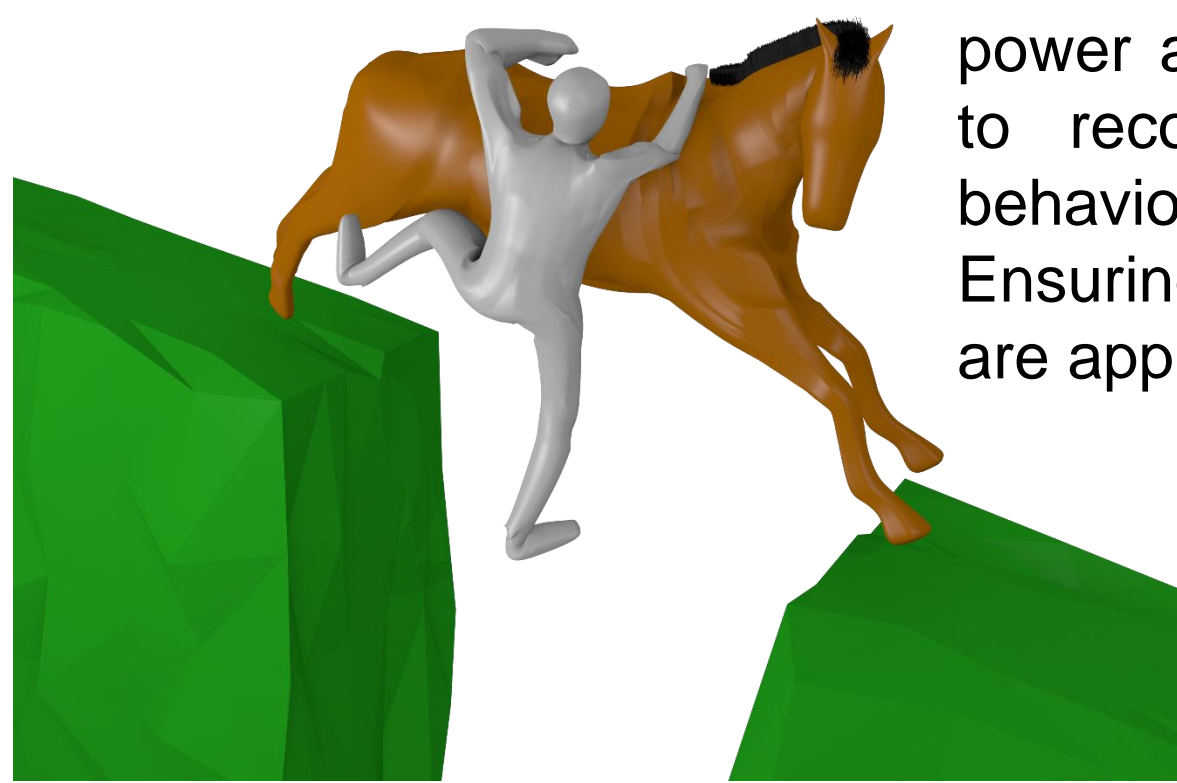# ISES Training Principles

Human and horse welfare depend upon training methods and management that demonstrate:

Human and Horse Safety

Acknowledging the horse's size, power and flightiness. Learning to recognise flight/fight/freeze behaviours early.
Ensuring horses and humans are appropriately matched.

The Nature of Horses

Meeting horse welfare needs such as foraging, freedom and equine company. Acknowledging that horses may perceive human movements as threatening. Avoiding dominance roles during interactions.

