

## Horse clinic provides lessons

by Chris Eakin Tuesday April 04, 2006

**Fairview Post** — Nettie Barr is a lifelong horse enthusiast who for the last eight years has been focusing on “natural horsemanship.” For the last three years she has been and continues to be a visiting instructor at the NAIT Fairview equine program.

Barr, who lives in Beaverlodge, has also studied horse safety, psychology and behavior, conformation, and nutrition. In her own words, she has learned from the best. This past weekend she gave a two and a half day clinic on round penning and on-line ground work with horses. She calls what she does with horses “building mind” and says, “if you build the mind, the body will follow.” She explained that horses are a prey animal and regard humans as predators unless taught differently. Her goal is to teach people to convince their horses that they the horse owner, are the number one horse and the horse should follow their lead. She demonstrated in the ring that a horse only needs to be shown three times before it starts to understand what is wanted.

Barr demonstrates to students how to make themselves a place where the horse feels comfortable being as part of the training. The horse comes to rely on the person for direction. Barr explained horses are more apt to react than to think and her type of training is intended to teach them to think and follow instructions rather than just reacting. Jan Meston, one of the students at the clinic, said she had come because a horse had bucked off both herself and her husband and she was scared of the horse. She said the horse had a mind of his own, was very headstrong and although her husband could ride it he only did so by using his full strength. She said that Barr’s clinic was making a great difference in her horse’s behaviour.

Barr said some people, like Meston, come to her with problem horses, but others come to improve their horsemanship and she also gets beginners who just want to start off on the right foot. Barr said safety is her first concern and did not hesitate to stop a lesson to point out when a student did something that had potential to allow an injury.

She added many people have beasts of burden, what she wants is to teach people to build partnerships with their horses.