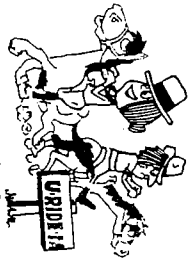


ABC OF Riding Horses

and Riding Techniques
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Horseback riding has become one of the country's largest outdoor recreational activities. There were less than four million horses in the United States in 1955. The number had nearly doubled by 1972 and according to a study committee of the National Academy of Sciences, may again double by 1982.

It is estimated that approximately 90% of all horses today are maintained for recreational purposes—mostly for riding. All of which means numerous new people are taking up the sport of horseback riding daily. It is hoped that this pamphlet will help make riding a more enjoyable recreation, especially for those who are beginners.

RIDING

There are two reasons for giving your riding horse kindly, humane treatment. One is the normal human instinct to be kind to animals. The other is your own safety and comfort.

The key to any safe, pleasant horseback ride is a contented, relaxed horse, and this can be possible only if the rider makes it so. There is a feeling among experienced horsemen that "If I take care of my horse, he will take care of me, and if I do not take care of him, he cannot take care of me."

The purpose of this pamphlet is to set forth some simple guidelines on how to take care of your horse, keep him contented, comfortable and relaxed, and thus assure safe, pleasant riding for you.

WHY ACCIDENTS HAPPEN

Most accidents with horses are man-made. It is a rare horse that will intentionally hurt a person. However, horses, like man, when abused will attempt to avoid the abuse or fight back in self-protection. If his equipment is ill-fitting, he is likely to buck, bite or lie down. If his rider is abusive with spurs, whip or jerking reins, he is likely to buck, run sideways blindly, spin or jump up and down rather than walk. If he is startled by a person or another horse approaching, especially from behind, he is very likely to kick.

The horse that will not walk under saddle may just be full of exuberance, especially on a cold day,

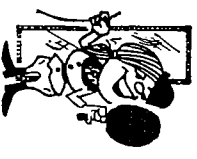
but usually something is annoying him—an ill-fitting saddle, a tight bridle, too much pressure or pulling on the reins, a careless rider in awkward positions, strong wind, a talkative, noisy rider or more often a horse following so closely he occasionally gets his heels stepped on. When this happens, he is quite likely to kick the horse and rider behind him.

The most frequent cause of accidents is a rider urging a horse to do something the horse cannot do safely. For example, if forced to walk on ice or made to trot, move or turn quickly on pavement or slippery ground, he will frequently lose his footing and fall. If forced to take an obstacle he cannot quite make, he will frequently dislodge his rider by either abruptly stopping or crashing through the obstacle and stumbling or falling down. Also, in crossing areas of treacherous footing, such as bogs, many horses will panic, jump, run or lunge and lose footing, even fall down in their fear of being trapped or entangled.

Horseback riding, of course, does involve a certain amount of risk, but with a little training and common sense, most hazards can be avoided. Certainly, you would not jump into a river for a swim before someone had explained the fundamentals and you had learned to swim. By the same token, it is utterly impossible on your part to attempt to ride or work with a horse before receiving basic instruction from a qualified person. Remember, the neck you risk is your own; your best insurance is a comfortable, contented horse.

BEFORE YOU RIDE

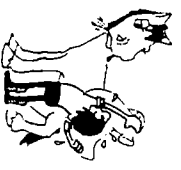
First, get dressed in reasonably loose-fitting, comfortable riding clothes, adequate to protect you from the weather as well as from trees and brush. Second, select a well-fitting and comfortable saddle and other horse equipment (new equipment is seldom comfortable). Discomfort, tenseness and irritability on the part of the rider are immediately reflected in the horse and he will usually react in the same terms, thus adding to the discomfort.



Next, observe your horse. Approach him slowly and from the left side. Speak to him so that he is aware of your presence. He should appear to be normal, alert and ready to go. He should stand, walk evenly on all four feet and show no signs of lameness. He should be thoroughly groomed, either in his stall or at the saddling area. During the grooming, examine his back for abrasions and sore spots. Also back, he should receive veterinary attention and not be ridden.

The saddle blanket on pad is next. First, shake it to dislodge dirt and hair, then examine and remove any burrs, sticks or foreign objects that may have become attached. Place the blanket well forward, then slide it back to smooth the hair and position it on the horse's back to receive the saddle.

