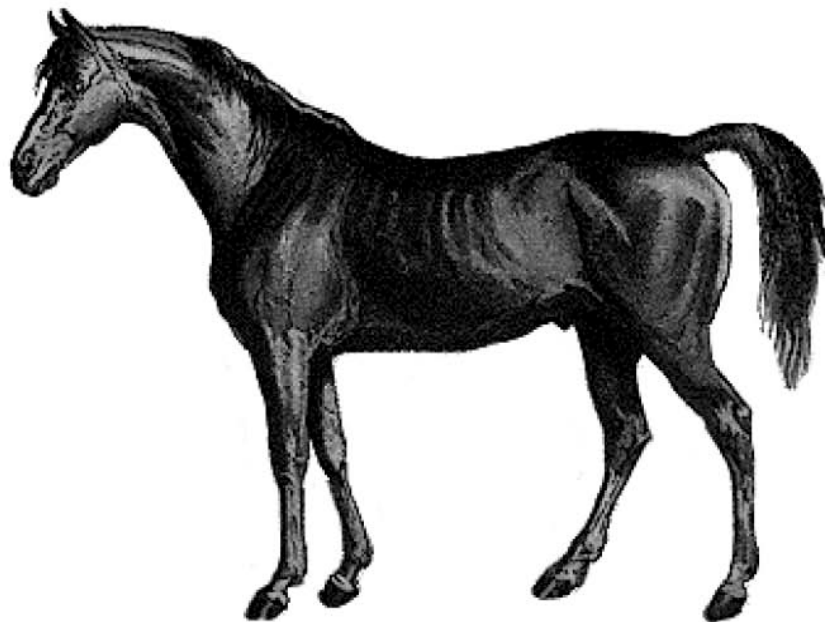


# 4-H Horse Safety Training Manual



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South Dakota  
Cooperative Extension Service



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## **4-H Horse Safety Course**

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### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

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### **Sources include:**

“4-H Horse Project Members Manual.” Colorado State University Cooperative Extension.

*The Horse Industry Handbook.* American Youth Horse Council.

*The Horse.* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. J. Warren Evans.

*Horsing Around.* Cooperative Curriculum System. 1998.

## **4-H HORSE SAFETY TRAINING REQUIREMENTS/GUIDELINES**

The requirements/guidelines for this program are as follows:

1. This training is intended to provide reasonable and prudent safety instructional training for our 4-H Horse Project members/parents.
2. Each 4-H Horse Project/club member is required to complete the 4-H Horse Safety Training Program annually. Parents are required to complete the training every three years. New parents must complete the training the first year.
3. Horse Project leaders, Extension educators, and Horse Committee members may conduct the Horse Safety Training. 4-H Horse Project youth are encouraged to participate in conducting a Horse Safety demonstration at the training. However, youth must be accompanied by a Horse Project leader, Extension educator, or Horse Committee member. Trainings will not be conducted 100% by 4-H youth.
4. Safety topics to include Level 1, 2, and 3. Level 4 is optional and is used in a county where appropriate.
5. Recommended Horse Safety Videos: *Every Time, Every Ride*; *Ground Handling Horses Safely*; *Weaver Leather—Horse Rider Safety*; *Horses, Kids, & Ethics*, by Jeff Goodwin.
6. For 4-H youth and parents who have a legitimate excuse for not attending the scheduled County Horse Safety Training, the option of an open-book yearly test will be available. A 70% score is required to pass the test, and the test can be re-taken. Tests must be taken in the Extension office, with the questions on the test coming from the South Dakota 4-H Horse Safety Training Manual.
7. Training is to be completed by June 1 of each year.
8. Signed training and verification form is to be on file in the county office certifying that each member (family) has received training.

9. County educators will confirm by letter to the State 4-H Office by June 15, annually, that each member (family) has taken the 4-H Horse Safety Training Program. (Verification forms are not sent to the State 4-H Office.) Please include in the letter the names of the parents and children who have completed the training.
10. Members not taking the training are ineligible for participation in any 4-H Horse event/activity at the club, county, or state level. 4-H'ers who take part in Youth In Action events are still required to complete Horse Safety Training—this is a safety and liability issue; for many events, these youth are in the arena with live horses.
11. The mandatory safety-training program is strongly supported by Extension administration.
12. The State 4-H Horse Committee will continually review the importance and effectiveness of local, county, and state 4-H Horse Safety and related safety issues.

### **4-H HORSE SAFETY TRAINING OVERVIEW**

The intent of this program is to teach youth and their parents life skills through practicing safety around horses. Each 4-H youth and one parent/guardian must complete the course or the test by June 1 of each year in order to compete in the county or state 4-H Horse Shows.

Extension educators are expected to strongly support and encourage the use of safety helmets and insure implementation of the mandatory 4-H Horse Safety Training Program.

