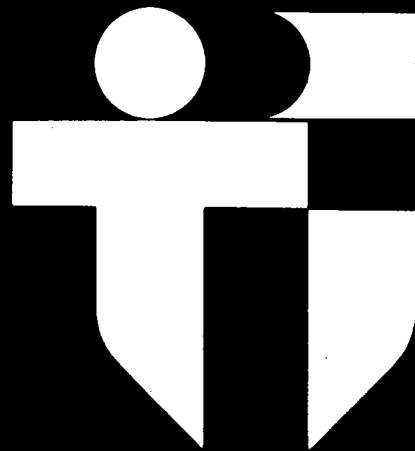


**HORSE ABUSE**

**OPERATIONAL GUIDE**  
**For Animal Care And Control Agencies**



**AMERICAN HUMANE**

Millions of people have recently discovered that there is nothing that can equal or replace the horse in giving pleasure to mankind. Thousands more are discovering it each day. They are becoming new owners, riders and users of horses. This has created a tremendous demand for horses and the equine industry is experiencing a population explosion—up from four and one-half million to nearly eight million in the past ten years.

This new popularity and demand have created many problems for the horse because he is new to so many of the people who now use him. Many do not understand his care, his needs and his limitations. They do not know what is right, what is wrong and what is cruel in managing or using him. Resultantly, the horse suffers many abuses due to carelessness and ignorance. Most of these abuses are not intended and would be avoided if people were better informed about the horse. Rarely does one see horses abused by a person who thoroughly understands them. Cruelty and abuse among true horsemen are the earmarks of the ignorant and the incompetent.

Horsemen realize a horse is a living creature—not a machine. Like man, he experiences anxiety, pain, hunger, weariness and has physical limitations. Like man, he needs food, water and rest regularly—a good bed, protection from the elements and a safe environment in which to live and work. All this is discussed in The American Humane Association pamphlets, "The Care of Horses" and "The Care of Riding Horses." This section discusses abuses along with means of avoiding them.

### WATERING ABUSES

The lack of water is one of the chief instruments of abuse, whether it be through ignorance or neglect. A water line breaks, a well or a stream goes dry, the automatic valve gets stuck, someone failed to turn on the water, the tank froze over—these and many others like them cause untold suffering, even death. All could be avoided if someone would inspect the drinking water supply each day.

The horse, like man, must have an abundance of good drinking water and at about the same intervals. Preferably, water should be available in stalls, pens and pastures at all times. Horses being worked or ridden hard should have water every two to four hours—all they want *providing they are to continue working* immediately after watering. If the horse is very hot and the water cold, he should be required to take on water slowly.

Idle horses should have water three or four times a day and must have water at least once a day. Even the wild horse that must travel many miles between his feeding grounds and water hole will go for water once a day.

Lack of water intake results in body dehydration, intestinal impactions and colics. Cold weather compounds the problems because the horse drinks less water, especially if it is ice cold. Many types of heaters designed for use in water tanks and buckets are available and should be used in severe weather.

Water can be harmful, also, if too much is given at one time, such as happens when a horse has been deprived of water for a day or more and then suddenly allowed to drink his fill. Most dangerous is allowing a hot horse to drink his fill. This usually results in indigestion or colic and frequently founder which is a near incurable type of lameness.

So—in thinking of a horse's water requirements and problems—think in terms of your own—except for quantity, they are quite the same.

### FEEDING ABUSES

Man has taken the horse from his native green pasture lands and shut him up in small enclosures. He is forced to subsist on dry hay, grains and feed mixtures of all kinds. This complete change in environment often leads to many abuses because, physiologically to remain healthy, a horse must have considerable exercise—far more than he can get in a small corral and his

digestive system is still adapted to grazing which means eating in small amounts and often.

What are the abuses? The most common is too little feed or too much at one time and too little later, spoiled feed, worthless feed of poor quality, wrong type of feed and all too often too much good feed.

Best indicator is the appearance of the horse. If he is poor in flesh, "skinny" in appearance, the usual cause is not enough feed. Sometimes the cause is internal parasites, usually blood worms, and occasionally it is bad teeth or a chronic sickness. The fact is that it is a rare horse that will not stay in good flesh and "plump" if he is given sufficient good feed and water to meet his body requirements.

A common abuse is turning horses in small, lush appearing pastures and then not watching the changing conditions in the pastures. Soon the edible grass is consumed. The pasture may still look lush because of the inedible weeds still present. Usually sooner than expected the useable grass has disappeared and although the horse pitifully picks away constantly at grazing, he slowly starves unless another source of feed is provided.

Another abuse is over-feeding. The overly-fat horse, caused by too much feed and too little exercise, is never a really healthy and pleasant horse. Sickness and lameness due to founder are frequently seen in them and even light work causes them extreme distress.

### HOUSING ABUSES

By nature, the horse is an outdoor animal. He seeks canyon walls, banks, trees and brush for protection from sun, wind, cold and storms. He finds a comfortable bed at will upon which to rest and moves about continually so that his environment is always clean. Man's confining him to back yards and small enclosures has led to many abuses.

Too often man thinks of the horse's comfort in terms of his own and puts him in tightly closed, heated stalls or barns. The level of humidity, as well as odoriferous ammonia from manure and urine, rapidly rises and a situation conducive to respiratory ailments and pneumonia soon exists.

A horse seems to experience little discomfort in extreme cold weather so long as he remains dry, out of drafts and has room to move about. Tying a horse outside on a cold night or forcing him to stand out in a wet snow storm with no protection from wind is most punishing.

Dirty stalls where a horse must stand in an accumulation of manure and urine soon leads to soft feet, then sore and infected feet and an uncomfortable, lame horse.

