

# *Are Geldings Nice Guys?*

People trust geldings and they have it in their minds that geldings are always safer, more reliable horses than stallions or mares. Now any time you generalize, you can always find exceptions. But by and large, geldings are easier to handle because they do not have their minds on sex every few seconds the way stallions do. They do not have hormonal swings affecting their mood or territorial issues like mares. Stallions and mares are a whole lot more stressed than geldings.

So geldings, in general, are easier to handle because they have fewer distractions than horses of other genders. That makes it easier for less skilled handlers to work with them.

Unlike stallions and mares, they are neutral about who is in charge. That also makes them safer for less experienced handlers. About the only thing geldings argue about is who gets fed first.

A gelding is not necessarily a more forgiving horse or easier horse to train just because he is a gelding. Personality-wise, every horse is an individual and you never know exactly what he is going to be like after he is gelded until the deed is done. Geldings seem easier to train because it is easier for their handlers to keep their attention. Since people view geldings as safer and because they tend to view safer as better, they have a more relaxed attitude around geldings. A gelding feels that relaxed attitude and it helps him relax and be more trainable.

The age a colt is gelded makes a big difference in whether he acts like a gelding or acts like a stallion. If you want a gelding mind, it is a good time to castrate as soon as both testicles come down. There is a lot of discussion about how less testosterone will influence the colt's growth but that is not something that really adds to the value of the horse, just to what he weighs.

Physiologically, when a colt is gelded, he does not go from being a stallion to a gelding overnight. He still has just as many hormones circulating in his system the day after castration as he did the day before. His mind is still pretty much in the same place it was before the vet arrived even though he is a little sore when he walks.

If a horse is castrated while he is still young, before he develops any breeding behaviors, he will act like a gelding. If he fully matures before he is castrated, and particularly if he is used for breeding before he is castrated, he will not act like a gelding. He is a "stag."

People tend to get along with stags better than stallions because they believe that geldings are safer than stallions. However, a stag's behavior patterns will often be identical to those of any stallion. A stag is a horse that acts like a stallion but does not have any money in the bank.

A stallion will often work more enthusiastically than a gelding but his handler needs the skill to keep his attention from leaving. A mare can be a really super partner when her handler understands how to work with her mind. Geldings are just nice, consistent guys that can be among the most fun horses you will ever handle.

The horse's gender does not make a bit of difference, however, in how you approach training. No matter which gender you prefer, you need to start with groundwork to build a vocabulary of consistent, horse-logical pressures to communicate with the horse. The horse needs to work its way, step by step, up the training tree in order to build a solid foundation for whatever games the two of you would eventually like to play. Geldings might make the job a little easier but being a nice guy does not excuse either them or their handlers from any homework.