The purpose of the 4-H Horse Project is to help you learn how to care for and use your horse properly and to have fun while you learn. Not all cowboys are good horsemen/horsewomen, and many top horsemen/horsewomen were never cowboys; but both horsemen/horsewomen and cowboys follow certain basic principles in handling horses.

To become a good horsewoman or horseman, you will need to train both yourself and your horse. You will earn respect for your horse, learn responsibility in caring for your horse, and practice discipline in the way you handle yourself around horses. You also will learn patience—through training—and neatness—through being mindful of your own and your horse's appearance—and you will have pride in yourself when your friends and others who see you with your horse admire and respect what you have done.

### **HUMANE HORSE TREATMENT STATEMENT**

It is the responsibility of every 4-H member to ensure that their horse is given proper care, and that proper care should be given according to the acceptable methods of good equine husbandry set forth by South Dakota State University Cooperative Extension Service and the South Dakota Department of Agriculture. A healthy horse requires sufficient food, water, and shelter, and correct health care. Cruel and inhumane training methods are not appropriate in the South Dakota 4-H Horse Program. Specific equine husbandry guidelines and humane training methods are provided in this manual.

## **Note to Instructors/Educators/Trainers**

Before teaching the contents of this manual, please review the appropriate level, corresponding activities from the CCS booklets, and suggested hands-on activities. Efforts made prior to presentation will determine the success of the material being taught.

A strong suggestion would be to hold the training at a *host farm*, a place where more than 2 or 3 horses are kept. This would eliminate the dynamics of introducing strange horses to one another (as would be the case if horses were brought to a common place, a potentially dangerous situation in itself). The host individual/family would be able to assist with the hands-on activities, and the students could then observe the horses' behavior together as a group—e.g., language and pecking order. In addition, stations could be set up to put into practice the various activities—e.g., behavior, approaching and haltering, bridling, saddling, tying.

It is likely that there is a horse owner or owners very near you that would be more than willing to assist in the training in many different ways. Please look to these people for help in creating a more effective training course. Secondly, older, experienced members are a very valuable resource and can provide leadership throughout the presentation while still “learning” themselves.

Many of the sections include helpful hints or suggestions for putting the information given into practice. Again, please read these well before the training session to adequately prepare the activities.

## **Commandments for Horse Safety**

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

## Level 1

### **I. Horse Behavior**

**Instructors: Observe a group of horses together—the communication between them, group reaction to new stimuli, grazing/eating behaviors—then consider the individual activities.**

Part of learning to work with and enjoy horses is understanding their behaviors and senses.

***Vision:* Observe horse's ears and head position as individual moves closer to him first with a bucket, then with a plastic bag or other unknown object—observe SAFELY.**

Horses have a blind spot directly behind their hindquarters and directly below their head. A horse must raise its head to see faraway objects and lower its head to see close objects. If an object is closer than 4 feet, the horse cannot see it with its binocular vision (a horse uses both eyes to see one object). It takes time for a horse to adjust its eyesight to a dark stall, a dark trailer, or dark building. A grazing horse can see almost all the way around its body. A horse has a hard time focusing clearly on objects but is very good at detecting movement.

***Fight or Flight:*** The nature of a horse is to flee from anything that frightens him. But if the horse cannot flee, he will do what comes naturally to defend himself from the object that is scaring him: a horse will defend himself by biting, kicking or striking.

***Touch:* Observe the sensitivity of the horse(s) skin to a tiny fly.**

The horse has a well-developed sense of touch. Hence, touch is the most important sense for responding to cues (signals) from the rider. Eyes, ears, and nose are the most sensitive to touch, followed by withers, ribs, flanks, and legs. Horses are fearful of anything touching these sensitive areas, so care needs to be taken around these areas.

***Social Behavior:* Observe a group of horses together.**

Horses have a very strong desire for the company of other horses. This is a survival instinct—it helps protect them from predators. Some problems for riders can occur when horses are separated from others and become nervous and uneasy; as a result, the horse may not pay attention to cues from the rider. A horse that does not want to leave the barn feels safer in the barn; this is called a “barn sour” horse.

Knowing the above facts about a horse will go a long way in learning to handle your horse safely at all times and in all situations. Today's course will cover a variety of situations you and your horse may face. And by using this behavioral knowledge of horses, we hope you and your horse will have a number of safe rides to enjoy through the years.

## II. Choosing a Horse and Shelter/Feeding/Care of the Horse

**Instructors: You need either a horse or a horse picture to review the parts of the horse as you mention them (particularly *conformation*), so all have an understanding of anatomy.**

### A. Choosing a Horse

When discussing the purchase of a horse for a **beginner**, a theory often heard is this: “We are going to buy a young horse so the two of them can grow up together.” **This may be one of the biggest mistakes made by well-meaning parents.** A person new to horses, regardless of age, needs to have a well-mannered, well-broke, experienced horse that will be forgiving of beginner mistakes and ignorance.