SADDLING COMES NEXT



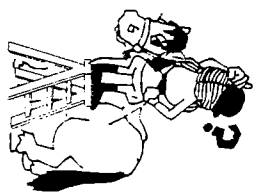
Lay the right stirrup and cinches over the seat of the saddle. Then, standing near the left shoulder of the horse with the front end of the saddle in your left hand and the rear end in your right hand, lift the saddle over and gently settle it on the saddle blanket. Go to the right side of the horse, lower and straighten the right stirrup, cinches and saddle strings. See that the saddle blanket is evenly distributed on both sides, is free of wrinkles and protrudes two or three inches in front of the saddle. Return to the left side—re-check and slide the left hand under the blanket over the withers (to avoid blanket pressure after the saddle is cinched). Then, *fasten the front cinch first*. It should be quite snug, yet loose enough so that a flat hand may be easily inserted between the cinch and the horse's side. The back cinch should be slightly looser.

BRIDLING IS NEXT

Remove the halter from his head and temporarily fasten it around his neck. Standing near the left shoulder with the top of the bridle in the right hand held near the horse's forehead and the bit in the left hand, insert the bit in the horse's mouth, then slip the head strap over the left ear, then the right. If he refuses to open his mouth to receive the bit, extend a finger between the lips into the side of the mouth and push down on the jaw in the space between the front and back teeth. The bridle should be adjusted to where the bit causes a very slight pucker on the edge of the lips. Remember to check the curb strap or chain—it should be snug enough so that light or moderate pressure is exerted when the reins are pulled. If it is too loose, it is useless in controlling the horse, also, it may pinch the lips and irritate the horse. If the strap is too tight, it will cause unnecessary pressure and pain to the horse—which he will resist and fight. If two fingers can easily be slipped between the chin and curb strap, it is probably correctly adjusted. Remember to offer your horse a drink of water before mounting.

MOUNTING IS NEXT

Lead your horse around for several steps to allow him to feel and adjust to the equipment. (Horses saddled and mounted cold without moving are likely to fall over backward or buck when mounted.) Lead him into an open space away from other horses and obstacles, re-check the cinch and then mount from the left side. Do not jam the foot all the way into the stirrup because it may wedge if you fall or the horse moves quickly. Always hold the reins snugly in the left hand to prevent the horse from moving while you mount. Hold the left rein shorter than the right so that if the horse moves, he must circle towards you rather than turn away in a position to run or kick. Require your horse to stand quietly while you mount and for a few seconds thereafter while you adjust in the saddle. If you experience difficulty, ask someone to hold your horse while you mount.



RIDING

At the start of a ride, a horse should be walked for at least ten minutes. This allows him to warm up and relax. He should be walked at least the last fifteen minutes of any ride—longer if he is hot—so that he will be cool, dry and ready for unsaddling and grooming on arrival. Otherwise, he should be led ten to fifteen minutes after unsaddling to avoid chills and cramps.

The first criteria for pleasant riding is to be comfortable and safe in the saddle. To accomplish this, a few riding lessons from a qualified instructor are essential. Slouching down, feet forward, relaxed and positioned in a saddle as though it were a rocking chair may seem most comfortable—for a time. However, any seasoned rider knows that the more erect your posture, the more you equalize your weight on your feet, legs and seat, the more secure you will be and the less tiring the ride.

To get the most pleasant ride, alternate walking with trotting or other slow gaits. Cantering is safe and pleasant on some horses, but not all. Many will try to gallop and run away rather than canter quietly. A horse must be kept under control at all times. If he shows any inclination to run or get out of control, pull him back to a walk immediately. Failing in this, take a firm short hold on the left rein and turn him in a small circle until he slows to a walk.

Contrary to the impression created on the television screen, horses cannot gallop indefinitely. Many a willing horse has been physically ruined

because an ignorant rider forced or allowed him to run beyond his capability—which for the usual riding horse not in racing condition is usually only two or three hundred yards. Experienced riders rarely race or even gallop their horses except when necessary to accomplish their task. Unnecessary racing or galloping especially on bridle paths is recognized among horsemen as the mark of ignorance or carelessness.

