

Ethics: An Outcome of Integrity

In the previous editorial I spoke to *integrity* as it relates to *horsemanship*. This article will focus on *ethics* as a natural outcome of *integrity*.

What is an *ethic*? As defined by the Concise Oxford Dictionary, an ethic relates to morals and the treating of moral questions. It speaks to what is honourable and morally correct. Ethics are a set of principles, rules of conduct, and a field of moral science. Integrity is a precursor of ethics. Ethics as rules of conduct would not survive without the integrity of individuals.

Equine Canada has a Code of Ethics, which includes

- (1) The Preamble (an overall philosophy or belief system);
- (2) Statement of Principle (what Equine Canada is committed to and how this translates in behavioural terms);
- (3) Code of Conduct (which includes rules regarding several areas including the welfare of the horse, the safety of the horse and handler, competition administration, breed and discipline rules, control of medication and drugs, and a code of conduct for those people who compete as well as for those folks who officiate; and
- (4) Further Expectations of an Equine Canada Member (encouraging further continuing education, taking an active role in the organisation's functions and activities, striving to enhance, advance and preserve horse sport for the purpose of maintaining respect in the community).

Ethics, in general, have been divided into two subgroups: (1) Personal ethics, which encompass the rightness and wrongness of actions, and (2) social ethics, which speak to the concerns of society.

Personal ethics concern themselves with what is right or wrong based upon an individual's belief system. This can be referred to as one's conscience. Societal ethics are seen as secondary.

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Social ethics are about what is best for society at large. An individual's own ethics are not considered to be any more important than his neighbour's. Societal ethics are concerned with what is best for society at large.

How do we marry the two in our passion for horses and our love of the sport? I believe that this marriage is possible. Neither subgroup entirely excludes the other. None of us exists in a vacuum. What each of us does and says causes a ripple effect that touches others. Societal ethics and resultant standards dictate to some degree our individual behaviours. The following is also true: we all, as individuals, impact our communities, our society. We are all connected.

I believe that it is tantamount to ask ourselves questions about our own intentions, our own ethics. Being mindful of this will help us to evolve

and to be ethical regarding the well being of our horses as well as the way in which we live our lives.

Here are some questions for your consideration.

- Am I concerned for the well being of my horse?
- Does her/his safety and health come first and foremost?
- Am I committed to doing what is best for my horse?
- Do I keep myself educated regarding recent research into health matters and horses?
- Do I keep myself educated and recent regarding best practices in riding theory and methods?
- Do I keep myself current regarding best practice, theory, and training methods?
- Am I compassionate?
- Am I kind?
- Am I clear?
- Do I respect the privacy of others (friends, colleagues, clients, students, amateurs, professionals, officials, etc.)?
- Do I treat my horses with regard and respect?
- Do I treat my human counterparts with regard and respect?
- Am I reliable and responsible?
- Am I honest?
- Am I aware?

There is an old English saying that reads, "Show me your horse and I will tell you what you are". How we conduct ourselves, the rightness and wrongness of our actions, our own belief system, our very ethics show themselves in the demeanour, behaviour, and appearance of our horses. How is your horse doing? 🐾

References are listed on page 9

Authors referenced in Hoofnotes

- Canadian Equestrian Federation Rule Books
- Lama Surya Das
- Mary Midkiff
- Charles De Kunffy
- Natalie DiBerardinis
- Guenther Festerling
- Canadian Psychological Association Code of Ethics
- National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (U.S.)

