



SELF DEFENCE OR OFFENCE

I recently watched the 2021 Road to the Horse Competition live feed held in Fortworth, Texas.

One of the horsemen competing was Craig Cameron; he drew a tough horse but bold and confident. The horse had a very sticky shoulder and would not yield. Craig spent quite a bit of time working on this sticky spot with the colt, and at times, it looked like the colt was thinking about striking and charging him.

In his interview, he said something that got me thinking. 'The horse was full of self-defence that made him almost offence'. On day 2 in the round pen, he spent quite a bit of time with the slow approach, and the horse gave him the breakthrough he was looking for. In the past, I have referred this to as fear aggression.

Self-defence is a countermeasure that involves defending the health and well-being of oneself from harm.

Offence is annoyance or resentment brought about by a perceived insult to or disregard for oneself.

I find the horses with a high sense of self-defence in the end when the partnership is achieved, make the best bold and confident horses.

My black horse Bronson was started late in life and had colossal Self-defence and can quickly get offended, and then his offence shows up. When teaching him one of the exercises of accepting me running alongside him whilst leading him at a trot, he would lay his ears back, flick his head and go to bite at you. This took some time to work through, first at the walk and then slowly jogging for a couple of steps and stopping to reward him when he accepted this, I could have been seen for a few months singing and skipping whilst I was leading him at the trot until he finally realized I was not a threat just crazy. I could have met his aggression by coming back at him with an attack and maybe trying to punish him, but I knew this was a self-defence issue I was working with, and he felt threatened.

Sometimes we have to change our approach; the more horses I work with, the more time I take, and the more ways I come up with to help the horse understand the lessons without his self-defence coming to the surface.

As Craig Cameron pointed out when working with his colt, "he was tough, but it takes time; the slow approach gave me the breakthrough I was looking for."

Happy Riding

Mandy