



“Realise the Magic of Horses”

Three week course

Introductory & Intermediate Level

‘Alchemy Place’ Moonbi, NSW

March 12th – 30th

Horses are Magic – all horse lovers feel this and that is why they are drawn to them. Horses symbolise and embody freedom, spirit, power, energy, speed, strength and athleticism. This is what makes them magnificent and within all of this power is gentleness, softness and love. When we were young and dreamed about horses they were magical to us. The sad part of this story is that often as soon as the human comes in contact with horses this magic is lost from the horse. Horses have been shut down, restricted and their spirits broken and instead of softness they have become full of defensiveness, fear and anxiety. Usually this does not happen purposefully it is just the way things have been with people and horses.

We can rekindle the magic of horses by developing ourselves as True Horseman. I use the word Horseman as meaning the coming together of the horse and the man, as in the human. I put the word True in front because the word horseman is used so commonly that it doesn't encompass what I believe the horses would classify as a horseman.

To a horse, a True Horseman is someone who:-

- **Treats horses with absolute respect and dignity.** Appreciating them for “who” they are and not just using them for what they can do. Dignity means choice – a real choice – not just making the consequences of not doing what the human wants so uncomfortable or even painful that the horse will comply.
- **Understands horses mentally** - knowing what they are thinking and how they learn.
- **Understands horses emotionally** – knowing how they are feeling about things and feeling compassion for them.
- **Understands horses physically** - knowing how they are feeling in their bodies and how their bodies function. Knowing how they need to move with healthy biomechanics.
- **Understands them spiritually** – knowing them at a spirit or soul level, knowing their deepest essence.



photo by Coco

Becoming a True Horseman

There are so many facets to this learning and in longer term courses like this 3 week module, we can delve deeper and build understanding and skills layer by layer. Primarily horsemanship is about working on ourselves. It is more about a way of 'BEING' than it is about a way of 'DOING'. A way of being calm, still, centred and focussed in our minds and emotions. This way of 'being' has to come first and then we can physically learn the techniques or what to 'do'.

Training the horse is secondary to developing ourselves. When we get things right the horses can usually do things without too much trouble. Horsemanship is an interesting paradox because whilst it seems that we humans are the ones training and teaching the horses, the horses are equally teaching and leading us. The more we listen to them the better things will go. So learning to listen to them and feel them is the core essence of becoming a horseman. People talk about horse whisperers but more appropriately we need to become horse listeners.

After learning how to 'Be' we need to develop a great awareness of our physical body so that we can be balanced, coordinated, athletic and in control of our body. One of my mentors, Gavin Schofield, said to me "the only difference between a great rider and a not so great rider is that they are doing different things with their bodies". This simple but profound statement set me on a path of discovering what was going on in people's bodies and how to change patterns in their bodies from patterns of restriction and tension which are not helpful to horsemanship, to patterns of freedom, balance and mobility.

Aside from plenty of coaching on the horses, helping people to develop their physical skills is done through mind and body awareness sessions, simulations and body balancing exercises which incorporate aspects of yoga, feldenkrais, aikido,

meditation and energy healing. To free up the body we need to free up the mind and the emotions, releasing any negativity, fear or stress. The experience of getting away, relaxing and having fun with the group, the horses and all of nature in such a supportive learning environment will be very instrumental in itself for getting the mind back into present time and reconnecting the mind to the body.

True Horsemen are very aware of energy and how to use it. Horses are masters of using energy so we too need to become masters of energy. When we learn how to ride with our energy rather than muscle force we begin to ride horses in the unrestricted way that they want to be ridden in. Energy can be used for communication, health and healing or athleticism and performance.

To become True Horsemen we need to work on ourselves at all levels of the mind, emotions, body and spirit. As we develop ourselves we will start to find the magic in horses again, the magic of feeling in harmony with them when riding or just feeling their beauty, power and grace when in their presence. The dream can start to become reality, having your horse calm and relaxed, mentally with you and moving with effortless ease. As we develop things further we can experience their spiritedness, freedom, courage, athleticism and power while still having the calmness and the mental connection. This is what we all dreamed about in a fairy tale type dream – the magic of horses.

Of course you are not going to learn it all in 3 weeks, but you will learn in a tremendously accelerated way, where the learning is deeper and where we can build understanding and skills layer by layer. Three weeks is also the time frame for changing habits, so the changes will stick.

The areas covered in this course will be :-

- Learning ground skills for basic handling, physical therapy and exercise, building

confidence, preparing horses for riding or simply to play and have fun.

- Developing an independent seat, balance, coordination and body awareness. Learn to ride with the qualities that horses are looking for, softness, rhythm, flow, balance, harmony and healthy biomechanics.
- Learning about the physical care, maintenance and health for the horse. Including basic feeding, using exercise as physical therapy, stretching, energetic body work and soaking and poulticing the feet and legs to maximise health and performance.

Ideally people would do all 3 weeks and first preference will be given to those booking for the full course. It will be possible for some people to just do one or two weeks. The course will be taught from a multi-level perspective so you will work with the information at whatever level you are at.

To reap the full benefits of the experience we offer camping on site so you are able to stay fully immersed in the atmosphere. Some of the sessions may be early in the mornings or in the evenings. The course will be catered for lunch and dinner.

