

## “Good Day!” “My Name Is!”

We have often found ourselves working around pack stock in other strings than ours or handling stock at saddle fitting workshops that may not know or trust us. When this is required we attempt to follow the rules below.

1. We always, approach the critter with gentle thoughts in our mind. They are so keen on body language that our slightest worry or anger can easily be telegraphed to them by our body language. (If you are not so inclined, we suggest you stay away).

2. It is often safer to introduce yourself by approaching at the shoulder of the animal. This appears to be a neutral position. This angle of approach gives the animal several directions to move away from this approach. More choices in their minds are always safer.

3. We work your way forward touching their neck until we are opposite their head.

4. Slowly and ever so gently, we will touch their face working toward the cowlick in the center of their forehead. This is the magic button where they normally love to be rubbed and stroked. It seems to have a natural calming effect on them.



5. Once they are very comfortable with the maneuver we will run our hand slowly, softly and in one movement over their eye. If they will allow this, they are learning to trust our presence next to them. Continue this with both eyes and watch for any adverse behavior.

6. If all appears well, slowly walk around the critter keeping our hand in constant contact with its body. Be mindful that its eyes and ears will tell us if it is concerned by this journey.

7. If all of our handling is acceptable to the critter, we then will ask to lift its front foot. This will allow the animal to understand that we are in a normal relationship with it and are the dominant but gentle leader. If it does not give to our request after a couple of attempts, we are concerned and very, very careful working around this horse or mule.

This is still an unfamiliar relationship between you and this horse or mule, but if you are going to be there anyway, it is better that they have some idea who you are.

*(Special Note: Whenever you reach under a horse or mule, always position your body with your back toward their butt. Our bodies are more armored on our backs than on our fronts. Even the skin on our backs is thicker than on our chests. Always keep your face toward their head. A boot in the behind is usually better than a kick in the face or teeth. They can kick at a biting fly faster than you can get out of the way.)*

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