As you ride, the reins should be relaxed. Do not pull continuously or jerk on the horse's mouth. Use the reins as a means of communication and control—never as a means to maintain your balance in the saddle. If you feel insecure, keep one hand on the saddle horn or front of the saddle. Most experienced riders ride with one, even both hands, on the saddle horn much of the time for safety, as well as for comfort and ease. Do not ride too closely to a horse in front of you because he is likely to kick your horse or you and break a leg. If you cannot look down between your horse's ears and see the hind feet of the horse walking ahead of you, you are in the danger zone.

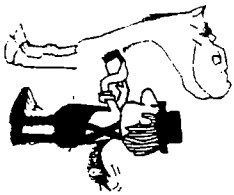
If your horse seems tired or is breathing too fast, give him short rest stops. If he is restless and seems annoyed, try to determine what his problem is. If he seems lame, dismount and examine his feet for injuries, wedged stones or lost shoes. When riding on highways or motor roads, always ride on the left side facing on-coming traffic. Most state laws require this because a horse is much less likely to step or jump in front of an automobile coming toward him where he can see it than one coming from behind where he cannot see it.

AFTER YOU RIDE

Dismount and lead the horse to the saddling spot. Fasten the halter around his neck. Then, standing near his left shoulder, take the reins and top of the bridle in the left hand, slide it forward over his ears and hold it at his forehead until he drops the bit from his mouth. (If you drop your left hand and bridle first, he will throw his head upward and injure his mouth on the bit.) Next, adjust the halter on his head—then unfasten the hind cinch and breast plate, if used. Always unfasten the *front cinch last*. Place the saddle and blanket where they will dry and wash the bridle bit and hang the bridle in a clean place. Clean other tack, if needed.

If your horse is dry, cool and breathing normally at the end of the ride, he is ready for unsaddling and grooming. If not, he should be led at a slow walk until he is cool and dry. If a horse has been ridden long and sweats much in hot weather, it is beneficial to wash the area of the back covered by the saddle with cold water immediately after unsaddling. The entire body of a horse should not be washed while he is hot or during cool weather. In fact such washing is

not a good grooming method. Dry rubbing with a brush and rubber curry comb is preferred and will result in a much brighter, glossier hair coat.



After the horse is thoroughly cool, groomed and examined for injuries and sore spots, he is ready for his stall or pen and feed and water. He should receive water before feed and hay before grain. It is best not to water or feed for at least an hour after hard work.

TYING

A horse should always be tied with a strong halter. A rope around the neck is dangerous because it may slip tight and choke him, or while the horse's head is down, it may slide around so that the tie of the rope lies on top of his head between his ears. If he then pulls back, the neck loop will lock over his forehead and strangle him. If tied with a bridle rein, he can easily or accidentally break loose and a loose horse is a dangerous horse, both to himself and to those around him. Most riders carry a halter if they plan to tie their horse for a rest stop during a ride.

The length of the tie is critical. If too long, he will get a foot over it with a resulting bad rope burn or fall. If it is too short, he cannot fight flies or relax. The best guide is to tie the halter rope to a tree or solid object about nose high for the horse, with the length of the tie rope adjusted to where his nose cannot quite reach the ground. Never tie to a wire fence (he will get a foot caught in it). Never tie to a flimsy rail fence, dead limb or other breakable object. If a horse pulls back and breaks loose with an object such as a fence rail or tree limb attached to his halter rope, he usually panics and runs until exhausted or injured and disabled. Always tie to a stout post, tree or other solid object and where there is no wire, trash or junk to injure him.

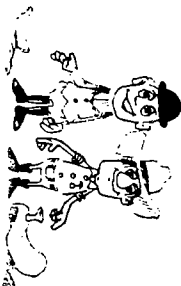
RENTING A HORSE

When renting a horse at a riding stable or borrowing one from a friend for a pleasure ride, the same preparation, saddling and riding routine outlined above should be followed. If an attendant does the saddling, watch him while he does it, and then personally check all equipment to insure that it is properly adjusted and safe. Ask the owner of the horse if the horse has any peculiar habits or tricks for which one should be on guard. At rental stables, especially, one should always observe his horse for lameness, sores and exhaustion, and if he does not

EQUIPMENT

Two types of riding equipment are generally used. One is "English" or flat (no horn) saddles and bridles with either two or four reins. The other is Western or "Cowboy" saddle (with a horn) and two-rein bridle, usually with a curb bit. Riding equipment is commonly referred to as "tack" or "gear."

Western tack is the most popular because most people feel and are more secure with the high cantle, horn and deep seat.