When it comes time for choosing a horse, one must decide the **main purpose** for the horse. Much of the time, this purpose is strictly for pleasure, at least initially. If this is the case, care must be taken to ensure the purchase of a **mild-mannered** horse. **Soundness** is absolutely essential and must always be considered when evaluating a horse for any purpose. **Breed, color, and bloodlines** should take a back seat to individual behavior. If the individual looking for a horse is not a beginner, then breed, color, bloodlines, and other criteria can be considered, although these other criteria should still be less important than behavior and soundness.

Soundness is primarily directed at the feet and legs, because a horse’s value is directly proportional to the correctness of its stance and gaits. Here, a good understanding of **conformation** is necessary. However, soundness should also include **eating/digestive soundness, overall health** (e.g., pulse, blood pressure, breathing), **mental soundness** (i.e., behavior, habits) and in special circumstances, reproductive soundness.

Often, the only way to properly evaluate these parameters is to “**test drive**” the horse for a period of time before purchase. When buying from an **individual owner/breeder**, one may be able negotiate such an arrangement. Often, a 30-day “trial period” can be agreed upon. Purchases made at an auction typically do not have such a grace period.

**A sale barn or auction sale is likely not the best place** to find and buy a horse. In addition to the drawbacks mentioned in the paragraph above, shopping for and purchasing horses at sale barns and auction houses simply leaves too much room for error—unsoundness can be masked, behavior may be altered, and many questions will be left unanswered until you get the horse home and begin working with him.

## **B. Shelter/Feeding/Care**

1. It is not safe to leave a halter on a horse that is turned loose. When it is necessary to have a loose horse on a halter, the horse should be checked daily. A few reasons for checking a loose horse on a halter follow:
  - a) Some halter materials will shrink. Be certain to recheck the fit of the halter.
  - b) Horses can catch one of their feet in the halter strap.
  - c) Halters can catch on a fence post, trees, or other objects.
2. You are responsible for your horse's health and hoof care. Make sure you have adequate feed (pasture or hay) and shelter available for your horse. Hay must be secured for at least part of the year even if you have pasture. Also make sure you have fresh water available for your horse at all times. Proper hoof care is important.
3. The barn or shelter should be cleaned regularly. Flies will accumulate in areas that have not been cleaned.
4. Preventative health management is a must to keep a horse useful and healthy. Your horse needs to be vaccinated annually to prevent some of the common diseases—tetanus, colic, influenza, sleeping sickness, and rhinopneumonitis are a few of the common diseases that can be prevented through vaccination. (Use page 46 in the "Colorado Safety Handbook" as a handout.)

Deworming is important. Horses should be dewormed at least 4 times per year, depending on their environment.
5. Hoof care is important and often overlooked. Hooves may need to be trimmed every 6 to 8 weeks, or about seven times per year, depending on the amount and type of work and the type of surfaces on which the horse is being ridden. A qualified farrier should do the hoof work.
6. Check teeth annually for sharp points that inhibit thorough chewing.
7. Develop a good working relationship with a local equine veterinarian whenever possible. Accidents and emergencies may occur and an equine veterinarian may be needed.
8. Make sure all equipment is in good condition. Does it fit correctly? Are there any burs in the blankets, cinches, and so on? Is the leather in good condition? (See the "Safety Around Horses" section for further details.)

### III. Rider and Handler Safety

- A. Weight of horse vs. weight of handler/rider:** On average a horse will weigh 1,000 pounds or more, while a youth may weigh from 50 to 150 pounds—this is only about 5 to 15 percent of the horse’s weight. In a battle of fear, the one with the more weight will always win—that is unless you have taught the horse to trust your judgment and you keep in mind the things that both frighten a horse and trigger his fight or flight instinct.
- B. Rider skill level:** The rider’s skill level is a major factor in choosing a horse. A novice rider should choose an older, well-trained animal that is experienced in many types of situations. Most importantly, you will want to choose a horse that you will be able to handle. Few things are worse than seeing or being a terrified novice rider on top of an unmanageable horse.
- C. Environment:** Horses have what is called **investigative behavior**. Sensory inspection of the environment is very highly developed in horses and generally involves movement and one or all of the horse’s senses—sight, touch, smell, hearing, and sometimes taste. Horses are very curious, particularly about new surroundings or objects, and will use all necessary senses to investigate them. Horses do not see detail very efficiently and therefore are seldom satisfied with investigating something new by sight alone. They cannot resist smelling, listening, touching, and sometimes tasting a new object. This investigation must be completed before a horse will accept something new without sustained apprehension. Even strange horses are investigated. During the investigation process, horses are very excitable and are likely to overreact to sudden movement or sounds. Horses have frequently injured themselves as a result of running into a fence or other object after being excited by a new object. Horses put into a new paddock or pasture next to strange horses may run into the fence in an attempt to investigate these new horses. It is not uncommon for a horse to fear being caught or trapped as a result of investigating a new object.