\$1250 = 1 week

\$2300 = 2 weeks

\$3150 = 3 weeks

Prices include you camping, your horse accommodation and your lunch and dinner.

Bookings & enquiries:

courses@melfleming.com.au

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0428 385 745 or 02 6760 5519



Some of Mel's herd at Alchemy place going for a run. How amazing is it to watch a herd of horses run and play ?

3 & 4 week learning modules at “Alchemy Place”, Moonbi - March & September 2012

The following is a guide for the curriculum for the longer learning 3 & 4 week modules at ‘Alchemy Place’ Moonbi 2012. Each week of learning will be building on the previous week and each student and horse will work at their own level and in an appropriate way with the curriculum, to best develop themselves and their horses. Core themes and fundamental philosophies will be carried through and expanded upon each week throughout the duration of the course even though they may not be written into the course content for each week. For example, themes of centering, relaxation, connection and balance will be important focus areas throughout the entire course. Mind and body awareness sessions and balance building exercises will also be important sessions in each weekly course.

To accommodate people’s budgets and time frames, the format has been set up with options to attend just one, two or ideally all three or four weeks in the case of the September module. Students and horses with a suitable standard of prior learning may be accepted to attend the latter weeks without completing the first weeks. Priority, however, will be given to students booking for the entire course. Students who have previously done courses with me will still hugely benefit by doing the beginning courses, in fact, they will be extremely beneficial to their advancement as they will be guided and instructed to develop their feel, timing and understanding of body mechanics and balance while doing the fundamental tasks. That is, they will do the introductory tasks at an advanced level of feel. Going back and getting the simple things done with a great quality of feel and understanding, is one of the most important keys to doing advanced manoeuvres well.

An early bird discount of 10% off will apply for bookings for 3 weeks or more, for the September course. To receive the early bird special price, bookings and a 50% deposit must be received before April 30th. These courses will be prerequisites for future courses in starting young horses under saddle, horsemanship instructor training, performance horse courses and horse training courses.

Week One

GETTING STARTED

Develop a connection, communication and confidence on the ground and in the saddle.

Ground skills

Centering – preparing ourselves mentally, emotionally and physically
Energy and body awareness
Getting connected with you horse
Leading and addressing issues with basic handling
Fundamental body yields
Circling
Building confidence,
Playing with obstacles and challenges.

Riding

Basic position – neutral pelvis and alignment
Saddle savvy
Emergency handbrake
Stopping and going
Turning and directing – bending ribs, yielding FH and yielding HQs
Spiralling to a stop
Moving in harmony with the horse - feeling and following their movement
Developing feel in handling the reins
Bending the ribs and rolling the HQ’s around

Week Two

GAINING CONFIDENCE & IMPROVING SKILLS

Develop deeper levels of relaxation in the horse and yourself to develop more feel and balance both on the ground and riding.

Ground skills

More responsive yields
Developing greater feel and understanding of the horse’s body, balance and biomechanics
Sideways
Circling:
Working on longer lines – 22’ line
Changes of direction
Cantering on line
Upwards and downwards transitions

Trail walking – developing confidence in your horse on the trail or in big open spaces.

Riding

Developing relaxation, rhythm and impulsion

Getting horses to better follow your focus

Refining your aids for turning, stopping and going – using your body better

Shoulder and rib mobility exercises

Backing up

Trot diagonals

Smooth and Balanced transitions

Exercises to develop riders balance, feel, and co-ordination

Week 3

ADVANCING GROUND SKILLS & POSTURAL DEVELOPMENT FOR HORSE & RIDER

While all of the teaching is aimed at developing good posture, self-carriage and healthy biomechanics this course focusses more deeply in this area. This course also includes playing with your horse on the ground at liberty.

Ground skills

Playing at Liberty – no ropes attached

Using groundwork for physiotherapy to help develop good posture, healthy biomechanics, balance and self-carriage.

Health care and maintenance:

Stretching, massage, poulticing, bodywork,

Riding

Riding sideways – getting the horses more responsive to your legs.

Understanding and attaining lateral alignment (straightness) as the key to balance and self-carriage.

Riding to encourage the horses to lift their backs, swing along and engage their HQ's.

Longitudinal balance –where is the weight and is your horse “through” in the back? That means having the energy flowing through the horse's back, energetically connecting the hind quarters to the front end. Learn about the cycles of energy flow that travel through the bodies of both you and your horse when you are connected and in balance and self-carriage.

Develop confidence to ride in open spaces or on the trail.

Week 4

DEVELOPING MORE HQ ENGAGEMENT, BETTER BALANCE, SUPPLENESS, ATHLETICISM AND RESPONSIVENESS

Take it all a step further, to get more power, more expression, more exuberance and have more fun. Use and develop dressage manoeuvres to develop athleticism and balance.

Ground skills

Advancing groundwork on line and liberty

Getting more responsiveness and athleticism

Energising things to have more fun, playfulness and athleticism

Riding

Better balanced transitions

Getting more responsiveness and athleticism

Riding in suspension – riding so that you are weightless and the horse can come into suspension underneath you.

Shoulder in

Half passes

Turns on the haunches

Energising things to have more fun, playfulness and athleticism