There is necessarily a great variation in equipment. What fits and works well on one horse may not do at all on another. Consequently, it is necessary to be selective in outfitting a horse. The same general principles apply to both English and Western equipment in use, care and adjustment.

The hackamore or bozell (a rigid nose band made of braided rawhide or leather) is frequently used with Western tack—mostly on young horses not yet accustomed to carrying a bit in their mouths or on horses with tender mouths, over-sensitive to a bit. Developed by the Mexican cowboy more than a century ago, it is a comfortable and excellent device when properly used.

A modern version is not as safe or fool-proof. On it the braided leather band goes over the front of the nose only and fastens on metal shanks on either side of the nose. A curb chain passes under the chin and also fastens on these metal shanks in such a manner that a pull on the reins places pressure simultaneously on the front of the nose and under the chin. This action is most confusing to the green or untrained horse and may cause him to throw his head, strike out with his front feet, or otherwise violently resist. Since there is no bit in the horse's mouth, many people assume this to be a safe and pleasant device. However, unless properly adjusted and properly used, it can be dangerous. Another hazard with this modern version is that if adjusted too loosely, it effects no more control over a horse than does a halter. Consequently, caution is required in its use.

Perhaps the safest bit a beginner can use is the common snaffle bit. With it, he may either pull or neck rein in guiding the horse and if he loses his balance or for some reason accidentally jerks on the reins, it is less painful and upsetting to the horse. The horse knows this also and is less afraid of the rider hurting him and generally will work more quietly with a snaffle bit in his mouth than he will with a curb bit. This is not true of all horses—some require a

PONIES AND BURROS

While the foregoing refers to riding horses only, it is equally applicable to ponies and burros, because, in effect, they are miniature versions of the horse and should be regarded accordingly. There are several breeds of ponies—the Shetland being the most common and smallest. A little larger are the Welsh, Hackney and Connemara. The pony, as well as the burro, makes an excellent companion animal and pet for children.



WHILE RIDING, BE SAFE

- * Never shout, be rough or noisy around your horse because it will make him excitable, nervous and unpleasant.
- * Remember that due to his peculiar vision adaptability, any quick movement near a horse's head, such as moving an arm or dropping an object, will startle and cause him to bolt.
- * Do not wear spurs unless they are necessary and you understand the principle and the danger in using them.
- * Never allow your horse to go faster than a walk up and down steep inclines or on slick or dangerous footing.
- * Do not ask your horse to do something unless you are fully confident he can do it safely.
- * Do not race, run or unnecessarily gallop your horse.
- * If you must dismount on the trail, ask another rider to stand by so that your horse will stand still.
- * If you or your group opens a gate, be sure that it is closed.
- * Keep your horse at least one horse's length away from the horse ahead of you. Otherwise, expect to be kicked.
- * Don't pass another rider on the trail without permission and ample warning.
- * When riding with a group, adjust your speed to the group. Do not allow your horse to travel faster and disturb other horses.
- * If you must ride a horse on pavement, make him walk—otherwise he is likely to fall.
- * Along an auto road, always ride on the left side facing traffic.
- * Be on the alert for holes, wire, glass, junk and other objects dangerous to the horse's feet and legs.
- * Never ride over wire, especially barbed wire. Frequently, if a horse discovers he is over wire, he will abruptly attempt to back out of it, resulting in

* Never neglect the feeding, watering, or comfort of your horse. Take care of him first so that he may take care of you later.


The foregoing on riding and horse care is intentionally brief. There are many places locally where one may readily obtain much additional information—tack shops, feed stores, riding stables, saddle and riding clubs, state extension services and county agents. For information regarding health and feeding problems, consult your veterinarian. There are numerous horse magazines and books where a wealth of valuable information is available.

To enjoy a horse, one must understand a horse—so be a student of him. Understand "the horse is never wrong—it is always the rider." There is a basic reason for the humane treatment of any horse with which you are associated—self-preservation—your own.

"Pleasant Riding"



The American Humane Association is a non-profit federation established in 1877 to help prevent cruelty to children and animals. We thank you for your interest and support. There are well over 1,000 agencies in the United States and Canada which are concerned with the prevention of cruelty to animals. Learn the name and address of your nearest humane agency. Then, when you need advice and help with any animal problem, you will know where to turn for expert and friendly help. If you do not find one in your immediate area, ask:

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