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QuitKick Works

It effectively stops a horse from banging on its stall door.

There's at least one in every barn. It's the horse that bangs like crazy on the stall door at feeding time or when other horses are being turned out first. At best, it's an annoyance. At worst, the horse will damage the material of the door, damage door tracks and potentially loosen shoes or get hurt.

Correcting bad behavior when the horse is not within your reach is notoriously difficult. Raising your voice rarely makes an impression. Threatening actions like waving a broom or picking up a crop will be ignored if you aren't actually close enough to make good on it. The horse understands you're not happy with the behavior, he just doesn't care.

Giving in to the horse is not a good idea either. And feeding him or turning him out first only reinforces the behavior. If you aren't quick enough to cave in to the horse's demands, he will just escalate the behavior and bang even harder.

The QuitKick specifically addresses the problem of door banging. It's a rustproof polystyrene/polycarbonate housing with a plastic water reservoir that sends two small jets of water out the top if motion sensors in the unit are activated by the horse banging on the door.

The unit mounts to the outside of the stall door and there are two models with

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The QuitKick is a small box, powered by batteries, that sits on the outside of the horse's stall. It should be placed in the area where the horse tends to kick. When activated by the kick, water is sprayed up toward the horse. None of our test horses could beat the QuitKick's instant water release.

different water jet directions, one for dutch/half doors and one for solid doors with bars. It is mounted by a bracket to the door and can be easily removed. The unit is battery-driven, with one charge lasting a week or two.

Our Trial. We tried the QuitKick in two barns, one with racehorses and the other warmbloods. Both types of horses reacted similarly. As advertised, the unit is sensitive to jarring movement and immediately squirts the horse. Half of the horses reacted to their first encounter with the water by throwing their heads up or half rearing. When using with half doors, it's advisable to first pad the top of the stall over the door to prevent injury. The rearing was less likely to be an issue on later squirts.

The QuitKick does what it claims to do: It stops door banging. Most horses stop the behavior after three or four firings of the unit. A few of our test horses tried to "beat" the water by getting in close enough to bang, then making a quick retreat, but they couldn't beat the QuitKick because the water release is virtually simultaneous with the kicking.

Bad behavior is hard to break, and all horses reverted to banging their doors again within two to four weeks of either removing the unit from the door or turning it off. We did find that mounting the unit but not activating it for five to seven days led to the horses waiting longer before trying to bang the door again after it was removed. This is probably because they became accustomed to the unit being there and didn't directly connect it with the water. Leaving the unit on the door even though it was turned off also resulted in a longer interval before the horse would try again.

The manufacturer does offer "dummy" units, which look identical but do not have the electronics. These can be used to prolong the pawing-free interval while another horse in the barn is being corrected with the active unit. None of our test horses were "cured" of this behavior, although reinforcing the correction by constantly using the unit over several months time may have a more long-lasting outcome.

One concern we had with long-term use is that the plastic container for water can't be removed for cleaning. This could lead to build up of minerals or growth of microorganisms over time. To avoid this, we recommend using distilled water (about \$1/gallon—lasts a long time) and treating it with 16 drops of Clorox. This is a World Health Organization-recognized safe method of treating water for drinking and is safe to use in the unit. Some nontoxic antifreeze should also be used in the winter.

Bottom Line. The QuitKick (<http://www.quitkickusa.com/>, 502-290-8269) is simple to install, reliably activates when the horse is pawing the stall and quickly stops that behavior, as promised. It eliminates your involvement as the enforcer, which can reduce the horse's tension around people. The only thing that gave us pause was the cost: \$399.95 per unit (\$59.95 for the dummy units).

We asked the manufacturer about longevity. They told us the oldest unit in use is now only three years old, but it's continuing to function without problem. The battery has an expected life span of four years providing it's recharged regularly.

If that sounds good, go for it.

Horse Journal Staff Article.