

Saddle Up SAFELY
RIDER SAFETY PROGRAM

Safety While in the Pasture



saddleupSAFELY.org



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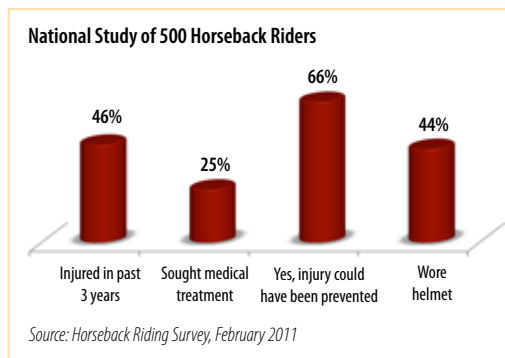


Jane Beshear

Dear Fellow Equine Enthusiasts,

As a lifelong equine enthusiast and First Lady of the Commonwealth, I understand the significance of the horse to Kentucky. We have long been known as the “Horse Capital of the World” and to ensure we retain this title, we must focus on the health and welfare of horse and rider. This is why I am proud to support Saddle Up SAFELY, a rider safety awareness program led by the University Of Kentucky.

All too often, riding injuries occur due to lack of education or understanding of equine behavior and proper riding practices. The chart at right illustrates study results that show riding injuries are not uncommon but could be prevented. Through Saddle Up SAFELY, we seek to educate current and future riders about the hazards of riding and horse handling, and the simple steps that can be taken to prevent accidents.



More often than not, horse-related injuries are presumed to be incurred while riding. However, many accidents happen while doing seemingly innocuous activities such as leading, feeding or grooming our horses. We forget that the actions of our horses are easily influenced by their flight instinct and their pasture mates, and, as such, they are susceptible to sudden movements and reactions that can ultimately cause an injury. By learning proper horsemanship and being conscious of the horse’s natural instincts, we can prevent many unnecessary accidents from taking place.

Many times we do not take safety measures seriously until it is too late. By implementing the pasture safety practices in this brochure, we can make a great sport safer and more enjoyable.

Sincerely,

Jane K. Beshear

First Lady of the Commonwealth of Kentucky

Introduction

If you own horses or spend a lot of time with them, you will spend time in the pasture – retrieving, riding or releasing your horse. Many accidents occur in the pasture, and this booklet reviews some of the tips you can use to stay safe.

In this booklet, when we refer to horses we also include ponies, donkeys and mules.

Understanding Herd Behavior for Safety in the Pasture

It is important to understand basic herd behavior to safely handle horses that are kept on pasture. Horses are highly social animals that prefer to live in groups. Horse behavior is best understood from the perspective that horses are prey animals with fight-or-flight instincts that were well-developed for survival in the wild and are now retained to a certain degree in domestication. Their first response to a perceived threat or danger is flight. However, be aware they are known to defend themselves or their offspring in cases where flight is not possible, as in a smaller pasture or other confined situations.

Take time to pay close attention to the group of horses with which you will interact. Watching a group of domestic horses will reveal specific behaviors, especially at feeding time. Within a herd of domestic horses, there is an established pecking order that can change with the introduction of a new horse or removal of a resident horse. There will be a dominant horse in the field; be sure to know which one it is, as knowing this herd dynamic will help you to manage this group of horses optimally.

Body language is a horse's principal means of communication. Horses use a combination of ear positioning, raising and lowering the neck and head, foot stomping, tail swishing, or other body movements to communicate mood or emotional status. Aggression establishes herd structures initially, and then body language maintains discipline within the herd.

The dominant horse may pin back its ears, stretch its head and neck out as if to bite, and turn its hindquarters to another horse indicating that horse must move away. The horse being warned will move away or pay some direct physical consequence. That horse may move on to assert itself against another horse, and so forth, in retaliation.

Instead of identifying one leader, horses rank individuals in their herd from the top down to the bottom horse. This requires the ability to not only recognize individuals but also remember their place in the hierarchy. Horses view people in a similar light – they are sensitive animals and will react differently to different people. Just because a horse acts submissive to one person does not mean he will act the same way toward all people. Horse and human interaction, however, entails significant rewards for both. Understanding horse behavior and correct handling can mean rewarding, enjoyable time spent with horses.



Could this happen to you?

"I was feeding multiple horses inside the paddock in correct order – top horse first – but then someone put another top horse in the paddock which shifted the dynamics. It caused me to get caught in the shuffle with grain in my hand. I was kicked and had the wind knocked out of me."

Advice: *It is best to never feed grain to loose horses in a pasture. If you must, the horses should be restrained. See feeding section later in this booklet for more information.*

Could this happen to you?

"I was leading my horse into the pasture, through the gate, when two other horses rushed my mare and I was caught between them. The middle finger on my right hand was cut by the chain on the gate that I was holding and it required six stitches."

