**HORSES**

**Horse Behaviour**  
An understanding of the horse's natural behaviour patterns and learning process is an essential key to safe and effective management of horses. The horse is a strong and powerful animal that is capable of great speed and quick reactions. The instinctive ability to flee from danger is a primary reason why horses have survived in the wild. This behaviour is called the ‘flight instinct’ and may cause horses to run or spook from unfamiliar objects or circumstances.

The horse is also a sensitive creature that has a tremendous ability to adapt to unfamiliar situations. Many things we ask of horses are strange to their nature. Therefore, in order to coexist with man, the horse must learn to accept many circumstances and surroundings from which he would naturally flee if living in the wild.

Horses monitor their surroundings and detect danger through their sense of vision, smell, hearing, and touch.

Vision  
  
Horses see much differently than humans and are generally considered to have poor vision. In the wild, horses are animals of prey. Their eyes are set far apart on the sides of their head where they can monitor their surroundings for signs of danger. This gives the horse monocular vision or the ability to see separate objects with each eye at the same time. This arrangement also gives the horse a 340-degree field of vision. Horses cannot see directly in front of them or objects behind them that are narrower than their body.

Due to the shape of their retina, horses must position their head to focus their vision. For example, when they lift their heads, they are focusing on something far away. Whereas, a horse lowers his head when focusing on low, close objects.

This visual arrangement is most suitable for grazing and watching for danger at the same time. However, this causes horses to have trouble with depth perception. This is partly why horses may be frightened when crossing shallow water and ditches. Also, horses, like humans, may suffer from faulty vision and may be more prone to shy at unfamiliar objects.

Smell  
  
The sense of smell is highly developed in the horse and serves primarily as a tool of recognition and to satisfy their curiosity.

*Hearing*  
The horse has an acute sense of hearing. A horse's ears are good indicators of their current behaviour. Their ears can rotate 180 degrees and will generally point in the direction their attention is focused. Ears that are "laid back," or flattened backward, may be a warning that the horse is getting ready to kick or bite. Knowing the difference between ears that are laid back and ears that simply indicate a resting or listening horse is a valuable recognition signal for safety.

Touch  
  
The horse's sense of touch is often used during gentling and training procedures. Horses are sensitive to pressure, pain, and temperature, especially around the head, leg, and belly regions

**Handling Horses - General**

Horses detect danger through their vision, sense of smell and keen sense of hearing. They have wide-angle vision, but they also have blind spots directly behind and in front of themselves.

Your horse's ears will give you clues; they will point in the direction in which its attention is focused. Ears that are 'laid back' or flattened backward, warn you that the horse is getting ready to kick or bite.

Always work with calm but deliberate movements around horses. Nervous handlers can make horses nervous, creating unsafe situations.

When catching a horse, approach from its left shoulder. Move slowly but confidently, speaking to the horse as you approach. Read the horse's intention by watching its body language.

Be careful when approaching a horse that is preoccupied, such as when its head is in a hay manger.

When approaching a horse in a stall, speak to the horse to get its attention and wait until it turns and faces you before entering and make sure the horse moves over before you walk in beside it.

Speak to your horse and keep your hands on it when moving around it. Even if a horse is aware of your presence, it can be startled by quick movements.

When approaching from the rear, advance at an angle speaking to the horse, making sure you have its attention. Touch it gently as you pass by its hindquarters.

When leading a horse hold the lead line with your right hand, 8 to 10 inches away from the horse's head, while holding the end, or bight, of the line with your left hand. Always use a lead line so you have this 'safety zone' and to prevent getting a hand caught in the halter.

Never wrap any piece of equipment attached to a horse around your hand, even with small loops, as it could wrap around the hand and cause serious injury.

Teach your horse to walk beside you so that you are walking at its left shoulder, with your right elbow near the horse's shoulder so you can anticipate its actions.

Do not let the horse 'walk' you. Do not allow it to get behind you either, as it could jump into you if spooked.

