

# Starting Horses Under Saddle & Foundation Training

ARTICLE/PHOTOS: DAVID GRACE

**WITH David Grace - 4 Star Senior Parelli Professional & Senior Horse Development Specialist**

**H**aving first started with horses in his mid twenties, David quickly discovered something was missing, and realized how important it was to find a Master horseman and clinician, one that was actually a true horseman and understood how to teach the horse and its handler. David believed this was going to set him on a successful path with horses. Pat's philosophy of Putting the Relationship first, Foundation before Specialisation, and Never Ending Self Improvement, was what David had been looking for to increase the bond with his horses. Making the change, and embracing these principles has become a successful and very rewarding way of life.

*"Practice Does not make Perfect, Perfect Practice makes Perfect." ~ Pat Parelli*

David discovered Pat Parelli, a Master horseman, and his program of **Natural Horsemanship** in 1989. He attended a two day course instructed by Pat and was so taken by Pat's Knowledge, Passion, expertise and teaching methods that he has followed in Pat's path ever since. David is a highly regarded 4 Star Senior Parelli Instructor who has been studying the Parelli Program for 26 years. He has studied Horse Psychology, Horse Behaviour and Horse Development directly with Pat Parelli and other Master Horsemen over this time, including having the privilege to spend time and work and learn from Mr Ronnie Willis. David's focus and commitment is to help people gain the confidence and skills they need to achieve, whatever goals they desire with their horse. His vision is of a perfect horse and human partnership, represented by the horse being calmer, smarter, braver, and more athletic. Whether it is out in the paddock, on the trail or in the competition arena. Using the proven methods of **Parelli Natural Horsemanship**, David will help you and your horse develop that partnership for yourself.

As Well as an instructor David is also a Parelli Senior Horse Development Specialist. He has attended 12 Colt Start Courses directly with Pat Parelli, & 2 with Mr Ronnie Willis. Also having the honour of assisting Ronnie on 2 occasions.

David has gone onto now have started, over 900 horses. David will continue to take horses for starting or



restarting 2-3 times a year, where he still enjoys putting those important first rides on your horses.

*"A good start isn't something, It's everything" ~ Pat Parelli*

## • **STARTING HORSES UNDER SADDLE**

Parelli Natural Horsemanship, Horse development specialists, like David prepare the horse mentally and emotionally so their first saddling and riding experiences are completely positive. Starting horses is a specialized, highly skilled discipline. When starting a horse it is about teaching the horse, which is different to teaching the human. The horse learns what he lives, and lives what he learns. From the moment he is born, his experiences with people will stay with him for the rest of his life, whether good or bad. From imprinting a newborn foal, to when we first step foot in the round yard, to the first time placement of the saddle, this will be locked into their memories forever and be programed into their emotional responses. There are 4 things that influence a horse's behaviour, innate characteristics, environment, learned behaviour, and Spirit. You get only one chance to make a good first impression.



*'A good start isn't something... it's everything'*



4\* Licensed Parelli  
Professional & Senior Horse  
Development Specialist

# David Grace Horsemanship



★ Starting/  
Restarting  
Horses Under  
Saddle

★ Foundation Training

★ Horsemanship  
Courses & Camps

★ Problem Solving

★ Float Loading



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From the moment we leave our front door, we are having an influence and an effect on our horses, learning how to move and be around horses, is the first steps to becoming a horseman. Knowing how we can best help our horse to learn, rather than make them do what we want. Teaching our horse something new without him even realising he is being trained. Sometimes people forget that we are working on developing the horses mental, emotional and physical conditions, not just the physical. David plays with the horse that shows up, and does everything with and for the horse, not to him.

Before someone starts thinking about starting a horse it is important to know what it is to have a finished horse. Parelli Horse Development Specialist like David have had to do many years of training and be successful with horses, before they are aloud to start horses under the Parelli name. They have gone through Pat's training programme and have spend many years of dedication and training directly and indirectly with Pat. They have had to be successful in the eyes of Pat Parelli himself and satisfy every aspect of the programme before becoming a fully endorsed Parelli Horse Development Specialist. After then being in the field for a number of years and successfully starting hundreds of horses David was promoted to the title of a Parelli SENIOR Horse Development Specialist.

