How To Cure A Barn Sour Or Herd Bound Horse

Safe and Effective Training Methods Used To Overcome A Very Frustrating Problem

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Introduction

You saddle up and mount your horse. You flex your horse a little and do a few exercises then head away from the barn for a relaxing ride. As you head away your horse’s head raises, he pins his ears back and you can sense his body getting tense.

Your horse slows against your will, perhaps throwing his head and comes to a stop. He’s worried and he balks. He won’t move forward. What do you do now?

Depending on how you handle this situation, your horse might spin around and take off back to the barn, possibly rear or start bucking. It’s a dangerous situation that too many horse owners have experienced. Many have been hurt when they can’t control their horses and end up getting thrown.

Fence Posts Go Whizzing By….

Another common problem is the horse that will ride away from the familiar barn or buddies okay but once you turn for home he bolts. He takes off like he’s possessed and doesn’t want to stop for anything. This is a very dangerous situation for green or inexperienced riders as they try to hold on for dear life and their horse won’t stop with the normal methods. So they freak and start yanking the reins making things worse.

Frustration….

As a rider, this situation is very frustrating. You want nothing more than to enjoy your horse and ride him, not only around the barn, but also on trail rides and events.

What do you do? How do you overcome these problems and get to the point where you can start enjoying your horse away from the barn or his stable buddies?

What in the world makes your horse act this way?

In the following chapters we’ll examine the cause and the solution to these nagging problems! Barn Sour, Buddy Sour and Herd Bound are all problems related to each other and the solution is almost identical for all.

Let’s get started....
What Causes A Horse To Be Herd Bound or Barn Sour?

To understand what’s going on with your horse when he’s barn sour, it helps to know a bit about how they’re made and a few things about their nature. When we say “Barn Sour” or “Herd Bound” or “Buddy Sour”, we are talking about a type of anxiety in your horse that is typically created by separation from the familiar.

In the case of Barn Sour – it is the separation from the familiar stall, pen, feeding area, etc. It is their safe place where they are cared for and nurtured. Or it could be the horse who is fine until you turn for home and then wants to rush home.

There are other possible reasons that horses become barn sour. If he is ridden infrequently and you take him from the barn only to work him, then he’ll soon learn that it’s no fun for him and he’ll have no desire to leave his comfort zone.

You might even not realize that your pattern of riding may be contributing to the problem. If riding always means work to him and, when you return you untack and turn him out to his buddies or to the stall where it is comfortable, then he will associate riding with work and he’ll resist it. You have to break this pattern and sometimes just take him out to enjoy an outing and not make it work for him.

In the case of Herd Bound or Buddy Sour, it is the separation from their friend(s).

In either case, it is all manifested as a form of insecurity. Horses feel safe in a herd. They watch out for each other, they play and graze together. Watch them in a pasture or in the wild – they’ll almost always stay together. It is common to see two horses stand head to tail as buddies.

Your horse may have a phobia about leaving the barn and will do anything he can to avoid it. Some horses will rear, buck, whirl, and even run backwards. At times these fears are so strong that they override his normal instincts and he will even crash into things. If you are apprehensive and lacking firm control as a rider, your horse may resent you intruding into his comfort zone and you may be making the situation worse.

If a rider’s frustration resorts to punishment or force for the bad behavior, the problem is compounded. In your horse’s mind, your actions confirm that riding can be a bad experience and should be avoided. You are only giving him more reason not to leave home because it is unpleasant to do so.

The herd mentality is extremely strong. You must understand that the instinct of the horse, when presented with any form of danger, is to flee. And this instinct is manifested in a herd as each member can act as a sentry. Many watchful eyes, ears and noses will help keep the herd safe by watching for the threat of predators. When a threat is detected the alarm goes out to the herd and they can decide to flee or not.
In your horse’s mind, to be separated from the herd or from his safe place, is to now become vulnerable to these various threats and could mean death. You would think that after a few hundred years of domestication of horses and all the special breeding that has taken place, that these instincts would be subdued. But that simply isn’t the case.

When you couple this insecurity with incomplete training, your problem continues and the barn sour problems get worse. And, the longer it goes on without correction and leadership from you, the worse it will get.