Mental and Sensory Abilities
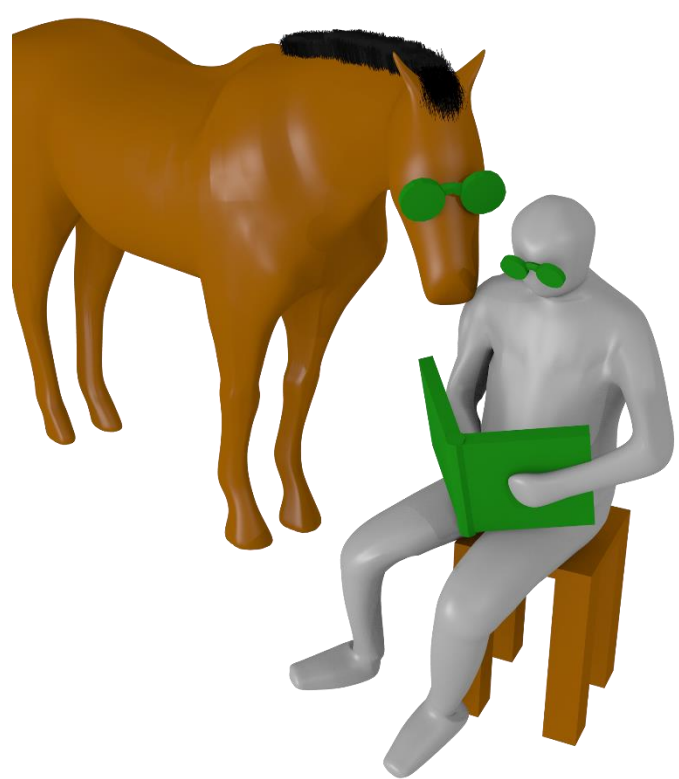
Acknowledging that horses think, see and hear differently from humans. Keeping the length of training sessions to a minimum.
Not overestimating or underestimating the horses' mental abilities.

