

hind legs. Turn the horse away from you to protect your toes and to remain authoritative. Zone C is unsafe, because although not a typical action, the horse could reach up and kick you with its hind leg. Often times we must work in this area, so we need to be cautious and observant of the horse and its behavior. The horse could jump forward and

place you unexpectedly into Zone D. Zone D is an unsafe place because this area is a blind spot for the horse. He simply cannot see what you are doing back there! This area is also lined up with the horse's hind legs. If the horse is startled or has the desire to, he could easily kick you. A kick from this zone can be very powerful and can cause serious injury.

Zone A also contains a blind spot. Because a horse's eyes are placed on the sides of his head, he cannot see directly in front of him. Horses can easily bite or strike in this zone if they feel the need to defend themselves. Only place yourself in this area if necessary and move back to zone B as soon as possible.

RISKY BUSINESS

Be safe and courteous to other humans and horses. Don't cause someone else's misfortune just because you weren't paying attention to their situation. Remember to always control your temper before you control a horse.

Be purposeful in your communication with horses. Don't run lessons into the ground and bore the horse or he will look for ways to pass the time. Have empathy for the horse – walk a mile in his horse shoes!

Discourage the horse from rubbing his head on your body. If he is allowed to rub on you, he can use rubbing to challenge your authority. By rubbing, he is invading your space, a dominant gesture. This behavior is not a sign of affection by the horse. If you feel an uncontrollable urge to rub, make sure your horse stays in his space and you invade his space to initiate the rubbing yourself.

Do not use restraint methods that you do not understand. If you use a restraint such as a twitch or a chain, be compassionate and learn its proper use and

adjustment from a professional. If a restraint method is improperly applied, the horse will predictably fight, possibly violently.

Some horses are aggressive at feeding time, so allow them extra space while they eat. Speaking of food, treats are often used as bribery by well-meaning horse owners. If you feed by hand, you may inadvertently create a horse that bites or aggressively seeks treats. Instead, give your horse an affectionate rub on the neck and a kind word. They can relate naturally to these gestures.

When leading through a narrow opening, be aware of your surroundings and make sure you step through the opening first and the horse follows. Be sure the horse is calm and straight to avoid trauma to the point of the horse's hip.

Watch out for "turnout terrors," those horses who bolt as soon as you set them free. After entering the pasture, make sure you turn the horse to face the gate and let him relax before you turn him loose.

BE SAFE WHILE YOU ARE HORSING AROUND!

Be reasonable in your expectations when working with horses and accept responsibility for your actions. Don't get into the habit of blaming the horse when something doesn't go as planned. After all, the human is supposed to be the intellectual portion of the equation.

Laws such as the Illinois Equine Liability Act can help protect horsemen from frivolous lawsuits, but the best protection is vigilance where safety is concerned. Risk is inherent when working with horses, but all horsemen will tell you the risk is worth the rewards.

You are responsible for your own safety and the safety of others. Your horses depend on you for their safety. Make safety practices part of your daily routine. And remember, when it comes to horses, knowledge is power!

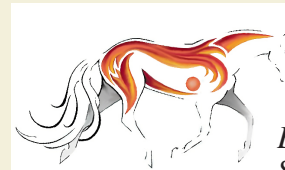
– the BASICS of – HORSE HANDLING & HUMAN SAFETY



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What's wrong with this picture? Just about everything. The handler is out of the safety zone, facing the wrong direction; the horse is not secured to a stable object. And why is this a safety concern? Read on and learn the basics of horse handling and human safety. This guide is a joint publication of the Horsemen's Council of Illinois and Southern Illinois University's 4-year Equine Science Program.



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SAFETY = SELF PRESERVATION

Every aspect of good horsemanship has its roots in the humane treatment of the horse and in promoting safety for horse and rider. Every time you are near a horse, you should remember that you are dealing with 1,000 pounds of animal; precaution should always be practiced. Knowledge is much more powerful than physical force when dealing with the horse. Remember, it is impossible to force a horse to do anything unless he chooses to comply! Therefore, the more horse knowledge you acquire, the safer you will be when dealing with them.

A universal truth for both horses and humans is that behavior is a product of both instinct and past experience. Every time you interact with a horse you are molding its behavior for better or worse. If you are ever in doubt of your safety or level of ability, obtain

instruction from qualified, experienced individuals. Initiate newly learned techniques under their direction. The most successful horsemen are those who have close relationships with their horses and who work with the nature of the horse rather than against it.

WHEN TWO WORLDS COLLIDE

Humans are predatory by nature. We walk upright, use frontal vision and eat meat. We have come to expect quick results and immediate gratification – think about fast food, express delivery and same-day service. Horses are prey. They eat grass and drink water and tell time by the season. When pleased they sigh, chew and rub each other. When angry they bite, strike, spin and kick at each other. Horses know what they like and dislike and respond accordingly. This is how the horse world operates, and horses understand the rules instinctively. Problems arise when Man integrates the horse into the human world where the rules are very different and often unclear. Horses



Unhappy horse!

are smarter than humans about the horse world, but they must learn about our world.

