

Setting Goals

IT IS FAR ENOUGH INTO 2008 THAT MOST OF US who made resolutions are either well on our way to achieving them or have dropped them completely. In fact, studies show that more than one third of resolution-makers have given up by January 31. I find the biggest problem with New Year's resolutions is that they are usually made in one evening and they wind up being a short statement aimed at fixing a problem that has developed over the long term. Get organized. Lose weight. Be nicer, etc.

Unlike New Year's resolutions, goal-setting doesn't have to be this intimidating. Here at Westfall Horsemanship, we've been using goal-setting for years to make sure we're always moving forward. Every year at this time, I have all of the staff, including me, review the previous year's goals. Then we fill out new goal sheets for the upcoming year. It is a process that can be done in a morning with a sizable group of people or more quickly with fewer.

Often, the greatest thing holding someone back is lack of commitment, so putting something down in writing gives a sense of concreteness. Sharing your goals with others adds their expectations to your own, making it much more difficult to just give up.

You may have your goal-setting already under way, but if you'd like to try our method, here are some tips to get you started:

1. About a week in advance, tell those who will be involved to be thinking about their goals – for the coming year, for three years out, 10 years out, etc.

2. Collect the things you will need ahead of time – pens/pencils, timer, forms you made or have found on the Internet (The forms I use are available on my Web site, www.westfallhorsemanship.com)

3. Set aside plenty of time for the process to take place, then ...

4. *Do it!*

You might want to encourage everyone to consider doing a goal sheet for each area of

their lives – job, horse, family, etc.

On your scheduled day and time, have everyone fill out the forms at the same time. Set a timer for 10 minutes per question. Sometimes that looming bell is all it takes to get someone who hems and haws to finalize a goal. Be sure not to criticize one another's goals. Some people will find it easier than others to dream big.

It's also important, when reviewing last year's goals, that you don't punish yourself or others for the goals that were not achieved. Focusing on goals that weren't achieved instead of all that were is unproductive. So cheer the successes!

First-time goal-setters often don't set their goals high enough. They'll figure this out when they see themselves achieving what was a three-year goal in a shorter amount of time. That's why having the goals out in increments of one, three, 10 and 20 years can really pay off – seeing goals achieved faster than you dreamed possible.

So put those big goals out there even if you have to put them in the 20-year range.

Next month, look for tips on training your horse in the stall. □

Stacy Westfall is an AQHA life member from Mount Gilead, Ohio.

By Stacy Westfall

The difference between a dream and a goal is a timeline.

Examples of goal lists

ONE-YEAR GOALS

- Save enough money to buy a saddle
- Be in at least one horse show
- Ride my horse four times per week
- Teach my horse to bow
- Go on one AQHA trail ride

THREE-YEAR GOALS

- Attend six local shows
- Win a class
- Save enough money to buy a trailer

TEN-YEAR GOALS

- Raise a foal and train it myself
- Save enough money to build an addition on the barn
- Win a class at the All American Quarter Horse Congress



WALT TENENBERG HORSE PHOTOS

If I had set the goal of competing *bridleless* early on in my reining career, it would have been out of reach. It was, however, in my long-term goals. I now compete *bridleless* and *bareback*, and that took another two years to bring to competition level.