Advice: *Use your voice or body language to discourage other horses from approaching while you're navigating through a gate, or hold your horse until the other horses have arrived and then shoo them away. Know where the dominant horse is at all times, and if there is a "traffic jam" at the gate, get help. Make sure you always turn the horse back toward the gate once you've entered the field, closing it behind you. This will put you out of danger should the horse begin to kick, and it will also allow you a quick exit should you need it. Never send a student or novice to retrieve a horse from the herd without the supervision and assistance of an experienced horseperson.*

Tips for Introducing New Herd Members

As touched on previously, anytime you add or subtract a horse from a herd, you create new herd dynamics. If you have never introduced a new horse, it is good to get someone very experienced with managing horses to help you the first few times.

Before you lead a new horse to a paddock or pasture, ask its owner, former owner or the barn manager whether the horse is accustomed to being turned out at all and, if so, whether it has been out alone or in company. If the horse has never been loose in a field or with a herd, get him used to it gradually, starting with a small paddock or a round pen and working up to pasture turnout.

- Introduce a new horse to a herd over a fence first, if possible, by turning the horse loose in an adjacent pen alone or with a buddy horse.
- Always introduce the new horse to a herd that is already loose. Never put the new horse in the pasture and turn the established herd out to meet him.
- Be certain the horses in the pasture are grazing quietly before turning the new horse out into the pasture and also before walking away and leaving the new horse and his new pasture mates alone.
- Introductions should be made during daylight hours for safety, so the new horse can see fences or other obstacles clearly and so you can see the interactions.
- Be aware of footing and weather. Horseplay to establish dominance will probably occur, so be sure to take slippery or rainy conditions into consideration. For instance, it may not be appropriate on a very hot, sunny, humid day to introduce new horses; as a solution, introduce them in the morning to avoid exhaustion and overheating.

The drama and conflict within a horse herd is more difficult for humans to witness than it is for horses to experience. Keeping this in mind, do not intervene if horseplay seems rough; you could be seriously injured in the process. Let the horses work out the dominance hierarchy. Also realize that stalled horses, though separated by walls, have an established hierarchy, too, so take caution when working with agitated stalled horses that are working out this hierarchy.

Herd Hierarchy Vocabulary

ALPHA HORSE: A dominant leader. All other horses respect and submit to the alpha horse. Horses instinctively seek leadership. The alpha horse provides security and leadership to the herd and is typically a mature mare. One might think a wild herd's stallion would be the alpha horse, but often he is not. His role is to keep intruders of any kind and predators away, and he protects his bond with mares and young horses. He runs most often behind the herd, keeping the slower movers caught up with the rest. Notably, however, horse owners and managers generally keep stallions separate from other horses (for safety reasons as well as population control).

DOMINANCE: Dominance in a horse herd is established with aggression. Once dominance has been established, the alpha horse controls or "has first dibs" on available resources. That horse may claim the first drink of water, first serving of feed, first access to the best rolling spot, first spot at the gate, etc., by using threatening body language. If a subordinate horse doesn't get the message



there might be escalation to kicking, biting or striking, but this rarely happens once the pecking order is established. That is why it is important to raise horses in a herd so foals learn how to respond to aggression and move away. Horses that don't learn this at an early age often keep getting punished because they simply don't understand herd dynamics. Again, the hierarchy of the herd can be easily discerned by watching the horses at feed time or turnout time to see who gets first shot at resources.

HERD: Horses naturally live in a group called a herd.

PECKING ORDER (Herd Hierarchy): Order of dominance. The pecking order starts with the most dominant animal (see ALPHA). The order continues down to the last animal that is the most submissive and is dominated by all the others.

SUBMISSIVENESS: In a herd, "submissive" horses display respect, obedience and dependence. Submissive individuals are secure in knowing the leader is in charge. If a submissive horse in a wild herd is not respectful, it is temporarily rejected from the herd (leaving it vulnerable to predators). Since horses instinctively feel safer in numbers, a horse that doesn't heed the alpha horse's warnings quickly learns to be respectful and dependent upon its leader for survival.

HUMANS MUST BECOME THE ALPHA in the human-horse dynamic for the relationship to be safe and successful.

Gates and Gate Areas

There are many gate types, styles and sizes that may be appropriate for horse use. Verify that your farm gates are horse-safe, in good condition and constructed with graduated horizontal bars or sturdy mesh.

Here are some gate safety considerations:

1. Gates should be at least as tall as the fence. When installing gates, they should be placed high enough above the ground to ensure they can swing open safely.
2. Gates should be attached with the bottom hinge facing up and the top hinge facing down. This prevents horses from lifting gates off the hinges.
3. Gates should be secured with gate latches intended for horse use that are easy for you to operate. Chain and brass snaps are generally horse-proof. However, some horses can become quite good at opening snaps or latches with their lips and teeth. Even if your gates have safely contained other horses, keep an eye on any new horses you turn out.
4. When pasturing horses that tend to walk the fence line, bump the gate or display mouthy behavior, it may be necessary to use a gate latch designed to stand up to more wear and tear. Looped gate latches that are designed to be opened with one hand can be especially useful.
5. Gates that may be open for free passage between fields should be at least 12 feet wide to allow passage of tractors and equipment. This will ensure enough width for safe passage of led horses, as well.
6. Since horses often cluster around pasture entrances, these locations are considered high-traffic areas. They rarely maintain vegetation and often become muddy and slippery during inclement weather. Installing a high-traffic pad, which allows water drainage and provides solid footing, at gate entrances helps reduce your and your horse's risk of injury. (For more information see UK Extension Publication 164 – *High Traffic Area Pads for Horses*)



Could this happen to you?

