

Raven and the SARI Horses

by Barbara Janelle

In early 1995, Raven, a Newfoundland puppy joined Linda Markey's household. Linda and I work on the SARI horses on Friday mornings, so she brought him out one day to see the horses. Raven's first visit to SARI was traumatic for him. Little Gretal, our 43 year-old, 12 hand black and white pony laid her ears back at him and Raven hid behind Linda. A few months later, Linda brought him again and Hannibal lunged at him. Raven fled. He was afraid of horses.

When Raven was eight months old, Linda and I decided to help him learn to be comfortable around the horses, so Linda brought him to SARI again. This time, we worked his ears before bringing any horses out. Then Linda continued to work his ears while I did some TTouch on a horse nearby. We moved to the arena, and brought out quiet, trustworthy 16 hand Santana and Raven's old nemesis, Gretal. Helen Thorn worked on Gretal and Linda worked on Santana while I did some TTouch on Raven. Then I walked him on a leash around and between the two horses. Raven enjoyed it all. He was quiet, breathing and interested in the horses, and no longer appeared afraid.

We decided to let him off the leash. Raven trotted over to Santana and sniffed her legs. Santana looked at him with soft eyes and continued undisturbed by his presence to enjoy Linda's work on her legs. Gretal ignored him and Raven quickly settled down while the work with the horses continued.

Since then Raven has helped us several times with the SARI horses. We like to expose the horses to unusual things and a big (Raven now weighs 152 lbs) Newfoundland dog playing in the arena while we work with them, is a challenge. Raven's good manners quickly reassure the horses and we have been able to ground drive and work SARI horses through plastic with Raven present and loose in the arena.

Taking a few minutes to help a dog relax with the TTEAM ear work can build confidence and change behaviour very quickly. By providing a safe place for him to watch and stay relaxed, Linda and I gave Raven a chance to develop some confidence. Then by involving him in the arena TTEAM body work session, he learned that he could be quiet and confident near the horses. Finally by walking him around the horses while they stayed quiet, encouraged Raven to mirror their ease while moving. It took about 40 minutes to change Raven from a fearful dog into an animal who is confident and trustworthy with the horses.

*SARI is the Special Abilities Riding Institute, a therapeutic riding centre for disabled children in London, Ontario.



Photo 1: Linda Markey & Santana (28 years), Barbara Janelle and Raven, Helen Thorn and Gretal (43 years) - SARI 1995. They are using the TTouch to introduce Raven, the Newfoundland dog, to the horses.



Photo 2: Raven watches on, instead of running away, as Linda does Python Lifts on Santana's hind legs.