



# INTRODUCTION TO HORSE CARE & SAFETY

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## WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

At AHEAD With Horses, safety is our main priority. This guide provides an introduction to understanding and caring for horses. Whether you're a beginner or experienced, it's important to read this manual and process how we do things at AHEAD With Horses.

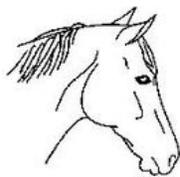
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## A BIT ABOUT HORSE SAFETY

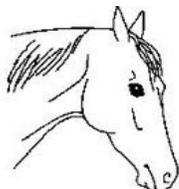
Horses are prey animals with a strong fight-or-flight response. Their first reaction to a threat is to startle and usually flee, although they will stand their ground and defend themselves when flight is not possible. They also tend to be curious; when startled, they often pause to understand what was the cause of their fright.

Horses are also herd animals. If one horse gets scared and decides to run, it will often make the other horses scared and want to join them. This is one reason why we do not allow people to run near the horses. This is important to note in lessons. If there are multiple horses in the arena, if one spooks, it might cause the other horses to react as well.

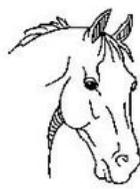
A horse expresses itself through body language; their ears and actions are the key to their emotions. They can tell you what they are paying attention to and how they feel by the way their ears are positioned. Horse tail positions can tell us a lot as well.



**Ears forward but relaxed**  
interested in what's in front of him



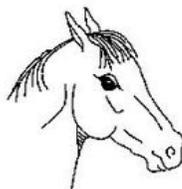
**Ears turned back but relaxed**  
listening to his rider or what's behind him



**Ears pointed stiffly forward**  
alarmed or nervous about what's ahead. Looking out for danger



**Ears pointed left and right**  
relaxed, paying attention to the scenery on both sides.



**Ears stiffly back**  
annoyed or worried about what's behind him; might kick if annoyed.



**Droopy ears**  
calm and resting, horse may be dozing.



**Ears flattened against neck**  
violently angry, in a fighting mood. May fight, bite or kick.

**OTHER SIGNS YOU SHOULD NOTICE ARE:**

- **Tucking the tail down tightly.**  
Danger to the rear.  
Horse may bolt, buck or kick.  
Watch out if cars are flattened too!
- **Switching the tail.**  
Annoyance and irritation:
  - at biting flies, stinging insects or tickling bothersome actions of a rider or another horse.
- **Droopy ears and resting one hind leg on toe.**  
Calm and resting, horse may be dozing.  
Don't wake him up by startling him!
- **Wrinkling up the face and swinging the head.**  
Threatening gesture of an angry or bossy horse.  
Watch out for biting or kicking.

 <i>Contented</i>	 <i>Startled</i>	 <i>About to strike</i>
 <i>About to bite</i>	 <i>Excited</i>	 <i>Galloping</i>
 <i>Sweeping insects or annoyed</i>	 <i>Afraid</i>	 <i>Hunched against the wind or of low social status</i>