Emotion
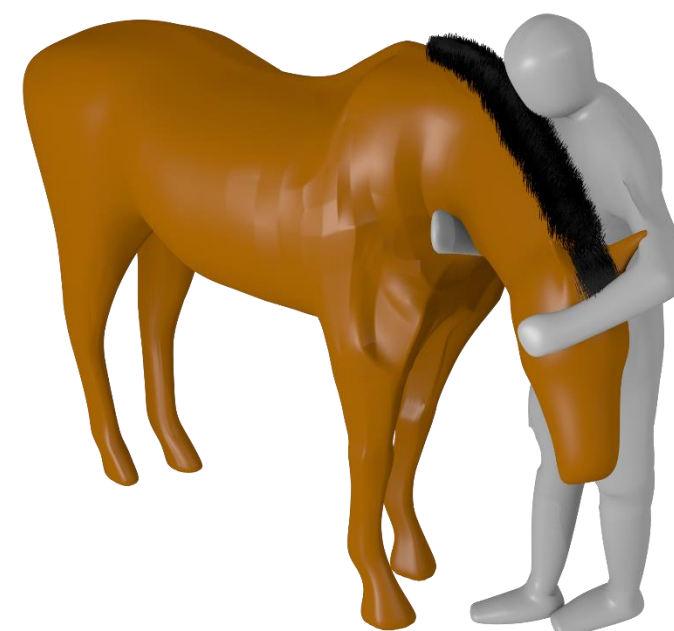
Understanding that horses are sentient beings capable of suffering. Encouraging positive emotional states. Acknowledging that consistency makes horses optimistic for further training outcomes. Avoiding pain, discomfort and/or triggering fear.
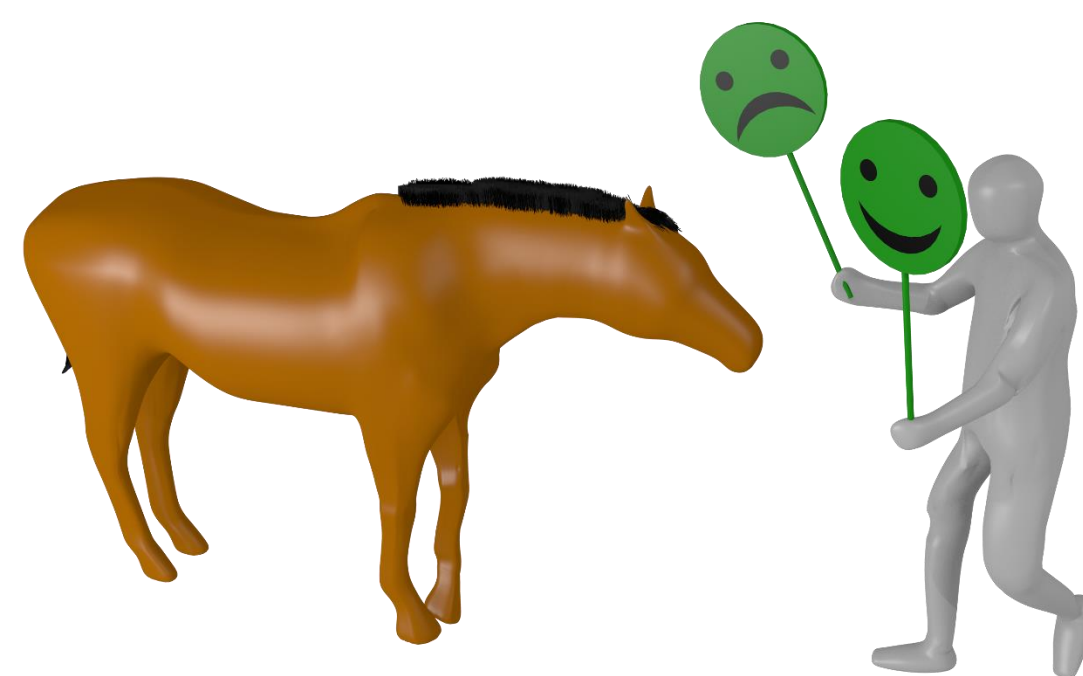
Classical Conditioning
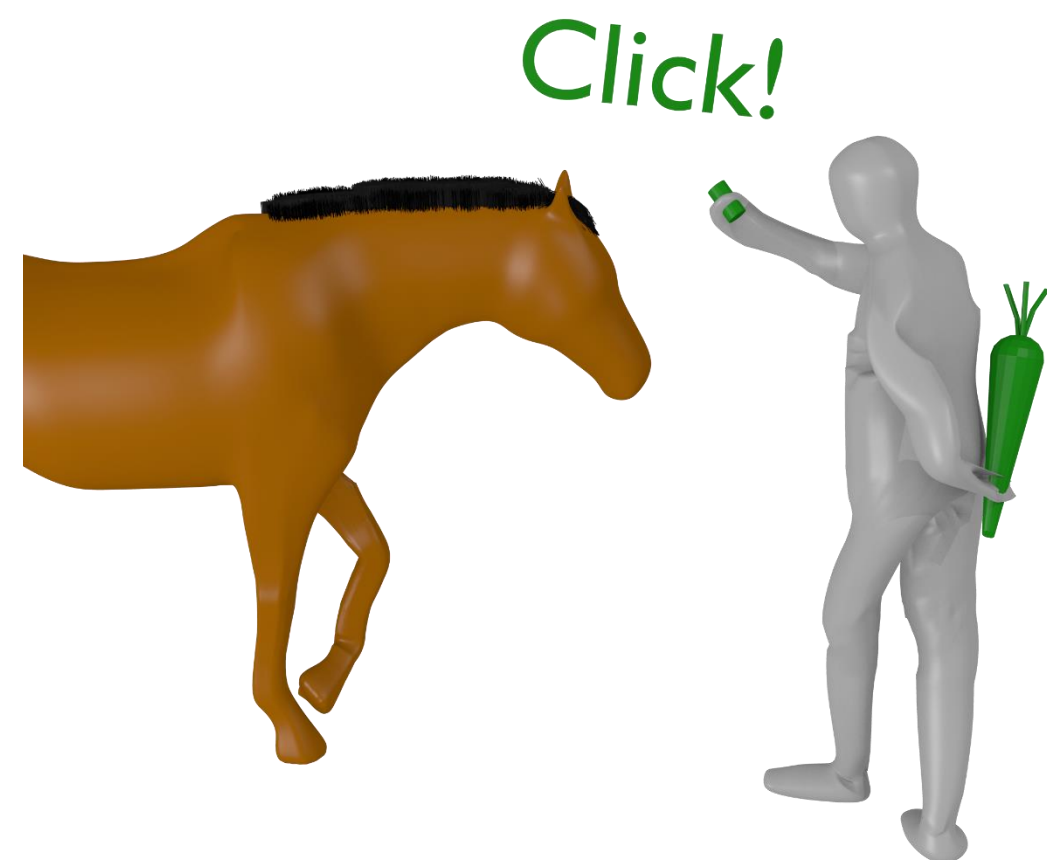
Click!