#### • **PARELLI PRINCIPLES WHEN STARTING HORSES**

Horses set the timeline, to be successful, we must be true to our horse's nature, as much as we try to set a time frame, horses live only in the moment, they are very forgiving, but they never forget. Principle, purpose, and time are the tools of teaching. Ego and emotions have no place when it comes to horses and if we wish to have success with horses, their needs must come before our goals.

Parelli Natural Horsemanship has 4 important steps identified by Pat Parelli for starting horses.

*Accept the human. Accept the saddle.  
Accept the rider. Accept the bit.*

#### **ACCEPT THE HUMAN.**

Here's where it all begins. The horse learns to trust and accept the human – totally, unconditionally, and without force. A special language of communication is developed between horse and human.

#### **ACCEPT THE SADDLE.**

Saddling and cinching, are important steps and must result without fear in the horse. We introduce the saddle in a way that the horse learns to accept it and wear it like his mane and tail.

#### **ACCEPT THE RIDER.**

After the first two steps are complete, riding the horse is a natural progression. We do not use tricks, ties or hobbles because the horse is prepared and totally accepting. First he will learn to carry the rider as a passenger and then to accept the rider's guidance.

#### **ACCEPT THE BIT.**

To start a horse naturally and not ruin his confidence and sensitivity we begin with a soft rope hackamore. He learns how to follow the feel of the reins and perform every manoeuvre without confusion or resistance. The bit is only introduced once the horse is prepared and ready to accept more refined and sensitive communication.

*“Foundation before specialisation” ~ Pat Parelli*

#### • **FOUNDATION TRAINING**

David believes that before we use our horse for a specialisation, the horse needs to have a solid foundation. The Parelli foundation programme is designed to do just that. The programme works towards having horses more confident, connected and responsive. A solid foundation will result in the horse being calmer, braver and more athletic. Then they can be asked to do a job or compete in the sporting arena, without force and without fear. David is a true believer that horses jump higher out of heart and desire, and with a solid foundation become a willing partner.

*“Horses are like snowflakes, they are all similar, but no two are the same.”  
~ Pat Parelli*

No matter the breed, purpose or reason for having a horse. David believes they all need a good start and a good FOUNDATION. Learning to become a horseman is a goal every horse owner studying the Parelli programme strives to be better at everyday. However no matter their ability or level of horsemanship, every horse owner can run into roadblocks. They can seek help by finding a horseman with a higher level of ability, like David to learn from, they can attend a clinic or camp, with their horse. There are on occasions however, that this is not enough. One example of this is that the horse may be too green or too high-spirited for the owner's ability and or confidence, even with the assistance of the horseman. David has been taking in horses for foundation training and starting for over 20 years, taking saddle horses in for foundation training can help

bridge the gap between horses and humans. By increasing the level of development and understanding of the horse, and taking its foundation to the next level. Once this is done, the horse and human partnership can continue to progress in a safe and fun way.

When David is starting a horse or progressing a horse's foundation, the level of savvy and ability of the owner is always taken into account, and David develops the horse specifically to the owner's purpose and ability.

Nothing is more important to David than keeping, the horse's spirit, curiosity, sensitivity and dignity intact.

**“No force, No fear, Just Natural communication and understanding”**

*~ Pat Parelli*

David lives at Condamine in South Western Queensland, where he holds regular clinics and camps, at his horse development facility. David has spent many years developing his property for short and long-term student's use, and for starting horses under saddle & foundation training. He also travels extensively during the year throughout Australia and New Zealand, teaching clinics and camps, starting groups of young horses, and continuing the foundation training on saddle horses.

David enjoys travelling with his horses, and believes this is a great way to develop the partnership and bond between horse and human. David continues to dedicate time to learning, by travelling overseas to spend time with Pat Parelli and other mentors in his journey of never ending self-improvement, and his pursuit to becoming a Master Horseman. 🐾





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