Horses also have what is termed **agonistic behavior**. This type of behavior includes all actions that are a result of or are associated with conflict or fighting and include aggression, submission, and attempts to escape. Agonistic behavior in horses is very pronounced and highly variable. Agonistic behavior causes many problems for horse people, but when carefully observed it can be managed. Awareness of agonistic behavior in horses and the implementation of management practices to minimize the adverse effects of that behavior are essential to successful horse management.

Both young and adult horses signal for care and attention by calling or movement. This behavior is commonly seen when horses are separated from each other. This behavior is called **epimeletic behavior**. Adult horses that are accustomed to being together will call repeatedly for their companion. Strong pair-bonding relationships exist between horses, and breaking these relationships can complicate management. To get together with each other, horses will often go through or over fences that they normally would not bother with. Some horses, when separated at a show, will become excited and call for their companion to such an extent that the action interferes with their performance. As a result of conditioning, many horses will call for the handler at feeding time. It is

common for horses to call at the sight of their owner when feeding time is near. Horses given supplemental feed in pastures are likely to go to the feeding place at or near feeding time.

#### **D. Approaching**

1. A horse's vision is restricted directly in the front and in the rear, but its hearing is acute. Always speak to a horse as you approach it. Failure to speak when approaching may startle the horse and result in it kicking.
2. Always approach at an angle, never directly from the front or rear. Speak to the horse; let him 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 out of kicking range around a horse.
5. Never walk under or step over a rope that is or may be attached to a horse.

#### **E. Handling**

1. Be calm, confident, and collected around horses. A nervous handler causes a nervous, unsafe horse.
2. Stay close to the horse while working around your animal so that if it kicks you will not receive the full impact. Try to stay out of kicking range whenever possible. When you go to the opposite side of a horse, move away from it and go around out of kicking range.
3. Know your horse, its temperament, and its reactions. Let your horse know that you are its firm and kind master. Control your temper at all times.
4. Always let a horse know what you intend to do. Sudden movements may startle your horse. When you pick up a horse's foot, for example, do not grab the foot hurriedly. Grabbing the foot hurriedly will startle the horse and may cause it to kick. Learn the proper way to lift a horse's feet.
5. When working around a horse, the safest thing to do is to tie or hold its head.
6. A horse's shoulder is the safest place to approach.
7. Never stand directly behind a horse to work with its tail. Stand off to the side, near the point of the buttock and facing the rear. Grasp the tail and draw it around you.
8. A good equestrian will keep in balance at all times while riding. An accidental slip or stumble can result in unintentional injury by the horse.
9. Do not drop grooming tools underfoot while grooming. Place the grooming tools in a place where you will not trip or slip on them.
10. Teasing a horse may cause it to develop dangerous lifelong habits and put your safety in serious jeopardy.
11. Punish a horse only at the instant of its disobedience so it can identify why it was punished. If you wait, even for a minute, it will not understand why it is being punished. Punish without anger. Never strike a horse about its head.
12. Wear footgear that will protect your feet from being stepped on or from the effects of stepping on nails around the stable and barnyard. Boots or hard-toed shoes are preferable. Never go barefooted.

## **F. Leading**

1. Use a long lead strap with the excess strap folded in a figure-eight style in your left hand when leading. It is customary to lead from the left, or near side, by 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 also can be used on 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. Make the horse walk beside you, not run ahead or lag behind, when leading. A position even with the horse's head or halfway between the horse's head and its shoulder is safest.
2. Always turn the horse to the right and walk around it.
3. Your horse is larger and stronger than you. If it resists, do not get in front and try to pull.
4. 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 handgrip when needed for control.
5. 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 that includes snaps, bits, rings, and loops.
6. Be extremely cautious when leading a horse through narrow openings such as a door. Be certain you have firm control and step through first. Step through quickly and get to one side to avoid being crowded.
7. The stirrup irons on an English saddle should be run up or dressed anytime you are dismounting or leading the horse. When using a western saddle, also be cautious of the stirrups catching on objects.
8. Use judgment when turning a horse loose. It generally is safest to lead the horse completely through the gate or door and turn the horse about, facing the direction from which you just entered. Then release the lead strap or remove the halter or bridle. Make the horse stand quietly while you pet it. Avoid letting a horse bolt away from you when released. Good habits prevent accidents.
9. Avoid using an excessively long lead rope to prevent it from becoming accidentally entangled. Watch the coils when using lariats or lunge lines.

