

# Desensitizing Kit

**Golden Cross Ranch, LLC**  
***Having Fun With Your Horse***

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## *How the Desensitizing Kit Came To Be*

"We had a great start but got interrupted with the heaviest rainfall in years (we don't have any indoor facilities where I board), so after three weeks with next to no saddle time, I decided to do some things to re-establish our relationship before attempting anything else - and that is how the desensitizing kit came to be."

**Recommended experience level:** Because the desensitizing kit requires solid horsemanship skills on the ground and solid riding skills if continued under saddle, we recommend this kit for the experienced horse person unless under the supervision of a professional trainer.

## Desensitizing Kit Item List

Please Note: While we try our best to provide the exact items seen here, if we are unable to order a specific item from our suppliers, we reserve the right to replace it with an as good or better quality item that provides a similar function.



**Heavy Duty Tote Bag** Desensitizing Kit Color: Green

Dimensions: 18 ½" x 14 ½" x 4" with 27" double handles

Material: 600D Flexar Canvas

Our tote bag is very sturdy and has with lots of room. It is a great way to carry the items you will be using in your Desensitizing Kit!



**Sponge for Horse** Hydra Finepore All Purpose Body/Bath Sponge 6 ½" x 4" x 2"

What a great way to cool down your horse or to give him a bath!



**Hand Towel for Human** Color: Green, Dimensions: 16" x 28" (wash before first use)

Working with horses can be hot, sweaty work so we included a hand towel for you to use to cool off or clean up with.



**Insulated Lunch Bag for Horse and Human to share** Foam insulated with waterproof lining. Front pocket. Has a handy carrying strap that can also be looped onto a saddle horn and an easy open Velcro fastener.

Fun Kit Lunch Bag Color: Green

Dimensions: 9" x 7" x 4 3/4"

Material: 70D Nylon

I get shaky if I go too long without a snack. Our lunch bags can easily hold those snack bars, fruit or sandwiches that are so important for a fun session with your horse – you don't want to get hungry in the middle of your time together and not have something to eat!



**Aquaclip for Water or Beverage Bottle** A handy gadget for securing your water or beverage bottle to your saddle or it comfortably slips over your waistband or belt. It also comes with "gripper teeth to open stubborn beverage caps. The aqua clip is durable, non-toxic and recyclable. Water bottle not included.



**Bandannas** Two brightly colored bandannas are included in each desensitizing kit. These are a nice size for beginning to desensitize your horse – they can look quite innocent folded up and gradually become “scary cloth monsters” that you can then train your horse to become accustomed to. Bandannas come in assorted colors (our choice please).

Dimensions: 20”x 20”



**Coleman Emergency Poncho** Color: Red or Green. This versatile item included in each desensitizing kit is a great way to introduce your horse to plastic flapping in the wind – although it looks small, we have found it can really swell up when the wind catches it. Remember to introduce it to your horse slowly and for safety’s sake we recommend that you don’t wear it around or on your horse until he has become fully desensitized to it.

Covers Head and Torso

One Size Fits All



### **Tarp –**

Size: 6'x 8'

Color: Blue

What desensitizing kit would be complete without a horse-eating tarp? This tarp features polyethylene rope sewn in hem on all sides for extra reinforcement. We have found this tarp to hold up well in our training sessions and the size makes it large enough to accomplish a variety of training goals while small enough to maneuver easily.



**Mrs. Pastures Cookies for Horses** A sample pack of three cookies is included in your kit. Dylan loves these cookies and gets two every time I go to the barn – and he knows it too! All natural ingredients made of oats, wheat bran, rolled barley, cane molasses, apples and water with no additives or preservatives. Because they are dehydrated instead of baked, they are hard and crunchy so they won't crumble in your pocket. We also offer a variety of sizes on our website.

**Training Cards** A set of training cards comes with each Desensitizing Kit. These cards contain training tips and ideas for using your desensitizing kit, along with important safety information.

