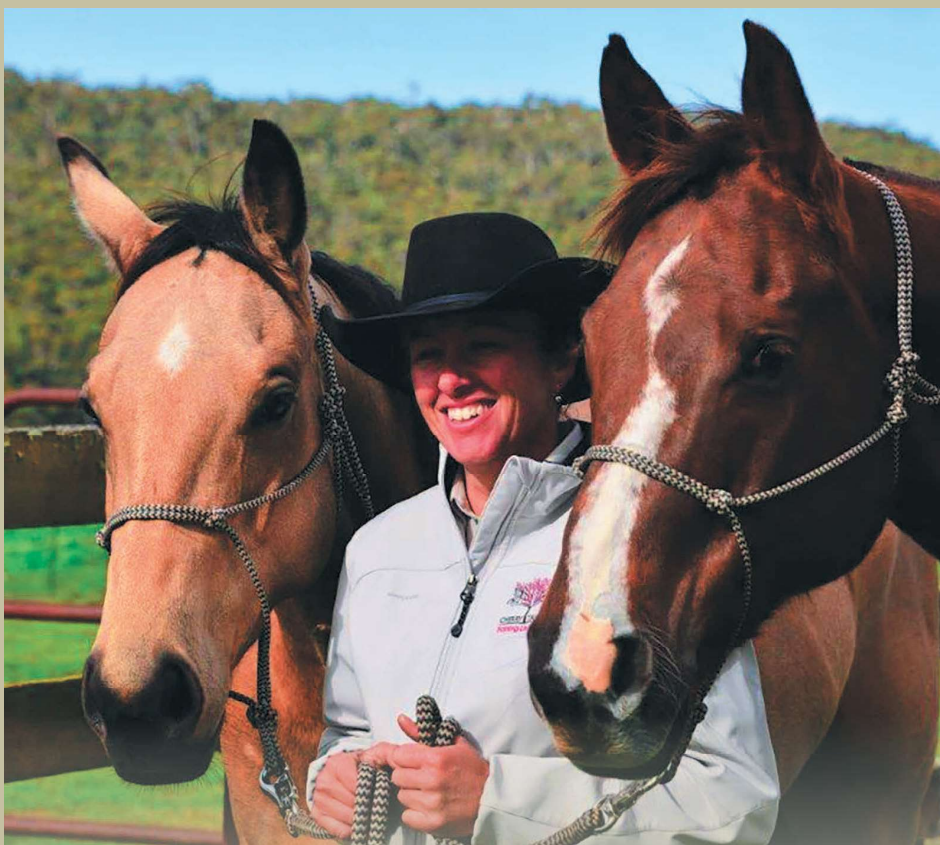


BEING PREPARED FOR A CLINIC

With
**MICHELLE
O'NEILL**

With so many competitions having been cancelled and postponed over the last few months, it has been a great chance to attend clinics and learn new skills or refresh old ones.



Clinics are an awesome investment of your time and money, as not only do you get to spend one or more days working on your horsemanship skills but also watching others work on the same or similar issues. This is doubly beneficial as you get to both feel how things work when you do them and then see how the same things work when others try the same methods.

But to make the most out of your investment (and you should look at it as an investment in your knowledge to get the most out of it) what should you do to be prepared?

BE POLITE TO THE ORGANISER

Often the organiser of the clinic is not the clinician and they are often organising the clinic for little or no payment, so it is important to be nice to them.

If they ask you to pay or return paperwork by a certain date, it is important to make their job easier by doing so.

And remember one day the shoe may be on the other foot; a lady who once abused me (when she pulled out of a clinic and then had trouble finding a replacement so she could get her money back) went on to organise a clinic for someone else and then complained that people did the same thing to her.

BE ON TIME

If you want to make the most out of your time at the clinic, make sure you are always ready to start work when you are required to.

If you are late, the clinician must start without you and you may miss out on some important information to make the most of the clinic.