Barn Sour or Herd Bound May Only Show Up Away From Home

The barn sour or herd bound horse may only show it’s ugly head when you are away from the barn and then turn towards home. At this point, the horse may become extremely anxious to get home and start doing all kinds of prancing and getting anxious, then get sudden bursts of energy and want to “take off” for home. His mind is now on his buddies or he has a strong desire to be back at the barn. This is a very dangerous time for all but the very experienced rider.

I can’t tell you how many stories I have heard about this type of situation. The horse starts to take off for home and no amount of “whoa” or pulling on the reins will stop him. He lays into the bit, picks up his pace and the rider tries to hold on for dear life as fence posts go whizzing by. The horse wants the rider off his back and wants to get home as soon as possible.

Lack of training, which means lack of control, is evident here and makes for a very dangerous horse.

If you turn for home and your horse decides he wants to bolt and run for home, you must be able to maintain control. If you know your horse has a tendency to do this then you must predict his actions and take control prior to it happening. We’ll discuss this in more depth later.

You Must Become The Leader

It is only when you become the leader and the horse respects your control that you’ll be able to overcome these problems. Both you and your horse will have the confidence to work together, away from the herd, and your horse will be responsive to your cues and direction.

The road ahead isn’t necessarily easy. It greatly depends on the severity of the problem and the level of your horse’s insecurity. It will probably take a generous amount of patience and time to finally cure this problem. As you work through the solution you’ll see a steady increase in the time and distance you can be away. The key is to not allow your horse to get too frustrated at one time.
Preparation And Training

There is a trait that all horses have that can either act in our favor, or be a detriment if we don’t know how to take advantage of it. That trait?

**Horses have a one-track mind.**

For example – when you start to ride away on a horse that is herd bound and he realizes that he’s going away from his buddies or away from his safe place, *then his one-track mind is fixed on returning*. This reaction is extremely overpowering. That’s why his body language is screaming out “DANGER”. He freezes up, his head goes up, and he wants you off his back and wants to return. It can be a very dangerous situation depending on the horse and on the skill of the rider.

However, if we can re-focus his attention over time by training him to look to you for direction, by cueing him to do certain things, then his attention is on you and that one-track mind won’t allow him to fear leaving his familiar surroundings. In the process, *you become the leader you must be to build confidence in him*. It doesn’t happen over night but there is a proven way to approach and solve the problem.

**Horse Psychology 101**

I remember raising our 5 children over the years. As babies they might get a grip on something or want something that was dangerous to them. They would cry and fuss when we either tried to take it away from them or move them away from whatever it was. So, we’d give them something else to distract them while we quietly removed the problem item. They’d soon forget about the original thing and be happy. Babies, like horses, had a one-track mind and distraction worked quite well (too bad that doesn’t work with teenagers – but I digress).

So how can we use this trait to help our horse overcome his insecurity and to be comfortable with riding away from the barn?

The plan is actually pretty straightforward. Starting near the barn in a safe place (round pen, arena, etc.), you will calmly and patiently work with your horse and keep his attention on you. You’ll take him through drills, at little bit at a time, while building a responsive horse through proper feedback and praise. In the process, you’ll be limiting the distance you get away from the barn while controlling his emotions.

The result will be a horse that has confidence in you as you slowly start to get farther away but always return BEFORE he gets too concerned. The process is repeated, always sensing your horse’s state of insecurity, until you have achieved the role of leader and built a trust between you both.
Get Setup For Success

There are a few things you’ll need to successfully overcome this barn sour / herd bound problem.

Here are some things to pay attention to:

1. **An Enclosed Pen or Arena:** It is important that you have a safe place close to the barn or close to his buddies to work. A round pen or some form of enclosure is best. Your goal is to keep your horse’s attention on you and the maneuvers you’ll be doing. You don’t want him to have the freedom to take off on you.

2. **A Good Snaffle Bit:** You don’t want a harsh bit or high-curbed bit. A smooth snaffle bit will allow you to ride with two hands. The idea is to be able to rein or lead your horse in the turns holding a rein in each hand. A good bit would be something like the Jesse Beery 4-Way Riding and Training Bit that is connected using the “Easy Bit” method.