To lead a horse through a doorway, you should step through first, then quickly step to the side out of the horse's way.

Keep an eye on it, as some horses try to rush through narrow spaces.

After you remove the halter, make the horse stand quietly for several seconds before letting it go completely. This will help prevent the horse from developing a habit of bolting away and kicking at you in the process.

Some horses can become sour and begin nipping at you if they anticipate discomfort during grooming. Do not hurry the grooming procedure, especially with a young or spooky horse.

Do not climb over or under the lead line of a tied horse. The horse may pull back and cause you to trip over the line, and you will have no quick escape should the horse lunge forward, paw or try to bite. Never walk under the belly of any horse.

**Working with the horse consider the following:**

**Recognize the hazard. Questions to ask:**

* What is unsafe?
* Who is at risk?
* Are there any unsafe behaviour or conditions?
* Are there any hazards that are not obvious or immediate?
* Can I handle this situation?
* Can my horse handle what I am asking him to?

**Evaluate the hazard. Questions to ask:**

* Why is it a hazardous situation?
* What could happen?
* What is creating the hazard?
* What injuries could occur?
* Are there any pressures that are creating an unsafe condition or behaviour?
* Do I have to go this way?
* Can I take an alternate route?
* Is there a better way to do this?
* Should I dismount?
* How will this horse respond to this situation?

**Control the hazard. Questions to ask:**

* What could be done to prevent the incident from happening?
* What could minimize the risk?
* What could be done to eliminate or minimize the hazard?
* What training do I need to do with my horse to better prepare us for this task?

**This will assist you in doing your hazard assessment for the task at hand**

**SAFE WORK PRACTICES-With Horses -Varied Tasks**

**Working Gates**

*On Foot-fixed gate:*

* Be confident but relaxed
* Choose your path to the gate, be aware of slippery or difficult footing
* As you approach a fixed gate make sure that you keep other horses away
* Keep any other horse from pressing in or crowding you
* Watch for the possibility of being stepped on
* Ensure that the lead shank is not too long and the horse able to step on it
* **NEVER** wrap the lead shank around your hand or place your hand through the loops of shank,
* **NEVER** carry treats or grain into an enclosure or field that has multiple horses in it
* **NEVER** tie the lead shank to any part of your body
* **ALWAYS** bunch the loops in your hand
* As you approach the gate keep other horses back
* Open the gate in the direction of least resistance if possible away from you:
  + Different gate set ups make it impossible to have a hard and fast rule

*Single rider-fixed gate:*

* Choose your approach to the gate and how you will open it
* Don’t reach for the gate as soon as you are near it
* “Set” your horse (get him into position and stand him there) and wait a second or two, this will help to avoid teaching your horse to anticipate the opening of the gate
* The horse needs to follow your direction and cues and not move when he feels you have had enough time at the gate
* If things do not work out you can dismount and work the gate from the ground
* Do not overextend yourself by trying to hold onto the gate with a horse that is moving away from the direction of the gate opening: many stretch, strain, dislocation and fall from horse injuries occur this way
* Don’t sacrifice your balance or your proper seat to
* The added pressure of traffic or approaching cattle will increase the sense of urgency
* Remain calm and confident, give clean clear cues to the horse and do not become agitated: You can always dismount
* Don’t be afraid to let go of the gate

*Multiple riders-fixed gate:*

* When working a gate from horseback with two or more riders leave lots of room between you and the rider handling the gate
* Good spacing of 2-3 horse lengths will avoid jamming up at the gate and reduce the possibility of being pinned or struck by the gate
* Good spacing also alleviates the possibility of the horses “piling up” on each other and creating a wreck
* If you are having trouble working the gate, dismount and work the gate from the ground
* If you are waiting for the gate to be opened don’t heckle the gate opener or create additional stress for them through things you do or say
* When you move through the open gate get far enough through to allow for other riders and lots of room for the gate handler to close the gate
* ALWAYS leave at least one rider to wait for the gate handler
* Failure to do this may cause his or her horse to lose focus and want to follow the others making the task much harder and increasing the possibility of injury
  + This could create bad habits for the handler & his horse in hurrying to “catch up”
* If the gate handler is on a young horse it will be very difficult to keep his horse on task and can create hard to break bad habits
  + If the gate handler has had to dismount it may be difficult for him to remount with his horse anxious not to be left behind
  + **O*h yeah…it’s just good cowboy etiquette!***