"My horse slipped in the mud while I was trying to make her ride toward a gate to open it. I didn't want to get off and get my boots dirty. She fell on me and I broke some ribs."

Advice: Put a high-traffic pad around gate areas that see a lot of horse traffic.

Horse Equipment

Using the proper equipment every time a horse is handled is an excellent safety practice. Always lead horses with a correctly fitted halter and lead appropriate to restrain and guide the horse effectively. Many horses can be led/managed safely with a cotton lead rope; however, some young horses, higher-strung horses and most stallions may need to be handled with other lead rope types, shanks or restraint methods under the supervision of an experienced professional.

Halter Fit

Halters should be selected in the size most appropriate for your horse's body type, size and age. Traditional nylon and leather halters are typically adjustable (within a few inches) using a buckle at the crown (the crown is the part that goes over the horse's head, behind its ears) and sometimes also in the noseband and throatlatch areas. Rope halters also have some adjustability.

Regardless of the style of halter, the noseband should rest roughly 1"- 2" below the horse's cheek bone. There should be adequate space to fit two or three adult-sized fingers (widthwise) comfortably between the noseband and the horse's face. The throatlatch of the halter should rest on or below the thickest part of the horse's jaw and two to four adult size fingers (widthwise) should fit comfortably between the throatlatch and the horse's head.

A halter that is too large may slip off or it can apply pressure to sensitive areas such as the nostril. Likewise, a halter that is too small or too tight for your horse can cause discomfort, damage or both. Check the fit of a halter on a young horse regularly to ensure the horse hasn't outgrown it. Keep in mind that nylon halter size can change with wet or dry weather, affecting halter fit.



Halter Selection

While most halters are suitable for leading horses, not all are appropriate for leaving on the horse during turnout. It is safest to remove halters from most pastured, stalled and other unattended horses. This is particularly important if your horse is able to stick its head out of a window or over a stall door (if it's a Dutch door). In this scenario a horse could get its halter caught on latches or other protruding objects, causing it to panic, struggle and seriously injure itself.

However, some circumstances (for example, the horse is difficult to catch) may require you to leave a halter on an unattended horse. Care should be taken to select a safe halter, meaning one that will break when stressed.

It is important to understand that nylon is incredibly strong and does not readily break under pressure. Therefore, if a nylon halter is selected, use it with great care because if it becomes caught on something, the horse might injure itself while struggling to get free.

To prevent such dangerous situations, many halter manufacturers offer halters with a "breakaway" feature, which can prevent serious injury or even save a horse's life in the event the animal becomes hung or trapped by the halter. This generally consists of an area on the crownpiece made of leather or another breakable material that is designed to break under stress and free the horse from the halter. Leather halters might break under stress; however, remember that the safest strategy is turning the horse out wearing no halter at all.

Horses should not wear knotted rope halters when they are unattended – while in the stall or turned out – as they generate undo pressure on the horse. Knotted rope halters are a training device and should be treated as such.

Bringing Horses into the Barn

It is important to stay alert and ever watchful when retrieving horses from a field and leading them into the barn.

Here are a few safety tips to remember:

Know the hierarchy of the herd, each horse's likely reaction to being caught (and other members of the herd leaving) and how each horse leads. **Never wrap a lead rope around your hand or arm.** If the horse pulls, this loop will tighten and may injure you. When bringing the horses in, always remove the dominant horse from the field first. Work your way down the "pecking order," but be careful not to leave a very nervous horse for last; an insecure horse or one that is extremely "herd-bound" may become distressed and frantic if it thinks it is being left behind. A panicked horse may injure itself by galloping wildly through the pasture and may even try to jump over the fence to join its herd mates. This puts the horse, other horses that are being led into the barn and the handler in serious danger.

Another thing to keep in mind is that horses are creatures of habit. They quickly learn a daily routine and take security in it, such as the order in which the herd members are retrieved from the pasture. If you change the order, a horse that thinks it was his "turn" to go earlier may rush the gate and cause upheaval among the herd, endangering his handler and the other horses. Developing a routine for bringing horses into the barn can minimize possible mishaps.

Removing horses from the field is accomplished most safely with two people. This is especially true for the inexperienced or novice horse handler. One person can lead the horse and the other can work the gate. Likewise, when navigating herd dynamic, one person can keep an eye on the other horses while the other person extracts the intended individual. With fields housing a group of horses, the safest configuration is to have a "catch pen" built inside the gate area. This is a smaller pen that allows the handler to remove the target horse from the herd without this animal or the others escaping.

