



## Chapter 15

### SEAF The People Pleaser

“Am I doing a good job?”

“Are you happy with me?”

“Do you still like me?”

SEAF’s have a million questions and they over-analyze everything. Never give them your cell phone—they will be calling every ten minutes! Insecurities abound in their lives. They are constantly trying to fit in and be liked. They are sometimes described as delightfully sensitive; at other times as incredibly needy and uncertain. You may have rescued one that you felt was being misunderstood. The challenge now is in your court to try and figure out what this horse needs to be able to relax and enjoy life.

Easy to love! They are touchy, cuddly, expressive, cute, loveable, and smart. They try so hard but worry so much. You want to wrap them up, take them home and keep them safe. Safety should be your main priority if you want to work successfully with this type. They need to be kept safe. They are afraid of many things in their world. Because they are Submissive and Friendly, a lot of their fear is rider directed. They are trying so hard to please, that it comes across as not listening because they are over-responding and over-reacting.

Add Energy to this personality and it is like adding fuel to the fire. They are spinning their wheels and revving off in six directions. They need to be kept in a small box so that they know exactly what to do and where to put their

feet. Routine is critical for them. They find any change stressful, whether it is new places, new jobs, new owners, or new pasture mates. The less Submissive types will externally express this emotion through motion, while the more Submissive ones will internalize their feelings and be the ones that colic easily or develop ulcers. Your emotions as well as theirs need to be managed carefully. If you get emotional, they will get emotional.

They will appear psychic in the way they can pick up on how you are feeling today. If they are pushed into overload, they can have explosive outbursts. Listening to them and calmly and quietly returning to a lesson that they know well may save the day.

SEAF's need constant input and assurance that they are doing everything right. The relationship is much more important to them than the job. Their worries are not about the job or external environment nearly as much as how you feel about them. Like the DEAF's (Wild Cards), they would be happy to do the same circle for eight years as long as it made you happy. They do not need a lot of variety and exciting challenges. They are emotional, expressive and fairly feminine, similar to the SECF's (Goddess), but lacking some of that personality's confidence and grace. It is hard to look graceful when sweating and worrying.

A somewhat conflicting characteristic that shows up occasionally (in small herd situations) is the desire to be bossy and controlling even though they are Submissive. They may repeatedly try to push the herd boss away from his food even though they never succeed. Owners watching this may be confused and think that they have a Dominant horse making them a DEAF or Wild Card. Reading the characteristics of that personality would soon reassure them that they do in fact own a Submissive horse. This

horse will never challenge and fight with them like a Wild Card. But why the bossiness? Perhaps they feel that their world is out of control and are struggling to put some order in it.

They need you to have a quiet, consistent program and be understanding and fair with them. Keep your expectations low. They are insecure, so they need a confident, relaxed rider on whom they can rely. If their rider gets nervous, tight or tense, they will respond likewise by getting nervous, tight and tense. Help them to manage their emotions because they can't. If left without input, before long, their busy mind will send them rushing off in some direction that will take their rider totally by surprise. In the hands of a relaxed confident horseperson, this horse will not put a foot out of place because that rider will be telling them exactly where to put every foot. In spite of their complexities, People Pleasers are loved and appreciated companions by most of their owners.

### **Training**

Enroll this horse in the three-year training program. They will need all the time you can spend with them and more. New things must be introduced slowly and repeated frequently until you are both probably a little bored. At this point the SEAF will finally understand that he is in fact doing the right thing and start to relax and consequently develop some confidence.

This horse is easy to make mistakes with as they can get in over their heads quickly. Because they are trying so hard, riders think that they have got it and proceed on to more advanced work before they are ready and eventually the horse derails. They are dealing with fear and energy, so it is your job to slow it all down until they understand. This horse must walk before he runs. He must understand

his training very well at the walk, before proceeding up through the other paces.

Some riders will think that they can lunge or exercise this horse to get him to quiet down. As the speed increases, the internal chatter increases until nothing is making any sense and you both feel frustrated and upset. That is why the canter can take a long time to develop in this personality. The wind in their ears is whispering many things. But as they learn to allow you to control them, you can start to slow it all down and make it work for them.

Ground games are great for these horses as it gives them a place to build the relationship and trust, which is really what they are looking for. They need the relationship. They need to be listened to. Any erratic expectations in your program will lead to erratic behavior on their part. They do not hold grudges, but are easily damaged emotionally.

A trainer must never lose his cool with this horse. The damage may be irreparable. This horse doesn't just develop issues from abuse. They develop full blown phobias and disorders. The best ground exercises to build a solid foundation would be ground driving or long lining. With round pen or lunging, their energy makes it hard for them to slow down and understand the exercise. They will worry if we are always sending them away. They need to know that we are constantly there for them.

Owners have found this horse slow to mature. Perhaps we are inclined to baby them because they are so uncertain and insecure, which is maybe why we frequently rescue them. But we must understand that no amount of love is going to make them feel safe. We need to take their hand and guide them through life. This is why the confident rider who can tell the People Pleaser where to place every foot has success with this type. And when the rider does it

in a quiet way that is constantly reassuring this horse that he is doing everything right, the SEAF will blossom and shine.

However, just because they shine in the hands of one person, does not mean they can with another. Without the same confident ride, they could easily fall apart even though they appear to know their job. Remember they are Friendly, not Aloof, so they do not attach to their job. They are attached to you. They can become a one-man horse.

An SEAF show jumper I have watched over the years has excelled in this type of quiet, consistent program. Her name is Rayana, and her rider has been there for her every step of the way. He is a pro who is able to slow her world down and tell her exactly what to do and when. In return, she turns her entire trust over to him. They competed in the Puissance event at Spruce Meadows one year. This is a competitive event in which the horse and rider are required to jump a solid wall and are eliminated if they knock down any of it. The wall is built higher each round and the last remaining horse/rider pair is the winner. You would not normally think that this personality could possibly do that event. For her to jump such a large and imposing obstacle was credit to the type of ride she received. Others watching were not nearly as in awe as I was because I knew her personality—I knew she was doing this feat entirely to please him. He gave her the ideal ride. In the competition they have one or two smaller jumps to warm up and then down to the big wall. Each time after jumping the smaller fence, her rider stopped her and patted her, letting her know what a good job she was doing, then would pick up a canter and ride on down to the big wall. She gave him her all. They finished by jumping 6'1". He retired from the competition at that point, knowing that she had done her

best for him. Who knew a pat could mean so much? It does to this personality.

### **Careers**

The People Pleaser horse is not actually looking for a serious job. He is happy being your companion at work or otherwise as long as you are appreciating him for his part. They do not like to be left on their own, so the job must be one that you can help them with. They are not your once-a-week pleasure horses as they need a lot of riding, but trail riding will appeal to them as it is relatively low stress.

They could make a lovely hunter as they usually have a very cute jump because they are a bit afraid, but the energy is sometimes too much for hunters. They would like the repetition as long as you dictate the ride. Jumpers might have too much variety and speed, unless you were the type of rider that could really slow it all down for them. They will jump clean but may have trouble when you add speed. They would probably like dressage as they would like you telling them where to put every foot as long as you proceed through the levels slowly and do not put too much pressure on them. They would enjoy competitive trail, as they would have all the energy you need, and they would love all the miles and time that you spend with them in that type of sport. The People Pleaser does not care too much what you do, just as long as you care.