

TERRY GRANT

Mantracker. Always Learning. Always Thinking Outside the Box.

*Text and photos
by Helen Williams*

The Mantracker concept:

Two people take off into the bush with a map, a compass and a head start. Mantracker is on horseback, armed with a local guide and an arsenal of forensic skills. The prey have 36 hours to reach a finish line some 25 miles away without getting caught. How they escape is up to them.

The terrain is rough; hills, valleys, rocks, dirty bush and often trail-less. The skills of the trackers are complemented by the natural abilities of the horses.

After five seasons on Canada's outdoor reality show, Mantracker®, and years of forensic knowledge of the land, Terry Grant's goal is to make the horse standard equipment throughout Canadian search and rescue operations looking for missing people in the woods.

Safety was Terry Grant's number one concern on the show. He was careful to not place his horse, the filming crew or the prey in any danger from riding on horseback. He never got too close to the prey and always left room – a hole (as he calls it) – for a quick exit should the horse he was riding spook. He prepares for the unexpected while respecting beast and man.

Tracking is Terry's life. He started as a cowboy in the saddle watching over herds of cattle and learning the land on Alberta's ranches, on foot as a hunting guide looking for big game, and from his years involved in Foothills Search and Rescue (SAR). Tracking people on horseback, however, only started with the TV series, Mantracker.



Terry was one of the five founders of Foothills SAR, which was started because too many people were getting lost in the Alberta Foothills and there was no agency between Calgary and the border to assist the RCMP when the call went out for help. He helped establish the organization, and was involved in coordinating the training of local volunteer searchers. This is where he first learned to track humans.

An accomplished horseman, Terry took his tracking skills to the seat of a horse in search of human prey as Mantracker in 2006. It was a natural fit and one Terry required few adjustments to perform. Tracking humans in the field called upon all of his forensic and life skills. With a search and rescue background, and a desire to help people, Terry sees the horse as valuable in

SAR operations. He says, "Horses are a huge, useful tool so long as you have qualified searchers trained in good horsemanship and the right horses. Something that is quiet, strong and can walk all day and still pull someone out in

a litter or ride double. No fiery Arabs or Thoroughbreds.”

The type of horses needed are like the ones he encountered in British Columbia’s South Chilcotin Mountains while filming two Mantracker episodes for season six. Terry is not usually told who his sidekick will be and which horse he’ll be using until he arrives on location. He had quite the surprise to have a choice in horses this time. Kevan Bracewell, the owner of Chilcotin Holidays, had selected two most suited to the size of the rider and task at hand from his herd of fifty Cayuse mountain horses.



Terry Grant and Pearson.

The Cayuse is a mixed breed, often with some draft in them, originating from the herds of the wild horses which still roam free in BC’s Cariboo Chilcotin. Of the two horses, Terry picked “an above-average bombproof horse” called Pearson, a calm black draft mare cross named after Pearson Ridge in Gold Bridge, BC.

What makes the horse so valuable and underutilized in Terry’s opinion is simple. Because the rider is as much as five feet higher it is possible to see farther afield. With greater visibility more ground can be covered and a number of trails can be investigated/eliminated quickly, without the tracker having to pay attention to where his feet are going or worrying about wrecking the tracks he’s looking for. The searcher doesn’t exert as much energy. Terry calls it “an afforded luxury.”

On the set of Mantracker, Terry would identify a track and tell the camera what he saw. If he was uncertain, he’d stop and spend a couple minutes duplicating the track with his own foot until he figured it out. He needed to know how the track was made so he’d know where to look for the next one.

Not realizing it, Terry was teaching while he was Mantracker. He had no script and there was no acting. It was truly real-life. By the third and fourth seasons, Terry started injecting more know-how into the program because of all the requests he was getting from viewers who wanted to learn how to track at the hand of the master, regardless of whether they would actually use the skills.

The popularity of the series by the fourth season ensured Terry couldn’t go anywhere without being

noticed and stopped by fans. For Terry, the show took on more purpose; “The teaching of people” as he calls it. He shared with his audience the years of wisdom he gathered from some good old cowboys out on the Alberta ranges: tracking, wild plants, etc.

With few rules on Mantracker, other than the prey cannot use a motorized vehicle, both prey and Terry tried to outwit one another. All the tips Terry had willingly shared over the seasons came back to be used against him. As Terry explains, “Fair enough. I don’t have a problem with the prey trying to trick me. It makes me think

outside the box. I would trick them too.” But as a result Terry gave fewer hints on how to elude him and more on how to track, the local vegetation and the forensic science of tracks. Terry’s firm belief is, “You can learn something from everybody, if you want to learn.”

And knowing there is a desire among the common people to learn how to track, Terry envisions taking his tracking courses into more everyday environments, such as teambuilding. He would also instruct horsemen who want to become SAR volunteers. He plans to continue making customized cabinetry in the winter months when not involved in SAR.

Terry won’t be returning to Mantracker for the show’s seventh season. He’s become the world’s expert in SAR, understanding not only how to track humans, but the psychological element: what’s happening in the heads of the prey. He speaks to audiences ranging from SAR participants/members to school children. Establishing a mounted SAR unit is being discussed, and Terry is developing his own tracking course for those physically able to keep up with him in the field. As a mentor and teacher for SAR, Terry is leaving his own tracks in the minds of his students.

We’ll be saying farewell to Terry Grant as Mantracker at the end of this season, but before he goes he’ll be up against some of the toughest terrains he’s ever faced - in Utah, Colorado and the Canadian Rockies. 🐾

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