*Single rider-wire gate:*

* When opening the gate alone one of your main concerns is keeping the horse from becoming entangled
* Control the gate with one hand and the horse with the other
* If you have dismounted don’t wrap the reins around your hand in case he should start, spook, jump or run off
* “Bunch” the reins in your hand
* Never tie the horse to yourself
* Keeping yourself between the gate and the horse should keep him out of trouble and allow you to do the job
* Close the gate allow the horse enough rein to be well out of the way
* Be sure to take a look back and see what the horse is doing, don’t become too focused on the gate
* If you have a difficult gate and you need two hands:
  + Tie the horse out of the way
  + Work the gate open
  + Retrieve and tie your horse through the gate out of the way
  + Close the gate
* A horse trained to “ground tie” will make this task easier

*Multiple riders-wire gate:*

* Decide which rider will open the gate
* If dismounting:
* Pass the reins to the other rider
* Make sure that you allow yourself plenty of room to open the gate
* The mounted rider needs to keep the horses well back from the gate while it is being opened
* Open the gate wide to allow the horses to easily pass through
* Don’t ride through until the gate is fully open
* When you start to ride through the gate be sure that you have the attention of the horse you are holding this will help you to avoid being jerked back should that horse balk or pull back
* Move well through the gate
* To avoid spooking or startling the horses with the action or noises from the gate handler position yourself so that the horses can see what is happening behind them
* Moving well away from the gate will allow the dismounted rider to get back on the horse without getting caught up in a fence or bushes
* **ALWAYS** ensure that at least one rider waits for the dismounted gate handler and can move off together with them.

**Catching the horse:**

* Enter deliberately, know what you want to do
* Establish dominance and respect
* If using a halter carry it with a hands-free approach, ready to use
* Once close to the horse you have selected reassure and dominate with physical contact
* The lead shank over the horses back or neck create the sense of being caught
* Create a safety pocket by removing horses from your path
* Establish plenty of room to work the gate
* Be aware of the footing and other slipping or tripping hazards
* Be familiar with the halter that you are using, have it properly positioned, ready to put on
* When haltering make sure that you can’t be hit with the horses head if he should lift it quickly
* Always ensure that the horses are aware of your presence
* If using a rope make sure that it is properly coiled and that it is ready to use
* Be aware of the pecking order among the horses in any enclosure you enter
* NEVER carry a bucket of grain or other treats into a group of horses
* Horses are easier to catch in a confined area, it may help in training the horse to be caught to work with them in a catch pen
* Repetition and reward are often used by trainers to make the horse easier to catch
* If the horse is alone in the catch pen treats can be used without jeopardizing your safety
* When approaching the horse to catch him speak softly
* **MAKE SURE THE HORSES ARE AWARE OF YOUR PRESENCE**
* Never make an unannounced or surprise approach to a horse in the blind spot directly behind them
* Move toward his shoulder
* Horses can at times sense motion faster than they can identify what caused the motion
* Horses will respond with a fight or flight instinct
* When catching the horse be aware of your position and alert to the possibility of being stepped on or run over
* Your best safeguard when handling a horse on the ground is to teach him to maintain a respectful distance from your body
* For your safety he must understand that he cannot enter your territory without your permission… and he must understand that you are the boss and you can enter his and he must give ground and be submissive when you do