Always use appropriate equipment to catch and lead horses. If horses in the field are not wearing halters, make sure you take the appropriate size halter into the field with you. Always use a lead rope when removing a horse from the field. Lead ropes, if yanked out of one's hands, can leave nasty rope burns, so wearing gloves is recommended. If there is a chance you will get caught in the herd on your way to the gate, you can loop the lead rope through the halter instead of snapping it. This gives you the opportunity to let the horse go and remove yourself from the herd if the group gets pushy. By doing so, you will avoid getting tangled in the lead rope and having a loose horse trailing the rope through the field. If you follow this strategy, remember to snap the lead rope to the halter when you reach the gate. **Only bring multiple horses out of the field at the same time if there is a handler for each horse.**

Make sure the path to the barn is free of debris and has safe footing. Make sure your destination is prepared in advance: stall door completely open, wash stall cleared and prepared for the horse, etc. As you enter the barn, make others aware of your presence. This will help prevent startling the horse you are leading and those in the barn. Lead the horse into the stall and ensure the door is closed before you release the animal. Work with a professional trainer or an experienced horseperson to develop an approach that works with you and your horse for entering a stall.



Turning a Single Horse Loose

Entering a field of horses can be daunting. Often, nosey horses will cluster at the field entrance and create a traffic jam at the gate. Turning a horse out into such a pasture requires careful planning and an understanding of herd behavior.

First, consider where the horse you are handling stands in the hierarchy of the herd. Leading a timid horse into a herd of assertive horses can be far different than leading an assertive horse into that same herd. It is best to turn a horse into a field in which the other pastured horses are standing far from the gate.

Before you enter the field, encourage the horses to move away from the entrance. You can accomplish this by shooing them away with arm motions and voice commands, or you might need to distract the others by providing feed or attention some distance from the gate. If any one of the pastured horses or the horse you are handling is agitated, wait for it to calm down before entering the field.

Once the other horses have moved away from the gate, open the gate wide enough so you and the horse can safely pass through (usually about 4-6 feet). As you open the gate, be sure to keep holding it so it is in your control. Remember crafty horses in the field might try to escape, so keep an eye on the other animals. **Inexperienced horse handlers should have someone else along to open and close gates.**

Turn the horse around so it's facing the gate as you close it. Tell the horse to "whoa" and stand beside the animal, halfway between its shoulder and head, waiting until it stands quietly before removing the halter (or lead rope if the horse must wear a halter for turnout). After halter removal, quietly exit the gate, being sure to face the horse as you do so. Don't smack your horse on the hindquarters after releasing, as this can stimulate a kick.

If your horse bolts when you remove his halter at turnout time, you should train him to quietly face the gate as his halter is removed and you leave the field. A variety of methods can help change this behavior, and you should talk to a trainer for advice on which to use.

Could this happen to you?

"I was turning a horse out into a paddock when another horse in the paddock pushed into the gate. The next thing I knew I was kicked in the back and had blacked out."

Advice: Never let any horse push into your space. Your space is an imaginary circle with a radius of about 3-5 feet around you. If a horse tries, shoo it off until it is 5-10 feet away. If you can't do it yourself, get someone else to help. Always be aware of where every horse is and what each is doing.

Could this happen to you?

"After 40 years of riding and teaching I was hurt doing something I tell all my students not to do. I was turning out a horse into a pasture. Instead of turning the horse toward me, I unbuckled her halter and let her walk past me. Just as she was almost past me she squealed and (I knew what was going to happen next) she kicked up her heels. Luckily I had time to put my arms up to protect my face and was only hit in the front of the elbow. I had to get stitches but nothing was broken."

Advice: You should always turn a horse back toward a gate before turning them loose. This way they have to turn to move off. Teaching them to "whoa" for a few seconds before and after releasing the snap will give you a chance to get out of the way.

Turning Out Multiple Horses

The process for turning out multiple horses at once is very similar to the process of turning out a single horse. It is especially helpful to have an assistant to open and close the gate for the handlers bringing out the horses, but it is not entirely necessary. When turning out multiple horses at once, there should ideally be one handler per horse. The first horse to enter the field should be the lowest ranked in the pecking order followed by the next ranked, and so on, so that the most dominant horse is the last horse to enter the field.

The handler of that first horse should open the gate and hold it open for all of the following horses. As each horse enters the field, the handlers should maintain

control of each, face each toward the gate and be sure that each is at least a horse length (about 10 feet) from the other horses. Once all the horses and handlers have entered the field, the gate holder should close the gate. After verifying all horses are facing the gate, the gate holder can give the signal for the horse handlers to release their horses. All the horses should be turned loose at the same time by quietly removing the halter and/or lead rope. It is important to communicate that all handlers are ready to release their horses before doing so. Make sure all handlers have a path to the gate before letting the horses go.

The handlers can then quietly exit through the gate, keeping watch on the horses as they leave the field.



