



## TALKING TO HORSES



AN INTERVIEW WITH HORSE WHISPERER  
**CATHERIN SEIB**

**EQUESTRIAN PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR**

Catherin Seib is one of the most popular animal communicators in Europe. She has been translating between humans and animals since 2009. In 2016, she decided to focus her practice exclusively on the mutual understanding and respect between horses and humans. Her company, Pferde Verstehen, produces 32 professional horse whisperers every year. What she does is not based on training technique, nor horsemanship, but actually having a conversation with your horse, even over distance. We spoke to Catherine to find out more.

### When did you first realise you had an affinity for understanding horses?

I can't remember if there was a time when this wasn't the case. I was probably born with it! When I was three years old, my family went on a vacation in the German countryside. There was a nearby horse farm where my parents rented a pony which we took for a stroll while I was riding it. After we gave it back, I snuck away from our rental house and went back to the farm. I climbed into the paddock where "Schecki" (pictured, below) was sleeping and laid down with her, in between her legs. A few hours later my father found me sleeping there. He was afraid I might get hurt if he woke the pony up, but nothing happened.

### Does the skill run in your family?

Not really. I grew up in Hamburg, a bit city in Northern Germany, and my parents had no interest in horses or animals. I always had a very strong wish to be with horses, dogs and other animals. Every Christmas and birthday I wrote 'a pony' and 'a dog' on my wish list. Every chance I got, I rode my bike to the stables outside the city or spent time on a farm. I was allowed to train and ride different horses by the age of 11. When I grew up and had a decent job as an animal keeper at a zoo, I bought my first dog Merlin and my first horse Mouna shortly after. I have three horses now and recently got my second dog. We all live together with my partner John on our little farm in Northern Germany, one hour from Hamburg. Horse whispering is my full-time job now since 2009.



### What has been your most profound experience from horse whispering?

I could tell many touching stories. One is probably when I spoke to a gelding I knew nothing about. I only had a picture of him, never met him in person and asked him what he wanted to tell me. He said he loves his owner deeply as she rescued him off a slaughter truck in Poland. Since that day, he was happy and grateful every day. She was his saviour, he said. I thought this sounded odd and very cheesy. The owner gave me feedback and said this was actually true. She had pulled that horse off a truck in Poland where he was on his way to being slaughtered. They were now very close friends.

Another story is when I sat in a seminar with my students and we spoke to a mare with only a picture of her. That horse told one of the students she knew that across the street from her barn lived cows. She felt very sorry

for them as they were not being treated kindly. She said she often looks over to them and sends them good thoughts. The owner of the mare said this was true; there was a factory farm on the other side of the road from where her horse was. She could see the building, but not the cows, as they never left the building. But her mare knew and felt compassionate about them being used and locked up.

### When you connect with the horses, what is it like? What kinds of communication would you compare it to?

The actual term for this kind of communication is 'telepathy'. I know that in our society something like telepathy isn't recognised as real and I didn't believe in it either until I started to bring my close connection to animals into a shape that I could work with to help connect humans and animals.

I actually connect with a horse in my mind. It feels like a daydream or a story that I read in a good book. I don't have to meet the horse physically for this; I only need a picture of its face. That doesn't have to be a current one, an older photo will do. I then close my eyes and picture the horse in front of me in my thoughts and start a conversation. The horse replies with pictures, little movie scenes, emotions, smells or tastes, sometimes even phrases.

Of course a horse doesn't speak German or English or Spanish, but as my brain is used to putting information into language, sometimes I receive actual German phrases and we can talk like I would talk to a human being. This information form pretty accurate and useful answers to any questions. As I don't have to meet the horse, I can do this all over the world, usually whilst talking on the phone with the owner.





#### How do the horses typically respond to the presence of horse whisperers, and do all horses respond in the same way?

If I speak to a horse before I meet it, it usually acts friendly and as if it knows me when we finally meet. I can't remember a horse which didn't like me, but horses are very kind and social beings that are always grateful to meet a human who doesn't have any pre-existing expectations towards the horses' behaviour.

