. All he knows is that I'm anxious and not relaxed.

As we start to ride I feel a resistance coming from my horse. He's communicating to me with his body... the only way he knows how. He's telling me, "Your body feels tense and that makes me anxious. I'm not feeling safe and comfortable with you on my back right now, can you do something to change what I'm feeling from you... can you help me?" I think, "Oh that's great. Not only am I going to run out of

riding time, but I'm going to have to struggle with my horse and his bad attitude." I do what many people do; I blame the horse.

I begin to feel angry and frustrated. My cues become rough and heavy-handed. This is frightening for my horse. He thinks, "not only is my partner anxious, he's hurting me!" At this point my horse will usually do one of two things. He'll either emotionally and mentally shut down, brace himself and do everything he can to tolerate me until the ride is over. This is how

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humans create dullness in their horses. Or my horse will ask me to leave (read: buck me off). This is how humans get hurt.

Natural Horsemanship is seeing and understanding every situation from the horse's point of view. It took me years and many mistakes to remember the enormous impact time (or the nonexistence of time) has on my horse and my horsemanship. And like everything else I've had to do to get my horse to be better; I had to be better. I had to change my behavior first.

Now when I get to the barn and I'm "late," I change my agenda, I adjust to fit the situation. For example instead of doing 20 minutes of groundwork and 40 minutes practicing flying lead changes, I may just practice groundwork or take a nice leisurely ride with the time I have left. If I'm "very late" I may just spend quality time with my horse and let him graze. The most important thing with any horse in any discipline is always **THE RELATIONSHIP.**

By putting myself on "horse time" I show respect for my partner

who lives in the moment and has no schedule or agenda. Then no matter what we do we are spending quality time together not just physically but emotionally and mentally. Our relationship becomes stronger, my horsemanship gets better and neither of us ends up frustrated, disappointed, dull or hurt. ©Tim Hayes 2011 *(Photo courtesy of Tim Hayes)*

"BE A BETTER HUMAN, BE A BETTER HORSE."

-Tim Hayes 2002

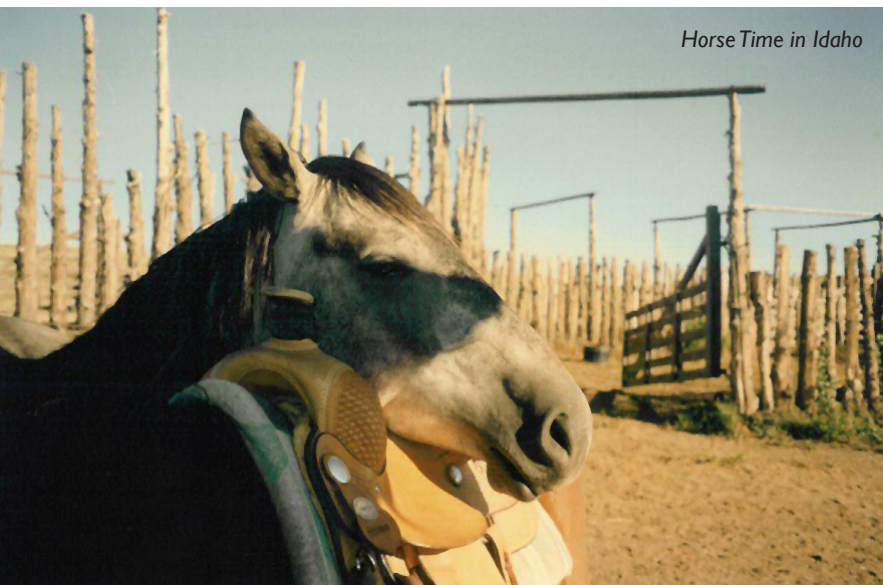
Natural Horsemanship articles by Tim Hayes are at:

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Horse Time in Idaho