3. **Time, Patience and Control of Your Frustrations:** When you first start, and until your horse starts to “get it”, you may very well feel frustrated. However, you need to reward each right answer and each try as you ask your horse to move, turn, stop and start. The **absolute worst thing you could do is to be spurring him, raising your voice, yanking on the reins or otherwise punishing him for not doing the right thing.** Such actions will do nothing but reinforce his insecurities and your road to recovery will be extended. It is imperative that you plan at least 2 hours or more per session and do so daily, if at all possible.

As you can start to understand, this process will require that you keep on top of the training and pay close attention to your horse’s status. This includes his physical, mental and emotional state. You must be able to “read” his anxiety level and sense his emotions to do this successfully. Watch the ears, the way he brings his head up, how his gait changes, and how his body tenses up, etc. All these are signaling methods he uses to indicate concern.

Here’s another thing we need to understand to stay safe:

**Go Where You Can – Never Fight With Your Horse**

There’s a simple principle in horse training that you must learn early. Horses are at least 10 times as strong as a normal human. Any time you try to match your strength against the strength of the horse, the horse will always win. Don’t go there. It’s a surefire path to frustration, pain and destruction.

What this means in regards to this training is that we’re **not going to fight the horse.** We must always stay in a position of control. The minute we loose control we are in danger.
A Preview Of What We’ll Learn

What you’ll be doing is taking your horse through controlled maneuvers such as turns, changing gaits, etc. and working on his responsiveness to you. You’ll be keeping his focus and mind on you, not the things around him. You’ll start close to the barn or his buddies and eventually work farther away. You’ll do it in small steps first, building confidence and responsiveness, and then progressing to the point where we can get away from the familiar all together.

You will learn to “read” your horse’s body language and his emotions. You must understand that, when you first start, your horse will be on edge any time you start to take him away from his familiar surroundings and buddies. Each time his alert starts to go up you’ll calmly, and in control, return him to a relaxed state. As you return back to the familiar, you’ll work him more.

Over time he’ll learn that it is too much work to get all worried. Remember, horses are basically pretty lazy. When they start to realize that returning and working is more work than relaxing and trusting you, then you will be on the road to freedom with your horse.

You’ll eventually be able to get farther away for longer stretch of times.

Don’t Force Him Or Let Him Get Upset

As we prepare to start this training process it is important to know when to back off. If you try to force your horse through the process too fast your horse might start getting upset. You must immediately back off and return to a given safe distance and proven set of exercises and then take it slowly from there. You will gradually be able to increase the distance and time away.

Another key training principle:

Take Him To A Comfortable Spot Then Return

Let’s say we take him 10 feet away and all is well. You should ride back and forth while doing specific maneuvers (turns, changing gaits, sidestepping, raising or lowering his head, etc.). Do this multiple times as you build confidence and are giving him praise. But don’t let him get bored doing it.

Get to the point where he is relaxed. Then start increasing the distance away to 15 or 20 feet and do the same thing. Do it multiple times at these new distances until he is completely relaxed doing so. You are building confidence and trust in the process by repeating these maneuvers within a safe area. You are building the foundation needed so that you will be able to start extending the range.
Here’s another important principle to learn during this process:

**You Must Keep The Horse’s Brain Engaged and His Focus On You**

The following method is extremely important in this process. Be sure to read it over a couple times and understand what’s going on before you continue.

You cannot allow your horse to ride in a lazy or lethargic manner. His mind must be engaged. You accomplish this by actively moving his shoulders, his hips, his feet and head. You ask him to move his hindquarters and, when he properly responds, you praise him. You have him step in a certain direction and move his shoulders. You have him drop his head. You affirm his actions when he does things right and keep at it when he doesn’t (you must be sure he understands your request – be fair).

**Make him work AND think at the same time.** Speed up for a few steps and then stop. Make sure he stops when you say so and comes to a complete stop. Back up a few steps then turn 90 degrees. Good. Give him praise. Encourage him. Make him work but keep his mind engaged and support and praise him when done correctly.

As you work your various maneuvers you build confidence. You start to move a little farther away but not too far that he starts to get upset. Maintain a “safe distance” where he feels safe in your control and his emotional state is calm.

