

# HORSE SAFETY RULES

*By Barbara Kostelnik*

## **NEVER SURPRISE A HORSE!!**

Don't touch a horse suddenly or without warning; don't make sudden noises or movements and don't throw or flap things around. Always let the horse know where you are and what you are doing. Allow them to see you as much as possible. Approach a horse from the front at an angle so that you are not in a "blind spot" directly behind or in front of the horse.

## **ALWAYS KNOW WHERE EACH PART OF THE HORSE'S BODY IS AND WHAT IT'S DOING.**

Know where a horse's feet are and anticipate where they are going to put them next. Everyone gets stepped on sometimes, but it doesn't have to be a catastrophe. When you are stepped on, don't pull it right out from under the horse's hoof; this causes more damage. Instead, try to push the horse's weight off of you and ask for help if you can't get the horse to move.

## **KNOW THE HORSE'S WARNING SIGNS.**

Wide eyes and sharply forward ears, curved (arched) neck and snorts are signs of fear. Flat back ears, narrow or wide eyes, and tight or curled lips are signs of anger. Ears pointed toward you, calmly, means the horse is paying attention to you. We want this!

## **ALWAYS TIE ANYTHING AROUND HORSES WITH A QUICK-RELEASE KNOT IN CASE OF EMERGENCY.**



Learn how to tie a quick-release knot. Practice it! In case of an emergency, a quick-release knot will allow for easy removal and could save you or your horse's life!

## **NEVER WRAP OR LOOP ANYTHING AROUND YOUR HAND OR ANY OTHER PART OF YOUR BODY.**

Learn how to gather up the long parts of ropes, leads, and reins safely. Looping it through your hand, rather than wrapping it around your hand, allows it to slide through without hurting or possibly dragging you.



## **DO A "PREFLIGHT CHECK" BEFORE MOUNTING.**

Check that your tack is all in good shape and securely fastened, especially the cinch or girth. At the bottom of the horse's belly, insert two fingers on top of each other at the front of the girth or cinch. They should fit snugly. If they don't fit, the strap is too tight. Make sure you clean your horse's hooves, checking for stones.

## **WHEN YOU TURN A HORSE LOOSE, BE SURE ITS HEAD IS FACING YOU.**

Make sure you have room to move away, in case it spins around and runs off with a playful kick. When you leave, back away, keeping an eye on the horse. Never say "goodbye" to the back end of a horse.