Acknowledging that horses readily form associations between stimuli.
Always using a light signal before a pressure- release sequence.

Operant Conditioning

Understanding that behaviours become more or less likely as a result of their consequences. Removing pressures at the onset of a desired response. Minimising delays in reinforcement. Using combined reinforcement.
Avoiding punishment.

Desensitisation

Learning to apply correctly systematic desensitisation, over-shadowing, counter-conditioning and differential reinforcement. Avoiding flooding (forcing the horse to endure aversive stimuli).
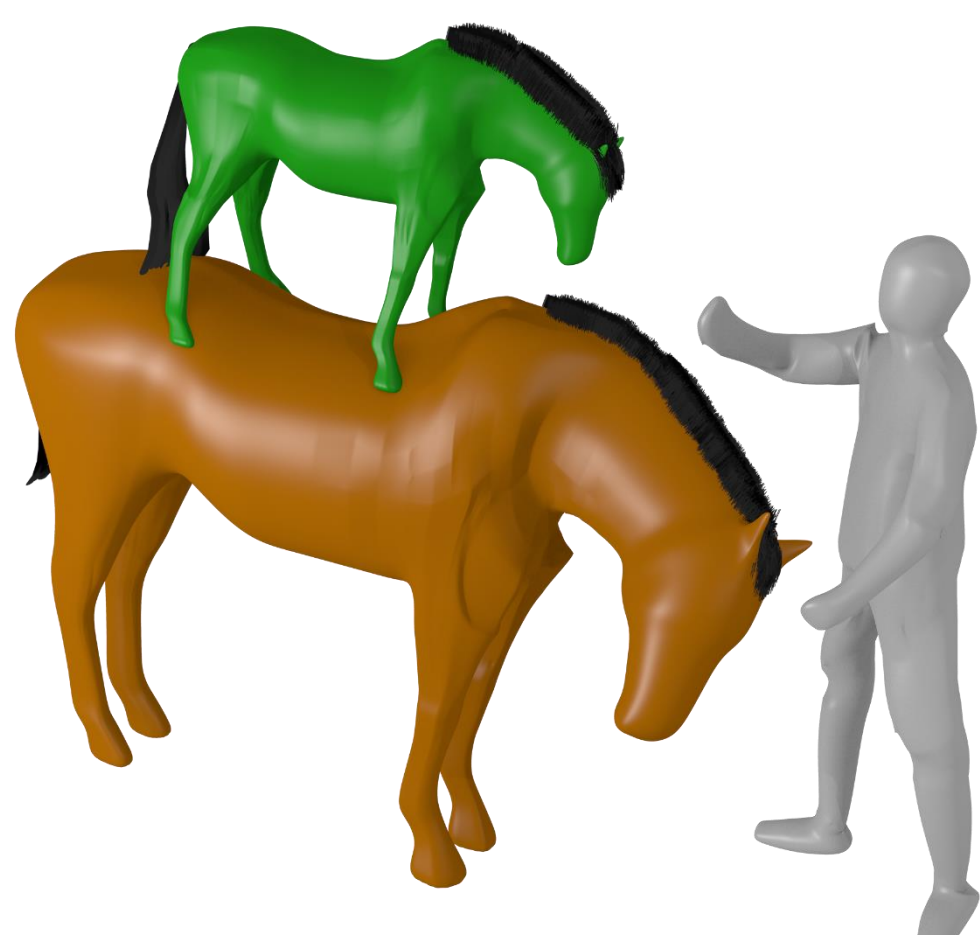
Shaping

