

# 4-H Horse Safety Guidelines



San Diego County Horse Advisory Dec 2008

# San Diego County HORSE: SAFETY GUIDELINES

## INTRODUCTION

The disregard for simple safety precautions in handling horses can result in serious mishaps. The Council has developed these guidelines to promote the safe use of the horse in an effort to improve the value of this animal in service to youth and society in general.

The points listed in these guidelines are selected as pertinent facts to refresh each rider's memory.

They are not intended to serve as complete "how-to-do" instructions. The reader is encouraged to seek competent and experienced help whenever necessary.

- San Diego Horse Advisory 2008

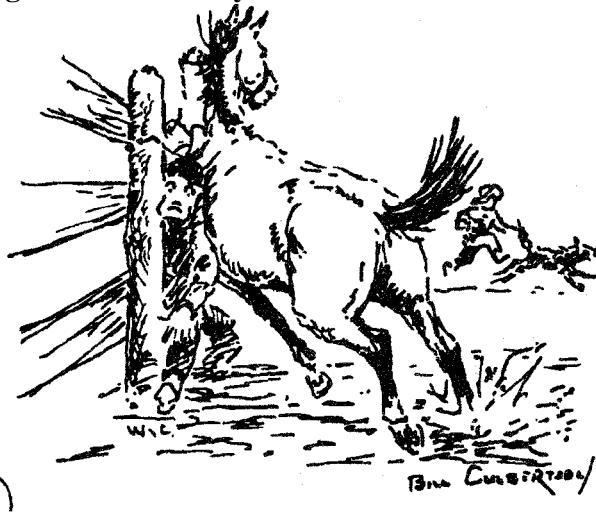
## APPROACHING

1. A horse's vision is restricted directly in the front and in rear, but its hearing is acute. Always speak to a horse as you approach it. Failure to do so may startle the horse and result in a kick.

2. Always approach at an angle, never directly from the front or rear. Speak to the horse, let it know you are there.

3. Pet a horse by first placing a hand on its shoulder or neck. The touch should be a rubbing action. Don't "dab" at the end of a horse's nose.

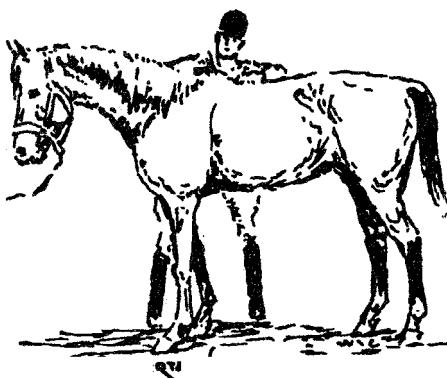
4. Always walk around a horse out of kicking range. Never walk under or step over the tie rope.



## Handling

1. Be calm and confident around horses. A nervous handler causes a nervous horse that could be unsafe. Do not wrap lead ropes, reins, or other lines attached to the horse around your hands or other parts of your body.

2. While you work around a horse, stay in close so if it kicks, you will not receive the full impact of the kick. Stay out of kicking range whenever possible. When you go to the opposite side of a horse, move away and go around out of kicking range.



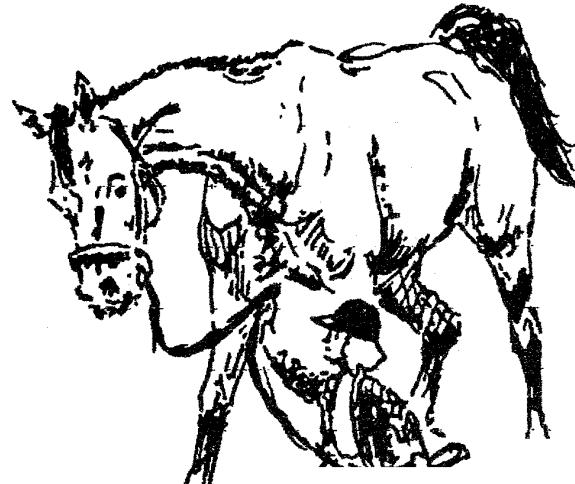
3. Know your horse, its temperament and reactions. Control your temper at all times, but let it know that you are its firm and kind master.

4. Always let a horse know what you intend to do. When picking up the feet, for example, do not grab the foot hurriedly. This will startle the horse and may cause it to kick. Learn the proper way to lift the feet.

5. Learn and use simple methods of restraint. For example the quick release knot is best when tying your horse for grooming.

6. Tying or holding the head is the safest method to follow when working around a horse. Work from a position as near to the shoulder as possible.

7. Never stand directly behind a horse to work with its tail.
  8. A good equestrian will keep in balance at all times. A slip or stumble can result in unintentional injury by the horse.
  9. Do not drop grooming tools underfoot. Place them where they will not cause you to trip or be stepped on by the horse.
  10. Know the horse's peculiarities. If someone else is riding it, tell him or her what to expect.
  11. Teasing a horse may cause it to develop dangerous habits for the rest of its life and could put your safety in serious jeopardy.
  12. Discipline a horse only at the instant of its disobedience. If you wait, even for a minute, it will not understand why it is being punished. Discipline without anger. Never strike a horse on the head.
  13. It is not safe to leave a halter on a horse that has been turned loose. If it is necessary to do so, the horse should be checked on daily.
    - a) Some halter materials will shrink so be certain to check the fit.
    - b) There is a possibility of a horse catching a foot in the halter strap.
    - c) A halter might catch on posts or other objects.
  14. Wear footgear that will protect your feet from being stepped on and from nails, etc., around the stables and barnyard. Boots or hard toed shoes are preferable. Never wear tennis shoes, moccasins or go barefooted.
- LEADING**
1. Make the horse walk beside you when leading, not running ahead or lagging behind. A position even with the horse's head or halfway between its head and shoulder is safest.
  2. Always turn the horse to the right and walk around it.
  3. Use a long lead strap, with the excess strap folded in a figure 8 style in your left hand, when leading. It is customary to lead from the left, or near side, using the right hand to hold the lead near the halter. Extend your right elbow slightly



toward the horse. If the horse makes contact with you, its shoulder will hit your elbow first and move you away from it. Your elbow can also be used in the horse's neck to keep the head and neck straight for control, as well as to prevent the horse from crowding you. A horse should be trained to be led from both sides, even for dismounting and mounting.

