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What is clicker training?

Clicker training is a positive reward based training method based on what scientists understand about how all animals learn. A distinctive 'click' sound is paired with a food reward. The clicker can be used by the trainer as a signal to indicate and immediately mark correct behaviour so the animal learns the new behaviours that are being taught. Clicker training has been used for decades to teach an enormous number of different animal species from dolphins to penguins, but is most popular in the dog training world.

Why use clicker training for horses?

Traditionally, horse training relies on pressure and release, careful introductions to new objects / environments and punishment. But scientists now realise that such methods have disadvantages including weak learning and forming negative associations. The advantages of clicker training (positive reinforcement) over other training methods includes:

- It is fun and rewarding for both horse and trainer.
- It allows positive associations to be formed with new objects / situations, and even with previously fearful objects / situations. The overall result is a more confident horse with less stress and anxiety.
- The focus is on good behaviour and not bad behaviour and therefore punishment is avoided.
- The horse can now accurately understand exactly which behaviours are correct and learn performing correct behaviours can lead to rewards.
- Horses are motivated to participate in training sessions.

These advantages have been noted through independent scientific research as well as anecdotally.

How to start.

The emphasis of initial training stages is to teach the horse politeness and food manners. Once the horse has learned that he must earn his rewards rather than mug and bite for them, then you can continue to teach him anything. But the initial training is vital to ensure that food manners are learned safely. And for this reason it is really important to seek professional advice before starting.

What can your horse learn?

You can teach your horse anything from everyday behaviours to advanced dressage movements, from the ground or under saddle. You can train your horse to be the horse you have always dreamed of!