

Safety Practices



Because we place horses into unnatural environments by containing them, we create many possibilities for injury. But a simple examination of your facilities with the horse's nature in mind can prevent most of them. Avoiding accidents that cause injuries is certainly better than having to heal them later.

Make fences for small areas extra strong and fences for large areas extra visible. Tie white rags to wire fencing to make it more visible. Introduce a horse to a new home in the morning so he learns his boundaries before nightfall. Be certain that, where gates are latched, no gaps exist that could catch and hold a hoof or leg. Remove, cover or use electric fence over any sharp edges or barbed wire.

Always tie horses with quick release knots and always tie to sturdy objects such as the posts (not the rails) of fences. Tie a horse close enough that he cannot get a leg over the rope and long enough that he won't feel panicked. Be certain that he cannot drop his head under the lead rope and raise up with his head and neck trapped! Keep the area where the horse is tied free of things like chairs, buckets, vehicles and the like that he could catch a leg on or worse. Tie a horse at chest height or higher.

When leading a horse, keep the excess length of lead rope folded in your hand (this protects both of you – never wrap anything that is attached to the horse around any part of your body!). Keep things like boards with nails, roofing tin, pitch forks, etc. out of reach of horses, even if they get loose.

Keep hard feeds (grains, pellets, supplements) in a secure place inaccessible to horses. Many horses and ponies have died from colic or foundered from eating

their fill from the feed room! Use nontoxic cleaners and products and fly sprays that are as safe as possible.

Keep an eye out for wasp nests and spider webs in shelters since many poisonous insects have been known to injure horses. Fill in any holes that develop around your stable yard. Keep nails picked up from building projects (I suggest having a magnet for efficient clean up) and never, ever weld near horses (or any other animals). They will watch the welding and can easily be blinded.

Stay aware of erosion around buildings. If your shelters have metal walls, the possibility of getting cut by metal edges that become exposed is very high if a hoof can slip into the gap created.

If you tie up hay nets or horse toys for your equine, be certain they are high enough that a hoof cannot get caught in them. If you have glass windows, cover them with metal mesh or grates. If light bulbs are accessible, have covers on them.

When hauling in a trailer or van, it is good to wrap the horse's legs and put a head bumper (on a second halter, so it won't make the main halter slip off) on him. You never know when traffic might necessitate a sudden swerve or stop that could make your horse step on himself or hit his head. Keep trailer floors clean and in good repair; use rubber mats so the horse has traction when travelling.

When you ride a horse, wear a helmet. Many expert (even Olympic level) riders have suffered severe head injuries when "just riding a minute" without head protection and some never recover. A helmet should be a matter of fact, every ride, every rider piece of standard equipment.

There are many more ways you will find to increase the safety around your stable. Observation and thinking about just how a horse could get into trouble will reveal many possibilities. It is worth the effort if it prevents just one mishap.