

Let sleeping horses lie.....



How many of you see horses “down” and go into a slight “panic” and/or rush out to “get them up” only to find out they were just trying to take a nice nap?? I know I have! The last time I was in a “panic” was shortly after Dusty joined our herd in 2010 (he is the dark bay “standing watch” over the others as they rest in the included photo).

The conversation went something like this:

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[open scene- it's "dark" and I see the silhouette of the newest horse laying flat out on the snow in the field]

Me (rushing out to field in snow in "office" clothes"): "Oh. My. Gosh!! DUSTY!!! I'm coming!!

((arrive at prone horse))

Me ((nudging said horse)): "Dusty! Are you okay?!?"

((bends down to listen for "gut" sounds, instead hear something that sounds suspiciously like snoring))

Dusty ((raises head and opens one eye~~I SWEAR it had a sarcastic gleam in it~~as if to say)): "Listen Lady!! Do you MIND?!?!?!?! I was just falling into some MUCH needed REMs!!!"

Me ((realizing he was sleeping and I woke him up)): "Oh Dear!! My mistake! Apologies! Apologies! Please go back to sleep! I didn't mean to interrupt your dream about Zenyatta!"

[[end scene]]

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In my defense, I normally wouldn't have worried so except:

- Dusty had just joined our herd
- I had just put a new ((netted)) round bale out
- It was dark and snowy
- It was also "dinner" time when all 5 of my hungry hippos... errrr.. I mean horses, are usually lined up at the fence

Which brings me to the topic at hand:

Did you know that horses can become sleep deprived and must lie down for REM sleep???

Unlike humans, horses do not need continuous, unbroken periods of sleep, they need approximately 2.5 hours of sleep in a 24-hour period. On average, most occurs in 15 minutes increments. Horses MUST lie down for about an hour every few days to reach their minimum REM sleep requirements. If a horse does not lie down to get his much needed REM sleep he can become sleep deprived and suffer from narcolepsy. Horses will not lay down if they are not secure in their environment, or if they are in pain (interesting tidbit, ulcers may prevent your horse from laying down for his much needed REM sleep. The stomach acid will irritate the ulcer,

and the horse will stand rather than endure that pain). Horses sleep better in groups, often times, if the lead horse lays down, the herd will follow his/her example. Typically, one horse will stay awake and “stand guard” (as is shown in the included photo above), it really depends on the situation and how comfortable and secure the horses are with the environment. I have had my whole herd lay down with 3 laying recumbent and one upright.



Is your horse sleep deprived? The following link will take you to a few videos of horses with sleep disorders.

http://www.equisearch.com/horses_care/health/behavior/sleepdisorder_121506/



With thoughts of joyful sunshine and peace,

Inez ☺



About the author:

Inez Donmoyer is a Certified Equine, Canine, and Small Animal Massage/Bodywork and Reiki Master Practitioner. She is the owner of Unicorn Dreams Wholistic Touch and seeks to look at the whole in order to facilitate healing. Inez is a firm believer in showing and teaching humans how they too can help partner with the animals in their care. Inez has a strong interest in wellness and creating a healing environment, specifically as it relates to the animals we share our life and world with. She believes that creating a "healing team" is an integral part of thriving wellness and seeks to work together with other animal practitioners, including and not limited to: veterinarians, farriers/trimmers, equine dentists, intuitives, energy workers, aromatherapists, nutritionists, homeopaths, chiropractors, acupuncturists, trainers, and YOU, the animal's human. Healing is a team effort and begins from the inside out, one must look at the whole of the being, not just the part.

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