

Freedom Means Responsibility

The Greater the Freedom, the Greater the Responsibility

This applies not only to human interactions, but also to how we interact with horses. The more freedom we claim for ourselves, the greater the responsibility we carry. Freedom does not simply come about—it is the result of awareness, knowledge, action, and the willingness to take responsibility.

To Ride or Not to Ride Is Not the Issue

In a perfect world, a horse would be completely free— independent of humans, embedded in natural structures where it can take care of itself on its own. But this world no longer exists for our horses. For thousands of years, they

have lived in close proximity with us. Whether we call it servitude or partnership matters less than the fact that we have taken responsibility for them—fully and irreversibly.

This responsibility goes beyond just providing food, water, and shelter. It also means engaging with the horse's needs, nature, and abilities. When we talk about freedom, horses should also have a voice. And this is where the challenge begins.

Breeding and the “Blood Rule” and Their Respective Guidelines—Are They Really Correct?

Breeding clearly shows how strongly our own interests

take priority. Over millions of years, nature created an adaptable and resilient animal. We, however, breed according to our preferences: bigger, smaller, more spectacular, more sensitive. Traits we prefer or those that offer advantages in sport are selectively enhanced—often without regard for the long-term consequences for the animals' bodies and minds.

This raises an important question: Are we still breeding horses for a shared life and for future generations—or only for our own immediate interests?

Even in everyday life, we see how contradictory our understanding of responsibility can be. Obvious problems are recognized and penalized, while more subtle—but often more serious—issues go unnoticed.

One example is injuries in the mouth area. Visible blood leads to consequences—and rightly so. In equestrian sport, this results in immediate disqualification under the so-called “Blood Rule.” However, many other injuries remain hidden. Over 60% of horses suffer from mouth injuries. Pressure points, bruising, or chronic strain are often invisible from the outside, yet painful and harmful for the

horse in the long term. And this does not only affect horses ridden with a bit.

Here, responsibility becomes a conscious choice—not in exceptional situations, but in everyday actions. How much pressure do we apply? How well is the horse trained? Is the stable environment stress-free? Does the horse understand what we ask of him—or is he merely functioning?

Often, a lack of training or understanding is the real cause of conflict between horse and rider. Instead of recognizing this, control is increased. This may work in the short term, but in the long run it destroys trust. And this is exactly where the difference between monologue and dialogue becomes visible.

From Monologue to Dialogue, from Control to Trust

A monologue means we decide, control, and enforce. The horse is expected to function. A dialogue, on the other hand, requires us to listen—to perceive signals, interpret them, and respond accordingly. It means being willing to question our own actions.

A horse can learn to make good decisions for himself. He



PHOTO: KATJA TAUREG

The only person responsible for your happiness is yourself—being free is a togetherness.

can develop confidence, cope with stress, and build trust. But this requires that we give him the opportunity and that he is mentally and physically at ease. The more we control, the less the horse can regulate himself. He will then respond either with resistance or resignation—neither of which reflects true cooperation.

This fundamentally changes the role of the human. Moving away from the controlling leader or the overly protective “parent” toward the role of a mentor. A mentor does not just explain but enables understanding. A mentor creates a foundation where cooperation can take

place—not through force, but through clarity, consistency, and trust.

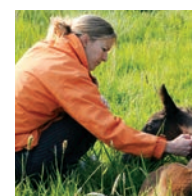
Freedom, therefore, does not arise from the absence of rules, but from the right balance of guidance and responsibility—for both us and the horse.

If we are truly willing to carry this responsibility, something emerges that goes beyond mere functioning: a genuine partnership. And perhaps this is the form of freedom we are seeking—one that does not come at the expense of others but grows through mutual understanding.



PHOTO: ANDY WICKLI

“You are responsible not only for what you do, but also for what you do not do.” — Lao Tzu



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