

Guide to managing risks around horses for inexperienced persons

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1. The Induction

One of the key elements in workplace safety is employee Induction and Training, this induction program will provide information about:

- Horse instincts and their response to fear.
- How to behave around horses.
- How to use peripheral vision when handling animals.
- Determining an escape route.
- How to recognise a horse's individual characteristics.
- What drivers and horse handlers should wear?
- Listening to and obeying instructions.
- First aid and emergency procedures.

This induction is a basic overview to assist you with being safe around horses, in conjunction with this overview your Employer will be teaching you the practical side of caring for and training horses. There are also training units to assist you develop your career in the Equine Industry, further information on training is available at [\(web site references\)](#)

2. Basic safety Rules around horses

2.1. Approaching

1. No walking up to a horse in its kicking zone.
2. If walking behind a horse, walk close with a hand on its rump. A horse's hind legs are very strong and can deliver a powerful kick. A horse can also lash out with its front legs. A stressed or frightened horse might kick you. Even if the horse knows where you are, quick movements can startle it. One well-placed kick can kill or cause serious injuries, like broken bones.

Always approach your horse from the front or side. If he's turned away from you, call to him or entice him with a treat to get him to come to you. Never approach your horse directly from the rear. Always approach a horse in a calm way, making sure they can see you. Do not approach from their blind spot (directly in front or behind) – this could startle the horse.

When catching a horse, approach from its left shoulder. Move slowly but confidently, speaking to the horse as you approach. Read the horse's intent by watching its body language. Ears flat back is a warning sign.

2.2. Handling

- When working around your horse, tie him securely with a quick-release knot.
- Always let a horse know what you intend to do.
- Never stand directly behind a horse or directly in front of him.
- Be calm, confident, and collected around horses. A nervous handler can make a nervous horse.
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- A rope which is attached to a horse must not be wrapped around a person's hand
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2.3. Leading

Always use a lead rope attached to a halter so you have a 'safety zone'; don't hold the halter directly with your hand. Hold the lead rope with your right hand, 8 to 10 inches away from the horse's head, holding the end of the rope with your left hand.

Teach your horse to walk beside you so you can walk at its left shoulder. This puts your right elbow near the horse's shoulder so you can anticipate its actions.

Don't let the horse pull ahead of you. Don't let it get behind you either, as it could jump into you if spooked. You set the pace; you are in charge.

To lead a horse through a doorway, step through first and then quickly step to the side, out of the horse's way. Keep an eye on the horse, because some try to rush through narrow spaces.

Never wrap equipment attached to a horse around your hand, wrist or body, even with small loops. It could wrap around your hand and seriously injure you if the horse startles.

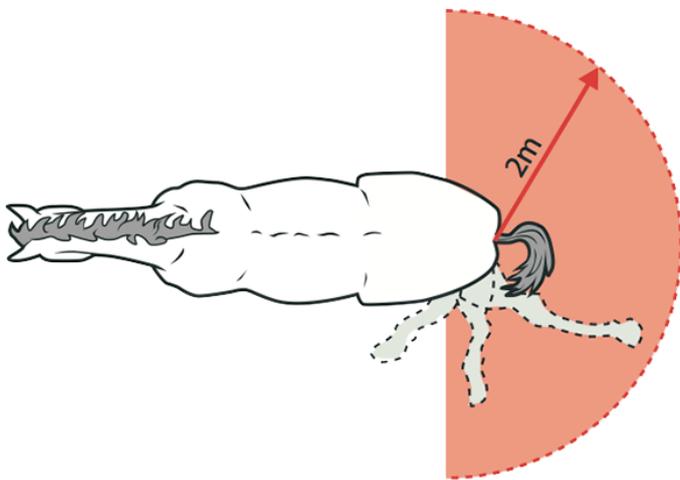
Don't climb over or under a tied horse's lead rope. The horse could pull back, making you trip over the rope. If the horse lunges forward, paws or tries to bite, you have no quick escape path. Never walk under any horse's belly.

The horse is stronger than you, so don't try to out-pull him.

2.4. Tying

- Tie your horse far enough away from strange horses so they cannot fight.
- Tie your horse with a rope long enough to allow comfortable movement but short enough to avoid becoming tangled or getting a foot over the rope.
- Never tie your horse by the reins as he may pull back and break the reins or injure his mouth. Always use a halter.
- Be sure to tie to an object that is strong and secure to avoid the danger of breaking or coming loose if the horse pulls back. Never tie below the level of the horse's withers. Tie to a post set in the ground, not to a rail on a fence. If a horse has broken loose once, he is more likely to pull back again. Should always tie to a breakaway option e.g. string, binda twine around a post, never tie a horse with lead rope to pole, post etc. as more damage can be done if horse gets fright.
- Remember to stay out of the way of the horse's feet.

When around the hindquarters of a horse, stay well out of the way (e.g. over 2m) to avoid being kicked. If you have to be closer, get right in close so if the horse kicks, its legs have no space to build power behind the kick.



