

Horses Hone Questar Employees' Communication Skills

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WELLSVILLE - The Utah State University equine science program recently hosted an Equine Experience event for Questar Gas employees to illustrate the effects of non-verbal communication, using contact with horses as teaching tools.

The Questar conference's 26 attendees participated in the event where instructor DJ Anderson demonstrated equine behavior and how non-verbal communication can affect responses. One guest accompanied him in the round pen and attempted to have the horse join up with her using only her body language to draw him in, showcasing how body language cues play a role in communication.

Michelle Weed, director of equine-human science, and Karl Hoops, DVM and USU equine Extension specialist, then led the groups through team building, leadership and communication activities with the horses in the arena.

"Our horses stepped right in to help guide our guests to greater self-awareness," Weed said. "Horses don't care what you say, they read your intentions and body language. Leadership is not simply about what you say, but what you do."

Equine Experience events provide interactive learning focused on the needs of a company or individual and utilizes horses as a teaching tool. Events like this one not only reinforce the Extension mission of Utah State University, but also allow students that work and volunteer in the equine science program to use skills that they learn in classes.

Chisum Gardener, a summer intern in equine-assisted activities and therapies (EAAT) and USU senior in equine science and management, said the experience was fun for all involved.

"Everyone found the activities to be engaging and thought provoking," Gardner said. "Even those observing the team involved in the exercise, were brainstorming how to accomplish the goal. The event was an exciting learning experience for everyone involved. I hope these types of events continue."

Contact Michelle Weed at michelle.weed@usu.edu or equine.experience@usu.edu for more information about how your company can take part in an Equine Experience event.