

UConn Horse Barn SAFETY RULES AND PRECAUTIONS

Safety around horses involves knowledge of their possible reactions to any given stimulus, an effort to anticipate these reactions, and an attempt to stay out of harm's way while still being in control of the situation. Most accidents are caused by the rider failing to think about safety! With practice, safety procedures will become second nature, but constant attention to the situation will best prevent accidents.

I. Working Around Your Horse

1. Stay in the safety zone - close to the shoulder, barrel or hip whenever possible. Keep your feet clear of his and your head away from his face and legs.
2. Move around his hindquarters by either keeping your hand firmly on his croup and stay close or by walking a horse's length away.

II. Approaching the Horse

1. Approach your horse from the front and left. It is important that he sees and hears you approach. If his hindquarters are toward you, approach him at an angle so he can see you. Speak to him and watch for his ears to flick in response. Place a hand firmly on his neck, shoulder or hip, and push him to the side if necessary. Step toward the horse's shoulder. As you approach his head, remember that most horses do not appreciate being patted on the face.
2. The safest place to stand when working with a horse is close to his side, between his shoulder and hip. Do not spend any more time than necessary in front of or behind a horse, and when passing behind him either stay a horse's length back or, in a stall, stay close to his hindquarters with your hand on his croup. Horses do not normally kick at people. However, it is always safer to keep in mind that they might. By staying close to the horse's hindquarters as you walk behind him, you would not be in a position to receive the full impact of a kick.

III. Leading Your Horse Safely

1. Walk beside the horse when leading, not ahead of him. It is best to lead from the left. Use both hands: the right hand holds the lead rope or reins under his chin and the left hand holds the end and keeps it off the ground.
2. Your horse is stronger than you, so don't try to out-pull him. He will usually respond to a quick snap on the lead rope.
3. Never wrap lead ropes, long lines or reins around your hand, wrist or body. Always keep a secure hold on the lead rope.

4. If the horse hangs back on the end of the rope, do not pull him forward. Turn him left or right until he moves and then proceed forward.
5. Always roll (run up) stirrups when you are not in the saddle so you don't forget and lead the horse past an object he may get caught on.

IV. Tacking Up

1. Keep tack off the ground at all times.
2. Stand beside - not in front of - the horse when bridling; keep your head clear. Use your right arm under his jaw with your right hand putting pressure on his nose to keep his head within reach.

V. Mounting

1. Pick an open space, without projections or overhangs, for mounting. Stay clear of other horses. If your horse takes a step as you swing up he won't endanger either of you.
2. Hold the reins at all times while adjusting stirrups or girth to keep control of your horse.
3. Keep both feet in the stirrups and stay alert while adjusting your stirrups or tightening the girth to keep your balance should the horse move suddenly. Even the quietest horse may spook at an accustomed noise or movement.

VI. Riding

1. Smooth soled boots with heels are required to give the necessary support, to protect your toes and to enable you to slip your feet out of the stirrups quickly in an emergency.
2. Wear a helmet, with the harness snap down, when mounted for your own protection. Helmets must be ASTM approved and within five years of manufacture date.
3. Do not chew gum while riding to avoid the possibility of choking on it.
4. Do not ride with keys, cell phones or ear buds.

VII. General Barn Procedures

1. Smoking is not allowed at any time in the barn because of fire danger.
2. Always return all your equipment to its proper place to avoid damage or loss. Keep tack off the ground.
3. Stay out of the stalls of horses you don't know. Do not encourage horses to nip at your hand between the bars of their stalls.
4. When in doubt, ask!

VIII. Miscellaneous Information

1. Horses can sleep standing up. Certain ligaments in their forelegs keep their knees straight while they doze. It sometimes takes the horse an instant to become oriented upon awakening, and especially if he is startled awake he might react instinctively to whatever startled him. To an animal whose ancestors were preyed upon for their meat, the obvious reaction would be to put distance between him and the perceived threat. When confinement prevents escape, the instinctive defense is kicking. Check to see that the horse is awake before you approach so you can avoid startling him. Speak to him, and he will turn to look at you.

2. His eyes are placed on the sides of his head, enabling him to see almost 360. If something unexpectedly comes into his field of vision, he is likely to react instinctively. Approach him, and work around him, so that he can see you. If you have to cross his blind spot, speak to him or keep a hand on him to remind him where you are.
3. The horse has acute hearing. Although he cannot differentiate between similar words, he can determine meaning from the tone of voice used. A soothing tone of voice will reassure him, while a sharp reprimand can be effective discipline. When used with a touch on his side or rump, the clicking noise made by some horsemen will move him sideways or forward. His ears move to catch sounds of interest, so you can often tell what he is listening to by watching his ears. If he hears you approach, his ears will turn toward you.
4. His ears also show his attitude. Interest is shown by one or both ears turning to catch sounds. One or both ears may point backwards to hear as you work beside or behind him. If he is annoyed, he may threaten with both ears back flat on his neck. This threat is usually accompanied by an aggressive turn of the head.