Recognize and respect the horse's natural defense mechanisms. Horses react to threatening situations by quick activation of the flight response. Their instinctive response to flee an unfamiliar or threatening situation is the primary reason horses are not extinct today! Their flight instinct causes horses to run or spook from unfamiliar objects, and they can do this with amazing speed and strength. Horses are instinctfully vigilant. Horses are constantly monitoring their surroundings through the senses of vision, smell, hearing and touch.

If you want them to concentrate on you and on the task at hand, you must first make them comfortable in their surroundings. Teaching the horse to trust in humans is essential when working around horses. Bonding needs to be continuous; daily grooming is an excellent means of bonding. Be alert when handling horses, no matter how well you think you know them. Pay attention to their body language and what is going on around them.

Understand the personality of each individual horse and work with the horse's temperament when handling him. If he is bold, don't allow him to dominate you. If he's lazy, don't let him get away with cheating by avoiding tasks. Take care not to be overbearing with a timid horse so he doesn't become even more afraid and skittish. Beware of stallions, they can be unpredictable and should be left to the professionals.

Horses that lack respect for humans and horses that are fearful and defensive can both be dangerous. Spoiled horses lack respect for humans. Spoiled horses should be addressed only by professional horsemen. Respect has to be earned, so let an experienced horseman develop a rapport with a dangerous horse. Improper punishment will cause a horse to fight back mostly out of fear. Horses should be disciplined, not punished. Discipline shows the horse what he should be doing, whereas punishment just tells the horse that what he is currently doing is wrong. To have a positive effect, corrections need to be consistent and applied while the horse is misbehaving.

PREPARATION (DON'T BECOME A STATISTIC)

The best thing you can do to ensure a safe horse activity is to be matched with a horse appropriate for your ability level. Children and inexperienced handlers should be supervised and started on a calm, experienced horse. Many people love horses, but not all horses love all people. Novices should be taught how to properly approach, handle and care for horses. A positive experience will result if you learn alongside an experienced horse and then work your way up to more challenging individuals as your skill and confidence increases.

Work proactively to avoid an accident. Maintain your equipment in good repair. Perform routine examinations and replace any questionable items that may fail under stress. Don't fall into the trap of letting frugality endanger your safety. Keep your environment clear of items that are unsafe to horses. Pick up clutter, pull protruding nails, and throw out that wire lying around. And you and your horse should both be up-to-date on your tetanus vaccination.

Be prepared in case of an emergency. Post emergency phone numbers near the phone and cover the list with plastic. Stock an equine as well as a human emergency kit. Check the stock of items periodically to replace used items. Complete human first aid kits are available for purchase at many stores. In your

equine kit, keep only items that you are comfortable using. Examples include towels, cotton gauze squares, cotton leg wraps and flannel wraps, diapers for oozing wounds. Pliers, bolt cutters, a flashlight, duct tape, scissors, wound scrub and thermometer can be handy in an emergency. Make sure you have water-soluble wound care items in your kit, so you don't limit veterinary care, such as stitches.

DETAILS, DETAILS, DETAILS!

Before you approach a horse, get him to look at you. Always notice his expression before advancing. Approach a horse from the front left side if possible, as most halters



Proper approach

attach on the left side. Always let the horse know what you intend to do before you do it.

Your entire stance and the tone of your voice have an effect on horses. A relaxed stance and soothing voice will let a horse know everything is going to be OK. A tense stance and disapproving voice lets them know there is a problem. Be aware of the message your body is conveying to your horse.

Lead your horse with a halter and lead rope. Adjust the halter so that it fits the horse properly. The halter should

Improper leading



Proper leading



be tight enough so that the horse cannot fit a hoof through any opening, but not squeeze any part of the horse's head. Never wrap the lead rope around any of your body parts, and hold the lead rope, don't grab onto the halter. A lead that is 12 feet long will allow you extra space if you need it under unexpected situations, and it can also double as a training tool.

Always tie your horse with a quick release knot or snap. Never tie a horse that hasn't learned to give to halter pressure. Always tie a horse to a stable object; a gate is not a stable tying surface. Tie the horse at or above wither level with a length of rope that is short enough so that the horse's nose cannot touch the ground. Tied horses should not be left unattended. Never cross underneath the neck of a tied horse, instead change sides by moving behind him.

To maximize safety, dress for success. Long hair should be secured back to ensure a clear field of vision. If you wear jewelry, avoid wearing dangly or loose fitting pieces. Boots should be smooth soled with a distinguishable heel. The barn is no place for sandals! Helmets may not look cool, but the National Ag Safety Database estimates that an approved helmet can reduce the chance of traumatic brain injury by 88 percent. NASD also states that 2/3 of reported injuries are due to horse behavior—primarily spooking, followed closely by human practices causing accidents. Understanding the nature of the horse and attention to detail will minimize your problems.



Proper haltering

SAFETY ZONES VS. DANGER ZONES

The manner in which you position your body relative to the horse's body is very important. In general, the safest place for a person to be is in zone B which is at the horse's shoulder, while facing forward. (Please see diagram on next panel.) You should always lead your horse from this position. Zone B is the safest because the horse can see you and your actions; you can monitor the horse's expression (which is an indication of things to come); and because the horse's front legs work primarily in a forward and back motion, unlike the