When walking up to a horse that is in their stall, make sure t

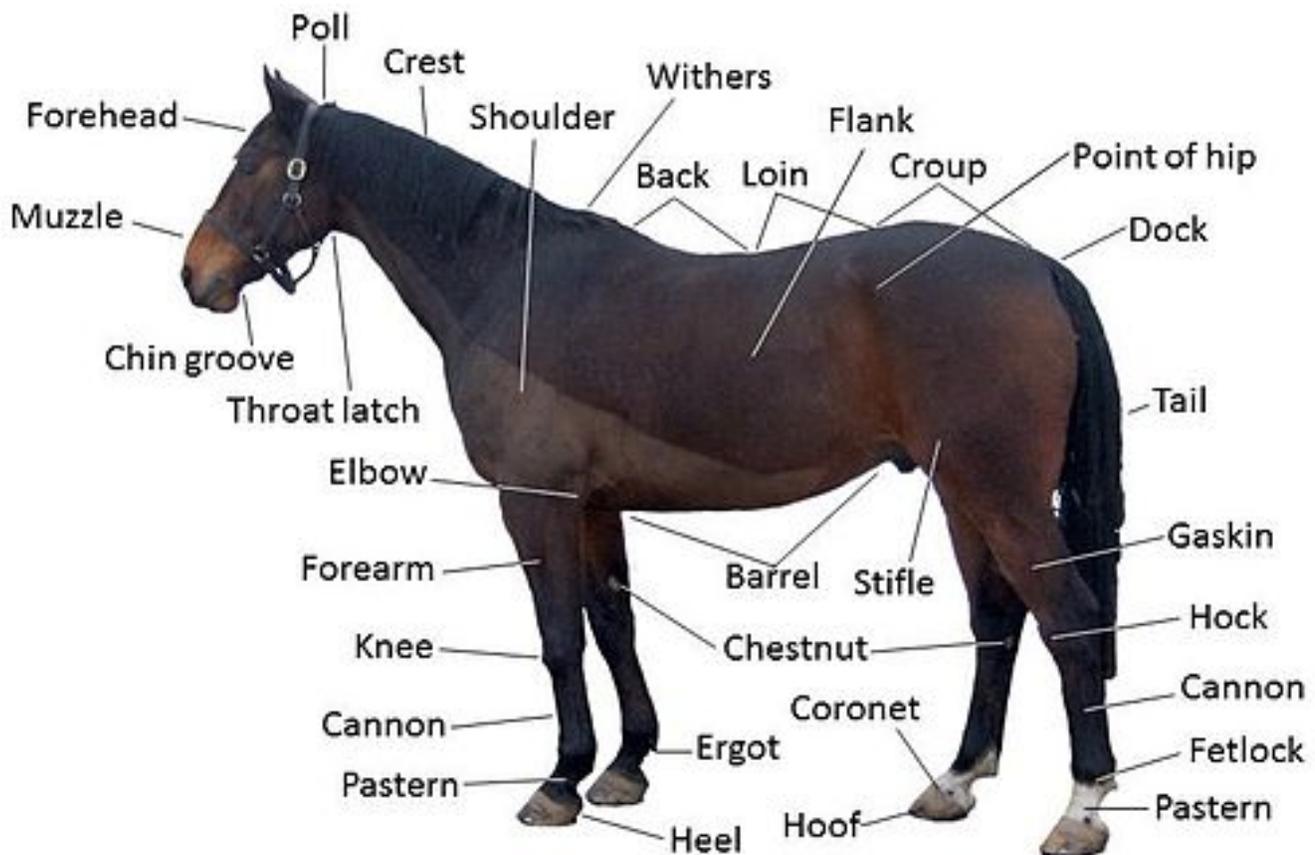
- Speak to the horse so that they know you are there. (Especially if walking up from behind or they have their eyes closed and might be sleeping)
- Always try to walk towards the shoulder and head of the horse when approaching so that they can see you

When walking behind a horse either:

- 1.) Keep one hand on the horse's croup/butt and stay right next to the horse the entire time
- 2.) Walk far around the horse so that if they were to kick, they would not reach you