I usually let them be and admire their beauty, which creates a relaxing atmosphere. When I work with horses that people have trouble dealing with, the horse mostly acts calmer and braver than usual. My work is always based on mutual understanding and needs consent from both sides. I don't work to only make the horse do what the human wants.

#### What are the key differences between horse whispering and more widely known horsemanship techniques?

Horsemanship techniques usually try to make the horse do what humans want. The aim to make the horse do anything we ask for creates jaded, sad, and empty-headed horses. They learn to avoid the psychological pressure that these techniques usually create. They do what is being asked because the alternative is absolute stress. A horse will do anything to avoid stress.

Horsemanship trainers often claim that when a horse does all this for you, it trusts you. This could not be further from the truth. The horse has given up or it chose the smart way to cope with being a slave when it cooperates unquestioning. A real friendship means accepting the other ones wishes and encouraging him or her to be him- or herself. For this you need to be able to communicate in both ways, not only on a one way street. That counts just as much for horse-human friendships as among any beings.

#### What do you teach during a horse whispering teaching session?

As mystical as telepathy sounds, it is a natural sense that anyone has and can quickly learn to use consciously. So in my basic clinics for horse whispering, I briefly explain how it works and then let my students have a lot of practise. I have eight participants per clinic and we speak with each person's horse all at once, one after the other over a weekend. The feedback people get hearing from the other participants that they had communicated similar things with these horses, shows them they can actually do this and aren't just hallucinating.

After having spoken to eight horses – including your own – everyone realises it's not a coincidence when you find out things you couldn't know about a horse you have never met. It is pretty convincing and I don't have to do much but encourage people and lead them through the sessions, so I really love my job. People leave stunned that this works. It changes their entire view upon horses and life in general. I have a great job.

#### What benefits can horse whispering bring for those who work professionally with horses or own beloved pets?

If you have a horse or a pet you might have asked yourself 'why is it doing this?' or have possibly had the intuition that they have something wrong, perhaps with its kidney, but don't know why you think that. Horse whispering is the ability to really ask a horse or any animal. You can stop the trial and error method that most horse-related works use. You can actually ask and get answers! It's like *Dr Doolittle*. Sometimes it's even as funny.

I have worked for a professional, world class show jumper. Her horses were very on point about what they needed and the rider was very concerned about them being happy. Every time I went to a tournament with them, we made first or second prize. If you love horses or animals in general, being able to really speak to them is the greatest gift. It's like a dream come true.

#### Is there anything else you would like to add?

Most people haven't understood how much horses need space to move in order to stay sane and happy. A horse in a stable is only okay for a few hours overnight. It must have the ability to move freely with other horses for the most part of the day. That counts for all horses, no matter if it is being ridden or not. The idea of keeping horses isolated in small cages for 18 hours or more a day is still very common. Most physical and mental problems on horses happen because they are being kept in the wrong way.

If you ask a horse how it would like to live the answers vary, but they all hope for a peaceful environment with friendly humans and other horses where they have greater choice. Their wishes and needs are also individual, so sometimes it's not easy to find the perfect horse-keeping solution. This is why I envision creating a horse-keeping system, together with the horses I speak to in order to give them more choice. I am looking for a good opportunity to build a prototype at the moment because a happy horse makes a happy human and vice versa. And that's all I want.



Pferde Verstehen - Catherin Seib

*Catherin Seib (Pferde Verstehen) has been awarded Equestrian Professional of the Year by West Germany Prestige. The judges were particularly impressed by Catherin's holistic approach to creating a positive relationship between horse and human. They also praised her vast experience as a trained zoo animal carer, trained animal communicator, certified Tellington practitioner for horses, and Reiki master. For more information please visit: [www.pferde-verstehen.de](http://www.pferde-verstehen.de)*