The barn or the buddies that your horse wants to return to are like “magnets”. They will try to “pull” him back in his mind. This is a normal thing for him to be drawn to. If you are riding in a certain gait and his gait changes as he starts to be drawn back, then you simply urge him back to the correct gait when you sense it.

**Read this carefully:**

**When your horse starts to act up or you realize his anxiety level is raising, then follow this simple principle: keep your horse working when he is near the “magnets” and only let him rest when you get a certain distance away.**

As Rick Lamb puts it: *The wrong thing is made difficult and the right thing is made easy.*

Again, remember – the horse is generally lazy. When he finally realizes that he has to work when he returns to the “magnets” and that he can rest when he moves away, then he will not mind being away so much.

This pattern is only to be used once you have established control and respect with your horse.

Now that we have some of the principles laid out, let’s put the whole process in sequence.
The Recovery Process

First – Establish Confidence With Your Horse

If you haven’t established confidence and a tolerance for you with your horse then you must start there. This is simple, basic stuff that helps you build a relationship with your horse as you care and work with him. This will take time and patience to establish if you aren’t there yet.

This is sort of like your other relationships with your spouse, family members, kids or close friends. It’s taking time to care, show respect and enjoy time together. Start by taking your horse out of his stall or paddock several times a day if possible. Don’t make him work hard– just groom him, lead him around, let him graze some and do some light ground work.

You should vary the routine and make these fun, pleasant times. In the process, walk him around farther and farther away as long as he’s not getting concerned. I can’t stress enough that this may take many days to establish if you’ve never done it before.

Evaluating The Severity When Riding

If your horse only flares up as you ride away from home then you should start with daily short rides near home (barn, pen, pasture). If you can, even two short rides a day will help the recovery process.

You must keep a calm attitude in this process. Any apprehension or tensing in you is conveyed to the horse and the process will take longer. You can convey calmness through your reins and through your voice and body cues while mounted. Always affirm right actions.

In some cases it may be helpful to solicit a friend to ride with you – if they have a calm horse. If your horse is insecure about leaving home alone then having a buddy along may be comforting. However, you will eventually have to go solo in your training exercises. If you can only ride with another horse present then you haven’t cured your horse of his dependence on his buddies or the barn.
Change Your Routes and Routines

Don’t follow the same routine each time you have your horse out. If you always return straight home from a ride and directly back to the pen or stall, then your horse will become accustomed to this. Instead, each time you start to return take your horse in a different direction. Don’t automatically turn down the lane to home – go past it, take some turns, ride him out a little farther and then do it again.

One trainer said: “Keep your horse guessing when the ride is over and he won’t know when he’s going back to the barn.”

If your horse starts to freak when you get too far away then simply ride him closer to home. Vary the routine, ride him in circles, make many short trips out and back, go in different directions. Head out in one direction and return in another. You can cover a total distance of 3 or 4 miles and not be more than ¼ mile from home if necessary when you work this plan.

As your horse becomes more confident by leaving and returning at a “safe” distance, then simply start increasing it. Just be sure to vary the routine and ride in different sequences so your horse won’t be able to predict or anticipate what happens next.

Start To Move Farther Away From Home But Keep Him Relaxed

One way to approach this is to ride in circles and then gradually increase the distance away from the barn or from his buddies. But the key is this – once he starts to get nervous then ride in a smaller circle until he is relaxed. It is important that you don’t allow your horse to get nervous and excited about being away. When he does, stop and calm him. Never go so far that he panics or explodes.

Make it a calm experience. Reward him in the process. Ride a little distance and then dismount and let him graze. He’ll start to associate this as a pleasant exercise and you’ll be starting to overcome his fear of being away.

If you dismount away from home and it becomes a problem to mount again, simply lead him home. Again, it is pleasant and grazing rewards him. After a while he won’t mind being ridden out for a treat and a place to relax.

Once you overcome this fear of leaving home you won’t have to reward him each time. But keep taking short rides. If he starts to get nervous or panics, them stop and calm him. Make him stand. Relax him. You might have to have him ride in circles to take his mind off his anxiety. Get him to focus on you and stay in control.