4. Your horse is larger and stronger than you. If it resists, do not get in front and try to pull.
5. Never wrap the lead strap, halter shank or reins around your hand, wrist or body. A knot at the end of the lead shank aids in maintaining a secure grip when needed for control.
6. When leading, tying or untying a horse, avoid getting your hands or fingers entangled. Use caution to prevent catching a finger in dangerous positions such as halter and bridle hardware, including snaps, bits, rings and loops.
7. Be extremely cautious when leading a horse through narrow openings. Be certain you have firm control and step through first. Step through quickly and get to one side to avoid being crowded.
8. Any time you are dismounted or leading the horse, the stirrup irons on an English saddle should be run up or dressed. Be cautious of the stirrups catching on objects when using a western saddle.

9. When turning a horse loose it is safest to lead it completely through the gate or door and then around to face the direction from which you entered. Then release the lead strap or remove the halter or bridle. Make the horse stand quietly while you pet it. Avoid letting the horse bolt away from you when released. Good habits prevent accidents.

10. Avoid using an excessively long lead rope to prevent it from becoming accidentally entangled. Watch the coils when using lariats or lunge lines.

## TYING

1. Know and use the proper knots for tying and restraining a horse.

2. Tie your horse far enough away from strange horses so they cannot fight.

3. Always untie the horse before removing its halter.

4. Always tie a horse in a safe place. Use the halter rope not the bridle reins.

5. Tie a safe distance from other horses and from tree limbs or brush where the horse may become entangled.

6. Be certain to tie the horse to an object that is strong and secure to avoid breaking or coming loose if the horse pulls back. Never tie below the level of the horse's withers.

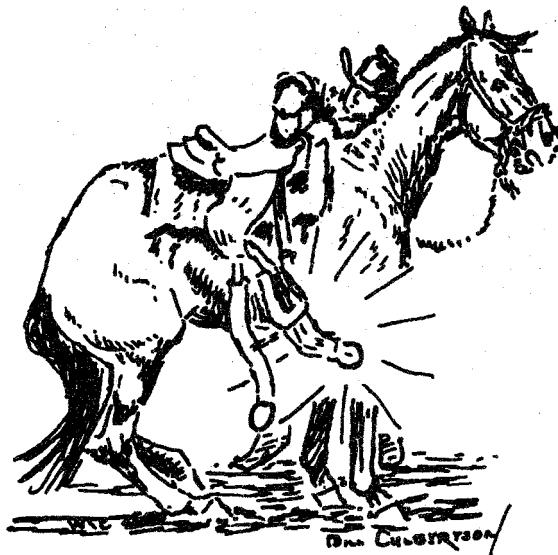


## BRIDLING

1. Protect your head from the horse's head when bridling. Stand close just behind and to one side (preferably on the left side) of the horse's head. Use caution when handling the horse's ears.

2. Keep control of the horse when bridling by refastening the halter around the neck.

3. Be certain the bridle is properly adjusted to fit the horse before you ride. Three points to check are the placement of the bit, the adjustment of the curb strap and the adjustment of the throatlatch.



## SADDLING

1. Check your saddle blanket and all other equipment for foreign objects. Be certain the horse's back and the cinch or girth areas are clean.

2. When using a western double-rigged saddle, remember to fasten the front cinch first, rear cinch last when saddling. Unfasten the rear cinch first when unsaddling. Be certain that the strap connecting the front and back cinches (along the horse's belly) is secure.

3. Fasten accessory straps (tie-downs, breast collars, martingales, etc.) after the saddle is cinched on. Unfasten them first, before loosening the cinch.

On English equipment, it is sometimes necessary to thread the girth through the martingale loop before the girth is secured.

4. The back cinch should not be so loose that your horse can get a hind leg caught between the cinch and its belly.

5. When saddling, it is safest to keep the cinches and stirrup secured over the saddle seat and ease them down when the saddle is on. Don't let them swing wide and hit the horse on the knee or belly. That's painful to the horse.

6. Swing the western saddle into position easily - not suddenly. Dropping the saddle down too quickly or hard may scare the horse. An English saddle is much lighter than a stock saddle. You don't need to, and should not, swing the saddle into position. Lift it and place it into position.

7. Pull up slowly to tighten the cinch. Check the cinch three times: a) after saddling, b) after walking a few steps (untacking) and c) after mounting and riding a short distance.

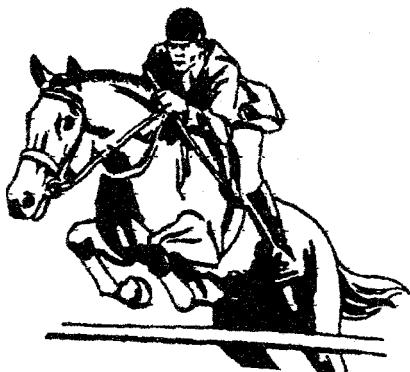
## MOUNTING AND DISMOUNTING

1. Never mount or dismount a horse in a barn, near fences, trees, or overhanging projections. Sidestepping and rearing mounts have injured riders who failed to take these precautions.
2. A horse should stand quietly for mounting and dismounting. To be certain this is done, you must have control of its head through the reins.

## Using English Equipment

1. Immediately upon dismounting, the rider should "run up" the stirrups. A dangling stirrup may startle or annoy the horse. It is possible for the horse to catch a cheek of the bit or even a hind foot in a dangling stirrup iron when trying to brush off a fly. The dangling stirrup can also be caught on doorways and other projections while the horse is being led.

2. After running up the stirrups, the reins should immediately be brought forward over the horse's head. In this position they can be used for leading.



