



Who do you admire in your field of work? Everyone who is a current or past Council member or Honorary Fellow of ISES. Also Uta von Borstel, Katrina Merckies, Sue McDonnell, Carissa Wickens, Amy McLean, Janne Winther Christensen, Daniel Mills...there are many others, but those are the first ones that popped into my mind.

What has been your biggest lesson? When I first officially entered the area of Animal Welfare (around 1998), it took me a while to realize that I had to concentrate on “baby steps” when it came to changing people’s attitudes... if I tried for anything too radical, I risked alienating important stakeholders... this is still a challenge for me in the horse industry. I have to constantly remind myself not to try to change things too fast or step too heavily or I will alienate certain stakeholders. Some of my closest colleagues at MSU frequently remind me of this.

What’s one thing we should know about you? I’m going to step away from being a scientist for a moment and be a bit anthropomorphic. I love almost every horse I ever encounter, but have had the good fortune to have 4 of my own that were just extremely special... almost human in

some ways and I always felt they could look right into my soul. The absolute most special one had to be euthanized last fall and it is still incredibly painful even now to think about losing her. I think horses may be about the most emotionally perceptive domestic animal we will ever have the good fortune to work with, but unlike dogs (who tend to love almost everyone unconditionally and nearly always be in a good mood), horses require an effort on our part...especially the “fragile minded” ones require us to be our very best selves when we work with them and I find that bond, with those horses, to be especially dear & meaningful.

What advice would you or do you give to anyone wishing to get into research with horses? It is crazy hard to get funding, so you’d better have a passion for it and be willing to do much of the work “out of hide”... nonetheless, it is incredibly rewarding because the work you do can truly impact the welfare of equids in a positive way.

Where can we find out more about your work? Contact me if you would like any abstracts sent your way, my email address is heleski@msu.edu

Meet an ISES colleague...

Inge Teblick



What do you do? I’m a trainer, instructor, coach, thinker and writer about horses, horse training, behaviour, horse cognition, ethology and research. I’d love to say that I’m a rider too but alas, that doesn’t seem to happen so much lately.

Where were you born? I was born in Antwerp, Belgium and live in a small village about half an hour drive from there, with my family and among the many animals two horses and two ponies.

How did you start riding? I started riding on my 11th birthday - a far away date my mother had given me when I was very small still, just to be rid of my constant whining about it. Unlike she had hoped, I never forgot about it, hence on my birthday I sat on my first horse and never looked back. My first horse Naomi only came when I was an adult. She was wounded physically and mentally, and defensive to the point of aggression: she’d attack and kick and bolt, but I fell for her the day I saw her, and that was when I really started to learn about horses. Without her I wouldn’t be where I am now.



What are you passionate about? Teaching people about the person that is inside their horse. He's an adult with emotions, rights and responsibilities, and he's quite up to thinking and deciding for himself. It's up to us to set up the circumstances in such a way that we can explain most clearly what it is we would like him to do. His motivations are his, we can't change them; we can only work with them.

I've seen the power of positive reinforcement and even more so of bridges (the 'click' in clicker training although I never use a clicker). It changes everything for horse and rider (since it teaches riders to become trainers), but I acknowledge that it's very hard for people to change what they are doing, especially when they are already successful in what they are doing. Training the horses is the easy part.

What are you working on right now? In general I'm trying to work out strategies for combining riding with positive reinforcement in such a way that riding aids don't need to rely on their aversiveness to produce changes in the horse's behavior. I'm at the finishing stage of a 380 page book on learning theory for horse people (Denkwerk). It's the first part of a two-part book, the second one is about riding.

What do you have planned for the year ahead? Finishing the third book (Rijwerk) is planned next although I don't dare put a date on its publishing date. My first book on groundwork will be translated in French, so it might force me to surpass my school-French and go out and teach in French, which I've done a bit but not seriously. I also want to have my site translated into English. Then there's the 'I Train My Horse's Brain' demo team we're setting up; 2013 will be the first year we go out to show people what can be done with positive reinforcement methods, without losing spunk and frivolities like speed and power. We have husbandry, agility, freedom dressage, trick training and riding. There are some vague plans about setting up a European positive reinforcement conference for horse trainers, but I can't say anything concrete about that yet.

Where would you like to be in 5 years time? I would like that I wouldn't meet people on big events anymore (like happened on the last Horse Event in the Netherlands) who never heard of groundwork other than lungeing, let alone the idea that you'd actually focus on what the horse did RIGHT instead of wrong. That people wouldn't be afraid anymore to leave some control to the horses; they'll be safer for it, even if that sounds like a contradiction. And if I could go on wishing, I wished that people would free their horses from their solitary confinement and let them be horses with other horses.



courtesy of Inge Teblick



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What achievement are you most proud of? There have been many emotional and gratifying moments with different horses and people, but I'd have to say: the day my first horse dared to roll without feeling that she'd be eaten by everything around her if; I hope she felt that she could trust me enough to be off guard for that short moment.