## IV. Rider Equipment & Clothing Safety

**Instructors: Show one of the following videos: *Every Time, Every Ride*; *Ground Handling Horses Safely*; *Weaver Leather—Horse Rider Safety*; or *Horses, Kids, & Ethics*. View the video prior to the training session. After watching the video the first time, review it again to be able to point out other important equipment/clothing safety issues—e.g., well-fitted pants, heeled shoes with hard toe, no jewelry, no baggy shirts, hair tied back, gloves, etc. Tell students to watch for those dos or don'ts, creating double duty for the video.**

- A. *Every Time, Every Ride* video introductions:
  - a) Sixty percent of all horse-related deaths involve head injuries.
  - b) Sometimes accidents involving well-trained horses/riders happen.
  - c) Nobody thinks it will happen to them.
  - d) All incidents depicted in the video did happen.
  - e) The purpose of video is not to scare you.
  - f) The video shows the benefits of wearing a proper helmet as well as the possible unfortunate consequences of riding without one.
  - g) Copies of the video are available at <http://4h.wsu.edu/foundation/merchandise.htm>.
- B. Spurs can trip you when you work on the ground. Take spurs off when not mounted.
- C. Wear neat, well-fitting clothing that will not become snagged on equipment. Belts, jackets, and front chap straps can inadvertently get hooked on the saddle horn.
- D. Wear boots with heels as a safeguard against your foot slipping through the stirrup.
- E. Gloves are a safeguard against cuts, scratches, splinters, and rope burns and will help you avoid infectious organisms.
- F. Do not wear rings or dangling jewelry that may catch on halters or other equipment.

## V. Tying, Bridling, and Saddling

### A. Tying

**Instructor: Two knots essential to learn are the quick release and bowline knots. Square, half-hitch, and double half-hitch are other options. Have pieces of rope on hand and have participants work together to learn to tie the knots. Examples of knots can be picked up at your Extension office.**

1. Know and use 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 the halter.
4. To prevent the horse from becoming entangled, avoid using excessively long lead ropes. When using lariats or lunge lines, watch the coils.
5. Always tie in a safe place. Use the halter rope, not the bridle reins.
6. Tie a safe distance from other horses and tree limbs or brush where the horse may become entangled.
7. Be certain to tie the horse to an object that is strong and secure to avoid the danger of breaking or loosening if the horse pulls back. Never tie below the level of the horse's withers.

### B. Bridling

**Instructor: When possible, have the students practice bridling.**

1. Protect your head from the horse's head when bridling. Stand close, just behind and to one side (preferably the left side) of the horse's head. Use caution when handling the horse's ears.
2. Refasten the halter around the neck of your horse to keep control when bridling.
3. Be certain that the bridle is properly adjusted to fit the horse before you ride. Three points to check are 1) placement of the bit, 2) adjustment of the curb strap, and 3) adjustment of the throat latch.

### C. Saddling

**Instructor: When possible, have students practice saddling. Be creative—this does not necessarily require a horse!**

1. Check your saddle blanket and all other equipment for foreign objects. Make sure the horse's back and the cinch or girth areas are clean.
2. If your saddle has a front and rear cinch (double-rigged), remember to fasten the front cinch first and the rear cinch last when saddling. Unfasten the rear cinch first and the front cinch last 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) after the saddle is cinched and unfasten them before loosening the cinch. On English equipment, it is sometimes necessary to thread the girth through the martingale loop before the girth is secure.

4. The back cinch should be tight enough to avoid anything getting caught in it, including your horse's hind leg.
5. Do not let cinches or stirrups swing wide and hit the horse on the off knee or belly while saddling. It is safest to keep cinches and stirrups secured over the saddle seat and ease them down after the saddle is on.
6. Swing the western saddle into position with ease. Dropping the saddle down too quickly or hard may scare the horse.
7. The English saddle is much lighter than a stock saddle. Do not swing the saddle into position. You need to lift it and place the English saddle into position.
8. Tighten the cinch slowly. Check the cinch three times: (elaborate)
  - 1) after saddling
  - 2) after walking a few steps
  - 3) after mounting and riding a short distance

## **D. Mounting & Dismounting**

### General

1. Never mount or dismount a horse in a barn or near fences, trees, or other 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 via the reins.
3. Bridle reins, stirrup leathers, headstalls, curb straps, and cinch straps should be kept in the best possible condition. Your safety depends on these straps. Replace any of these items when they begin to show signs of wear such as cracking.

### 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 shank of the bit or even a hind foot in a dangling stirrup iron when he is attempting to swat a fly. The dangling stirrup also can 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 should be brought forward over the horse's head after dismounting.

## **E. Riding**

1. Keep your horse under control and maintain a secure seat at all times. Unusual objects and noises easily frighten horses.