## Using Western Equipment

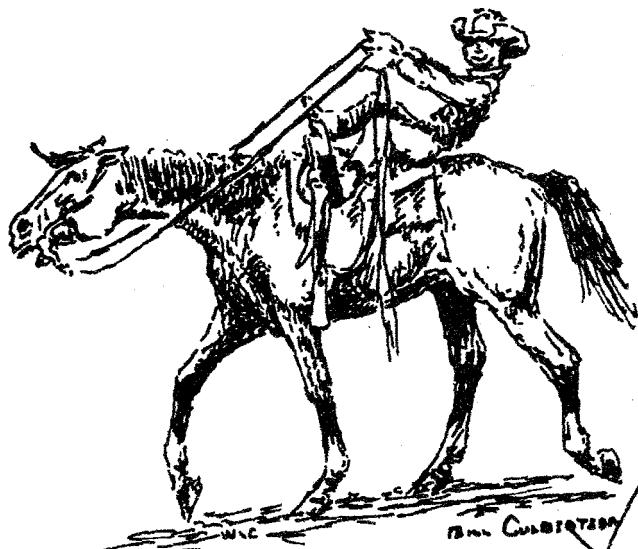
1. Closed reins or a Romal reins should be brought forward over the horse's head after dismounting.

at a slower gait as it startles both horses and riders," and frequently causes accidents. Instead, approach slowly, indicate a desire to pass and proceed cautiously on the left side.

9. Never ride off until all riders are mounted.

## RIDING

1. Keep your horse under control and maintain a secure seat at all times. Horses are easily frightened by unusual objects and noises.
2. Until you know your horse, confine your riding to an arena or other enclosed area. Ride in open spaces or unconfined areas after you are familiar with your horse.
3. If your horse becomes frightened, remain calm, speak to it quietly, steady it and give it time to overcome its fear. Then ride or lead the horse past the obstacle.
4. Hold your mount to a walk when going up or down a hill.
5. Allow a horse to pick its way at a walk when riding on rough ground, or in sand, mud, ice or snow where there is danger of slipping or falling.
6. Don't fool around. "Horseplay" is dangerous to you and your friends as well as to others who may be nearby.
7. Riding on roads:
  - \* Always bridle the horse - riding with just a halter doesn't give control.
  - \* Be certain there is sufficient space when riding in pairs or in groups.
  - \* Try to avoid paved or other hard surfaced roads. Walk the horse when crossing such roads.
  - \* In areas of heavy traffic it is safest to dismount and lead across.
  - \* Ride on the shoulders or in borrow pits (ditches) but watch for junk.
8. Never rush past riders who are proceeding



10. Ride abreast or stay a full horse's length from the horse in front to avoid the possibility of being kicked.

11. Walk your horse when approaching and passing through underpasses and over bridges.

12. When your horse is full of energy, lunge it or ride it in an enclosed area until it is settled.

13. Don't let a horse run to and from the stables. Walk the last mile home.

14. Know the proper use and purpose of spurs before wearing them.

15. Dogs and horses are good companions but they may not mix. Keep your dog under control at all times around horses.

16. Wear protective headgear when riding. This should be strictly adhered to in any form of Jumping.

## RIDING AT NIGHT

1. Riding at night can be a pleasure but must be recognized as being more hazardous than daytime riding. Walk the horse; fast gaits are dangerous.

2. If necessary to ride on roads or highways, follow the same rules as for pedestrians. Montana has no law that dictates which side of the road horses must be ridden but the Highway Patrol recommends facing traffic. When pulling a wagon or other vehicle, however, you must travel in the same direction as other traffic and a slow-moving vehicle emblem must be attached to the vehicle. In either case, wear light colored clothing and carry a flashlight and reflectors.

3. Select a location with care. Choose controlled bridle paths or familiar, safe open areas.

## EQUIPMENT AND CLOTHING

1. Learn to handle a rope before carrying one on horseback. Always use caution when working with a rope if the horse is not "rope-broke." Never tie the rope "hard and fast" to a saddle horn while roping from a green horse.



2. Bridle reins, stirrup leathers, headstalls, curbstraps and cinch straps should be kept in the best possible condition; your safety depends on these straps. Replace any of the straps when they begin to show signs of wear (cracking or checking).

3. Be sure all tack fits the horse. Adjust your tie-downs, etc., to a safe length that will not hinder the horse's balance.

4. Spurs can trip you when working on the ground. Take them off when not mounted.

5. Wear neat, well-fitting clothing that will not become snagged on equipment.. Belts, jackets, and front chap straps can become hooked over the saddle horn. Rings or dangling jewelry should not be worn because they can catch on halters and other equipment.

6. Wear boots or shoes with heels as a safeguard against your foot slipping through the stirrup.

7. Keep the horse's feet properly trimmed or shod.

8. Infectious organisms are prevalent around barns, corrals and fences. Gloves are a safeguard against cuts, scratches, splinters and rope burns which can lead to infection.

## TRAILERING OR TRUCK HAULING

1. Trailering should be done with two people if at all possible.
2. Always stand to one side never directly behind, when loading or unloading a horse from a trailer or truck.
3. Circumstances involved in loading a horse will vary but the following methods are given in order of preference.
  - \*Train the horse so it can be sent into the trailer.
  - \* Lead the horse into the left side while you stand on the right side of the center divider, or vice versa.
  - \* It is least desirable to get in front and lead the horse
- in. Never do this without an escape door or front exit. Even with a door use caution - most are awkward to get through. Also, horses have been known to follow the handler out.
4. Be certain the ground behind and around the truck or trailer affords safe footing before loading or unloading.
5. It is safest to remove all equipment (bridles, saddles, etc.) before loading. Use your halter.
6. Always speak to a horse in a truck or trailer before attempting to handle it.
7. If you have trouble loading or unloading, get experienced help.
8. Secure the butt bar or chain before tying the horse. Use care when you reach for it. Ease it down when you unfasten it to avoid bumping the horses legs.
9. Always untie a horse before opening the gate or door.
10. Avoid slick floors. Use matting or some type of bedding for secure footing.
11. Check your trailer regularly for the following:
  - \*Rotting or weakened floor boards.



