



Do you remember the first time you became the caretaker of a pet? Remember the excitement of having the sole responsibility of owning, caring, and loving that pet. Well, I do when we made the decision to move, build a house with a barn and be responsible for our three horses. We were thrilled with the idea that we would control the quality, amount of hay, the richness of their grain, and the exemplary medical care. Boy, how reality put a different spin on that.

We quickly learned that finishing the barn with a fully equipped tack room, coating all the walls with polyurethane, putting mats in the four stalls and on

the aisle way, purchasing the wheelbarrows and pitchforks as well as putting in paddocks was only the beginning. Worse, this was the easy part. We have three horses, one mare and two geldings. All are Quarter Horses. We knew that Joey, the larger gelding was alpha even though he was the 'chicken' of the group. The mare was actually the sneakiest and smartest one. She was the one who would find a way out of the paddock no matter how smart we thought we had been preventing escapes.

Our first experience occurred our first week being happy, horse caretakers. Early Sunday morning (around 6:00 am) we woke with the three of them running by our first floor bedroom window. Thankfully horses don't care what you are or are not wearing when you entice them with grain. So back into the paddock they grudgingly went. We fixed the escape route so rest assured that the culprits could no longer escape. Foolishness abounds. Couple of weeks later coming home from dinner and drinks with neighbors, guess who was no longer in the paddock. Yup, the mare. She had found a way through the back having slipped through ropes we had blocking an alcove. At 11:30 at night with no extended lights, do you realize how hard it is to find a bay (all brown) horse in the woods and, of course, with no halter. Eventually we determined she had gone out the back through the woods, down our neighbor's driveway and up our driveway and was happily munching on the grass below the stone wall. Back to the drawing board. So we shored up the alcove with a third line of rope. To this day, they are still outsmarting us and escaping from the paddock even though it is with a lot less frequency.

We now have been caring for them for approximately nine years. The adventures have subsided and we were again confident we had this caretaking responsibility nailed. Those words nor that thought is no longer in our vocabulary. Unfortunately, one of the geldings got Lyme disease. When they say the cure not the disease will kill you a truer statement does not exist. The vet said we would have to give him the medication for 30 days. The medication for a thousand pound animal is 20 capsules once a day preferably with food. So we separated the 20 capsules and put the powder in some applesauce with his dinner and he walked away. The vet suggested dissolving the powder in water then using a syringe, squirt it down his throat. After wearing the medication after the first attempt, the vet then informed us the medication stains. We have had to do this for four applications. That is 30 days four times. You do the math. I now own a shirt that has a huge, lime green stain on the front from the horse spitting it back on me when I was not as quick as him.

I could write a book about our or their exploits but, I think, you get the drift horses are not stupid animals and can out smart humans. We have had a wonderful time with them and would not change a thing except maybe build better fencing. We have been assured they are healthy, happy and quite spoiled. Goes along with the three dogs we have but that is another huge story or book.