# Abstract - McLean

## Ethical training - what does it look like?

Over the last few decades, the term ‘social license to operate’ emerged as a result of the decreasing public legitimacy of mining activities from the standpoint of environmental sustainability. To remain in business, the mining industry has had to work harder for public acceptance. A parallel spotlight is now on the use of animals in sport, and in particular the use of horses. Like mining, the horse industry must now work harder for public acceptance of practices.

Social license prescribes that all animal industries are subject to the same rising community expectations of welfare and the inevitable reassessment of practices. In response, there is a pervasive belief in the horse industry that the solution is to convince and educate the public about the sanctity and worthiness of human-equine partnerships and then ‘social license to operate’ will be restored. What is less understood is that social license is the trust owed to the public and must be earned.

As we look toward our future with horses, sustainability implies that horse management, training and horse sports need to rethink an equine-centric future: welfare from the horse’s perspective. The advent of equitation science and the International Society for Equitation Science have been integral in the burgeoning research in horse welfare including the Five Domains Model of Animal Welfare’s legacy in the notion of a ‘worthwhile life’ for animals.

This presentation illuminates an equine-centric blueprint and paints a futuristic ethical framework for horse training. Approximating humane as well as efficient locomotory control of the horse in-hand and under-saddle requires human education in the use of associative learning, nonassociative learning and reinforcement strategies. However, from an optimal welfare perspective, these components are not enough. Unless training strategies take into account the animal’s current emotional states, sustainability is threatened and indeed learning can be inhibited.

This presentation journeys through the ways in which trainers can optimise mental affect through an understanding of the complex dynamics of arousal, the emerging implications of attachment theory and the adoption of equine-centric management practices. Optimal training is therefore not only about the training regimen itself but implicitly requires knowledge derived from an understanding of the horse’s telos. These insights provide a universal framework for future horse training and provides the best prospects for a worthwhile life for the horse in human-horse interactions and ultimately sustainability of horse training.

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