

## Nitro Is Not Explosive, April 23, 2023

(by Jinny Johnson)

BACH president and professional trainer, Jennifer Skinner, demonstrated the beginning elements of trailer loading to a small group of BACH members at Still Creek ranch on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. Her helpers were her daughter, Sarah, and Nitro, a very nice 4-yr-old warmblood with limited trailering experience.

To begin with, Jennifer had Nitro show us how he responded to her cues on the line, changing direction going to the right or left and easily staying with her on a light contact. I asked Jennifer how long it would take to get a horse to that stage. "Three or four days", she answered. Having done some ground work myself, I would say that was very optimistic for most of us, but I digress.



Next, since Nitro easily responds to poll pressure, he led right into the trailer. "Well, there is another skill set that needs to be in place before you can begin this process", I thought. If you already have to drag a horse around to get him close to the trailer, nothing good is going to happen.



However, most of the time Jennifer spent in teaching Nitro to come off the trailer, insisting that he come off step-by-step and teaching him to stop midway with his hind feet on the ground while his fronts were still in the trailer. She patiently loaded and unloaded him until he would stop at any moment, stepping off the trailer so that he went backwards in baby steps until he felt the step. Having seen horses come blowing out of a trailer, ramp or step-down and nearly slip or fall, I thought this was very smart. I think, in general, we spend too much time thinking about getting the horse on the trailer and no planning for getting off.

Also, how many of us practice loading and unloading our horses without going anywhere just as a training session?

Throughout the demo, Jennifer gave us a lot of tips and insights into her thoughts and methods on training horses from the ground. It was easy to see that Nitro came already with a lot of training and trust even though he was not that familiar with trailering. I was thinking to myself that we need another session or two about making sure our horses are ready for a successful trailering session. Standby.