There are a variety of excellent trainers, training methods and materials available to help you train your horse to be readily caught If you have to enter such a pasture and can feasibly provide multiple buckets place them on the ground allowing space between each to ensure that one horse cannot possibly defend more than one bucket at a time, ideally you will have one bucket for each horse present, Obviously in large remudas this will not work but for those with a few horses that can be hard to catch it will keep you safe while you attend to this

**Leading:**

* Ensure that the horse respects your territory and does not try to walk past you
* You set the pace
* NEVER wrap a lead rope or lead shank around your hand, bunch it
* Be aware that many injuries are the result of being stepped on
* Understand the varied terrain or footing that you and the horse will cross
* NEVER attach the lead ropes to your body
* When handling a strange horse, it is always best to stand to the side, start on the left side slightly ahead of the shoulder
* Use voice commands to walk your horse and stop him

**Leading multiple horses**

* When leading two horses keep them separated by holding one lead in each hand
* Maintain the positions so that one horse does not get a hold of the other
* Bunch the lead rope in each hand
* Before leading more than two horses there are several things to consider:
  + Dominant horse will want to lead and may put you in danger by trying to be in front
  + Observe the horses and know which one you want in each position
* If you are uncomfortable with the combination or number of horses you need to lead consider making several trips
* Be aware of horses that “just don’t get along”

**Turning your horse loose**

* Take care when turning your horse loose also
* Lead him into the stall or pasture turning him around so you have access to the gate or door before you take off the halter
* **REMOVE THE HALTER**
  + No matter how convenient it seems to leave the halter on, many horses have been injured or killed through this practice
* There are many excellent trainers and teaching materials available to assist you in learning to lead well and stay safe

**Tying**

* When tying a horse, know what you are tying to
* Choose a secure object in a safe location
* Never tie to an unhitched trailer, rails or fence planks (especially nail side out)
* Use caution when tying to a vehicle or an attached trailer, be certain that there is not possibility of the vehicle or trailer being moved
* Look for potential hazards and booby traps when selecting the location to tie
* Be aware of electric outlets, fences or other electrically charged hazards
* Don’t tie too close to other horses, be aware of the pecking order that exists or might be challenged
* Make sure the ground is clear of loose wire, broken glass or other hazards
* View the area with a critical eye to see if there are things there that can cause your horse to be hurt or startled resulting in a wreck
* Never tie to anything that the horse could move
* When tying to fences or corrals use the post not the rails
* Tie the horse with enough lead to allow some movement but not enough to get caught up or entangled
* If uncertain as to how high or low to tie a horse a general rule of thumb is to tie at the horse’s eye level
* Practice and use a quick release not
* It is a good practice to always carry a pocket knife that will be suitable to quickly cut the rope should the safety of you or your horse call for that
* When tying a double wrap prior to tying the quick release will avoid the loops closing on your had if the horse pulls back at that critical point where a thumb or finger may be extended through the loop
* Consider quick release snap ties in places where you regularly tie your horse and in your trailer
* The tucked in tail of the lead shank will prevent the horse from untying himself

**Bridling**

* When bridling have the headstall ready on your arm
* Remove the halter from the head, pass it under the neck and do it up over the neck
  + You can leave the halter on although some people say it is like wearing your underpants over your wranglers!
* Stand close to your horse to bridle him…., just behind the head on the near side this will make it harder for the horse to hit you if he swings his head
* Be firm and sure in your actions

Our goal is not to train you in the putting on of a headstall but to focus on keeping anyone from getting hurt while doing this.

