

Little Hooves 4-H Club
Suffield, CT
Basic Equine Safety Rules

Safety is everyone's responsibility! Safety is the most important activity when handling horses.

Caution must be taken around even the quietest horse. Accidents can happen when you least expect them. Be especially careful when walking between horses that are loose, as they might treat you as part of their herd.

1. Do not run around horses. If horses see sudden movement without seeing the cause of it, they may kick, strike or bolt, causing injury.
2. When approaching a horse, always walk toward the shoulder; never from behind or ahead. Even in a stall, try to approach towards the shoulder. Always let a horse know you are approaching by talking to it.
3. Horses have three blind spots where they can't see you; directly between both eyes extending out approximately 10 inches (25 cm.), directly behind them and under their head. Their hips also block their vision of their rump area. Speaking to your horse lets it know where you are at all times.
4. Lead a horse from the left side, walking between the head and shoulder. This position gives you the best control while maintaining optimum safety. Place your right hand approx. 6 inches (15 cm.) down the lead rope, carry any excess lead rope in your left hand. (It is also a good idea to train your horse to lead from the right side in case that is ever needed.) Keep at least one horse length distance between horses.
5. Never wrap the lead rope around your hand or any part of your body so that if the horse were to bolt it would not wrap dangerously around you or pull you over.
6. When leading a horse, turn it to the right (away from you) so it won't step on you. Push its head to the right using the lead rope, held in your right hand, and as you turn stay between its head and shoulder.
7. When the horse is tied, do not go under the neck of a horse to get to the other side. If you do, you are passing through a blind spot and may frighten the horse. Go around the hindquarters, talk to your horse and keep hand contact on the horse as you walk around, so that it knows it's you when you pass through its blind spot. The closer you stand to a horse, the less likely you are to be injured if kicked. You may be shoved away, but not badly hurt.
8. When grooming the underside of a horse or working on the legs or feet, never sit or kneel. Always keep your feet on the ground and a hand on the horse so you can react quickly if needed. While handling or grooming do not drop grooming tools or equipment near the horse. Place them away from the horse so you will not trip on them, or they will not be stepped on by the horse.
9. When you are working around horses, wear adequate footwear. Do not wear flip-flops or go barefoot. Gloves will help prevent rope burn. Do not wear anything that dangles when working with horses.

10. Tying Your Horse: When you tie your horse, tie it to a secure object (like a fence post secured in the ground) that will not break or move if the horse pulls back. If possible never tie below the level of the horses withers. Tie your horse, using a quick release knot. Note that this is not very effective with miniature horses, as many of them know how to undo the quick release! Tie the rope to the post so that it is short enough that your horse can not get a leg over the rope. Never tie a horse with reins or to the bit.

11. If releasing your horse into a stall or field turn the horse around to face the door or gate before letting it go so he will be less likely to kick at you. Respect your horse's instincts. Any horse no matter how calm has a first instinct for survival. Try to anticipate situations that may make him nervous, and get him used to them.

12. If a horse steps on your foot, do not try to pull your foot out from under their foot, but push against the horse's shoulder or hip to move their foot off of yours.

13. Hang halters from the noseband, unbuckled, and with the lead rope attached so that they can be put on quickly in case of an emergency. Be sure they are out of reach of the minis!

14. A simple "NO", spoken sharply, is often quite effective, especially as a safety measure! Use only when really needed and do not overdo it.

Adapted from Alberta, CA 4-H Horse Program material

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