

Sensory and Obstacle Training Course

presented by Equestrian Services

The Sensory and Obstacle Training Course, presented by Equestrian Services, provides the equestrian with a unique form of training which is designed to expose the horse and rider to a variety of sensory stimuli and obstacles which might be encountered in an urban or "active" rural environment. The course is presented in a clinic setting which provides the student with continual "hands-on" training and individual attention.

The course is patterned after sensory training commonly utilized by law enforcement mounted units, but is tailored to the knowledge and skill level of the civilian equestrian population. Basic, intermediate, and advanced level courses are available.



The course is instructed by experienced equestrian professionals. The lead instructor is a trained and P.O.S.T. certified Mounted Police Officer who retired as a Captain and Police Mounted Unit Commander from a large Southern California police department. The lead instructor is also a California P.O.S.T. certified Mounted Police Instructor with many years of experience instruction both mounted police officers and civilian equestrians. Other instructors are knowledgeable and experienced civilian horse trainers who are not only experienced equestrians, but also have received specialized training in techniques for instructing sensory and obstacle training courses. Additionally, the instructor-to-student ratio is kept low to ensure personalized instruction and provide for a safe training environment.

The course of instruction is designed to overcome a horse's natural instinct—to flee from "scary" things, and to provide the student with methods to maintain control of their horse. Additionally, the instructors will focus on the actions of the rider, identifying subconscious movements by which the rider may cue the horse to be "afraid".

Sensory stimuli which will be presented in the course will deal with four areas of the horse's perception:

- Sound** - noise, music, unusual sounds, etc.
- Sight** - tarps, bright lights, flags, etc.
- Smell** - road flares, fumes, smoke, etc.
- Touch** - Tarps, bubbles, streamers, etc.



Students will learn to demonstrate control of their horse by maintaining their horse in both a stationary position, and by directing them to move while being exposed to obstacles and sensory stimuli.

The basic training course is approximately 8 hours long, depending on the amount of time necessary to give every participant an opportunity to negotiate each obstacle. The morning session consists primarily of horses being exposed to sensory stimuli presented to them by instructors on the ground. As the day progresses, the participants and their horses are exposed to increasing stimuli, ending the morning session with stimuli such as smoke, flares, etc. After a lunch break to give the horses a "rest", the afternoon session consists of horses and riders navigating various obstacles that contain sensory stimuli. Additionally, all participants will have the opportunity to train on a 6-foot "battle ball" where the horses will become desensitized to the large ball to the point where they will approach and "push" the ball around the arena.