Be aware that you could be hurt by being stepped on, banged by the horse’s head, or bit in this process

Seek help from a more experienced rider, widely available books and training materials or a trainer if you need direction in the actual putting on of the bridle

**The Controlled Stop**

* Be comfortable with the ability you have to stop your horse
* Be careful in the selection of a horse, many parents buy way “too much horse” for their children The best way to control a runaway is to never have one
* The horse you select might be a better match if it is one you will “grow out of” rather than one you might “grow into”
* Many would be riders or employees leave jobs out of fear of horses that are simply too much for them to handle
* As a young or new worker if you have a horse in your string or assigned to you that is too much for you or needs more round pen or training time, ensure that you politely convey your concerns to your employer
* As an employer you have a responsibility to try to match the rider to the horse by ability to exercise “due diligence” in trying to maintain a safe work site
* If you must stop a runaway horse try turning the horse back to one side, causing him to bend or flex against himself is better for stopping a runaway than just pulling back on the reins
* Try to remain calm and don’t panic
* Evaluate your risks: if there is an imminent reality in your mind that the horse is going to take you into greater danger… over a cliff, across a freeway or some other extreme …you may need to pick the best spot you can to bail
* Practice this stop in a controlled environment be gentle with your mount
* Be aware that the rapid change in direction may stop the horse but it may also cause him to lose balance and fall

**Saddling:**

* Be sure that the horse is healthy and fit to ride, that he doesn’t have a sore back or other injury
* Groom the horse, tack up in the right order
* ALWAYS do the front cinch up first and undo it last
* Ensure that you have a good fitting saddle and the right combination of pads and blankets
* A well-fitting saddle and good padding will make for a safer ride
* Hold or tie the lead shank of the horse as the need dictates or opportunity presents
* Place the pads then lift the saddle into place, be certain that you are able to properly and safely lift the saddle
* Back injuries are a common injury which occur during saddling
* Keep your gear clean and in good condition be vigilant for wear
* A partially torn or cracked latigo or cinch can cause a serious wreck and injury to the rider
* KNOW how to tie a latigo as well as use the cinch buckle
* Check your tack often and know what it is supposed to do, can do and what it cannot do
* Understand what equipment you have and know how to use it
* Don’t ask more of the equipment than it is capable of

**Mounting:**

* Understand the need for the horse to be two sided you may be in a very unsafe position if your horse is on a steep side hill or a narrow trail and you need to mount or dismount and he can only handle that on one side, train for this
* The horse should be trained to stand while you mount, this will go a long way toward ensuring that you do not become dragged or stepped on in the mounting process
* Both of the demonstrated methods provide a safe means of getting onto your horse, practice and become comfortable with the one that works for you
* Children and shorter riders need to be aware of the increased danger they are in when they mount as they often are in positions that extend their bodies along the horse’s length or hang out from the horse placing them at greater risk for being kicked or for the horse moving off on them
  + Step ups or natural helps should be utilized as often as possible to minimize this increased risk, a well-mannered horse trained to accept the rider and to stand will go a long way toward managing some of this risk
* Training the horse to stand will assist all riders in a safer mount
* Mount deliberately and with confidence, use smooth bottomed heeled riding boots
* Get up and get on… when dismounting be smooth and get off
* When dismounting, don’t swing out away from the horse
* Keep your body in close and well-centered over him

**Stalls:**

* Make sure that the horse respects you, backing up to allow your entry into a stall or paddock
* Use caution when approaching a horse in a confined area or space
* Ensure the horse is aware of your presence, even if entering the stall for a reason other than dealing with the horse
* Speak to the horse in a calm confident voice, touch the horse from a safe position to make sure that he knows where you are
* A horse in a small tie stall may be best approached on one side over another, know this and approach accordingly
* Make certain that the horse is yielding to your presence, hand and voice cues to avoid being crushed in the stall
* Use extreme caution if the confined horse is agitated or upset in any way
* Be aware of the positioning of horses in stalls or paddocks, don’t mix stallions and mares in these types of confined areas unless you have well designed facilities specifically constructed to enable them to be close yet ensure the safety of handlers and workers
* Always have an out, prior to entering the stall be sure of where you will go to escape if things go bad
* Knowing where you want the horse to go, whether to back out or turn will avoid confusion and fear in the horse
* Keep your facilities clean and free of debris