- \*Rusted and weakened door hinges.
- \*Solid hitch welds.
- \*When serviced have a competent mechanic check the spring shackles and wheel bearings.
- 12. Be certain the trailer meets state requirements for brakes and lights.
- 13. The trailer should be high enough to afford a horse ample neck and head room. Remove or cover any protruding objects.
- 14. Double check all connections (lights, brakes, hitch and safety chains) before driving and always:
  - \* Be certain all doors are closed and secured.
  - \* Drive carefully. Turns should be made slowly. Start and stop slowly and steadily.
  - \*Look far ahead to avoid emergencies.

Drive in a defensive manner.

15. It is safer when hauling a stallion with other horses to load the stallion first and to unload him last. Putting a dab of Vicks petroleum jelly into the nostril of the stallion may help prevent the stallion from getting excited around mares.

16. Distribute the weight of the load evenly. When hauling one horse it is generally safest to load it on the left side of the trailer.

17. Never throw lighted cigarettes or matches from a car or truck window because of the danger of a fire in the area or the wind sucking them into the trailer.

18. Check on the horse and the trailer hitch at every stop before continuing on.

19. Opinions vary on whether to haul a horse tied or loose. If you tie, allow sufficient length of rope so the horse can move its head for balance. Use a safety release or a quick-release knot.

20. If hauling in a truck or other open carrier, you should protect the horse's eyes from wind and foreign objects. Use goggles or some type of

windshield.

21. Horses are like people - some get motion sickness. Adjust the feeding schedule to avoid traveling when the horse is full of feed and water. Feed smaller amounts or avoid feeding grain before the trip.

## TRAIL RIDING

1. If you plan to ride alone, tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return.

2. Ride a well-mannered horse.

3. Do not play practical jokes and indulge in horseplay.

4. Watch where you ride- avoid dangerous ground. Note landmarks. Study the country and the view behind you so you will know how it looks when you ride out.

5. Courtesy is the best safety on the trail

6. Think of your horse first. Watch its condition, avoid injuries and care for it properly.

7. Carry a good pocket knife to cut ropes, etc., in case of entanglement.

8. Don't tie the reins together.

9. Ride balanced and erect to avoid tiring the horse or causing sore backs, legs, etc.

10. Check the equipment:

- \* Have a halter and rope. Hobbles are fine if the horse is trained to them.

- \* Have clean saddle blankets or pads.

- \* Be certain the equipment is in good repair and fits the horse.

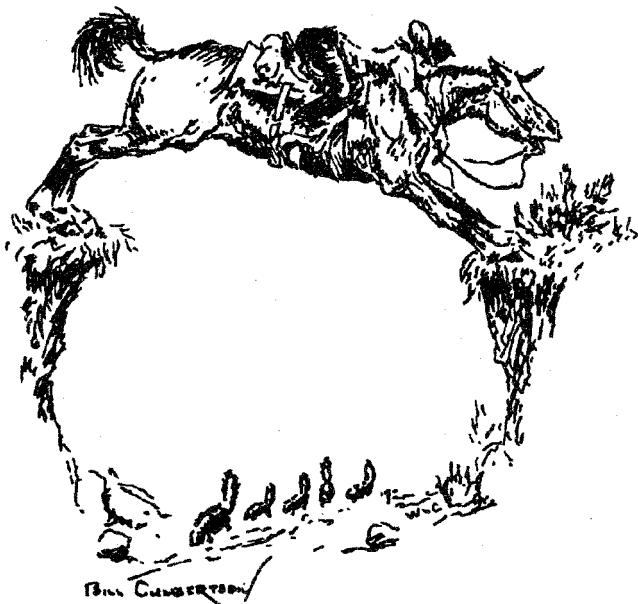
- \* Include clothing for rain and/or cold weather.

- \* A pair of wire cutters is handy in case the horse becomes entangled in wire.

- \* A lariat is handy for many needs but know how to use one and be certain the horse is accustomed to a rope.

- \* Extras should include pieces of leather or rawhide for repairs; a few spare horse shoe nails and matches in case you need a fire.

11. When you unsaddle, store your gear properly and place the saddle blanket where it will dry. Keep your gear covered overnight.



12. Don't water when your horse is hot. Cool it first.

13. Always tie a horse in a safe place. Use the halter rope - not the bridle reins.

Tie a safe distance from the other horses and from tree limbs or brush where the horse may become entangled.

Never tie below the level of the horse's withers. Be certain to tie to an object that is strong and secure to avoid danger of breaking or coming loose if the horse pulls back.

14. Be extremely cautious of cigarettes, matches and fires. Know they are out before discarding or leaving.

15. Obtain current, accurate maps and information on the area. Become familiar with the terrain and climate.

16. If you ride on federal or state lands, seek advice from the forest or park officials. Know the regulations on use of the trails and open fires.

17. Be certain the horse is in proper physical condition and its hooves and shoes are ready for the trail

18. Use extreme caution at wet spots or boggy places.

19. Speed on the trail is unsafe. Ride at safe gaits.

20. Avoid overhanging limbs. Warn the rider behind you if one is encountered. Watch the rider ahead so a limb pushed aside doesn't snap back and slap the horse or you in the face.

## FIRE SAFETY GUIDELINES

"In case of fire, break glass" is certainly a familiar phrase that sets forth simple instructions. However, a response to a barn fire is not a simple matter.

Many horse owners assume the attitude "it couldn't happen to me" and don't give much thought to what it takes to prevent a fire or what to do in case of one.

Today's horse owner usually provides adequate training for horse and rider, proper equipment, balanced nutritional needs and good stabling facilities. Missing from books, lectures and instructions, though, is the chapter on fire prevention and a course of action in case of fire. Young people receive the best available instruction in equitation but few have any idea of how to react in a disaster situation. Fire is the most terrible death that can befall an animal, especially the horse, because horses are usually penned within corrals and/or stables. The horse is totally dependent upon the owner's awareness and consideration of its needs when an emergency arises.

Fire prevention and safety are the duty of every person involved with horses. Many of the preventative measures apply whether the facility be at a track, a training barn, summer camp stable or backyard barn.