Feeding in the Pasture

It may be necessary to feed your horses grain and/or additional forage (hay) to supplement the grass in the pasture. It is extremely important that you feed horses in the pasture in a manner safe for both the horses and the person doing the feeding. Horses that are usually calm can become aggressive over food and could potentially injure you or each other during feeding. Make sure you know where each horse is and that you're not distracted as you feed. Look for potential problems before they happen (e.g., horses rushing to be fed and horses jockeying for position).

When feeding grain in the pasture:

- Feeding from outside of the pasture is the best safety practice. Taking food or treats into a field housing more than one horse can lead to the handler being surrounded by horses, fights over the food and possible injury.
- Avoid feeding concentrates directly on the ground. Rubber tubs on the ground are safe and not easily broken. Alternatively, use buckets that hang on the fence.
- Hang feeders from the fence for easy access; place them at least 20 feet apart (so horses can eat comfortably without other horses in their space) and at a height such that horses are unlikely to get a leg caught.
- It may be necessary to separate slow-eating or subordinate horses from the others (by bringing them into another paddock or stall or feeding them as you hold them on a lead outside the pasture) so they can consume their portions without being bullied.



When feeding hay:

- Make sure there is adequate space for all horses to eat at the same time; it may require putting out more than one bale at a time.
- Remove all the strings/twine and netting from bales before distributing the hay.
- Make sure there is adequate space between flakes and spread more flakes than there are horses so subordinate horses have a chance to eat.
- Whenever possible feed from outside the pasture.
- If you must feed from the inside of the pasture, you can feed a small amount to occupy the horses while you spread the rest of the hay.