**Crossing Water:**

* When crossing water pick your route carefully
* Try not to stop half way
* Allow room between yourself and other riders
* Allow the horse to investigate the water and lead him across if necessary
* Understanding that horses have very poor depth perception can help a rider understand why the horse does not want to cross
* Use every opportunity to establish trust with your horse, ask him to go through puddles you encounter rather than around, it is a small thing but it all helps with the trust and water crossings
* Before attempting to cross water make sure your horse has the following foundation skills:
  + Stands quietly when tied
  + Moves forward, backward and stops on cue.
  + Yields laterally to direct rein pressure in both directions
  + Confidently approaches unfamiliar objects and obstacles
* Keep the horse facing the water
* Find the best possible route to cross, look for firm bottom, shallow with large rocks or boulders
* Consider the exit side also, try to select an easy out
* Avoid log jams, deep pools
* If the water is deeper and the horse begins to swim do not fight him give him his head as much as possible
* If a known difficult crossing is anticipated bring a life jacket
* Do not swim horses that are tied together
* If the horse enters deeper water and panics or begins to roll- push away until he finds his swimming legs

**Hills:**

* Maintain good balance and a good seat position
* Notice obstacles before hand
* Pick your route with regard for the horse you are on
* Understand the limitations of both you and your horse
* Consider the ground cover and footing you will encounter
* Make sure that your abilities and those of your horse are up to the task
* Know your horse and understand how he wants to take the hill
* When going downhill keep your speed under control
* Pick the route down
* Stop occasionally if you need to get control of the speed
* A zig zag route can help you to maintain control and select a safe route down
* Maintain your balance uphill or down positioning yourself in the saddle to assist the free movement of the horse
* Remember he doesn’t want to fall any more than you do
* Know how the horse is shod, consider the climate and the terrain
* Know when to get off the horse and lead him up or down a slop
* When multiple riders approach the slope don’t bunch up
* Know how your horse and others will take the hill
* Don’t “tailgate”
* Don’t expect too much, is your horse tired, carrying a heavy load, in shape
* Don’t overwork the horse, watch for sweating on the sides and heavy heaves
* Keep your cool, be confident

**Horse Interaction:**

* When meeting with a rider who may be leading other horses or a pack string it is important to make the other rider and the horses aware of your approach
* Be deliberate and position yourself where the other horses can easily observe you
* Encounters should be well announced with a quiet calm voice
* If you are joining up with another rider make certain that the rider sees you
* If circumstances or opportunity require the use of hobbles or picket lines be cautious in determining the position of each horse
* Once an arrangement is determined that works don’t vary the positions of the horses
* Keep horses that are familiar and get along as close together as possible
* Carry a pocket or other knife to enable cutting of ropes in case of emergency
* Be careful about the placement and height of the picket line, a line that is too low will enable the horses to step over it and a wreck is likely

**Roping:**

* Get your horse prepared
* Reset your saddle if it has been awhile since you roped an animal
* Consider the animal you will be roping
* Have the back cinch a little tighter when roping
* Keep your rope in good condition
* NEVER get on the horse with the rope over the saddle horn
* Get the rope up out of your way when you mount
* Consider dropping your rope when dismounting or do the reverse of getting on
* You do not want to get a foot caught in the rope when mounting or risk the horse stepping out and the rope being entangled while hanging on the horn
* Approach the herd applying gentle pressure and low stress handling technique
* Take your time “cowboying is not a timed event” “slow is fast”
* Movement among the cattle should be slow and deliberate
* Select an area where you would prefer to work an animal
* When possible move the animal with the horse by allowing slack in the rope after the catch and entering and exiting the flight zone as able
* Be comfortable with the rope on the ground and be comfortable on the horse without the rope before ever trying to combine the two
* “If in doubt don’t”
* “Get a read on the animal you’re working with prior to stepping down”
* “Be prepared, have your horse and equipment prepared”
* Practice and be familiar with your dally
  + “Dally’n should be like holding a cup of water” - Stan Jacobs
* “You don’t want to be looking down at your dally”
* Stay focused on the task at hand
* Don’t tie onto something you are not certain you can handle
* Advance your roping skills through practice in a controlled environment
* Be willing to learn from others, from training material and clinicians
* Make sure that someone knows where you are, what you are doing and when to expect you back.
* The higher the risk the shorter the check in time
* Many injuries occur to hands and fingers when roping
* Wearing tight fitting protective gloves when roping can reduce hand injuries
* Remember that you can always let go if it looks like you’re going to get in a wreck
* If you are in the habit of tying fast you increase your risk level but you can still get out of a wreck if you have a knife

