



HOPE Therapeutic Riding Center

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HORSE SAFETY RULES

BASIC RULES FOR SAFETY WHEN WORKING WITH

HOPE HORSES

1. Understand that equine-assisted activities involving working with, on and around horses is inherently risky and can be dangerous. All the more reason to know how to be SAFER!
2. Students MUST ALWAYS wear a helmet when working on or around horses!
3. Unless deemed fully independent, students MUST wait for a Volunteer to be with them before entering a horse's stall or approaching a tied horse.
4. ALWAYS WALK; do not run when working with horses.
5. Never approach a horse directly from the rear! A horse cannot see back there and is more easily startled and may resort to a "Kick first, ask questions later" approach. It is better to walk towards the shoulder and neck.
6. Always speak to the horse before approaching or touching him. Let the horse know you are not there to hurt him and wait for him to accept you.
7. After he accepts your presence, keep a hand on his body as you walk around him and talk reassuringly to him.
8. NEVER tie a horse using the reins and bridle! If you have to tie him, use a quick-release knot, or simply wrap the lead rope attached to his halter around the hitching post.
9. Traditionally, you lead from the left side, placing your inside hand about 12 to 18 inches from the halter. Keep the excess lead rope folded, never wrapped, in your outside hand. Be careful not to let the rope drag on the ground to avoid you or the horse tripping on it. Learn to lead from both sides.
10. When leading, place yourself between the horse's head and shoulder. NEVER get in front of the horse and try to pull him. You will lose that tug-o'-war!
11. When leading, Volunteers always stay between the student and the horse, unless otherwise directed by the Instructor.
12. NEVER yank or jerk the horse's halter or lead rope! Use gentle 'pressure and release commands. Remember, some of our HOPE horses may be a bit elderly and need more time to react.

13. Keep at least two (2) horse lengths between your horse and the next. To increase the distance, either slow down, stop, make a short circle towards the inside of the arena, or safely cut across the arena and then get back on the rail.
14. If the horse pulls backward, step back with him rather than pulling against him. He will usually be ready to go forward again, since you have acknowledged his need. Also, look around. He may have seen something of concern that you had not noticed.
15. If the horse rears up, release the hand closest to the halter to avoid being pulled off the ground. However, do not completely let go of the lead rope, if safely possible.
16. Be aware of your surroundings and help keep your fellow students and volunteers aware, too. For example, let everyone know if you see a dog running loose or a loud truck passing by. This helps give everyone time to reassure their horse and student.
17. When tacking, grooming, or moving around the horse, NEVER go under the horse's neck or belly. Unbeknownst to you, he may have a sudden need to bring his leg up or head down fast. Ouch!
18. Pet the horses mostly on the neck and shoulders. Please DO NOT pet the horse's face. .
19. After leading a horse into a stall, turn the horse so that he faces the door. Close the door leaving an opening large enough for you to get out safely if a dangerous situation arises. Take the halter and lead rope off the horse.
20. Only the Instructor and trained volunteers are allowed to bridle the horses. This rule is for the horses' safety and comfort.
21. When saddling, tighten the girth SLOWLY. Abrupt pulls can pinch the horse's skin and you may get a bite for your efforts.
22. Initially, adjust the saddle carefully with the girth just tight enough so that the saddle and pad will not shift. The Instructor will do a final tack check to insure the saddle is in the correct place and tighten the girth.
23. **ALWAYS wait for the Instructor's direction before mounting.** Patience is a virtue for all you eager students!
24. Whenever in doubt about something, ALWAYS ask the Instructors! Remember they are there to help EVERYONE!
25. Volunteers and Students, please let the Instructor know IMMEDIATELY if you are uncomfortable about anything, e.g., team assignment, uncertainty about task, whatever. We greatly value what you have to say. Your time with HOPE should be an enjoyable one! Horses (and people) are very sensitive creatures and can quickly pick up on your discomfort. We cannot help fix a situation, if we do not know about it. So tell us, please! Any of us! If need be, feel free to call the HOPE office at 360-221-7656.

"Grab the Reins of Life with HOPE!"