Be safety conscious at all times. Fires give little warning. Rehearse the necessary course of action to be followed with members of your family, your boarders, children in training and others directly involved with the animals in the barn in the event of fire. Conspicuously post the number of the local fire department by ALL telephones.

Fire prevention is easier to preach than practice, but it is a vital part of horse ownership and management.

## STABLE FIRES

The National Fire Protection Association's records show the majority of fires in stables (figures compiled from reported fires at race tracks, breeding farms and fairgrounds) are caused mainly by the misuse of electrical apparatus, heaters and

## FIRE SAFETY

30 seconds  
Is All Your Horse May Have

### Plan Now

- Know where fire alarms are located
- Know location of fire equipment
- Know where water is located.
- Know how to use fire equipment.

*Post Fire Department number  
in a prominent place*

### Action

- Call the fire department.
- Begin evacuating horses.
- Open all outside access gates to the stable area.
- Keep roads clear for fire equipment access.
- Use first aid fire fighting equipment (hand extinguishers, buckets, etc.).
- Meet the firefighters and direct them to the fire.

careless smoking. Other causes of fires are lightning, arson, and spontaneous combustion. We will not concern ourselves here with the large race track and fairground facilities, but rather with the smaller scale training and/or boarding facilities, summer camp stables and the individual owner facility.

Almost all horse barns have the following in common:

1. Wood construction (at least partially)
2. Bedding straw or shavings in stalls
3. Storage of hay, bedding straw or shavings in proximity to the barns
4. Highly combustible materials within: leather, blankets, ropes, oils, etc.
5. People

A horse standing in a bed of straw might just as well be standing in a pool of gasoline should a fire occur. The burning rate of loose straw is approximately three times that of gasoline. The

horse in a stall where the fire originates has only 30 seconds to escape. The flame spread is so rapid and heat so intense that a fire once started is out of control in a matter of minutes.

Safety experts advocate automatic sprinkler systems for commercial facilities, such as race tracks and large breeding establishments and other commercial-type enterprises. But these systems are generally not included in smaller scale operations, due to the expense.

Water-type fire extinguishers are effective if used within the first minute. Since stable fires develop so rapidly due to the abundance of combustible materials, fire extinguishers are of little or no use once the fire has gained burning time (60 seconds).

Fire spreads rapidly, as does panic. Quick action is necessary to save the life of a horse and one person knowledgeable in the correct course of action will be more effective than five people in a state of panic.

Fire prevention and safety should be taught along with basic equitation by trainers, organizations and parents. As schools have fire drills for the students, so should the barn manager and trainer instruct students in the course of action to follow in case of fire.

The barn manager should be responsible for posting fire rules. The following, with individual modifications, could be used.

## IN CASE OF FIRE

- 1 . Call the fire department
2. Evacuate horses:
  - use halters and lead ropes.
  - blindfold, if necessary, using scarves, handkerchiefs or gunny sacks.
  - move to holding area away from barn site and out of the way of fire fighting equipment.
3. Open all access gates to the barn area.
- 4.Until help arrives use available fire fighting equipment: a) extinguishers; b) hoses; c) wet gunny sacks and d) shovels and dirt
5. Keep roads clear for fire equipment.

## FIRE PREVENTION MEASURES

Around the barn:

1. Clean up and dispose of all debris.
- 2.Have adequate water outlets and hoses attached.
3. Have an outside telephone with prominent display of fire department number.
4. Store feed, bedding straw or shavings at a safe distance from barns.
5. Spray for weeds in the general area.

Inside the barn:

1. Ensure that smoking is not allowed.
- 2.Have adequate water outlets and hoses attached.
3. Dispose of oily rags immediately after use.
- 4.Check all electrical wiring for frayed ends, doubled-up extension cords, etc.

The above rules apply to any size barn - whether it houses 50 horses or one horse.

The stable owner, barn manager and homeowner each has a responsibility to the horses entrusted to his or her care.

## EVACUATING HORSES IN BRUSH FIRE

At first warning of fire in the area:

1. Halter all horses.  
Animals should be tagged with owner's name and address. Place a nameplate on the halter with owner's name. Or affix a luggage ill tag to the halter with name and address. Or place adhesive tape on forearm of horse with name and address in ink.
2. Lead ropes for each horse should be kept on gates or stall doors.
3. Decide on safe location to move horses.
  - \* Horses can be moved by riding one horse and leading others.
  - \* If there is time, load horses in trailer and move them from danger area.
- 4.Don't wait until the last possible moment to move your horses. Brush fires travel with alarming speed and can cover many miles in a matter of minutes. Winds can fan the flames and carry firebrands that cause the fire to jump ridges and spread within minutes.  
Fire fighting crews will, as a last resort, turn horses loose in immediate danger.

## **OTHER FIRE SITUATIONS**

### **Trail Riding in the Mountains**

- 1. ABSOLUTELY NO SMOKING ON THE TRAIL.**
2. Advise a responsible party of your route and estimated time of return, whether riding in a group or by yourself.
3. Familiarize yourself with the terrain.

4. Any organized ride, as a safety rule, should have an alternate escape route planned.

(Firefighting crews always plan an escape route.)

5. In the event you come upon a fire, the personal safety of you and your horse is the primary concern:

- \* Assess the situation and use your best judgment.
- \* Under normal conditions, try to get away from the fire area.
- \* Proceed to a safe area.

\* This is a subject that seems to have no definite guidelines as so much depends upon the particular situation. However, for those who ride in such areas, definite thought should be given as to the proper reactions when faced with a fire

## **TRANSPORTING HORSES**

In the event of an accident with possible danger of fire:

1. Use quick-release snaps to tie the horse.
2. Lead ropes should remain on horses while traveling.
3. Fire extinguishers should be readily accessible, not locked in tack compartment of trailer.

## **HORSE SHOWS**

1. Follow proper parking procedures. Do not block street entrances or fire hydrants.
2. Never padlock your horse in a stall.
3. See Arena Safety guidelines in Horse safety special situations section of this manual.

