EPONAQUEST BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

EFL Eponaquest Instructors ~ Equine Skills Requirements

Edited for the Dutch Apprenticeship by Josselien Janssens

As EFL coach or instructor your first responsibility is to provide adequate physical safety for yourself, the client and the horse during all activities.

You need to be able to recognize both normal as well as exceptional behaviour in the horses you work with, and understand their reactions to you, the client, and their surroundings. It is your responsibility to decide whether something unusual crosses the line where it becomes an emergency. It is you who needs to step in decisively to get between a client and a horse in a safety emergency situation, as it is you who is liable for damages if anything goes wrong with the horse, a client or the property you work on.

Therefore it is important to be well versed in equine behaviour and horse training techniques before starting to coach people with the help of horses. In the Dutch apprenticeship as a rule we require that someone has the equivalent of having taken horse training or riding lessons for at least a 1 hour a week, for at least 2 years in a row.

Aside from that you need to undertake activities that require you to independently halter and lead horses around for at least one hour per week over 2 years. It is important to observe horses you work with in their 'free' time, to see how they behave when they are not led by humans and how they interact with other horses. Even if you are among the most experienced horse trainers, it is key to continue to develop yourself on an ongoing basis in the background of the human-horse relationship, horse training, behaviour, anatomy, and wellbeing in all activities you undertake with horses.

Taking some basic certification training in horsemanship is an advantage in this work and highly recommended for people who wish to make EFL their profession and have so far only dealt with horses on a recreational basis. Riding experience is not specifically required. Having some foundation knowledge of riding, the history of horse riding and riding techniques does lead to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the human relationship with horses.

Basic horse handling skills you need to master:

Connecting

Establishing a relationship with a horse prior to engaging in work or play.

Haltering

Entering and moving safely in the stall, pen or pasture.

Leading

Safely walking through gates.
Safely leading around other horses.
Maintaining a wide eye.

Tying

Quick-release knot.

Grooming

Respecting the horse and being aware of the horse's needs.
Moving safely around a tied horse.
Appropriate use of tools.

Round Pen Technique

Moving the horse at the walk, trot, and canter.
Slowing, halting, changing direction.
Exhibiting safe technique.

Suggested Practice

Haltering, leading and grooming a variety of horses.
Active round penning with a variety of horses.