A key point here:

NEVER Let Him Move Towards Home When He Is Uncontrolled

If his mindset is to turn and rush home you must take control and calm him. If he won’t listen to you then you have to work him. Don’t fight him. Direct his energy in
a controlled fashion by doing circles, serpentines and other work. Work on sidepasses or back him up then turn him. Only let him rest by going past the spot where he balked or started to get nervous and then let him relax and rest.

The key training point is to make him work when he starts acting up or balks. He will quickly come to the realization that going down the trail as you ask is easier than working when he resists. As we said before:

_The wrong thing is made difficult and the right thing is made easy._

Are you remaining calm? You must be the one to convey a calming spirit to your horse. You can do this by talking to him, singing, humming, etc. Don’t be a source of negative energy and don’t let your own frustrations and impatience be conveyed to your horse.

Start to ride a little farther out each session. Every now and then stop and stand quietly. Let him reflect on how peaceful it can be. As you talk to him and encourage him you are calming his insecurities. Perhaps for both of you.

As mentioned before, don’t automatically turn down the lane when you return. Ride past the normal return route a few times before you return back. And, when you do get back to the barn or pen, do some more exercises or ride around the barn or pen some. The key point here is that just because you arrive back at the barn doesn’t mean that the work or the ride is over.

If a horse associates returning and immediately being unsaddled, fed, watered, and groomed then he will develop a desire to return to that as quickly as possible. Mix things up and don’t stop riding just because you’re back at the barn. Another way to overcome this is to work your horse hard at home and make it relaxing to ride away. Pretty soon you can break the pattern and association that being home means no work.

**Some Horses Are More Explosive**

In the most severe cases, some horses simply explode when you try to remove them from their buddies or from the barn. They can develop this bad habit, many times not because of fear or anxiety, but because they have been able to get away with it for a time. If you are a novice horse handler or trainer then this could be a bit much to tackle. Enlisting the help of a professional trainer or experienced handler may be needed.

If your horse is putting you at risk when riding away, even a very short distance (a few feet or yards) by rearing, bucking, rushing backward or other dangerous actions, then don’t do this alone if you don’t have the experience to cure it. Your horse may very well need more forceful training. Continuing by yourself without the knowledge of how to train him may endanger you and the horse.
Change It Up – Don’t Be Predictable

When you are headed back don’t be predictable. Instead of riding directly to the barn or stable, ride past it a few times. Stop and dismount and lead your horse for a while. Dismount in a different place each time. Take him to the round pen or arena and work on some exercises.

Here’s the key point: YOU are the one to decide when the ride is over, not him. Over time, your horse will learn to accept your decision when to stop. His actions cannot dictate to you what to do. So keep him guessing. Change the routine each time.

Over time, with consistent actions on your part, with patience and getting him to relax when you ride away, your horse will learn that leaving the confines of home and his buddies won’t be so bad. He really won’t have a strong desire to rush home.

And the result: a more relaxed and enjoyable time together.
How To Cure The Horse That Rushes Home

Many horses will leave home without a problem but will become a real problem when you turn and head for home. Their mindset changes and they'll become unpredictable in their actions. They don't much care about you as a rider at that point.

Just as with the baby I discussed before – use distraction or diversion to refocus your horse’s attention at this point. Turn the other direction, away from home, and ride in circles, real tight if necessary. You can vary this by going in figure eights or other patterns. Your goal is to focus his attention on riding and responding to your control.

Once he settles down and you turn towards home again, if he gets antsy or becomes a flight risk again, point him away from home and do more exercises. It won't take too many times like this before he'll realize that he isn’t going home quite yet. YOU are dictating when to head home in a controlled, calm manner.

Maintain Control By Going In Circles

Unfortunately, many green riders try to stop the anxious horse by yanking on the reins or pulling on the bit. Pulling back on the reins and jerking the bit won't stop the horse. In fact, it will do just the opposite and most likely make the horse more upset. Many horses in this mindset will then start bucking or rearing and get even more angry. The more you pull, the more he’ll pull against you and lay into the bit. You will not win this battle.

Don’t try to hold the horse back in this situation. If he starts to trot or take off, pull him into a tight circle with one rein. The point is to redirect the energy since he can't trot or run when bent at an angle. You need to slow him to a walk and can do this by bending him and turning him.