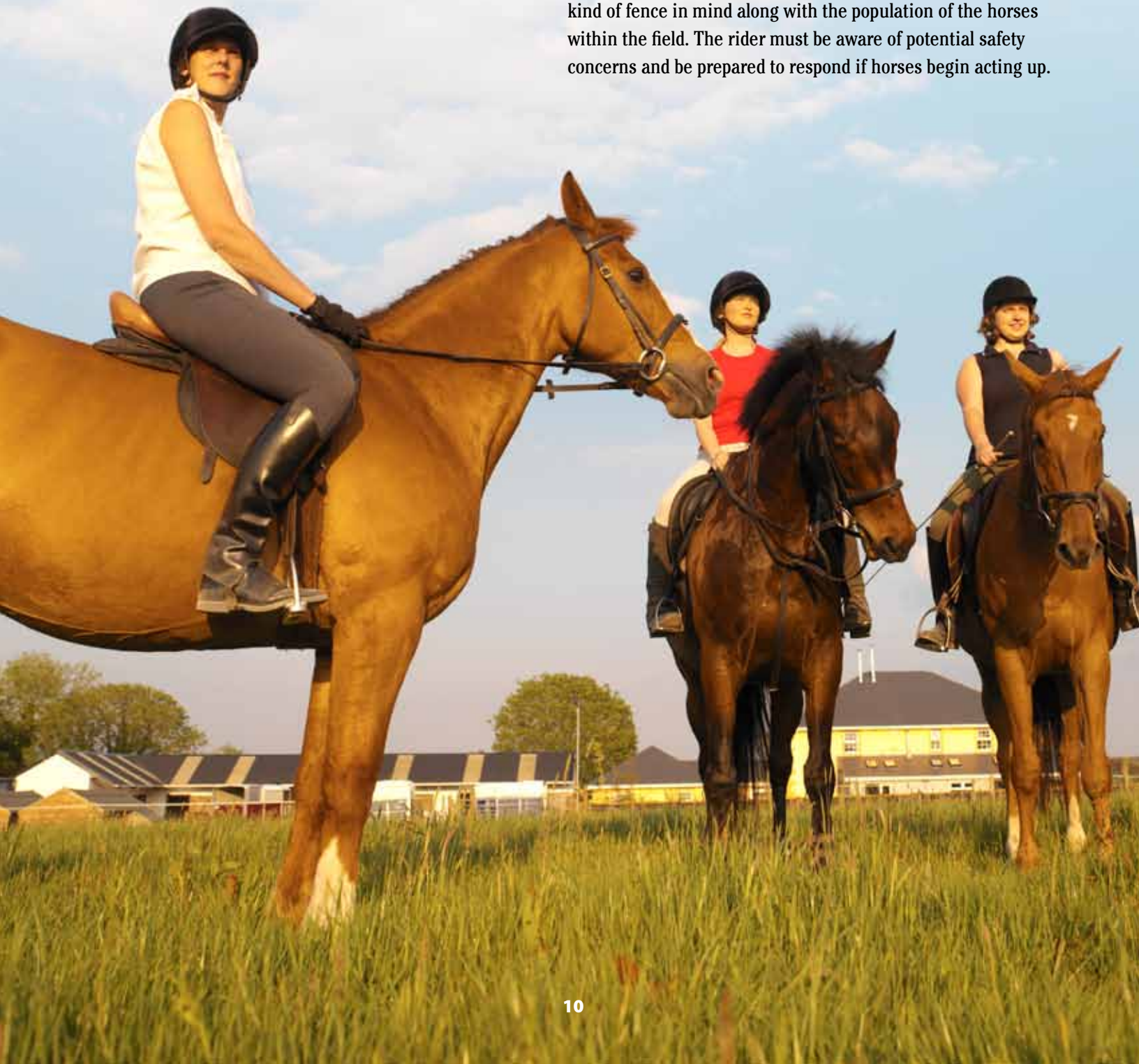


Riding in Pastures with Turned-Out Horses

Riding in a pasture containing loose horses is not recommended. It's terribly risky as you do not have control over loose animals, and their behavior is very difficult to control from the back of another horse. The pastured horses could rush up, kick, bite or simply cause the horse that's under saddle to spook, leaving both horse and rider in danger.

Riding Outside of a Fence with Pastured Horses

Horses are curious by nature, and issues of safety can arise when a horse is ridden in close proximity to pastured horses. This can cause the working horse to spook or become agitated. The situation only escalates when you're riding a mare near a stallion paddock or even a pasture full of geldings, so avoid such scenarios. Younger, less-experienced mounts with excitable/nervous dispositions are more apt to startle or spook, so take special care with these animals. Each type of fence material used, whether board, wire, electric, barbed or vinyl poses its own safety issues. Entanglement could result in serious injury for both horse and rider. When deciding whether to ride near a fence, keep the kind of fence in mind along with the population of the horses within the field. The rider must be aware of potential safety concerns and be prepared to respond if horses begin acting up.



Pasture Maintenance for Safety

It is important to keep your pastures and any shelters within them safe. Check with your county extension agent when you have questions about safety. Some tips include:

- Install high-traffic pads (for gates, waterers, hay feeders, sheds, etc.) – As mentioned earlier, these high-traffic footing solutions stand up to horses walking across them frequently or standing on them for long periods of time. The type of high-traffic pad needed will depend on your property and the location of the high-traffic area. Alternately, some people use rubber mats (old trailer or stall mats work well) and others use sand and gravel to improve drainage and footing in muddy areas. Feeders and water troughs can be moved around the pasture to minimize pasture damage.
- Fence off the following potential safety hazards:
 - Sinkholes – Fence off any places where the footing is especially uneven or unsafe, and fence off holes or cave entrances to keep horses and people from falling in or getting a leg caught.



- Trees – Horses often will chew on branches and trunks or eat the leaves and blossoms from trees. Chewing on/eating trees is not beneficial for the horse, and some trees are even toxic. It is best to limit the horse's access to them.
- After storms, check for and clean up sharp, fallen branches after storms that could cause puncture wounds.
- Clear out rocks from time to time.
- Keep your paddocks free of groundhogs, as they dig holes that can be dangerous for horses and riders.

- Learn to identify poisonous trees and shrubs. Contact your local county extension agent or state university's cooperative extension program for a complete list of species native to your area that are toxic to your horses.

Other Hazards

- Utility poles/stabilization cables – Especially be aware of the cables used to stabilize the poles or any wires that run off of the main utility pole at horse/rider height and lower. Fence them off, as horses cannot see these easily and can run into them, sustaining injuries.
- Equipment/machinery – Do not store equipment, including horse trailers, tractors and implements, in the pasture. Horses and handlers may injure themselves on any equipment left out in the pasture. (Conversely, weather, exposure to the elements and curious horses can damage the equipment.)

It is important to walk your pasture regularly to inspect fencing, look for holes in the ground and detect other sources of potential problems/injury, such as horseshoes that have been pulled off. Pick up garbage and check for weeds or poisonous plants that could be harmful to horses.