On a professional level: my first groundwork book. It lists all kinds of solutions for regular groundwork exercises and problems and I deviously sneaked in positive reinforcement solutions at a time most people didn't even know that existed. People picked it up like pebbles in a pond, making ever bigger circles. I believe that even when we're just a small part of the world, Belgium and the Netherlands have a higher average of people who work with positive reinforcement techniques because we have such dedicated people going out and teaching it every single day, and I'm very much in debt with them.

Outside horses, what would you consider your most memorable moment, or your greatest achievement? Raising 4 beautiful children with big hearts and strong personalities.



Which horse that you have owned or ridden would you consider to be the best? I always say my first horse taught me about horses, my second about riding, my third about training - but I still learn from every horse I meet.

How and when did you learn about ISES and Equitation Science?

I think I picked up on the existence of ISES 4 or 5 years ago.

Has your involvement with Equitation Science influenced your riding and training? If so how, why and what is the result of that? I appreciate and support what ISES does, but my path was set long before that and equitation science confirms my chosen path. ISES makes it easier to keep track of papers that I might miss otherwise - I've been following up relevant papers for a few years now. I like hearing people like Hilary Clayton explain their research themselves. It makes their conclusions more clear. And ISES obviously can do what mere mortals like me can't: work their way into the highest regions of the horse world and be heard top-down.

I do find it a pity that ISES seems to coincide with a particular Equitation Science method that's being developed by one or two people (though my perception of that could be wrong) where some choices are presented as 'scientific' but clearly are still personal choices; surely there are other strategies which work within the same scientific principles and might be a tad more ethical nevertheless. I've seen nice things but I've honestly frowned at some of the practical applications I saw as well. I'm not a saint either; we're all human and it's only by trying things and failing sometimes that we progress. I very much appreciate the search for reliable, ethical solutions but we're clearly not there yet.

I learned learning theory and making training plans from non-horse people first, from zoo animal trainers, and maybe that showed me how much horse people are blinded by traditional horse world 'solutions' like harsher bits. If you need to train a rhino to go willingly from A to B, putting in a harsh bit isn't exactly the smartest thing to do, so why would it be with horses?

Also, some of the definitions on learning theory are not entirely wrong, but not exactly right either and sometimes I get confused questions about that. Some things are explained difficult when they are actually simple, or learning processes are being confused with learning procedures.

So if I subscribe to the work ISES does, should that mean I subscribe to Equitation Science the way it's currently being presented? No. To me they are two separate things.

Who do you admire in the horse world? That would be, or rather has been, Tom Dorrance. When my horse world opened up through the arrival of the magical internet, and while by then he was a frail, old man, he had true insight in how negative reinforcement works (although he probably never even heard of the word) and had a talent for one liners like "It's the release that teaches" or "Do as little as possible but as much as necessary" or my all time favorite "The horse is never wrong". He's the one who taught people like Ray Hunt, Pat Parelli and Buck Brannaman.

Closer to home: my second dressage instructor, Bertie Prinsen. I didn't get that much lessons from her, but what she taught me sticks with me forever. She showed me that true dressage was about clarity with kindness more than anything else.

What's the best advice you've been given? It might seem irrelevant to horse training, but that must be something Alexandra Kurland said like 12 years ago, which wasn't meant to be an advise, but I made it one. At some point she invited a few people from around the world to her place. I couldn't go then, but a small sentence from that invitation stuck to my mind. Alexandra Kurland asked that the food would be "as vegetarian as possible". I wasn't a vegetarian back then yet but I knew I had to become one eventually, because you can't work with a horse and not eat him, then work with a cow but do eat her; but I struggled with the actual decision. I liked meat. But I figured well, I can do that. I can be as vegetarian as possible. I can as well take a few more animals into my exception rule. So I became as vegetarian as possible, and well - it turned out that "as much as possible" actually was quite a lot.

And that's how it is with anything that's new and sparks some interest from you. You don't have to postpone learning and trying until you have an abundance of time or means. You can do as much as you can within the limited possibilities you have now, even when that's not much, right now. Just take that first step. The rest will come.

Where can we find out more about your work? My website is at www.ingeteblick.be and you're welcome to mail me at any time through info@ingeteblick.be or at inge.teblick@gmail.com.