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My Horse Bucks for NO REASON

During spring a beautiful Leopard Appaloosa mare came to my barn because she had bucked her new owner off “for no reason”. The new owner’s story was a familiar one; she had ridden horses when she was young and now as an adult wanted to live her dream of having her own horse. To the owner’s surprise her first ride ended up with her on the ground, no injuries just hurt feelings, as the mare went into a buck for no apparent reason.

While talking with the owner it seemed to me it was a common case of new arrival, new environment, no groundwork or preparation for the ride, brand new stiff and heavy saddle (not broken in), lack of balance and confidence in the rider etc. Basic common stuff that new horse owners get themselves into unwarily, and sensitive horses respond to unwittingly.

As I worked with the mare I found common issues like lack of trust and confidence in people, stubborn and resistant behavior along with a great need for desensitizing. In a couple of weeks I had the mare respecting and responding with trust and confidence while making progress in rational behavior responses that otherwise had her spooked.

Soon I was riding with what seemed to be a normal confident horse with slight flinches at the “scary” things, but without serious incident. About a week after I started riding her I saddled her up one day for our lesson, untied her from the Blocker Tie Ring (I highly recommend them) and asked her to back up slightly when suddenly she began to have what seemed to be a seizure. Her body humped up like she was going to buck, but she kept stepping backwards, head down while her body was convulsing. I grabbed the lead rope and yelled, “Hey hey” while giving it a couple jiggle. She snapped out of it and looked at me with astonishment on her face. “What was that all about”, I thought and I imagine she was thinking the same. Maybe the cinch was too tight, but that wasn’t it; I always cinch over two to three times while warming up and it was only on the first hole of the latigo. What I witnessed was the weirdest thing I’d ever seen.

Well she seemed to be over it while I warmed her up working my Three Foundations and Five Fundamentals. After her warm-up I mounted and flexed her to the left and rubbed her head as I always do, then flexed her to the right and reached down to love her up when boom she went into a light buck where I slid down her neck and landed gently on my rear. I’m scratching my head thinking, “What is going on”? Obviously something is terribly wrong and this has to be connected to the seizure like behavior she had displayed at the time of saddling. I did not continue riding her since I knew the mare must be in some kind of pain. FYI: I believe that it is a myth to think you should get back on your horse if you were bucked off. Horses buck for a reason so listen to your horse and do not risk your life to prove you are the boss. Not getting back on is **not** going to ruin your horse.....

I called the mare’s owner who came out the very next day. I proceeded to saddle the mare and she immediately went into a seizure backing up all humped up nearly falling down. The owner and I looked at each other dumbfounded “what is going on?” It was a weekend and the mare’s vet was not in so her owner contacted a T-Touch certified

practitioner who was local and available. I tried to simulate the seizure behavior for the T-Touch gal, but the mare had no reaction. We tried different saddles, but nothing. An hour into the session it dawned on me to try and back her up to see if she'd seize. Sure enough the poor thing humped up and started to fall down as her knees began to buckle. It was heartbreaking to witness and we were all stunned. After the seizure subsided, it was only a few seconds, the T-Touch gal had an "ah ha" moment and asked "does she have problems with her season?", "oh yes" I explained, "she squeals and is aggressive to all the other horses and she seems to be in season constantly". The T-touch gal recommended a pelvic exam when the vet comes out and showed us some techniques to help relax the mare in the meantime.

Monday the vet came out along with the owner and as we described the situation the vet expressed that he had never heard of such a thing. I saddled the mare which she seemed fine until I asked her to back up and off she went seizing nearly to the point of falling down. The vet was amazed and dumfounded "I've never seen anything like it" he said. The owner suggested a pelvic exam since possibly the saddle is bumping into a tender spot in the pelvic region. "Let's give it a try" he agreed. During the exam the doc explains "the left ovary is normal and feels ok" and as he reaches to feel the right ovary he exclaimed "holy sh@#!" Whoa, it's not often I hear a vet talk like that which gripped me with fear and profound concern as the owner and I looked at each other wide-eyed. The vet described what he felt saying that the mare's right ovary was grossly enormous and misshapen. An ultrasound confirmed that she had an ovary the size of an oblong grapefruit that was probably tumorous. This poor mare was in excruciating pain and trying her hardest to tell us with her little light bucks. And as the ovary grew along with her pain she couldn't help but go into painful seizures as pressure from the saddle tapped on her enlarged ovary beneath her pelvis. It all made sense now. When I flexed her to the right she bucked; when the saddle tapped on her pelvis area she went into seizures. My heart ached for her.

The following day the Appy mare underwent a lay down surgery with an 18" incision on her belly after several ultrasounds determined the ovary was too big to remove from her side. The surgery was successful, but not without a moment of panic when the mare's blood pressure dropped while under anesthesia. The ovary was diagnosed as a Granulosis Tumor which was benign. The vet told us that this is the **most painful surgery a horse can go through** since there are so many blood vessels and nerves surrounding the ovaries. She had to be in terrible pain for a very long time, long before her new owner purchased her.

The mare came back to my barn for post-operative care and rehab which I used Natures Balance Care *Bare Skin Barrier* on her incision everyday to keep the flies off and to promote healing (the vet was amazed at the quick healing of the incision area). By the end of three months I began working with her and soon was riding without any further seizures or bucks. She was so sound that I rode her bareback in a walk, trot and canter – wow what a smooth girl she was.

Once again I can't say this enough "a horse does not buck for no reason". Please listen to your horse. If there is dangerous behavior or sudden behavior changes, consider the source of the behavior before you start training the behavior. Remember ***Problems Are Not Always Training Issues.***

Internationally recognized horse whisperer and Professional Humane Educator Missy Wryn provides comprehensive horse management, horse training, and effective communication workshops, clinics, and presentations across the country and at her Zen Barn in Estacada, Oregon. Missy is the producer of the famed, "free for viewing" [Training the Whole Horse](#)® and [Starting Under Saddle video series](#) plus founder of HorseMAREship™, and DO NO HARM Productions. Missy is also the creator of the [All-In-One Bitless Bridle](#), founder of IRON FREE RIDING, the "B" Horse Club and the Equine

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