## **STABLE CONSTRUCTION**

The majority of barns (training, boarding, rental and backyard) are constructed mainly of combustible materials, such as wood. Brick, stone, or cement block barns are generally thought to be fairly fireproof but the exterior construction does

not slow the internal spread of a fire, which is fed by the highly combustible materials within (wood, straw, shavings, leather, tack, ropes, oils, etc.).

Fire retardant paints are effective in checking or retarding a fire, but of course have no effect upon the bedding materials used in the stalls or the interior contents of the barn.

A few manufacturing companies are now featuring a line of prefabricated metal barns. There are also a number of companies that offer a complete line of metal corrals and fence panels. Overhead shelter installations used with these corrals are also of a lightweight metal. This type of installation is the most "fireproof" available.

Overhead sprinkler systems, such as those developed exclusively for use in horse barns, are highly effective in extinguishing fires within the barns. Unfortunately, this type of installation is very expensive and not in widespread use.

An alternative is to install extra large water lines, with adequate outlets inside and outside the barn, all equipped with large water hoses.

The same type construction that allows air to flow freely to ventilate a stabling facility unfortunately also aids in ventilating and fanning a fire.

In the interest of safety, all stalls should have outside doors, whether there are adjoining paddocks, which should also have outside gates.

## **SUMMARY**

Much can be done to diminish the ever constant threat of fire. The precautionary measures outlined are common sense. Those who live and work around horses must know the proper steps of action to follow in case of fire so the lives of individuals and horses and the loss of property can be minimized.

Due to the materials involved it is doubtful there will ever be a "fireproof" barn, but the basic steps described here will, if followed, help reduce the threat of fire.

Procedures to follow in the case of fire should be as important as instructions in grooming, equitation and the common ailments of the horse.

Fire prevention is everyone's duty - 24 hours a day.

## **FIRE PREVENTION RECOMMENDATIONS\***

1. Smoking in horse stalls, feed rooms and under sheds is strictly prohibited.
2. Sleeping will not be allowed in any of the feed rooms or stalls at any time.
3. Stalls occupied by horses will not be blocked at any time. Tack rooms will not be locked unless occupied.
4. No open fires will be allowed anywhere in the stable area.
5. No oil or gas burning lanterns or lamps will be allowed in the stable area.
6. All electrical appliances used in stable areas must be in a safe working condition and when in use, kept a safe distance from walls, beds and other furnishings and should not be left unattended when in use.
7. No flammable materials, such as cleaning fluids or solvents, will be used in the stable area.
8. No hay or straw may be stored under the sheds or outside of feed rooms at any time.
9. The alleyway in front of stalls must be kept free of debris and open at all times to give easy

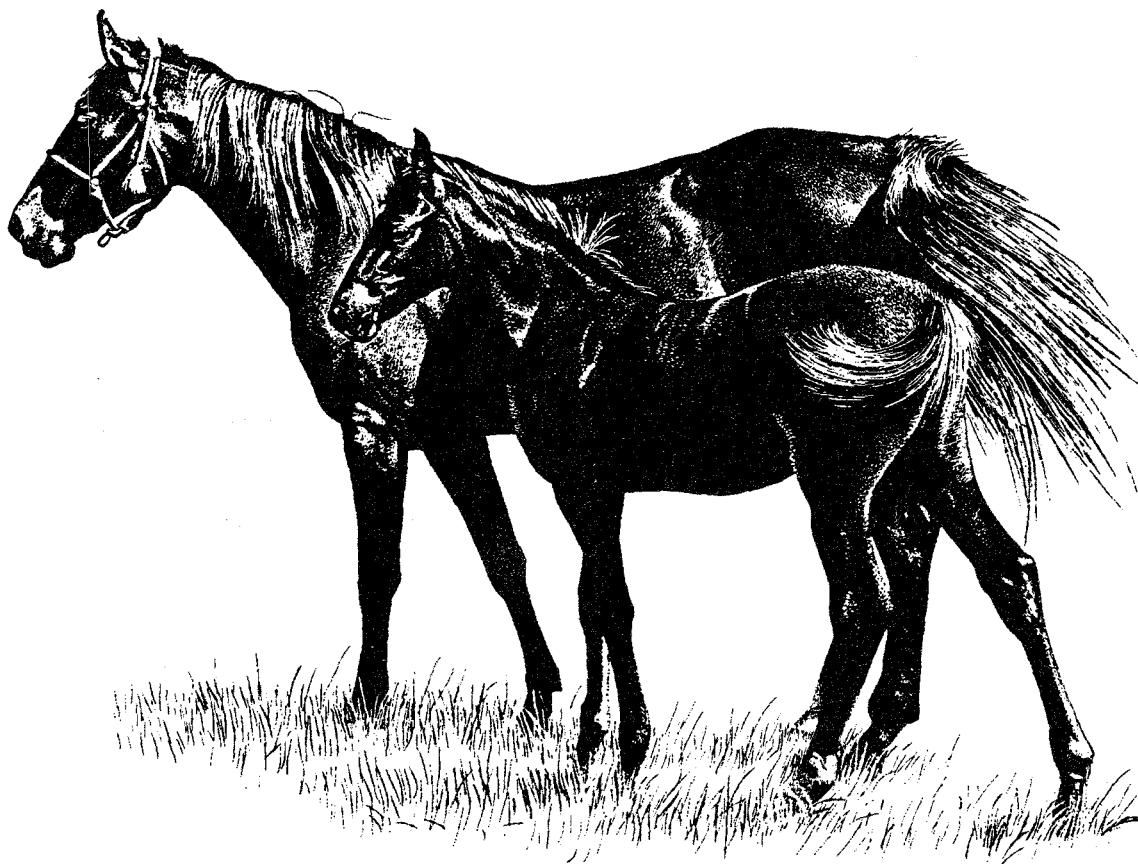
## **HORSE SAFETY COMMANDMENTS**

- 1 . Buy or ride a safe horse.
2. Don't be overmounted.
3. Know your horse.
4. Don't surprise your horse.
5. Check your tack.
6. Small children must be supervised.
7. tie your horse with care.
8. Know trailer safety.
9. Don't crowd others.
10. No clowning please.

access to each stall door in case of fire.