Horses Kicking Zone

If not handled well, horses can get agitated, rearing up or kicking the handler.

The horse can also stand on the handler's foot, causing bruising or broken bones.

The person assigning horses should know all the horses' characteristics. The horse selected for the driver should be suitable and safe for that person, considering the driver's age, size, experience, ability and any limits or handicaps. Give every driver information about their horse's character and behaviour.

Carefully match the horse to its task. Not every horse can do every job. Closely supervise or control the horse when taking it out of its usual environment or activity.

3. Driving

Most driving injuries happen from accidents which can cause serious injuries., Personal Protective Clothing (PPE) reduces the risk of injuries in accidents or when working with the horse.

The approved PPE will reduce the risk of head and body injury if you fall or a horse kicks you.

Below are some basic PPE used when handling or driving a horse;

- Helmet
- Body Protector
- Solid footwear
- Safety glasses/goggles
- Gloves

It is critical that your PPE is fitted correctly and you need an experienced person to assist you when first learning to wear it.

Other safety points:

- Always check the girth strap is tight before you get in the sulky
- Stay alert and in a controlling position when in the sulky

3.1. Driving or leading horses on the road

Horses are easily frightened by noisy, large vehicles and other things they don't normally meet in a stable or paddock.

Often motorists do not understand horse behaviour and drive too quickly and too closely to the horse.

Keep horses and vehicles apart. However, sometimes horses have to go on the roads to get to tracks or when training..

Only horses used to traffic should be allowed on the road, especially if being driven by an inexperienced driver.

To reduce the risk:

- Avoid busy main roads as much as possible.
- Give clear and accurate signals. Be considerate of other road users.
- Never drive more than two horses abreast on the road.
- Don't drive on the road in foggy conditions.
- Most road surfaces are slippery, so ride at a walking pace. Don't canter on grass verges

- Drivers must be clearly visible to motorists. Wear fluorescent and reflective vests and armbands, and provide horses with leg bands.
- Ensure workers have enough information and training to drive safely on roads without putting themselves or others at risk.
- Acknowledge and return courtesy – a smile and a nod helps keep a good relationship between Drivers and other road users.

3.2. When leading a horse on a road:

- Horses led on foot or from another horse should be on the left-hand side of the road.
- Lead the horse using a lead rope attached to a halter and preferably a bit in the mouth!

4.0 At the Race Track

When you accompany your horse to track there are rules and regulations to protect the public and other industry personnel involved in the day, you must familiarise yourself with the required rules and regulations and have a licence before you can go to the track. Any horses you accompany to the track are the responsibility of your trainer and you.

Commented [S1]: Already mentioned in the previous title above (3.2)?

4. Hazards

4.1. Identify hazards

Identifying hazards is an important part of workplace safety. A hazard is what could go wrong and what could cause you harm while you are working around horses.

Here are some examples but the list is not exhaustive and you should identify the specific hazards in your workplace.

PEOPLE	HORSE	ENVIRONMENT
Drivers or handlers not in control of their horse.	Horse acts unpredictably.	Tripping over equipment left on the ground.
Drivers or handlers wearing inappropriate shoes.	Horse slips.	Bad weather.
Visitors or new workers who do not understand how horses behave.	Animals or cars frighten the horse.	Dangerous chemicals.
	Horses not tied up appropriately.	Damaged or worn equipment.
	Horse is not trained or well behaved.	Damaged or broken fencing.

4.2. Keeping Safe

There are a number of hazards that are important to consider if you are new or inexperienced and are interacting with horses.

STABLES AND YARDS	
HAZARDS AND RISKS	CONTROLS
Being crushed or trodden on by a horse.	Limit access to the horse keeping areas. Provide supervision and training. Identify escape routes.
Herd behaviour of horses.	Learn how to lead a horse through a group. Exclude horses that behave aggressively from the herd. Ensure there is enough space for horses to move around without becoming agitated. Learn to recognize hazardous situations. Identify escape routes. Learn how to feed horses in groups safely.

DRIVING IN OPEN AREAS	
HAZARDS AND RISKS	CONTROLS
Plan the trip	<p>If the route includes public roads, ensure road rules are followed and basic procedures for crossing roads explained to Drivers.</p> <p>Provide exercises to help Drivers gain confidence.</p>
Horses bolting, becoming restless or shying.	<p>Test the horses on the track to verify they will stay calm and well behaved.</p> <p>Do not allow handlers to become isolated while stops are made for gates or to fix equipment.</p> <p>Only horses proven to be calm in traffic should be allowed on the road.</p>

EQUIPMENT AND GEAR	
HAZARDS AND RISKS	CONTROLS
Gear breaking or failing.	<p>Check stitching regularly.</p> <p>Clean regularly (see Figure 10??).</p> <p>Replace worn or damaged gear.</p>
Gear not operating as intended.	<p>Select harness gear that is suitable for horse and driver</p> <p>Check the gear including the girth immediately before allowing a new driver to get in the sulky.</p> <p>Fit gear to horse and check gear before driving.</p>

Biological hazards

Other environmental hazards include biological and zoonoses. Biological hazards that arise from animals and zoonosis are infectious diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans.