Fencing

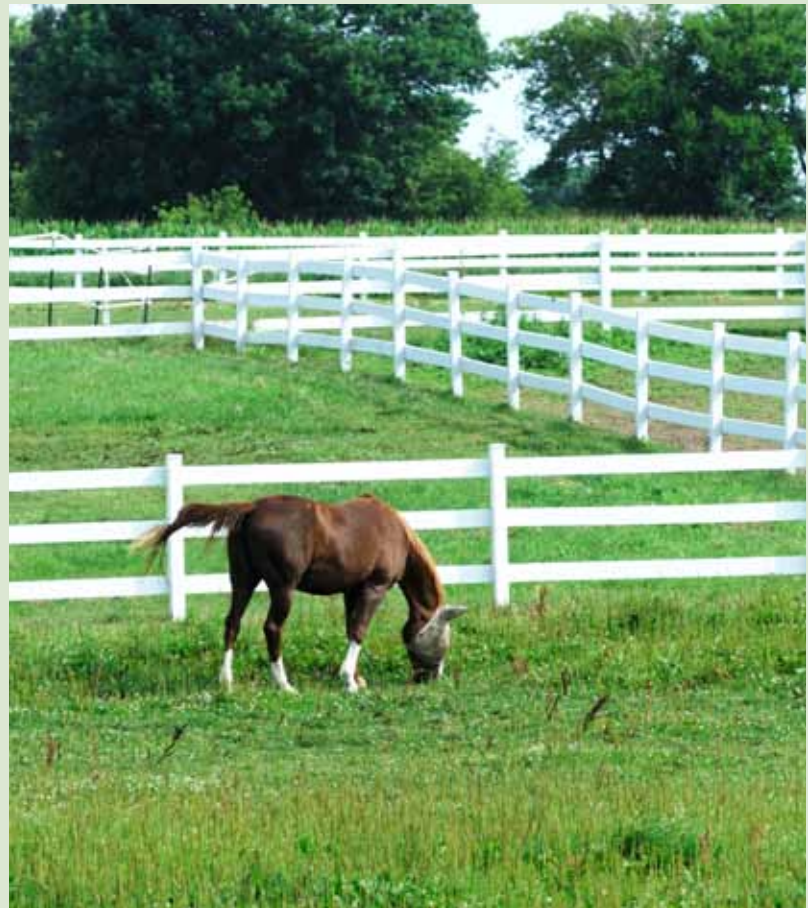
All fencing types can cause horses and riders to sustain cuts, scrapes, puncture wounds from protruding nails, as well as dangerous electric shocks. Fences should be kept in good repair to avoid unsafe conditions. Horses can be very hard on fences, damaging them by leaning, rubbing or chewing on them. There are many factors to consider when selecting fencing, including but not limited to durability, safety for the horses, aesthetics and cost.

Other factors affecting fencing selection may include the number of horses to be kept in a field, as well as local/city ordinances. A perimeter fence may be essential to surround pastures located near busy roads. It is important that you warn those approaching your pastured horses that entering a pasture can be unsafe. Many states recommend a sign be posted. See example below:

WARNING

UNDER KENTUCKY LAW, A FARM ANIMAL ACTIVITY SPONSOR, FARM ANIMAL PROFESSIONAL, OR OTHER PERSON DOES NOT HAVE THE DUTY TO ELIMINATE ALL RISKS OF INJURY OF PARTICIPATION IN FARM ANIMAL ACTIVITIES. THERE ARE INHERENT RISKS OF INJURY THAT YOU VOLUNTARILY ACCEPT IF YOU PARTICIPATE IN FARM ANIMAL ACTIVITIES.

KRS 247.4027



Catching a Loose Horse

The chance to be free from restrictions such as a stall or a barn – or even a pasture – can be extremely enticing for a horse. A loose horse can be a danger to itself and others – including drivers on roadways – so the scenario is not quite as enticing for the horse owner and can be quite frightening.

There are a few standard guidelines for safely retrieving a loose horse while minimizing damage to property and potential injury to the horse and/or humans.

- 1) When trying to catch a loose horse, your safety and that of any people nearby should be your first consideration.
- 2) If the property has perimeter fencing, be sure all gates to the outside are secured.
- 3) Prevent unnecessary injuries by showing confidence and demonstrating that you are a safe refuge, not a threat. This will make the horse easier to catch.
- 4) A few items you may need to catch a loose horse include: lead rope, halter that fits if the horse isn't already wearing one, and a bucket with some grain or the horse's favorite treat.
- 5) If a captured horse bolts or whirls away for whatever reason, human safety is of utmost importance and one should release the restraining device (i.e., halter or lead rope) immediately. Do not try to hang on as you run the risk of being dragged or stepped on.
- 6) If the horse is outside a perimeter fence, position your body between the horse and any potentially dangerous areas, such as a road.
- 7) Horses are motivated by what they enjoy, and some might not be able to resist fresh green grass, grain or their favorite treat.
- 8) Do not run toward the horse or chase it from behind. This may cause it to dart away and make it harder to catch.
- 9) When possible, recruit extra people to help catch the animal.

Safest approach: First, place yourself in a safe, open space. When the horse first sees you, it may freeze in place, raising its head and looking straight at you. The horse is assessing whether you are dangerous. Move slowly and speak softly and reassuringly. Observe the horse's body language. If you feel you will not startle the horse, shake the bucket of feed or rattle the package of your horse's favorite treats to pique the animal's interest. If the horse approaches for the bait, be slow in your approach to either snap the lead to



the halter or place a rope around the horse's neck (to restrain it long enough to get the halters on). Usually you can lead the horse safely at this point. If you must approach the horse, do so slowly, calmly and confidently. If the loose horse is not in danger but is having too much fun being free or is too panicked to be interested in the feed or treats, you may need to wait patiently for the animal to calm before catching. If the horse is in danger, it may be necessary to call in your local sheriff/police and large animal rescue team.

Conclusion

In this booklet we have tried to cover the major topics regarding safety in the pasture. Undoubtedly, there are other key points and tips to consider. Please share your safety suggestions by going to our website **SaddleUpSAFELY.org** and leaving your safety tips, calling Saddle UP SAFELY at **1-800-333-8874**, leaving a message on our Facebook page or writing us at:

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We will incorporate new information into our next edition.