10. Pets, such as dogs, cats, poultry, goats, etc., will not be allowed to run at large in the stable area but must be properly confined at all times.

\* Recommendations of the National Association of State Racing Commissioners Committees on Public Safety and Security.



# **NOTES**

## **Equestrian Safety: The Facts**

Information from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission indicates approximately 22,000 youth aged 18 years and younger were treated in hospitals for horseback riding injuries during 2005.

Two-thirds of these injuries occurred around or near the home or farm.

Head injuries are associated with more than 60 percent of equestrian-related deaths. Riders who only ride on the flat, or never gallop are not immune to injury. More than 50 percent of injuries that result in death or hospitalization occur when the horse is walking, trotting or cantering.

There is no such thing as a safe horse. Any horse can become frightened by an unusual sound or object. Fear, defiance, aggressiveness, curiosity or excitement may cause a horse to behave unpredictably.

## Clover Safe preventing 4-H member Injuries and Illnesses

### General injury and illness Prevention Measures

- As part of animal handling, 4-H members require instruction about safe practices such as approaching animals within their field of vision, horse characteristics, appropriate clothing and personal protective equipment (ASTM/SEI standards for helmets) requirements per the California 4-H policy Handbook, Section 805.
- Incident Reporting Procedures. Report all injuries within 48 hrs of the incident: online at <http://ucanr.org/incidentreport>. Cooperative Extension offices will keep a copy of the incident report and forward to ANR risk Services within two working days of the incident.
- When participating at 4-H horse events members should be made aware of all show rules and safety procedures.

### Horse Safety Special Situations:

**Snakes on the trail:** Stay away from snakes and watch where you are going when trail riding.



Most snakes will avoid humans and horses but when startled or cornered they will strike! A snake laying in the middle of a trail isn't coiled to waylay the horseman- the reptile was probably just crossing the trail and felt the ground vibrations of an approaching horse. It's nature's way of self-preservation, the snake coiled to defend itself. To keep from getting bite, prevention is the key in 90% of all snake bite cases.

Remember in hot weather snakes seek cool, moist places such as under water tubs, along barn aisle walls, under feed tubs and even under parked horse trailers.

**First Aid for your horse after a snake bite:** Fortunately, even a poisonous snakebite does not automatically mean that your horse will be in dire straits, but if you wait before seeking treatment and an anti-venom cannot be given quickly, your horse may sustain severe tissue damage. Fatalities in horses do occur if a venomous snake bite to the neck or nose occurs since this may obstruct the airways to such an extent that the animal suffocates.

The best course of action to take is to keep the horse calm so that the poison will not travel through the body any faster than necessary. Do not remount your horse to ride it back to the stable since this too, will get the blood pumping faster than is good. Instead, slowly walk your animal back to its trailer or stable. If at all possible, see if a veterinarian can meet you on the riding trail. Some riders swear by carrying six inch portions of a cut up garden hose that they will lubricate and insert into the horse's nostrils after a snake bite to allow the animal to keep breathing as the swelling sets in. If your animal is bitten on the leg, you should place a wide band around the affected limb to compress the veins but not the arteries. By opening and re-closing the band every 15 minutes, you will slow down the spread of the poison while preventing damage to the tissues.

Clean the bite wound with soap and water but do not resort to the method of cutting open the bite wound to suck out the poison. While this is a staple of the old Western movies, it only makes matters worse. Similarly, you should stay away from compresses since these, too, have shown to accelerate the damage. Instead, your veterinarian will be able to apply anti-inflammatory drugs, anti-venom and also a tetanus booster to keep the horse healthy.

## **Arena Safety at Horse Events:**

When putting on a 4-H event that requires an arena you should consider several factors: size of the show, condition of the arena and surrounding area, as well as minimizing danger the day of the show.

The size of the show can affect the arena safety. Class size should be kept to a manageable level, depending on the size of the arena and experience of the youth. If the classes become too large for the arena over crowding can occur. This is dangerous for the exhibitors and can make it more difficult on your judge to effectively evaluate the class. If the class is too large, it is appropriate to split it into heats or sections.

When considering facilities make sure they are in good repair. Gates, fences and other equipment should be in workable condition. If the gate does not close properly or rails on the fence around the arena are loose or have pieces protruding, they can be hazardous to both horse and rider. Consider the condition of the footing in the arena. If arenas are too deep, footing will be hard on the horse's ligaments and may not be appropriate for certain classes. If the arena is too compacted this may also be dangerous to the horse and rider. The area around the arena should also be considered. Be sure that the trailer parking area is free from debris and there is plenty of room. You may consider assigning a parking coordinator to efficiently and safely space incoming trailers. You may want to consider having some on site portable stalls available for those horses that cannot be trailer tied.

Please consider arena safety when hanging banners and signs. If they are hung, make sure they are secure, so they will not flap in the wind and cause horses to "spook."

While showing/competing, contestants should be reminded to leave space between them and other horses when leading and riding. Have the announcer ask riders to spread out into open spaces on the rail when they bunch up during a class. Remind riders to pass on the inside and not between the rail and other horses. Have a red ribbon available, so riders who have horses that kick can tie it in the tail, to notify others of possible danger.

People should not run during a horse show. People running on foot can scare horses both while in the class or outside of the arena. People on horses should not canter or trot their horse except in the designated warm-up area. When mounted, the horse should be saddled and in an appropriate bridle.

## **Trail Riding Etiquette:**

While the word "etiquette" implies good manners, **trail etiquette is as much about safety as it is about courtesy**. Horses are herd animals and prey animals and this is the driving force behind how they think. Most horses do not like to be "abandoned" and can get upset if they feel this is occurring. When they encounter something which they perceive as frightening, their natural prey animal reaction is to jump (and run). Much of what is listed below comes from an understanding of these facts.