Being on time also shows the clinician that you are keen, and that then makes them more likely to go out of their way over the clinic to help you solve your problems or answer questions you may have.

HAVE THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

I once turned up to the groundwork component of a horsemanship clinic with a flat nylon halter and the short lead rope. Needless to say the clinician was not impressed.

It is safe to assume you should never think you know what equipment is needed for a clinic; for example a friend of mine who gives barrel racing clinics requires that everyone turns up with long split reins, not barrel racing reins.

The organiser of the clinic will be able to tell you what equipment you need to bring; right down to your lunch. If this sounds silly, remember that if you have to drive away from the clinic to get something to eat, you may miss out

on a valuable opportunity to fence sit another group or spend time asking the clinician more questions.

BE PREPARED FOR ALL WEATHER EXTREMES

Not every clinic is held indoors and most clinicians will carry on in almost any weather extremes, so it is up to you to be prepared. The clinician is out there in the same weather, so they will possibly not be interested if you start to complain.

It is easier to learn if you are not freezing cold, boiling hot or soaking wet, so be sure to pack as many clothes as you need to make the most of the opportunity.

ENSURE YOU AND YOUR HORSE ARE HORSE FIT

If you normally only ride once a week for twenty minutes, then riding for one or more days, all day, can be a bit of a shock. If you need to, take some extra time to ensure you and your horse are ready for the hard work that a clinic can be.

To make this a bit easier, make sure both you and your horses' equipment are ready for the clinic too. Does it fit? Is it comfortable? Is it suitable? These are all good questions to ask yourself.

WATCH OTHERS

If the clinic you are attending is split into groups or if the clinician does some

exercises one on one be sure to watch what others do and listen to what the clinician says.

Often you will find things that the clinician says to someone will either apply to you and the horse you have or another horse you may ride that is not at the clinic or in the future.

Listening will also save time at the clinic; if you already know what the clinician is looking for when it is your turn, it will save them time repeating what has already been said and the entire group will get to achieve more in the long run.

BE WILLING TO LISTEN

Sometimes when you go to a clinic, you do not know what to expect and sometimes you may not agree with some of what the clinician is teaching you. That is okay, but the clinician is obviously trying to help you, so listen and do what they ask you to do (as long as it is safe).

Just because someone does something different to you, does not mean you should ignore it, so you may have to step out of your comfort zone to try something new and see where you end up.

If you do what the clinician asks and you find it is a better way, then that is fantastic, but this may not happen just at the clinic; sometimes it is what you do after the clinic that makes all the difference.

MAKE A RECORD

If you find it hard to remember everything from a clinic, make a record so that you can return later and refresh your memory. Notes are an easy method and can be written in breaks or at the end of the day. Video is also helpful, but some clinicians do not allow you to take video, so ask first.

WHEN YOU GET HOME

It is easy when you return home to get busy with life and return to your old habits. It is important to spend a little time, preferably each day, but as often as you can, practicing elements from the clinic. The more you practice what you learnt, the more likely it is to become a habit and the better your return on investment will be.

More and more clinicians have on-line resources, many of which are free, so if you get lost or confused after attending a clinic it is often good to refer to these.

Some also do lessons online, so this can also be a good follow up.

IT TAKES MORE THAN ONE

It takes clinicians years to accumulate their knowledge, so do not think you are going to learn it all in one clinic. If you really want to advance your education, and you found that you liked the clinic, make the effort to try to attend another clinic by the same person later on (even if it is next year).

Working with clinicians is just like any relationship; you have to build it up. The better they get to know you and your horse, the more they will be able to progress your learning further by building each time on what you learnt at the last clinic.

BUT IT ALL COSTS MONEY

Everything we do with horses is expensive, so why not use a clinic to make sure you are obtaining maximum return from the time and money you put in? Essentially every one of us that owns a horse is a horse trainer and is responsible for our horse's education. We owe it to them to be the best educator we can be and there is no need to try to do this on our own!



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