

Easy - The Difficult Boy!

I was contacted one evening by a friend who had recently been given a horse on permanent loan called (wait for it) Easy!

Easy was a problem horse because - no-matter what anybody tried - he just wouldn't load into a trailer or horse box and it just didn't seem to make any difference how many people tried. People would very quietly try to coax him in and when he still hadn't loaded ten or twenty minutes later they might start whipping him too, but do you know what? He still didn't want to go in. Funny that!

My friend told me that Easy was an eighteen year old Belgian Warmblood who, with persistence and occasional force, could be made to load, however, once loaded and with the partitions in place would just shake uncontrollably. She felt that there must be an easier way and wasn't comfortable using forceful methods. After our discussion about Easy I felt confident I would be able to make at least some small difference to his quality of life and duly turned up at their house as soon as was polite the following morning!

I briefly described to my friend what needed to be done. The first step was to create a make-shift pen in which to work Easy and initialise the join-up. I made her stand in the middle of a field as a pivot for me to walk around, pushing in posts every four strides until we had an area suitable to work in.

We brought Easy over and introduced him to the round-pen. As I walked him around I could feel him becoming a little concerned about being out in a windy field and away from his friend, so I made sure I did lots of changes of direction, stopping and backing up until he started to listen to me. Then, we made our way to the centre of the pen, unclipped and went through the process of join-up.

After a very successful join-up and follow-up, we continued worked on our ground skills until he was moving forwards and backwards without any problems: All good so far!

Next thing was to move to the lorry. With a poll guard fitted, I started schooling him up-to and away-from the ramp, without him showing any signs of being 'adrenaline-up'. So, I walked up the ramp and into the lorry.

It must have been approximately three minutes of pressure and release, gentle 'asking' and he calmly walked in and had a really good poo! From there it was only a case of simple repetition. In no time at all, he was following either of us in perfectly happily, without even having a line attached.

There really is no feeling like it; being able to help a horse who you know has had a really tough time. Easy was eighteen years old and must've been forced into boxes and trailers all of his life. To see him visibly relax, with a heartfelt sigh, and to stand in the box with his hind leg resting because he's been shown that, actually, there's nothing to fear and nobody's going to hurt him - beats any other high I can think of.

Tom Bowyer