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## HORSE ANATOMY



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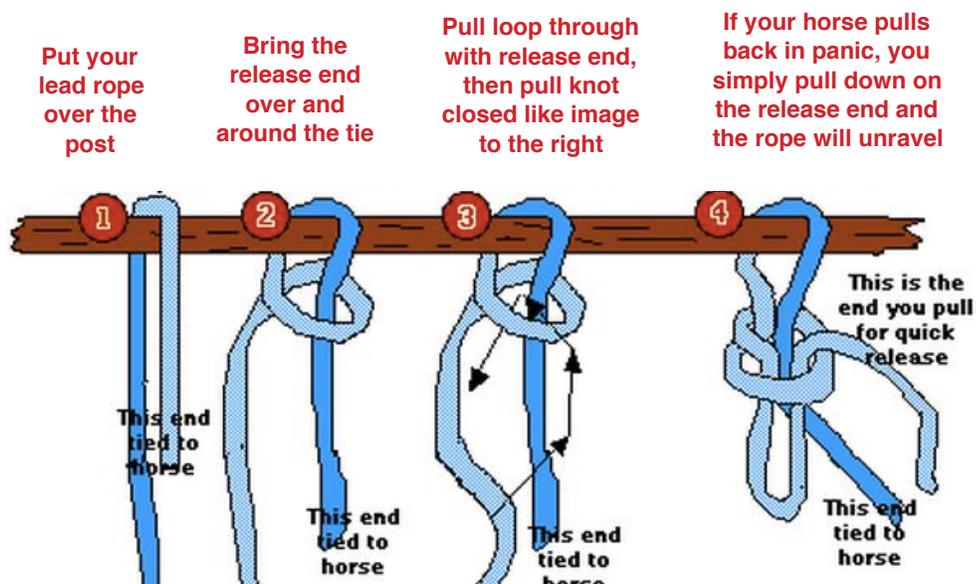
## GROOMING OUR HORSES

Grooming is an essential skill of horse care for beginners and experienced horse owners alike. Here are some basics to help make horse care a success!

You can check with staff if that horse is good about standing still on their own while grooming. If necessary, ensure your horse is haltered and tied, or that an assistant is holding him. Never tie the horse and leave them alone.

- Never leave a rope or lead dangling from the horse to the ground. Make sure to remove it before leaving the horse.
- NEVER tie a horse with their bridle and a lunge line. Only tie a horse using a halter and lead rope. Tying them up with a bit in their mouth can cause a lot of damage and be painful if the horse tries to pull away

How to tie a horse: you must use a quick release knot for the safety of the horse. Here is an example of how to tie one:



- Start with picking out the horses hooves
  - Standing next to your horse's shoulder (for his front feet) or hip (for his hind), face toward your horse's tail. Keep your feet together and turned away from your horse to ensure your toes don't accidentally get stepped on if the horse put's their foot down
    - Reduce stress on your back by bending at the knees as you lean over to pick up his foot

- Run your hand down your horse's leg to signal that you want him to pick up his foot
- Depending on your horse and how cooperative he is about picking his feet up, you might need to use your shoulder to lean some weight against him to encourage him to lift his foot. Just don't lean too hard!
- Use a verbal cue, such as "foot", "lift", "hoof up" or "pick up" to ask him to lift his foot. As he lifts his foot, hold his leg at the pastern or coronary band (just above the foot) or hold under the hoof itself to offer support
- Remove dirt and stones using the provided hoof pick, being careful to avoid the frog of the foot. This is the fleshy v shaped part
- If your horse is wearing shoes, trace around the inside of the shoe
- to check for and remove any pebbles. For a barefoot horse, clean around the area were the hoof sole (bottom of the hoof) meets the hoof wall (the outer hoof capsule)
- This is good opportunity to check the condition of the feet and shoes. Let the staff know if anything smells, looks black, or seems irregular
- Once the foot is clean gently set your horse's hoof down on the ground. Resist letting him do it himself—patience on his part might save your toes from getting squished! Instead, guide his foot to the floor. Use special care when lowering older, arthritic horses' hooves, as dropping a geriatric's foot could cause pain or cause him to lose his balance



- Then comes the brushing

- Keep in mind the sensitive areas of the horse (flank, face/neck, lower legs) and be sure to groom thoroughly where any tack will go
- Begin with the curry comb to loosen on dirt and hair; follow with the body brush
- When brushing, go in the same direction as the horses coat, keeping contact with horses body as much as possible
- Make sure you place yourself in a safe position, and be mindful of sensitive areas
- Use a soft brush to brush the face, being careful around the eyes and nose
- Using coarser brushes and rubber curry combs, remove the worst of the dirt, being careful on sensitive areas, such as joints and clipped parts
- Finish with the body brush