Breaking down training into the smallest achievable steps and progressively reinforcing each step toward the desired behaviour.
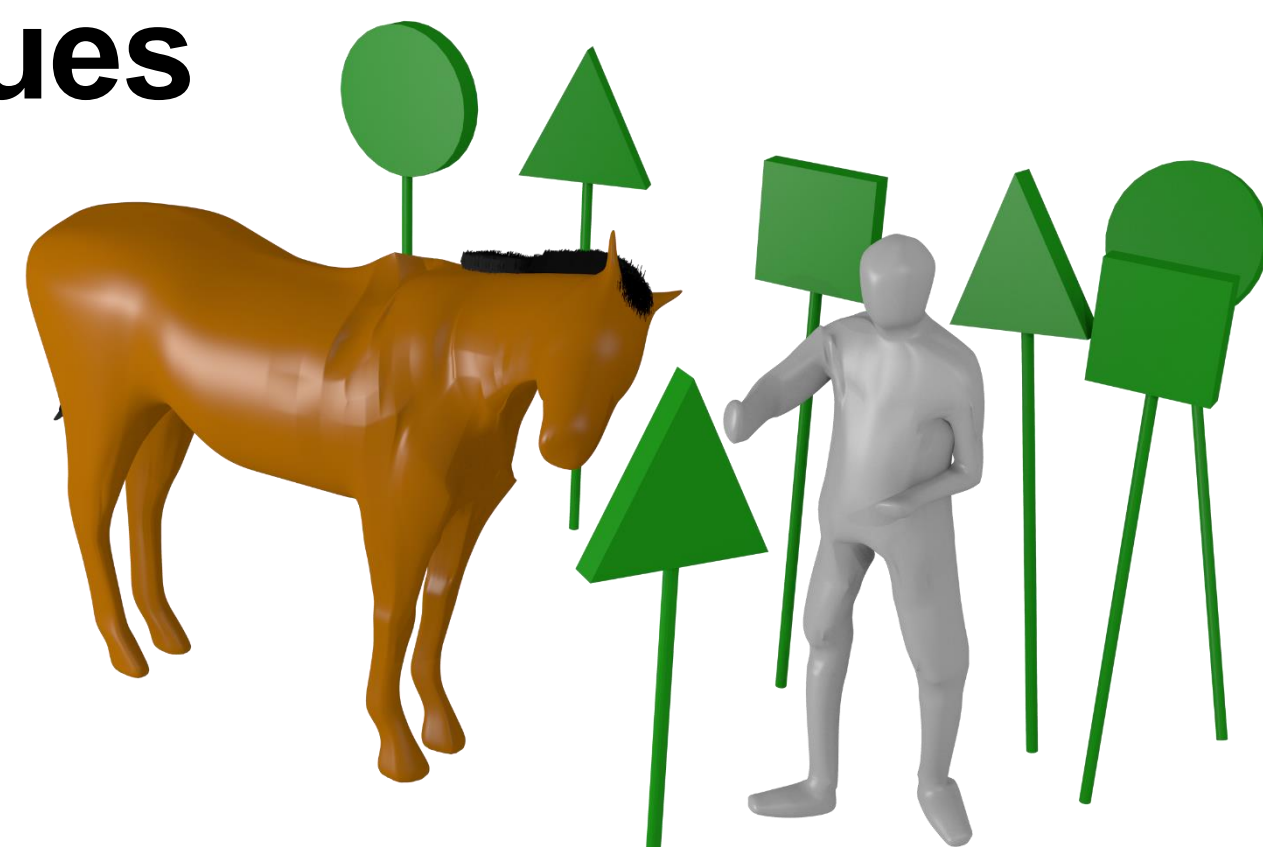Changing the context (trainer, place, signal), one aspect at a time. Planning the training to make it obvious and easy.

Self Carriage

Training the horse to maintain gait, tempo, stride length, direction and body posture.
Avoiding forcing a posture or maintaining it through relentless signalling (nagging).

Cues

Ensuring the horse can discriminate one signal from the other. Ensuring each signal only has one meaning.
Timing the signals with limb biomechanics. Avoiding the use of more than one signal at the same time.

Figures: Rudolf Leuthardt

This poster is a summary of the First Training Principles. To read the extended version go to:

www.equitationscience.com