**Shoeing:**

* Shoeing is a specialized skill that requires hands on instruction and training……..
* Workers who are called upon to shoe their own horses need to gain instruction and then experience in a controlled environment
* It may be a benefit to take a farrier course or spend time with a trained professional
* Working in an uncluttered secure area will make the task safer
* Know the horse you are working with
* Be aware that there are many strain, and muscle injuries associated with shoeing
* Deep cuts can often occur when shoeing especially if the horse pulls back with a partially driven or exposed nail extending from the hoof
  + “ringing off” your nails as you drive them through will prevent many cuts

**Working Smart**

* Make sure that your equipment is prepared and that if you are going to head up the rope on an animal take a read on it
* Is the horse agitated, look at his ears eyes, head high or low does he look relaxed
* Make sure you have the right gear……..and only the right gear
* Don’t try to look “punchy” using equipment that you don’t understand
* If you ride with a mecarte make sure it will release from your belt
* Check your footing at all times, if it is slippery be sure that you can kick out of the stirrup quickly
* Be alert and aware to the area you are riding in, look for potential hazards, exposed wire, gopher holes
* Put the right rider and the right horse on the job
* -don’t be offended at the job you’ve been asked to do…just do it well
* “Cowboyin is not a timed event” “slow is fast”
* Understand your horses attitude

**Working Attitudes**

* Assign tasks according to the ability of the horse and the rider
* Don’t be afraid to point out a task that you are not comfortable with
* Ranch and rodeo work are totally different, leave the rodeo at the arena
* Use low stress cattle handling techniques to reduce animal stress and increase efficiency
* Try to understand the animal’s natural tendencies and use them to your advantage… Understand resistance rather than just “fighting through it”
* Have a first aid kit available for you or your horse
* Communicate the objectives
* If possible and if you have a rider who is unfamiliar with the country put him with someone who is
* “Attitude is the most important thing in preventing injury on the ranch” - Mark Grafton

**Working Together**

* Supplementary Information & Review
* Make a plan… share the plan
* Make sure that you have a system of communication
* Use a man check system, know where you are and where others are at
* Increase the frequency of the checks if you are engaged in a higher risk activity
* Not yelling and putting down employees or family can help to create a more enjoyable and safer workplace

**Trailering: Small trailer**

*Preparing You & Your Horse for Travel*

The preparation of any horse for the travel experience will contribute to your safety and enjoyment and that of your equine friend.

Practice loading and unloading the horse in the trailer well in advance of any scheduled events, especially if the horse is unfamiliar with trailering.

Some seasoned horse owners join experts in recommending you trailer your horse in leather rather than a nylon halter. In an emergency situation the leather halter will break more readily and is less likely to burn or injure the horses’ head

Consider wrapping the horses’ legs for travel. This not only protects the legs from injury but also adds support. (It is important to ensure that the wraps extend below the coronet band to protect this area.)

If hauling in an open trailer or truck consider making ready the horse for the trip with eye protection specifically designed, a fly mask will prevent some debris from entering the eye and afford some protection from the wind. Consider the wellbeing of your horse before ever undertaking this mode of travel

Be aware of both weather and road conditions, ensure that the trip is “doable” given the anticipated forecast

If you anticipate a longer trip, ensure you have considered rest spots that will accommodate you and your horse

Remember when traveling between provinces or countries that travel regulations and veterinary requirements may differ, check well ahead to ensure adequate time to secure such things as your horses’ lab results and all applicable paperwork. Do you need a manifest?

