

Right from the Start

Outline

Horses

Characteristics

- Quick
- Agile
- Biters
- Attentive
- Expressive
- Very wide field of vision
 - 65 degrees of binocular vision- both eyes are used together
 - 285 degrees of monocular vision-each eye is used separately
- Blind spots: directly behind, under the neck, and under the belly
- Good night vision
- Good sense of hearing
- Acute sense of smell
- Great sense of balance
- Well-developed sense of touch
- Advanced sense of taste
- Long-term project
 - Teach them respect.
 - A good working relationship is important.

Danger Points

- Body Mass
 - The animal's size presents a crushing risk. Handlers can be crushed between an animal and a stationary object like a fence, building or trailer.
- Feet
 - Horses can step on a person's feet.
 - Horses can kick with great power. They can kick directly behind their bodies and to the side.
 - Maintain 1 horse length between exhibitors in the show ring to minimize kicking and stepping-on risks.
 - Kicking risks increase when a handler works near the back end of the animal.



- Kicking risks decrease when the animal is aware of the handler's presence, the handler stays close to the animal with a hand on the animal's body at all times, and the handler remains calm.
- Teeth
 - Horses can nip or bite handlers.

Horse Selection

- When selecting a horse consider the following:
 - Temperament
 - Conformation
 - Riding discipline
 - Cost
 - Gender
 - Breed
 - Skill level of the handler and the horse
 - Age of the handler and the horse
 - Size of the handler and the horse



Equipment

- Rope or nylon halter
- Show halter
- Cotton lead rope
- Grooming tools
- A trailer will be necessary to transport the horse to and from the show.



Safety

- Always approach an animal slowly and calmly toward the shoulder.
- Be aware of blind spots:
 - Under the neck
 - Directly behind
 - Under the belly
- Handlers should always have adult supervision.
- Ensure an appropriate match between the horse and handler.
- Abandon the project if it becomes unsafe for the handler or animal.

Acclimatization

- Acclimation and exposure to different people, places, sounds and images will help desensitize an animal and make it less likely to spook.
- Acclimatize animals to people of different ages, sizes and genders. Children have faster, sharper motions than adults and can be perceived as predators, like wolves and coyotes, due to their size.
- Expose animals to different environments, i.e. barns, pastures, pens, wash racks, etc.
- Play music around the animal to acclimate it to different sounds. There will be many different sounds at a fair that could frighten the animal if it is un-acclimatized.
- Take animals to small shows first.
- Expose the animal to areas of bright and dim lighting. Use flash photography around the animal.

Haltering

- Approach the animal slowly and calmly.
- Ensure that the animal is aware of your presence.
- Do not linger in danger zones, i.e. behind the animal.
- Use the lead rope to control the horse during haltering and un-haltering.
- Do not get wrapped up in the halter or lead rope.
- Allow horse to put its nose in the halter.
- Each animal will train at its own pace.
- Be patient. Halter breaking can be a slow process.
- Plan frequent, short training sessions, rather than a few, long training sessions.
- It is important to make each training exercise a positive experience.
- Use washing, rinsing and grooming to get the animal used to touch.

Leading

- The handler should stand even with the horse's neck.
- The lead rope should be about 9-12 feet long.
 - Right hand holds the lead rope close to the snap.



- Left hand holds excess rope in a loose coil or folded.
- Do not wrap the lead rope around the hand.
- Do not let the lead rope dangle. It poses a tripping risk.
- The handler should pivot the horse away from them to reduce the tripping risk.
 - The handler may be asked to pivot the horse toward their own bodies in turns of less than 90 degrees at a show.

Footing

- Good footing helps the animal feel secure.
- Footing also impacts the handler's level of control.
- Footing is important for the handler's and the animal's stability.
- Dirt or shavings can be used to establish a good footing.
- Pavement does not provide an appropriate footing.
- Move animals slowly when good footing is not available.
- Handlers should wear non-slip shoes that completely cover their feet.

Grooming

- Make the animal aware of your presence.
- Grooming is helpful in the gentling process.
- All handlers should work from the same side of the animal to leave an escape route for the animal.
- Pull the tail to the side for grooming rather than standing behind the horse.

Lifting the Feet

- Keep a hand on the horse at all times.
- Stand to the horse's side, not behind the horse.
- The hoof pick should be pointed away from the handler's body.
- When picking hooves, don't hover over the hoof or put your face in front of the hoof.
- Be slow and gentle.
- Keep your feet out of the way as you set the horse's foot back down.

Wash Rack

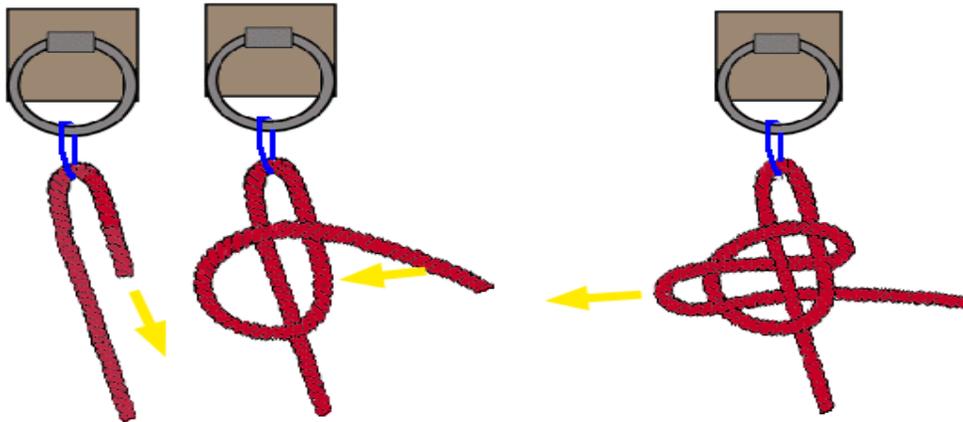
- Ensure good footing for the horse and the handler.
- Identify an escape route in case the horse is frightened.

Tying

- Never use bridle reins to tie a horse.
- Tie horses with a halter and cotton lead rope.
- Tie animals to a sturdy, stable object.
- Tie horses at the eye level, above the withers.
- Allow only 18-24 inches of slack.



- Use a slip knot so you can untie the animal quickly in case of an emergency.



Maintaining Control

- Handlers can maintain control of their horse through the following actions:
 - Varying the horse's speed
 - Pivoting the horse
 - Stopping the horse
 - Backing the horse up

Escape Route

- Identify an escape route in every environment where you handle an animal.
- Do not enter small enclosed areas with livestock.
- Tie and untie animals from the opposite side of a fence if necessary.