Once you have control at a walk, immediately give him a loose rein. If he starts to bolt again, turn him again – perhaps in the opposite direction. Again, once slowed, give him a loose rein and stay relaxed. You should convey a relaxed attitude, yet firm in control.

Use this pattern if he starts to trot or take off: spin him to a walk, give him a loose rein and continue to walk. What you are teaching him is that it is relaxing to maintain the walk and in your control. If you would allow him to fight you, his anger will increase and that results in rearing or bucking. It becomes even more dangerous if he is allowed to take off. Trying to slow him at a run becomes harder and more dangerous. Don’t let him get to that point.
You must be willing to repeat this process as many times as it takes to maintain control. If he has excess energy then allow him to trot in circles. This will keep his mind away from home. Tighten up the circles as necessary to control his actions.

**Practice The One Rein Stop**

Every rider should learn how to do the one rein stop. You never know when you might need it in a dangerous situation. You can refer to our professional trainers such as Sam Burrell and Paul Esh who teach this on the DVDs we offer. Learn it, know it and have it in your “bag of tricks” when riding. This is true when riding any horse, not just your own.
Even More Tactics To Use When Needed

Sometimes additional exercises and tricks are helpful in getting the point across to your horse. First, learn the basics and then consider these and be mindful of when to use them.

Bending The Neck To Slow Him

If you’re on a narrow trail and can’t do circles safely when he wants to speed up, then learn to bend his neck. The method is to bend his neck to one side with your rein but to drive him forward with your inside leg and keep him going straight on the trail. Then, as he slows to a walk, immediately give him a loose rein and remove the leg pressure. Pressure – release. Release as soon as he yields.

If he does it again, bend his neck in the other direction and drive him forward with your inside leg. Whatever you do, do NOT pull back on both reins or he’ll start to lay into the bit and fight you.

By bending him to one side and driving him forward and then releasing at the walk, he’ll realize it’s a lot more comfortable to simply walk along.

Pressure and release. It’s one of the most important lessons to learn in horse training. The key is to immediately release pressure once he shows you a try or gives you the correct response.

Be consistent and fair. But stay at it until he learns to finally relax and ride at your pace, not at his anxious or excited pace.

Trot Him To Burn Energy

If your horse wants to bolt or take off when you turn for home then work him in the other direction. Turn around away from home and take him at a fast trot for a short distance. Then slow, return to a walk on a loose rein and turn back towards home.

Only allow him to return home at a walk on a loose rein. If he breaks into a trot then turn him around and do it again.

If you can anticipate his anxiety and actions then you dictate the gait prior to him choosing it. In other words, if you sense he wants to trot or speed up then you direct him to do so and then slow him down, speed up, slow down, etc. You are showing him that you are controlling the speed and gaits and maintaining control.

Frequency Of Riding

Let’s face it, many of us simply can’t ride every day or as frequently as we should to keep the horse tuned up. After a long winter spell or an extended period of time
away, your horse may be more difficult to handle. Normally, after riding a few times you’ll be back to a regular riding routine and won’t have the problems.

It may be helpful to ask another rider (with a calm horse) to go along with you. This helps ease the mind of your horse and keeps him from going bonkers. You can vary this, but after a few rides together, you’ll soon be able to go solo.

**The Secret Of Distraction**

I indicated before that a horse can only think of one thing at a time. He has a one-track mind. Use this to your benefit. If he’s getting angry then you should give him something else to do (distract him) so his mind is off bucking or rearing. You essentially change his mind to keep you both safer.

The one rein stop works well to slow him and turn him. Or, simply spin him in a circle. In this case you use a direct rein to pull his head around and then use your OUTSIDE leg to make him turn. Keep him spinning until his anger subsides and his attention returns to you.

Keep this trick in your back pocket – you can use it in many potentially dangerous situations. A horse that is being turned in a tight circle can’t buck or rear. This is where the smooth snaffle bit (such as the Beery 4-Way Riding and Training Bit) comes in handy and won’t harm the horse when used correctly.
Patience And The Whinnying Horse

A Herd Bound horse (or a Buddy Sour horse) will frequently whinny or scream as you attempt to leave them behind. Do NOT resort to punishing your horse in these situations to get him to quiet down – it is very counterproductive and you'll essentially be making the horse more insecure about leaving.

