



How to "Read" a Horse

By Manny Londono

Reading a horse is understanding the many important signs a horse is telling you. These signs help you evaluate a horse from the ground and from the saddle. Don't be confused by what people tell you about a horse, allow the horse to tell you about themselves.

Brio is one of the most misunderstood words in our breed. Among horses we can identify three manifestations of brio - through hearing, through rein commands, and by leg signals. Hearing is any response to any sound made by the rider. Rein commands are the adequate and docile response horses show when keyed by the movement of the reins. Usually a docile horse to the rein is also easy to train. Leg signals are the response to movement of the rider's legs usually keyed with a soft, subtle touch.

People may confuse brio with other reactions like anger, laziness, or even evasiveness. Some horses may show outward signs of brio without having it. You can only determine if a horse has brio by riding him. When trying to determine brio, often we find a quick burst of energy forward and stopping shortly thereafter, usually called rabbit's jump or rabbit brio. A horse with true brio is a horse with an inner fire that burns consistently and without an end.

Temperament and brio parallel each other. Temperament in a horse is very important and it is important to understand it. Understanding temperament will help facilitate the training process. Good qualities of temperament are docility, happiness, nobleness, and a horse that is willing to work.

We can understand happiness and alertness as an expression of a horse by its conduct. You can look for these expressions in the horse's ears, the eyes, the lips, and elegant movement of neck. Also, it is very important to look at the posture of the tail and the form with which the horse stands. A horse should carry his tail and stand quietly and in a position reflecting a relaxed style. These are very important factors that must be kept in mind while evaluating a horse.

A primary quality of a horse is nobility -- maybe more important than brio! The good horse must be noble and docile. Meaning that the horse moves without laziness and with good consistent disposition executing its movements and respecting the rider's commands. Without under-estimating brio, a horse's willingness to respond to our commands is one of the most important attributes he can have.

While a horse having these qualities may be a great start, having a trainer to enhance them is the final key to a quality animal. Qualities of the trainer are elasticity, patience and many different resources for the many different situations. It also never hurts to have good humor to carry out the job consciously.

Now you are ready to start "reading" to get that next champion or lifelong companion!!!

Manny Londono has been a member, trainer and breeder in the Deep South Paso Fino Association for many years. Both he and his wife, Sharon, have made significant contributions to the development and improvement of the Paso Fino breed in our region. You can contract Manny at Rancho Poker Paso Finos, 19215 Largo Lane, Covington, LA 70435. Telephone: 504-892-9297.