

STEWARDSHIP:

WHY WE'RE ALL ENTRUSTED WITH THE FUTURE OF OUR INDUSTRY

BY STEPHANIE LYNN

Contrary to what many believe, people do not either lead or follow. People who do not lead are passive spectators—someone who waits for another to take responsibility. Rather than stepping forward, a nonleader steps back. A leader does not wait for someone to tell them what to do. Leaders take the initiative and responsibility to do what is right in both public and private life. Leaders are faithful stewards to all that is around them.

The word steward is often defined using terms like manager, custodian, administering, those entrusted with and those being given trust. The original the word, oikonomia was derived from the two Greek words, oikos and nomos. It portrayed leadership, authority and accountability. In ancient times, the oikonomos, or steward was the “ruler of the house.” But he was not the ultimate ruler. In fact, he was often a slave to the head of the household, second in command but entrusted to manage all affairs of the household, financial matters included.



The steward, or oikonomos, was in authority as well as under authority. The implication is that stewardship is a two-party method or system of operation. One person owns the resources and the other person is entrusted with the resources. By definition, the steward is accountable to his master for how the resources of the household are invested. Horse trainers are entrusted with the horse but the horse is not really ours to own.

A leader has the privilege, responsibility and authority because someone else has given him this authority. A steward does not own, instead he holds in trust and uses what he has been given for the one who owns. We are custodians of the horse. We never “own” a horse; instead, we are entrusted with the horse.

Each of us is responsible for how we handle every horse; what we do with it, the decisions we make about its care and the treatment we give it. Each of us is a steward. It is a job that cannot be taken lightly. We are accountable and required by

definition to be trustworthy. It is our job to manage the horse according to a higher purpose than that of ours alone. Arrogance and pride have no place in this equation.

As stewards, as horsemen, we must take responsibility for all things, not just the tangible: the hair coat, the turn-out, the training or the trophies. As stewards for the horse we must take responsibility for the intangible things such as our abilities, relationships, wisdom, service and especially the way we treat others, be they two-legged or four-legged. Every action has implications. Whether we are owners, trainers, exhibitors or bystanders, as horsemen, it is our duty and obligation to take responsibility for all that happens in our household.

Each of us is responsible for those around us—just as in Ancient Roman times. Theirs was a culture where household included anyone who entered; family, friends, or visitors. Household was extended to include every person who lived or worked in the house or on the estate. In essence, the household was the basic economic unit of the community and its influence extended to those who did business with the household.

Sound familiar? A horsemen's household is the barn at home, the show pens we ride in, the stables we visit, the show grounds we spend time at and the pastures we drive by. It is the café we have coffee in while chatting with the locals. Our household includes the veterinarian's office where we grant authority over our animal's wellbeing. It is our friend's barn, the stalls we walk by at the horse show and the people we give our money to. Our household is everywhere we are, all that we say, all that we do and all that we witness.

W. Clement Stone is famous for saying “be careful the environment you choose for it will shape you; be careful of the friends you choose for you will become like them.” Our time, 2014—right now, is a time to heed those words as we look at the world of horses that is our household.

Being a steward is not just about responding to the pressures from outside groups that do not understand all that we do and all that we are. It is about more than keeping a good hair coat and vaccinating. It is about taking responsibility for our household. We are all stewards of our household. We control our future and we control the future of our industry. It is up to us to manage our household, to be relentless when it comes to its administration.

Each of us must put the well being of the horse and the horse industry above our individual goals. Each of us must be a steward. If each of us will do just that, our industry will flourish. We will secure a place where horses make horsemen for years to come. We must be stewards of our households, oversee our community, administrate all that we do and be accountable to someone else.

At the beginning of this article a nonleader was described as a person who stands by and waits for someone else to take action. Perhaps they are the one who watches in disgust as a rider jerks a horse so hard they draw blood, but still takes no action. It may be the person who drives by the emaciated horse day after day



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on their way to work bearing witness to the horse's disappearing stature until one day they stand no more. Or maybe they are the one who simply is fearful of speaking their heart, afraid of retribution. If that is you, keep in mind that the important element is that as stewards, we are charged with responsibilities regarding things that belong to someone else. We do not own the horse; rather we are entrusted with the horse.

Being a steward is not an easy task and it will not always win friends. It is about doing the right thing because it is the right thing. It is about taking responsibility when no one else will. It is about holding ourselves accountable to a higher standard. Mostly, it is about being trustworthy to the animal we have chosen to include in our household.

2014 is the year of the horse in the Chinese Zodiac. The horse is recognized as making constant efforts to improve themselves. It is considered to be energetic, bright, warm-hearted, intelligent and able. All of the things we know we can be. Make this be the year of our horse. Consider the great responsibility we have been given in our

job as a steward. Move on from failure; lead—do not follow. Make changes as they need to be made and invest freely in our household.

ABOUT STEPHANIE LYNN



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