ZOOSESES	
HAZARDS AND RISKS	CONTROLS
<p>Ringworm, leptospirosis, gastrointestinal and other skin infections.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide and maintain hygienic hand washing facilities including running water, liquid soap and hand drying facilities like disposable paper towels. • Use waterless alcohol based hand rubs. • Instruct workers and others to practise hand hygiene: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ after contact with horses, handling horse equipment, removing PPE and on leaving animal areas ○ before eating and drinking, and ○ following accidental contamination with a horse’s blood and body substances. • Provide designated eating areas away from animal areas. • Prohibit workers and clients from eating and drinking in animal areas. • Maintain stables and yards in a clean and hygienic condition. • Minimise build-up of horse manure and soiled bedding. • Regularly clean horse equipment and tools. • Provide PPE to protect clothing, exposed skin and face from contact with a horse’s blood and body substances. • Discourage contact with areas such as the muzzle where horse saliva or nasal secretions can be transferred to a person’s face. • Cover cuts and abrasions with a water-resistant dressing. • Ensure vaccination and parasite control is maintained. • Isolate horses showing signs of illness from people and other animals. • Implement a pest control program and keep feed bins covered to discourage rats and other pests.

5. Hazards around the stable

5.1. Plant and equipment

The use of plant, such as oat crushers, augers, mixers, horse walkers and horse transport are commonly present in the stable environment. The extent of exposure to hazards associated with using such plant in the stable environment will depend on:

- The level of routine inspections and preventative maintenance.
- How effectively moving parts or areas where staff are potentially exposed to hazards have been appropriately guarded or isolated.
- The training and instruction provided on the safe use of plant

You should understand the written operating instructions (SOP), appropriate guarding and emergency shut down normally associated with this machinery.

5.2. Horse Transport

Horse transport is designed to allow safe access/egress while loading or unloading horses. Training and instruction on the safe use of horse transport needs to be provided before you use them.

5.3. Chemicals

Chemicals must be safely stored and secured in accordance with Health & Safety requirements.

Staff and contractors who use or could be expected to use chemicals have been trained and are aware of the associated hazards. Staff and contractors have access to chemical Material Safe Data Sheets.

Staff and contractors must have access to PPE, know how to use it and care for it (e.g. storage and maintenance). Employees, contractors and first aiders should know what to do in the event of accidental consumption, spill or contamination.

6. Emergency situations

An up-to-date fire and emergency evacuation plan should be clearly displayed in the stable environment. Staff and contractors should regularly undergo training drills.

You must familiarise yourself with the equipment and its use and learn where and how to evacuate yourself and horses if an emergency situation should arise.

The priorities are;

1. To ensure the safety of yourself and others;
2. To ensure the safety of the horses;
3. To minimise damage to buildings and machinery.

FIRE

In the event of fire;

1. Raise the alarm;
2. Dial 111;
3. Direct all persons to fire assembly points.

DO NOT PUT YOURSELF OR OTHERS AT RISK. IF IN DOUBT, GET OUT.

If you hear the fire alarm sound;

1. Switch off any machinery you are operating, unless instructed otherwise or it puts you or others in danger;
2. Evacuate through the nearest clear external exit;
3. Walk, do not run, to the nearest fire assembly point or to a location as directed;
4. Do not return for personal belongings;
5. Be ready to report your name when you reach the fire assembly point.

In the event of a minor fire use the appropriate firefighting equipment.

DO NOT USE WATER ON ELECTRICAL FIRES.

Do not continue to fight a fire if;

1. It continues to grow;
2. It becomes too dangerous;
3. There is any possibility of the evacuation route being cut off;
4. You have not been trained to use firefighting equipment.

All employees are responsible for ensuring that fire escape routes and access for emergency vehicles to the premises are kept clear of obstruction at all times.

List some examples of how you would keep yourself and others safe in the following situation.

Leading a horse		
Approaching a horse		
Tying a horse		
General handling of a horse		
Driving a horse		

List the Personal Protective equipment you would wear if you were.

Leading a horse		
Driving a horse		
Mixing chemicals		

Identifying hazards is a critical part of keeping safe in the workplace, can you identify key hazards in the following situations.

Stables and Yards		
Riding or driving a horse		
Mixing chemicals		
Zoonoses		

What are the key messages to remember when keeping safe around horses during your induction?

List what you would do in the case of a fire in the stable.

What would you need to do before using any machinery or chemicals in the stable?

Containment of the horse is very important – list some basic containment rules

EG – Gates	Always ensure all gates are closed after you pass through	