Acknowledgement

Saddle up SAFELY is pleased to have been one of the organizations that supported Equine Guelph in the development of this booklet. We are pleased to offer the booklet to U.S. riders with the permission of Equine Guelph.

Original Partners

Under Equine Guelph's leadership, the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association, Kubota Canada, SSG Gloves, System Fencing and Tack, Ontario Workplace Safety & Prevention Services, and UK HealthCare collaborated to produce this booklet.

Purpose of Saddle Up SAFELY

Saddle Up SAFELY is a coalition of 40-plus medical, public health, educational, retail and horse organizations from the United States and Canada, led by University of Kentucky's UK HealthCare and UK College of Agriculture Equine Initiative. Saddle Up SAFELY goals are to 1) raise awareness and understanding of rider/handler safety; 2) reduce the number and severity of horse-related injuries; and 3) encourage injured riders to return to the sport safely.

Resources Available

Saddle Up SAFELY offers a number of brochures on its website at saddleupsafely.org. In addition, you can find an online safety quiz, expert columns, Facebook page and safety blog by Dr. Fernanda Camargo. Perhaps the most valuable resource is the collection of more than 300 tips offered by our website visitors. We encourage anyone who has been injured to share their story and the advice they would give others to avoid or reduce the severity of a similar accident or injury.



Brochures available online at SaddleUpSAFELY.org or call **1-800-333-8874**.

How to reach us

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SADDLE UP SAFELY PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Alltech	Lexington Herald-Leader
Ariat International Inc.	Mid East Quarter Horse Association
Brain Injury Alliance of Kentucky	National Thoroughbred Racing Alliance
Brumfield Hay and Grain Co.	North American Racing Academy
Buffalo Trace Mounted Patrol	Northern Kentucky Horse Network LLC
Cardinal Hill Healthcare System	Ohio Quarter Horse Association
Certified Horsemanship Association	Pegasus Helmets
CMD Health	PHI Air Medical of Kentucky
DiscoverHorses.com	Point Two Air Jackets USA
Equine Guelph	Rood & Riddle Equine Hospital
Equestrian Medical Safety Association	Safe Kids Fayette County
Folck Insurance	Troxel Helmets
TheHorse.com	UK College of Agriculture Equine Initiative
Jockey's Guild	UK College of Public Health
Junior League of Lexington	UK Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation
Keeneland	UK Psychiatry
Kentucky 4-H Program	UK HealthCare
Kentucky Department for Public Health	UK Spinal Cord and Brain Injury Research Center (SCoBIRC)
Kentucky Equine Education Project	United States Pony Club Inc.
Kentucky Horse Council	United States Dressage Federation
Kentucky Horse Park	United States Equestrian Federation
Kentucky Horseshoeing School	US Rider Equestrian Motor Plan
Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center	Welch Printing Company
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Visit saddleupSAFELY.org and...

- take our safety quiz to assess your knowledge
- download other publications
- share your injury experience and what you learned

Saddle Up SAFELY: Horseback Riding Injury Prevention



Tell us how you Saddle Up SAFELY and be entered to win exciting prizes!



Do you Saddle Up SAFELY?



Saddle Up Publications



Saddle Up SAFELY is a rider safety awareness program sponsored by UK HealthCare, UK College of Agriculture and many [community organizations](#).

- Read our [Saddle Up SAFELY Blog](#), written by veterinarian Dr. Fernanda Camargo
- [Tell us how you Saddle Up SAFELY](#) and be entered to win exciting prizes
- Coming soon: our Saddle Up SAFELY quiz -- how much do you know about safety around horses?

It is important to Saddle Up SAFELY.

Every year, millions of Americans participate in horseback riding activities. Horseback riding is a popular activity for people of all ages but it has a high risk of injury. All too often, riding injuries occur due to lack of education or understanding of equine behavior and proper riding practices. In fact, a current study shows that half of equine-related injury patients believe their injuries were preventable and due to rider error.

Through Saddle Up SAFELY, UK HealthCare seeks to educate current and future riders about the simple steps that can be taken to prevent accidents. Horseback riding is an extremely rewarding and thrilling sport, but it should be safe as well. Through Saddle Up SAFELY and UK HealthCare, we hope to make a great sport safer and more enjoyable for all riders and equine enthusiasts.

Read the [Saddle Up SAFELY brochure](#) (PDF, 3.11 MB)

View the [Saddle Up SAFELY Horse Transmitted Diseases](#) brochure (PDF, 3. MB)

See the [Saddle Up SAFELY Horse-Related Injury](#) brochure (PDF, 3.18 MB)

“As an Olympic athlete, I take my sport seriously, and when it comes to safety, I take my equipment very seriously. I never get on my horse without a helmet”

*Ann Kursinski
U.S. Olympic Medalist, Jumping*

Information in this booklet developed by

University of Kentucky

UK HealthCare

UK College of Agriculture
Equine Initiative

UK College of Medicine

UK College of Public Health



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