

Training Quality Assurance

I have trained horses for the public for over 20 years; I started riding outside colts with my Dad at age 10, and have continued to train horses for the public through my twenties and into my thirties. Over this time I have seen some horses that people have paid for 60 or 90 days of professional training, that did not have what my dad and grandpa would have expected at the end of the first week. I have always been amazed at the lack of education in the equine industry of what it means to set the foundation on a horse, or start a horse.

If someone wanted to build a house, they would hire someone to lay a solid foundation on which they could continue to build their dream home. In the building industry there are many people qualified to set the foundation, and after the house was built, the client would expect the foundation not to fall apart. However, this is not the case in the equine industry. There are no defined quality standards in the equine industry for setting the foundation on a horse, or any minimum qualifications for people to instill this foundation. The question is, could there ever be? Granted the comparison of setting the foundation of a non-living and thinking house compared to a fear driven horse is not a fair comparison. However, there are 7.1 million people in the equine industry in the U.S., and 85–90% of these horse owners are inexperienced and will need assistance in riding and training their horses. So, although it may be tough to define quality standards in the equine industry for setting the foundation on a horse, this is the goal and mission of *Training Quality Assurance*.

Foundation for Perfection

I was blessed to be raised in a very horse savvy environment. I remember Tom Dorrance coming to give clinics at the ranch my dad managed in Nevada, and doing a little traveling with my grandpa to some clinics as well. I grew up starting colts with Dad, and remember always having someone observing, or helping us start colts so that they could learn from my dad. Although, I realize I was very blessed to be raised in this environment growing up, it was very frustrating as well. I remember being frustrated by the always echoed “there”. Whether it was Tom, Grandpa or Dad, they would be helping someone with a horse, and they would be coaching a very frustrated horse and confused person, and then out of nowhere they would yell with excitement “There! You feel that?” The person would usually nod and fake a little smile like they had actually felt something, but deep down you could usually tell they had no idea in world what had just taken place. So being raised in this environment, when I started teaching the green breaking classes at MSU I remember asking myself, Is there a different way to teach what I thought I saw growing up?

Well, that question has taken me on over a 10–year journey of trying to name and define what I thought “there” was growing up. This is what I got my masters in, basically trying to name and define what I thought I saw my dad and grandpa do when setting the foundation in a colt. The end result was something that I called the [Foundation for Perfection](#). (For more information on the very long personal journey of how I received the knowledge of the Foundation for Perfection, read [Returning to Eden: True Unity and Willing submission](#)). When I started this journey, although I did not fully understand the “there” in every situation, I knew if I didn’t have it in some very crucial places, the horse's foundation would

eventually fall apart. Some of the horses that I blew their foundation in the first few days never did fully recover by the end of the first month.

Another very frustrating part about the environment I grew up in, was that nearly every horse these men worked ended up being the same. My grandpa used to travel all over the country, and people used to bring the most wild and dangerous horses they could find to test him. However, at the end of the session, every one of them would reach the same place. It was the same with my dad. I would try to do everything right, and then I would get a horse that no matter what I did, I just couldn't get through to it. So I would take him to my dad and tell him that this horse was the exception to Tom and Grandpa's philosophy. I had tried everything and this one I just can't get through to. Well, back to the frustrating environment. There were almost no exceptions. Every horse could reach the same point, it was just a matter of the time it took for them to get there.

Well, taking a scientific approach to what I thought I saw my dad and grandpa do with horses growing up, and mixing it together with my own philosophy, I have learned from the Lord. I have developed a scoring system to help people reach the same place on every horse. There are 5 score sheets; [Ground Work](#), [Phase 1](#), [Phase 2](#), [Phase 3](#), and [Phase 4](#). Each score sheet has three variables that are measured, temperament or driving factors, task completion and foundation. What enabled my dad and grandpa to reach the same place on every horse is, I believe, that they had these built in score sheets in their heads. They would first get the horse's driving factors in order (temperament) and foundation before they tried to accomplish anything on the task completion side. In this way, they were focused more on the inside of the horse than the outside, and it was because of this approach that they were able to reach the same place on every horse.

The goal and purpose of *Training Quality Assurance* is to certify people that understand there are three areas that need focus when setting the foundation in the horse; task completion, foundation and driving factors/temperament. If a person goes too fast, and ignores the horse's driving factors in order to accomplish the task, the horse will be pushed into self-preservation and a fear driven response to training. However, if a person goes too slow and is focused only on the driving factors instead of task completion, the horse will go the other way, and fall into self-preservation and a resentment given response to training.

Training Quality Assurance Disclaimer

TFTC's TQA is a program to instill an acceptable level of consistency and expectation for both the consumer (horse owner) and the producer (horse trainer). It is unreasonable for a horse owner to adopt a mustang and pay a horse trainer to put 10 rides on it so that their daughter can use the horse in 4-H. However, if a horse owner pays someone \$1,600-1,800 to put the foundation on horse, in my mind, they had better be able to get a job done with that horse. TQA is not saying that every horse will meet TQA's quality standards in the time frame that TQA has set. It is our goal that *Training Quality Assurance* can serve as a tool to aid the horse trainer in educating their client about the best decisions for their horse.

An example of this would be if a horse trainer has worked a horse for 3 to 4 weeks, and they have improved very little on TQA's score sheets. The trainer could explain to their client that TQA's guidelines say that over 90% of the horses started using these methods, have reached a certain place by a certain

day, but some horses may take longer than TQA's quality standards. Then the client can make a well informed decision whether or not they want to continue on with training. Not that there is anything necessarily wrong with the horse, but the horse's temperament may not be a good fit for an inexperienced horse owner. This is why on all TQA's score sheets there are three variables that are scored and recorded for the client; temperament, foundation and task completion. An experienced horse trainer can usually tell within the first month if a horse's temperament is going to match their owner. Then the owner can determine how much money they want to put into their horse in order to have a solid foundation that is safe and suitable for their needs.