2. Confine your riding to an arena or other enclosed area until you know your horse. 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. Give the animal a chance to “look over” the situation. Then ride or lead the horse past the obstacle.
4. Hold your mount to a walk when you go up or down a hill.
5. Allow the 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 the mount slipping or falling.
6. Do not fool around. Horseplay is dangerous for you and your friends as well as for others who may be nearby. For instance, never rope a person while you are mounted on a horse.
7. Riding on roads:
  - a) Be cautious if you ride bareback.
  - b) Always bridle the horse. Riding with just a halter does not give control.
  - c) Use good judgment when riding in pairs or in groups. Leave sufficient space to avoid accidents.
  - d) Try to avoid paved or other hard-surfaced roads. Walk the horse when crossing such roads.
  - e) In areas of heavy traffic, it is safest to dismount and lead your horse across.
  - f) Ride on the shoulders or in barrow pits, but watch for junk.
8. Never rush past riders who are proceeding at a slower gait, as it startles both horses and riders and frequently causes accidents. Instead, approach other horses and riders slowly, indicate a desire to pass, and proceed cautiously on the left.
9. Never ride off until all riders are mounted.
10. To avoid the possibility of being kicked by another horse while riding, ride abreast or stay a full horse’s length from the horse that is in front of you.
11. Walk your horse when you approach and pass through underpasses or when you ride over bridges.
12. When your horse is full of energy, lunge it or ride it in an enclosed area until it is settled.
13. Do not 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. It is strongly recommended to wear protective headgear when riding. This should be strictly adhered to in any form of riding.
17. Learn to handle a rope before carrying one on a horse. Make sure the animal is *rope broke*. Never tie the rope “hard and fast” to a saddle horn when roping off a green horse.

### **OTHER RIDERS**

18. Know the horse’s peculiarities. If someone else rides your horse, tell him or her what to expect.

## Level 2

### **I. Riding at Night**

- A. Riding at night can be a pleasure, but night riding must be recognized as more hazardous than daytime riding. Walk the horse while riding. Fast gaits are dangerous.
- B. If necessary to ride at night on roads or highways, follow the same rules as for pedestrians. State laws regarding on which side of the road you should ride vary. Wear light-colored clothing and carry a flashlight and reflectors. Check your state regulations for details.
- C. Select a location with care. Choose controlled bridle paths or familiar, safe, open areas.

### **II. Trail Riding**

- A. If you plan to ride alone, tell someone where you are going and when you plan to return.
- B. Ride a well-mannered horse.
- C. Do not play practical jokes and indulge in horseplay.
- D. Watch where you ride: avoid dangerous ground. Note landmarks. Study the country and the view behind you so when you ride out you will know how it looks.
- E. Courtesy is an important safety function on the trail.
- F. Think of your horse first. Watch its condition, avoid injuries, and care for it properly.
- G. Carry a good pocketknife to cut ropes in case of entanglement.
- H. Do not tie the reins together.
- I. Ride balanced and erect to avoid tiring the horse or causing a sore back, legs, and so forth.
- J. Check the equipment.
  - 1) Have a halter and rope. Hobbles are fine if the horse is trained to them.
  - 2) Have clean saddle blankets or pads.
  - 3) Be certain the equipment is in good repair and fits the horse.
  - 4) Include bad-weather clothing.
  - 5) A pair of wire cutters is handy in case the horse becomes entangled in wire.
  - 6) A lariat is handy for many needs, but know how to use one and be certain the horse is accustomed to a rope.
  - 7) Extras should include pieces of leather or rawhide for repairs, spare horseshoe nails, and matches.
- K. When you unsaddle, store your gear properly. Place the saddle blanket where it will dry. Keep your gear covered at night.
- L. Do not overwater the horse when it is hot. A small amount of water is acceptable because horses need it to help them cool off, but overwatering can cause a horse to colic. Cool horses off before letting them drink their fill.
- M. Always tie a horse in a safe place. Use the halter rope, not the bridle reins.

Tie a safe distance from other horses and 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.

- N. Be extremely cautious of matches and fires. Know matches and fires are out before discarding them or leaving.
- O. Obtain current, accurate map and information on the area. Become familiar with the terrain and climate.
- P. If you ride on federal or state lands, seek advice from the forest or park officials. Know the location's trail-use and fire regulations and instructions.
- Q. Be certain the horse is in proper physical condition and that its hooves and shoes are ready for the trail.
- R. Use extreme caution at wet spots or boggy places.
- S. Speed on the trail is unsafe. Ride at safe gaits.
- T. Avoid overhanging limbs. Warn the rider behind you when an overhanging limb is encountered. Watch the rider ahead so a limb pushed aside doesn't snap back and slap either the horse or yourself in the face.