- Lastly, the lowest priority, is the main and tail
  - Use the provided hair brush rather than comb as they're less like to pull hair out
  - Working from the ends upward, similar to how you might brush knots out of your own hair (if you have long hair)
- After exercising, be sure to pick out feet again and wash or brush off any sweaty areas
- Always clean up after yourself
  - Never leave tools (including brooms, rakes, wheelbarrows, etc.) or grooming supplies inside a stall when you leave that space. Make sure everything is outside the stall (and out of reach), so that the horses will not accidentally hurt themselves.
- Horses know if you are nervous and will either take advantage of you or become nervous as well. If you act confident and like you know what you are doing, they will trust you and follow your instructions

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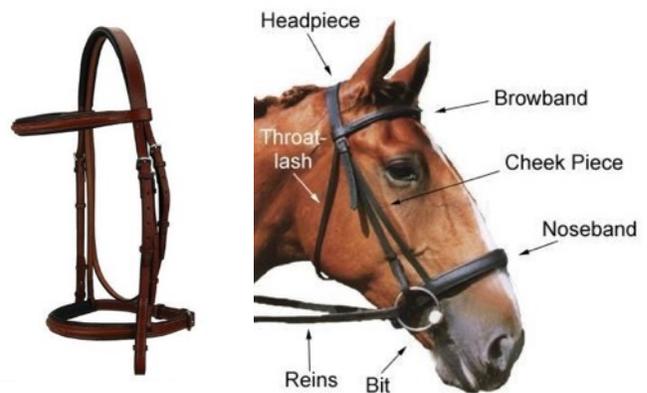
## GLOSSARY

Belly Foam- the long skinny foam that goes underneath the surcingle when the horse is tacked up.

Body Brush - brush used on the body of the horse. Can be stiff to soft bristles. Softer should be used on face and legs

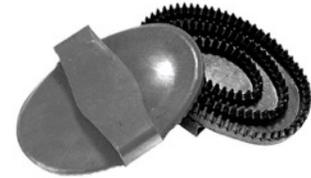


Bridle - The leather pieces that go on a horse's head to control them while riding or in lessons. The metal part that goes in their mouth is called a bit.



Colic - one of the most common ailments of horses. It can refer to many different types of abdominal pain. Can be caused by gas, a stone in the intestines, sand in the stomach, impaction, twisting of the intestines, etc. Can be very serious and/or fatal. Common Signs of Colic: pawing, biting or looking at the stomach, standing stretched out (while not peeing), laying down and getting up repeatedly. If you see a horse not acting normally, please tell a staff member immediately

Curry comb - type of brush used to get the loose hair and dirt off of a horse. Should be used before a body brush.



Grooming kit - bucket that has all of the necessary items to groom (or clean) a horse.

Halter - The item that goes on a horse's head to lead them around or tie them up. Normally made of nylon. There is no portion that goes in the mouth. (Bridles are normally leather and do have the bit.)



Flank - This is a sensitive spot on the horse that you want to make sure children do not kick or squeeze or lean on.

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Hoof pick - used to clean the bottom of the horse's feet.



Lead rope - Rope that attaches to the halter to lead the horse with. (Most of ours are red to match the halter, but come in any color.) They attach to the halter at the bottom / under their head.



Longe line - long flat rope that attaches to the bridle to lead them during lessons. (Looks like a leash.)

Mane & tail brush - Used to brush the main and tail. Looks like a person's hair brush.



Manure rake - Used to pick up horse poop. Can also be called an "apple picker" or pooper scooper.



Surcingle - The large leather handles that go around the horse and keep the pads in place. We use this instead of a normal saddle.



Pads- Placed on the back of the horse where the student sits while riding. We use a set of 4 pads that contains 2 foam pads with a red wool pad on top and bottom.

Poop Patrol - When we need someone to clean up a pile of poop that a horse left in the arena.

Tack - The items that are put on a horse. This includes: pads, bridles, surcingle, saddle, etc.

Tacked Up - The horse has all of the tack on it that is necessary to ride.

Sweat scraper - Used to remove excess water off a horse after being hosed down.



Untack - Remove all of the pads, surcingle, bridle, etc. after they are finished for the day.

Tack room - Where all of the bridles, longe lines, pads, surcingles, grooming kits, soaps, etc. are kept.