



RUNNING DEER. WORKING WITH HORSES POLICY

Reviewed 23/2/24

Date for renewal 01/02/25

CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

Sensible clothes should always be worn when dealing with horses. Sturdy boots **MUST** be worn, and gloves should be worn when handling horses and when turning out or bringing in from the pasture. Protective clothing should be fitted correctly and purchased new from a reputable retailer which has up to date product knowledge and fitting skills (e.g. riding hats must be certified).

Hard hats must be worn at ALL times whilst working with horses.

When working around horses, the wearing of jewellery should be avoided. Earrings, other piercings and finger rings are easily caught and can either break or cause injury.

UNDERSTANDING HORSES

A horse's behaviour should never be taken for granted – even the oldest and quietest horse can behave unpredictably at times. A horse's natural instinct dictates either “fight or flight” as a defence reaction if feeling threatened. When around horses, the following should be remembered:

- Be confident – a horse takes confidence from a confident handler
- Set fair and realistic ground rules and stick to them consistently
- Be alert and plan ahead – consider how the horse is likely to react, and take positive action before the horse becomes alarmed
- Seek help and guidance – there is always something new to learn about horses, so do not cope alone
- Think “prevention” - complacency causes accidents so don't take unnecessary risks

- Be insured – public liability insurance is essential for all horse owners, keepers or riders for claims that may be made against them in the event of an accident
- Be calm and quiet. Sudden moves or loud noises can cause a horse to shy (jump sideways) or kick out
- The safest way to lead a horse is with a halter and lead rope. Don't hook your fingers through the halter straps, rings or the bit. If the horse pulls away, your fingers could be caught, injuring them or catching your hand so that you are dragged
- Never stand directly behind a horse. If you are grooming its tail, stand to one side and pull the tail gently towards you
- When cleaning a horse's hooves, don't squat or kneel. Bend over so that if the horse moves, you can get out of the way quickly
- Never loop lead ropes, longe lines or reins around your hands or any other body part. If your horse pulls away, you could be dragged. Don't tie yourself to a horse in any way
- We do not permit the feeding of treats to our horses
- Wear sturdy shoes or boots that will protect your feet if your horse or pony steps on them. No sandals, flip-flops or thin shoes
- When tying, use a quick release knot or panic snap so that if the horse gets scared and pulls, he can quickly be freed. The feeling of being constrained can make a scared horse panic to the point of hurting himself or yourself or yourself
- The safest place to stand is beside a horse's shoulder where you can see each other, or about 10 or more feet away unless you are grooming, tacking up or otherwise interacting with a horse
- When grooming or cleaning the horse's stable, tie the horse up. A loose horse in a barn can cause havoc. Do not leave a tied horse unattended. While mucking out, it's safest if the horse is turned out or put in another stall
- When going through a gateway, make sure the gate is wide open so the horse doesn't hit itself on it. This can startle the horse and result in you being trampled or dragged. If the gate is narrow, go through first, make the horse wait, and then have it go through after you as you stand to the side.

ON THE YARD

On all yards, human and equine first aid kits should be readily available and someone on the yard should be qualified in first aid practice. All keepers and visitors should be familiar with accident procedures and know what action to take in the event of an emergency.

FIRST AID KIT LOCATIONS: Tack area to barn, Welfare trailer (staff room)

Understanding prevention and how to minimise the risk of accidents is essential, and best practice should be the norm. Safety procedures and a list of emergency contact numbers should be displayed prominently on the yard and programmed into the mobile phones of riders in case of accidents when out riding. An emergency list should include details of the yard manager, a veterinary surgeon, doctor, farrier, the local police and the fire brigade.

Main yard gates should be kept closed at all times to reduce the risk of a loose horse escaping onto the road. Stable doors should be fastened securely and areas to which horses have access should be free from obstructions and any surfaces that may cause an accident or injury.

ON THE GROUND

All horses should be taught to understand basic commands and to respond accordingly. They should be taught to stand still and walk clear of the handler when being led from either side. The handler should wear gloves when leading, and lead ropes or lunge lines should not be wrapped around the hand or permitted to trail on the ground.

Horses should be tied up when being groomed or tacked-up, even in a stable. This enables the handler to move quietly and confidently around the horse, without the danger of being trapped in a corner.

When tied, a horse should be wearing a well-fitting head collar, with the lead rope secured through a loop of string attached to the tying-up ring. If a horse panics and pulls back forcefully, the string will break, minimising the chance of the animal slipping over and being injured. A horse should not be tied by any other means. Attaching the rope to the bit or tying the horse by its reins may cause serious injury and long-term fear.

A handler should be aware of the safest position to adopt for the task being carried out. Standing directly behind or in front of a horse can increase the risk of being injured should the horse strike out with its limb. When holding a horse that is being clipped or treated by a veterinary surgeon or farrier, the handler should stand on the same side as the attendant.

When attending to a horse's feet and legs (such as when applying boots or bandages), the handler should bend beside the horse (not kneel or sit), enabling quick reaction should the need arise.

Care should be taken when lifting a horse's leg. When picking up a hind leg, the handler's arm should rest in front of the animal's cannon bone. If a horse pulls the leg away the handler can take preventative measures and will be less likely to be kicked.

To remove a head collar when turning a horse loose in the field or stable, the horse should first be led into the turnout area and then turned around to face the door or gate before being released. This will minimise the chances of the handler being trampled or kicked by an excited animal.

Feeding horses in a field or taking a bucket of food to catch a particular horse in an area where several animals are being kept can pose a significant risk of aggression and injury to both horses and handlers.

ON THE ROAD

Leading out horses on roads demands both common sense and road sense. All road users have a legal duty to care for other users and should be conversant with the Highway Code.

Staff and young people should be observant and acknowledge careful drivers. Both hands should be on the lead rope to maintain control at all times. Staff should inform a third party details of their planned route and the time at which they expect to return.

It is essential to wear fluorescent and reflective gear at all times when walking on roads – particularly in poor weather. Leading out in poor visibility (heavy rain, fog or at dawn and dusk) should be avoided. On a bright, sunny day a horse and walking can be equally difficult to spot, owing to the contrast of light and shade, and the glare and reflection from the sun. Irrespective of conditions, it should never be taken for granted that the driver of an approaching vehicle has seen the horse and walker.

ACTION IN THE EVENT OF A ROAD ACCIDENT

In accidents involving cars and horses, Running Deer staff should know what action to take and should report accidents and also any near misses to the local police.

If an accident occurs:

- prevent further accidents and risk of injury by warning approaching traffic
- summon professional help and emergency services
- apply basic first aid (to humans and horses) until the help arrives
- inform the police if there are horses loose on the road