*Loading the Horse*

If possible, and especially if you are new at trailering, and lack experience handling horses, have two people available to do the job. This is always a consideration when loading a horse that is either new to trailering or new to you.

Cotton or leather lead ropes should be used when loading or unloading. This is advisable should the horse pull back quickly for some reason drawing the lead through your hands. Nylon leads are more likely to cut, burn and blister. *NEVER* wrap the lead around your hand or fingers.

Examine the trailer before walking the horse in. Ensure chest bars and escape doors are open and available for the handler to exit safely.

Do not climb over or under dividers, chest bars, or the horse, to exit the trailer. Avoid being trapped in the trailer with the horse between you and the exit

Ensure the trailer is securely and properly hitched to the tow vehicle before loading a horse. Never load a horse or leave a horse in an unhitched trailer, and do not unhitch the trailer with the horse inside

When loading a single horse, place the horse on the left (drivers) side of the trailer. When trailering two horses side by side, place the heavier horse on the left side. This makes towing easier and smoother because of the crown contour of roadways. (your tires will last longer too!)

If you use a ramp approach with the horse in the center of the ramp so that the horse does not step off the sides.

**ALWAYS** secure the butt bar/chain before tying the horse’s head. If the horse pulls back before the butt bar is in place it won’t break the lead, fall down or hurt itself. Horses have incredible memories when it comes to bad experiences! The safest way to load your new horse is patiently and slowly, remember in most work with livestock Slow IS Fast. You may be able to get “any horse in any trailer” but can it be done more than once to the same horse? They will remember only the last trailering experience, for the safety of you and your horse make it a good one!

**NEVER** stand directly behind the horse when attaching the butt bar or chain

Secure the horses head with a quick release knot or fastener. Ensure that the horse has enough rope length to permit head movement, as this is essential for balance.

The lead or tie must be short enough to ensure the horse is not able to put its head down or over to the horse traveling alongside.

*Trailering: Stock trailer*

* Decide the order the horses will be loaded
* If it is your practice secure the horse
* One person and one horse at a time into the trailer
* If you transport unrestrained use caution when opening the door to get the horses out
* Untying the horses from the outside when at the destination can prevent “pull back”
* Keep dogs aware if there is any concern
* Don’t clog up the exit move well away
* Know how your employer loads and unloads. This is very important to understand the manner in which your employer loads and unloads. Observe a demonstration of this.
* Consider the temperament, attitude, demeanor and personality of the horses you are hauling and determine the order you will put them in
* Consider who you might be dropping where and place the horses with this in mind

**Pasture Doctoring:**

* Be certain that those you are working with understand the plan, know where you will take the herd or the animal that you wish to attend to
* Stressed cattle will require 20-30 minutes to calm down
* Low stress handling techniques pay off in animal wellbeing, manageability of the herd, reduced loss due to stress
* Consider where you want to doctor the animal
* Check and reset the saddle
* Ensure readily accessible medications, some cowboys have all they need in a bag which can be easily passed from one to another with all you need in one place
* This is not a timed event
* Shake out your loop and move quietly through the herd, moving the loop will ensure it does not get hung up on a spur or other things
* When possible use the horse to move the animal to a good location for you to work
* Communicate with others who are working with you
* Do your job and pay attention whether you are roping or an outrider, whatever the assignment stay alert
* On the ground work off of the downed animals back wherever possible
* Secure the animal with tie downs
* Be aware of the danger presented by the needles
* Keep an eye on the herd, don’t become so focused that you fail to
* Observe an encroaching or protective herd
* Ensure that you are tied off securely however you choose to do this
* Maintain heels when releasing, ensure everyone is clear prior to letting the animal up
* Communicate your actions what you want and where you are going