***A SAMPLE OF THE DESENSITIZING KIT TRAINING CARDS ARE SHOWN BELOW. After purchasing a desensitizing kit, a complete pdf file will be emailed to the address you used during the purchase process.***





## **Golden Cross Ranch, LLC**

### **Desensitizing Kit Training Cards**

#### **Card 1**

### **Golden Cross Ranch**

#### **Desensitizing Kit**

#### ***Having Fun With Your Horse***

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*Equine training can be a hazardous activity, which may subject the participants to possible serious injury. Golden Cross Ranch, LLC or and any of its members will not assume liability or responsibility to any person or entity in respect to any loss or damage caused or alleged to be caused directly or indirectly by the use of the information contained herein or by the use of any of the products manufactured or sold by Golden Cross Ranch, LLC . These training reference cards contain information, instruction and techniques that may not be suitable for everyone. No warranty is given regarding the suitability of this information, the instructions and techniques, to you or other individuals acting under your directions. As with any equine activity, please seek the help of a professional when appropriate.*







## Card 2

So where do we begin? Let's start with the term: "desensitizing" in regards to horsemanship. What does it mean anyway? When I think of desensitizing, I think of introducing objects to my horse that he may regard as scary and that since he is a prey animal, perhaps that scary object wants to eat him. In my experience, it soon became clear that the scary object did not have to be logical – at least to us two legged creatures. A skimpy Walmart bag apparently is very capable of devouring a 1200 lb. horse – who knew?!!!!

So to complete our definition of desensitization (which turns out to be a fancy way of saying "getting used to") what we do is slowly introduce the object to the horse in as nonthreatening a way as possible. By introducing the object in stages, the horse becomes accustomed to the object and therefore no longer finds it scary. Therefore, one can hopefully assume that he will not spook when he encounters it in other situations.





### Card 3

The safest way to do this is to always start on the ground. When I first decided to start exposing Dylan to scary things, I decided to always put him in an area where we could focus on each other without too many other distractions. I don't think you can (or should) totally shield your horse from outside distractions during training, because he needs to learn to focus on you when you are with him. One way I accomplish that is that before we start any training session, I lunge Dylan for about five minutes. This exercise accomplishes two very important things: 1. I can make sure Dylan is feeling good and that he doesn't have any lameness issues and 2. I get him to start getting out of the "I am playing out in the pasture with my other horse buddies" zone and into the "I am with my leader, I need to focus on her" zone.





#### Card 4

Now to safely desensitize our horse, we need to progress in stages where we push on their comfort zone without freaking them out. Now while you can freak them out and then calm them down, I think it is much more productive to push on that comfort zone instead. I believe by choosing this method – you have a great opportunity to build the kind of trust that will stay solid when something does happen to freak your horse out – the chances of him staying calm are greater because you are predictable and therefore trustworthy. Yes, you can jump around like an idiot and wave things while shouting at the top of your lungs – but save that for later (preferably when no one is watching, unless you want to be subjected to much teasing for your antics) after you have exposed your horse to smaller doses.



## Card 5

Let's review some basic horse body language before we begin. Understanding the signals your horse is giving you is critical to your success, both in this exercise and in all of your endeavors together. Horses typically transmit what they are feeling in ways that are easily observed, once you know what to look for. In any interaction with your horse, it is wise to pay attention to these signals, never forgetting that you are dealing with a 1200 lb. prey animal that can hurt you even unintentionally. Being observant to your horse and what he is telling you is key to both your success and your safety.





## Card 6

Because a horse is a prey animal, God designed them to be masters of being aware of their surroundings for potential dangers. While this works for the survival of the species in the wild, it is our job to build trust with our horses so they rely less on reacting to imagined dangers and more on us for leadership to keep them safe. With this said, part of your success when desensitizing your horse is proving that you are a leader that will keep them safe. One of the best ways to do this is through consistency. Remaining calm regardless of the situation and no matter how frustrated you get will go a long way in building trust. And being able to read your horse's body language and to respond to it in a calm and confident manner will assist this process.





### Card 7

**Ears:** A horse's ears are incredibly mobile. They are able to swivel back and forth independently from each other. A horse with his ears perked forward is indicating either keen interest or concern about the object that has his attention. A horse who has his ears flopped out sideways is very relaxed and unconcerned about what is going on in his immediate vicinity. A horse that is moving his ear sideways while it remains upright is focusing an object that is in the direction the ear is pointing. Often a horse will have his ears backwards in a listening mode as well. This is often mistaken for irritation or anger. But a horse who is truly upset will tend to pin his ears back – rather than just angle them backward. The more time you spend with your horse, the easier it will be to be able to tell the difference.