### **III. Preparing and Handling the Horse for and at the Show**

- A. Safety must be emphasized at all times, both in and out of the ring. The safety of spectators and contestants and their mounts must be the shared responsibility of all involved in the show.
- B. Dress appropriately—wear hard-soled shoes and no rings, earrings, necklaces, and so forth.
- C. You and your horse are in a strange environment and/or new situation. Bathing your horse can be a traumatic experience. Do not sit on a fence to wash the top of the horse. Use caution when cleaning in sensitive, hard-to-see areas. Remember: a horse will use the fight instinct if it cannot flee from something that scares it.
- D. Caution spectators regarding basic horse safety.
- E. You are in close proximity to other horses.
- F. Use care in riding your horse on hard surfaces.

#### **Arena Safety/Show Safety**

- A. It is best if the mare and her foal can stay at home, but if you must show your mare with a foal at her side, make sure you have her and the foal on the end away from the other competitors. You don't want the mare getting nervous about the other horses hurting her foal and causing problems for you and other competitors. Ask the judge if you can have a second person hold the foal close by so the foal is not running around the arena during the competition. If you know you are going to have to show the mare, start working with her and the foal the day it is born. Get both the mare and foal used to being separated for

a short time each day—so on the day of the show, both the mare and the foal are used to a temporary separation and it will help to alleviate the behavior problem caused by *epimeletic behavior*.

- B. Show courtesy to other contestants at all times. Leave enough room between you and the next horse (whether it is in a riding class or a showmanship class) to avoid any agonistic behavior between your horse and the next contestant. If you know your horse is not going to stand still for very long, take him in at the end so that you do not interfere with the next contestant's horse. Work daily with your horse to teach him to stand still until you give him the cue to move.
  
- C. If your horse is a kicker, put something such as a red ribbon in the tail, so others will be reminded to keep their distance. Even with a ribbon in the tail, you are responsible for your horse. Don't let him kick at others. Either discipline him before he kicks or get him away from the other horse. You are also responsible for yourself not getting within kicking range of any horse. **Know a safe distance.**

### Level 3

#### **I. Horse Loading and Driving**

- A. Trailering should be done with two persons, if at all possible.
- B. Always stand to one side, never directly behind, when loading or unloading a horse from a trailer or truck.
- C. Circumstances involved in loading a horse will vary, but the following methods are given in order of preference:
  - 1) Train the horse so it can be sent into the trailer.
  - 2) Lead the horse into the left side while you stand on the right side of the center divider, or vice versa.
  - 3) 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 doors are awkward to get through. Also, horses have been known to follow the handler out.
- D. Before loading or unloading, be certain the ground area behind and around the truck or trailer affords safe footing.
- E. It is safest to remove all equipment (bridles, saddles and so forth) before loading. Use your halter.
- F. Always speak to a horse in a truck or trailer before you attempt to handle the horse.
- G. If you have trouble loading or unloading, get experienced help.
- H. Secure the butt bar or chain before you tie the horse. Use care when you reach for the butt bar or chain. Ease it down when you unfasten it to avoid bumping the horse's legs.
- I. Always untie a horse before opening the gate or door.
- J. Avoid slick floors. Use matting or some type of bedding for secure footing.
- K. Check your trailer regularly for the following:
  - 1) rotting or weakened floor boards
  - 2) rusted or weakened door hinges
  - 3) hitch welds
  - 4) When the trailer is serviced, have a competent mechanic check the spring shackles and wheel bearings.
- L. Be certain the trailer is of adequate construction and meets state requirements for brakes and lights.
- M. The trailer should have sufficient height to afford a horse ample neck- and headroom. Remove or cover any protruding objects.
- N. When you drive, always observe the following:
  - 1) Double-check all connections (lights, brakes, hitch, and safety chains).
  - 2) Be certain all doors are closed and secured.
  - 3) Drive carefully. Turns should be made slowly. Start and stop slowly and steadily.
  - 4) Look far ahead to avoid emergencies. Drive in a defensive manner.

- O. When hauling a stallion with other horses, it is safer to both load the stallion first and unload him last.
- P. Distribute the weight of the load evenly. When hauling one horse, it is safest to load the horse on the left side of the trailer.
- Q. Check the horse and trailer hitch at every stop before you continue on.
- R. Opinions vary on whether to haul a horse tied or loose. If you tie, allow a sufficient length of rope so the horse can move its head for balance. Use a safety release or a quick-release knot.
- S. 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.
- T. Horses are like people—some get motion sickness. Adjust the feeding schedule to avoid travel when the horse is full of feed and water. Feed smaller amounts or avoid feeding grain before the trip.

## **II. What to do in Case of an Accident**

- A. In case of a serious accident:
  - 1) **DO NOT ENTER** an overturned/damaged trailer that contains horses.
  - 2) Open the gate to release horses.
  - 3) Call law enforcement to notify them about the accident.
  - 4) Call a veterinarian and administer first aid as necessary.