In his mind he doesn't want to leave so he's talking to his friends and expressing his displeasure. If you attempt to punish him in any way for doing so you'll be doing two things: you'll increase his insecurity and will be making him head shy or even jumpy. There is little you could do to keep him from being noisy.

Rather, you should work him patiently and put lots of time and distance between you and the others. If you can take long rides, daily if possible, your horse will eventually overcome his fear of being separated from his friends.

The key is patience in this situation. Over time he'll be less noisy around his friends and other horses you encounter while riding. Once again, if a horse is herd bound then give him lots of work such as daily rides. You'll be building a trust and a relationship between you both and he will eventually be less dependent on his buddies.
Don’t Reward Wrong Behavior!

In the case of the buddy horse left behind, it is common for him to be screaming and pawing and generally putting up a fit. If you come along and sweet talk him, give him a treat, pet him or perhaps give him a scoop of grain to keep him quiet, you are rewarding the bad behavior! Or perhaps you choose to turn him out from his stall or pen to calm him down. In the process what you are really doing is reinforcing his undesirable habits.

It’s just like the young child who cries or screams or throws a fit in the store and the parent gives them a toy or a candy bar to get them to be quiet. What do you think is going to happen the next time the child doesn’t get what he wants? Yeah, it’s ugly.

It’s like that with your horses, too. **In everything you do, you teach habits. Sometimes you unknowingly teach bad habits.**

Instead, it might be much more useful to use the feeding time to teach the horse good habits rather than to bribe it to be quiet. Let’s try this:

Schedule the feeding time of the problem horse so that you start his feeding just prior to taking his buddy away. Give him his feed and then take his buddy as far away as you can until the insecure horse starts to get anxious. You then stop, wait until the insecure horse relaxes and then resumes eating. You then return his buddy back to his pen or stall.

At each feeding you repeat this process, increasing the distance each time. **Over time the insecure horse will stop getting so anxious. You are using the feeding time to condition the insecure horse about having his buddy be away for a while. You are NOT bribing him and rewarding him for his bad behavior. Such lessons as this are invaluable in the understanding of how a horse associates trained habits (or bad actions) with wrong rewards.**
Final Thoughts

Understandably, the Herd Bound or Barn Sour horse can be quite frustrating and dangerous if not cured. I trust that the training principles and the methods presented will be of value to you as you work with horses to overcome these problems.

I would urge you to read over this report another time or two. It is really important that you clearly understand the concepts and reasons why you use certain methods at certain points in your training to overcome these problems.

Also, be mindful that not all horses have the same attitude and dispositions. Nor do all horses have the same level of care, experiences and handling. Some horses may have months or years of mishandling or bad experiences in their past and you are now in the position to overcome those deficiencies. Take it slow, have a plan, use patience in all your efforts. **Don’t force the training – you might only be reinforcing your horse’s insecurities if you do.**

If you don’t have a solid training background or are insecure yourself in handling and training horses, then I would strongly suggest you get our **Jesse Beery Illustrated Course In Horse Training.** Thousands before you have used it successfully to learn how to train and control their horses. You can, too.

I would also suggest that you consider a few of the DVDs by some of our featured professional trainers. Such DVDs as “30 Day Horse Training Plan – Want To Train Your Horse” by Diana Quintana and “How To Install An Operating System In Your Horse (and You)” by Sam Burrell. Also, Sue Robertson’s “Groundwork” DVD.

There are many more to consider depending on your need. You can read about them all here: [http://horsetrainingresources.com/DVD.html](http://horsetrainingresources.com/DVD.html)

Let me know you thoughts. If your horse is experiencing these problems and you use some of these methods – let us know how it goes. Any success you have that you choose to share with others will only encourage them to overcome this most troubling horse problem.

Finally – stay safe. Anytime you are working with horses you have the possibility of getting hurt. Working with a Barn Sour or Herd Bound horse can be even more dangerous. So take precautions, maintain control and get the help of an experienced trainer if you need it.

All the best,

Charlie Hicks

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