### **1. When encountering **hikers and bikers****

- a. Ideally hikers and bikers will yield to a rider.
- b. When encountering hikers or bikers, talk to them and get them to talk to you. Hikers with backpacks and bikers with helmets do not look human. Explain this to them and ask them to speak so that your horse will understand that this "thing" is actually just a person.
- c. Ask them to stand off on the downhill side of the trail. Once again, horses are prey animals and often attacked from above, so keep the scary looking thing down low. It can also be easier to control a horse going uphill if he spooks.
- d. Stay relaxed yourself and keep talking to the hiker and your horse if he is nervous.
- e. Find out if there are more in their party and tell them how many in your party.
- f. Thank them for their cooperation and be kind and courteous. We are all out there to enjoy ourselves.

## 2. Dogs

- a. I think we all understand the problems that loose dogs can cause, so I will suffice it to say: if you can't control your dog (with your voice from horseback) or he is ill-mannered with other people or animals, leave him at home.

## 3. Other horses

- a. In theory, single riders will yield to pack strings. Be prepared for this not to be the case (see item "3d").
- b. In theory, downhill riders will yield to uphill riders. Be prepared for this not to be the case (see item "3d").
- c. Do not try to *squeeze* by other horses, you are asking for all kinds of trouble. Instead, give yourself plenty of room to go around.
- d. Generally yield to anyone coming up or down the trail if I can because I know my animals and my riding ability. I don't know their animals or their riding ability. So I take the safer route and yield myself.
- e. If it is a narrow trail with no way to move off to let another pass, decide who should turn around.
- f. *Always* turn your horse to the down hill side. He can see his front feet and won't step off the trail. He cannot see his back feet or where he is putting them as well, so you want to keep those on the trail.
- g. Unless you know the oncoming horse and rider and their abilities, it is safest to assume that the horse and rider are both inexperienced and be prepared that anything could happen as you or they go by.



4. You want to maintain a distance of about one horse length between horses while going down the trail. This leaves you time and space to react safely in the event of an accident in front of you.
5. When you encounter a short bridge on the trail, walk the horses across one at a time. Allow more than the usual single horse length between each horse over longer bridges.
6. For your safety and the safety of others around you, pay attention to your horse and keep him under control. Keep a peripheral eye on the rest of the horses and the environment around you. Being prepared for anything to happen can often prevent a bad wreck.
7. Think like a horse, especially if you are the leader of the group. If you look at objects on the trail like a prey animal (is it unfamiliar or potentially dangerous), you can help prepare yourself for anything. Once again preparation and awareness can be the difference between a controlled flight and a bad wreck.
8. Nasty horses in the back. If your horse is unruly, he should bring up the rear where his poor behavior will not be witnessed by the other horses and cause them to get upset as well. And, if you are lucky, he may learn a thing or two from watching calmer horses in front of him all day.
9. Tie a red ribbon in the tail of a horse that kicks. If you are following a horse with a red ribbon, obviously it would be safer to maintain a little more distance between you, but also you might be extra watchful for signs of forewarning: pinned ears, swishing tail, hind leg at the ready, etc. Remember that your horse could move to avoid the kick and put you in its path instead. A broken leg or knee from a kick 10 steep miles from the trailer is no fun.
10. Mares in season and stallions can present special problems on the trail. They require an extra level of attention on the part of the rider and the others in the group. If you are riding one, be extra vigilant of her/his behavior. If you are not, but they are part of your group, keep an extra eye out on these animals. Ideally the rider on either of these animals would be an experienced horseman,

- but we all know you can't count on that. Warn oncoming riders if necessary. And then also consider that any horse you may pass on the trail could be a mare in season or a stallion and that the rider may not be experienced.
11. Watch the footing, especially on uphills and downhills. Gravel on rocks is like ice. Wet bridges can also be very slippery. If you encounter problems, warn any riders behind you.
  12. When leading and/or riding with anyone behind you
    - a. Walk
    - b. Ask before trotting/loping
    - c. Warn of holes, bad footing and other dangers
    - d. Warn when you are stopping
    - e. Warn if a branch might snap back in someone's face
    - f. Keep track of other riders behind you
    - g. Take turns leading, if possible...share the dust.
  13. When you reach a watering area, take turns and don't crowd. Wait for everyone to finish before moving off. And remember your [Leave No Trace](#) ethics: do not destroy additional water front so you can all water at the same time. Use only the obvious area where animals come down to drink.
  14. Stop if there is a wreck. This should be pretty obvious. Your help may be needed. But also, once again, horses are herd animals and do not like to be left alone, especially in an unfamiliar area. If you ride off, while someone is trying to mount back up, their horse could panic and take off to catch up with the group.
  15. Always practice Leave No Trace ethics:
    - a. Don't cut switchbacks.
    - b. Try not to walk through soft, wet ground. Horses' hooves are sharp and destroy vegetation.
    - c. Pick up all your trash, including cigarette butts, and pack it out.
    - d. Pick up other people's trash to keep places as pristine as possible and set a good example.
    - e. Be respectful of those who live there and those who will visit behind you.
    - f. Take only pictures, leave only footprints.
  16. Always be prepared for the idiot or the inconsiderate. Be prepared for someone to take off at a gallop while you are mounting, bump into you from behind or stop dead in front of you.
  17. Keep your comments to yourself (or pick your battles). Unless the situation is a health risk or puts a life in danger, refrain from passing on your horsemanship wisdom. Many people may not respond well to a "know-it-all" or will resent the implication that they are stupid. Your "helpful suggestions" may cause more harm than good.
  18. Additional safety items
    - a. Always carry ID on your person and on your horse in case you become separated.
    - b. Tell someone where you are going in case you don't come home, even when riding with a group.
    - c. Carry basic survival gear on your horse and at least the bare minimum on your person: cell phone, matches, food, water.

**Following basic trail etiquette can help ensure the safety of you, your horse and others who ride with you or you meet on the trail.** But just as importantly, it can keep the trails open to horses. Many trails are closed to horses because of riders who abused the privilege. It is a privilege as much as your right to ride these trails. Remember that you are always an ambassador of horseback riding and that we all share the outdoors. If non-riders always meet a courteous and polite horseman on the trail, their impression of all of us will hopefully remain positive.