## **III. Stall Safety**

- A. Do not clean your horse's stall with the horse still in the stall. This is an accident waiting to happen. Either turn the horse out into a pen or tie the horse outside of the area you are working in. A number of bad things can happen if the horse remains in the area you are cleaning. The horse may bite you just because he is bored. Or he may kick you because you either spooked him or are in his personal space. Or you may accidentally poke your horse with the pitchfork while cleaning the stall. And so forth.
- B. Do not allow ANYONE to have matches, cigarettes, or other items that may cause a fire. It takes only about 30 seconds for a fire to get out of hand in a stall that contains dry hay and straw. So, if a fire goes unnoticed for even a very short time, you stand the chance of losing your 4-H horse partner.
- C. Clean the stalls daily to avoid an ammonia buildup in the barn, as an ammonia buildup can make both you and your horse sick. All the bedding does not need to be removed on a daily basis, just the portion where he has urinated and defecated. There should be a thorough stall cleaning (removing all bedding, etc.) both at least once a week and after the horse has been turned out.

#### **IV. Horse First Aid**

- A. First aid is the immediate and temporary care given to a horse until the services of a veterinarian can be obtained. First aid includes preventing your horse from injuring itself further. Remember: horses are creatures of fright and flight—their instinct is to bolt and run when they experience a traumatic situation. For example, if the horse is caught in barbed wire or cast on the ground when caught in a feeder or fence, calm and soothe the horse until it can be freed. Take care that you do not become seriously injured during the process of calming and freeing.
- B. After a serious accident, it is best to keep the horse quiet and wait for the veterinarian. If the horse begins to shake or quiver after an injury, cover the horse with a blanket.
- C. To control bleeding in the horse, use pressure bandage applied over the injury. Elastic bandages make good pressure bandages. The bandage should be applied tightly enough to dramatically slow the bleeding—do not apply pressure too tightly because the binding could work like a tourniquet and cut off all blood flow. Try to control the bleeding until the veterinarian arrives.
- D. Don't use home remedies because many times they will contaminate the wound and make it more difficult for the veterinarian to clean and prepare the laceration for suturing. Do not use lanolin or petroleum-based products because they are not water soluble and are impossible to remove from the wound before suturing. **ONLY** use water to clean out the dirt and manure from an injury. Sutures need to be done by a veterinarian within 24 to 36 hours.

## LEVEL 4

### **I. Carts/Wagons/Harnessing**

- A. Select the correct harness for the class you will be competing in.
- B. Tie horses up when harnessing and unharnessing. That way, if something spooks them while you are harnessing them, they are not likely to run you over.
- C. To avoid making the horse sore, make sure that all equipment is kept clean.
- D. Avoid hitting the horse(s) with the pole when hooking up the traces.
- E. Do not leave your horse unattended while hooked to the cart.

### **II. Driving**

- A. Work and drive the horse either daily or as often as possible in order to keep them in shape. The more you work with them, the better they will work for you and listen to your commands.
- B. Do not stand while driving the horse(s).
- C. Keep your commands constant. Changing commands will only confuse horses. Some examples: Use “whoa” only to ask the team to stop; use “easy” only to slow them down; use “haw” to ask them to turn left; and use “gee” to turn them to the right. Other terms may also be used, but never use the same term to slow a team of horses that you use to stop the team. Using the same term will confuse the horse(s), and they may only slow when you are trying to get them to stop.
- D. Keep a safe distance between you and the next team in case your horse(s) spook so that you will have time to turn them away from the next team and try to avoid a wreck.
- E. Have an adult with you to help if the team becomes “strong headed” and tries to run away.
- F. Do not run or gallop your horse(s) on hard pavement. It is easy for them to slip and hurt themselves or you.
- G. During practice, work your horse(s) on as many different surfaces as you can, including sand, gravel, sawdust, clay, and turf. This practice will both improve the ability of your horse(s) to start cold under most conditions and accustom them to working with other horses.
- H. If possible, check the arena you will show in ahead of time. Notice the type of surface, puddles, and hard or rough spots. Be careful of deep paths worn near the rail by riding animals. Your horse may want to travel that worn path, but a worn path may not leave you with enough space for the cart/wagon to clear the rail. A worn path can also be hazardous if your rail-side wheel or wheels ride in this path. The rut can tilt your vehicle and put awkward pressure on your horse’s side. This pressure will make your horse nervous and will also make it difficult for it to turn and keep a balanced trot cadence or rhythm.
- I. When you leave the ring, keep moving through the gate and away from it. Many otherwise-perfect classes have been spoiled by hazardous congestion near the exit gate.
- J. When entering or exiting the arena, be aware of spectators (young or old)—they may not be paying attention to what you are doing.