Concrete and other hard or irregular floors with too little bedding are not only hard on feet and legs, but deprive a horse of needed rest. True, a horse can and does sleep while standing, but he will rest and sleep better if given a comfortable bed.

Most pathetic of all disasters are horses killed in fires. Many are burned to death each year because man tied or shut them in a highly combustible barn and then did not take adequate fire prevention measures to protect them.

### EQUIPMENT ABUSES

No equipment in itself is cruel or abusive. It is the way in which man uses it that makes it effective or abusive. For example, the common curb bit properly adjusted and used on a riding horse is a superb means of communication between horse and rider, equally understood and respected by both. But, if the curb strap or chain is too tight, twisted, too loose or the rider jerks or pulls too much on the bridle rein, then the curb bit (or any other bit) ceases to be an instrument of communication and becomes an instrument of torture.

The same is true of spurs. Most experienced horsemen habitually wear spurs of a

dull, blunt variety. These, too, are an instant channel of communication and, properly used, have prevented many a nasty fall or accident. Again, improperly used they are dangerous and cause accidents because they become abusive to the horse and his reactions are then dangers for him and his rider. One should study and understand the spur before using it and a horse must be trained to properly respond to it.

*Any piece of equipment used on a horse should have a functional purpose, and it should be used only for that purpose in a safe and comfortable manner for both horse and rider.*

### SHOEING

The condition of the feet are of prime importance to the health and comfort of a horse. An animal having bad feet is worthless, and abuse is usually caused by ignorance or neglect.

What are the abuses? The most common abuse is not having the feet attended to often enough. Many horse owners believe a shoe is suitable until it wears out, not realizing that the horse's foot is growing continuously. Shoes should be removed, the feet trimmed, shoes reset or replaced every six weeks or less. Whether an animal wears shoes or not, his feet must be trimmed regularly. Bad shoeing can cause permanent lameness, while good shoeing can correct many faults. Find a farrier who is of the school that believes in fitting the shoe to the hoof rather than fitting the hoof to a ready made shoe.

### P.M.U. FARMS

P.M.U. Farms maintain pregnant mares to collect urine from which estrogen is collected to be used in the manufacturing of certain drugs. A by-product of these farms are the foals produced by the pregnant mares. The abuses are perpetrated usually upon the foals as they are of little commercial value to the operators of these farms. These foals, when very young, are sometimes loaded loosely in trucks and shipped to distant horse auctions. Many arrive sick and injured to be sold to unsuspecting buyers who are unaware of the difficulties facing them in raising these

young animals. Experienced horsemen would have a difficult time furnishing the necessary requirements of these orphan foals.

### HORSE AUCTIONS

There are a number of abuses associated with horse auctions. These abuses are caused by neglect and deceitfulness. Rarely is ignorance a cause for abuse in these circumstances. Horses are left confined to vehicles, sometimes throughout the night, awaiting the start of the auction. Horses are also crowded into small corrals with other strange animals causing apprehension and fights that lead to injury. Feeding horses remaining after the sale is sometimes neglected. Other abuses are caused by unscrupulous horse traders who treat horses in a number of different ways in order to sell a dangerous or lame, unsound horse on the auction block as a useful animal. There are many tricks, and it is necessary that a veterinarian check such animals as only a well trained person would be able to detect the methods used to cover up the deficiencies of these animals.

### USING ABUSES

One common abuse is confining a horse to a box stall or small enclosure with little or no exercise and then suddenly subjecting him to hard riding or vigorous work. Like any athlete, a horse must be gradually worked into good physical condition and so maintained if he is to be ridden or worked hard without injury. Like the football player, he must have practice and work everyday—not just the day of the game.

Overriding is another abuse—i.e., riding a horse too far or too fast or longer than he is physically fit to perform. Contrary to impressions created by movies and TV, horses cannot race or gallop indefinitely—two to three hundred yards is about maximum without distress unless the horse is in excellent working condition; even then, not many can safely reach a half mile full speed. Many a willing horse has been killed because an ignorant rider forced him beyond his capability. The walk and the trot are the usual ground covering gaits of the horse. These were the gaits used by the

Army. Properly regulated, cavalry horses averaged between five and six miles per hour going 30 to 40 miles day after day and did it with little stress—but they were receiving the best of feed, care and attention.

There are many other less obvious abuses—riding a lame horse; riding a horse with a sore back; sloppy, careless posture in the saddle causing a sore back; whipping, jerking on the bridle reins and trying to force a horse to do things he does not understand or cannot do. Another is mounting a horse and riding off at a gallop with no opportunity for his muscles to warm up and relax. Equally bad is dismounting from a horse that is very warm or wet with sweat and allowing him to stand still while his muscles chill and cramp.

Most cruel of all is the treatment given many old or disabled horses. Some are “retired” to lush pastures where they slowly become totally incapacitated or starve. Others are simply abandoned in open areas by their owners and eventually starve. It was Army policy for many years to immediately put a horse down when he was no longer able to carry on his normal duties—a policy that is still sound and the most humane in most instances.

### TRAINING ABUSES

Most regrettable is the common practice of rushing young horses into hard training and competition before their skeletal system has sufficiently matured to stand the pressure. None are ready for strenuous work before three years old and many not until four or five years old—a fact the Army learned years ago and ceased to purchase any horse less than five. This abuse is more commonly seen in connection with racing because there is great demand for two year olds to race. However, it is seen among show and other competitive horses and due to practical economic factors will probably continue in spite of its adverse effect of prematurely disabling many horses.

Most pathetic abuse is that of an ignorant person attempting to train a horse by means of brute force—whipping, beat-

ing, jerking, casting, spurring, and broncbusting in the literal sense of the word. Any successful trainer knows that he must be smarter than the horse he trains because there is no way a 200-pound man can physically manage a 1000-pound horse unless the horse cooperates. Like a child, he learns quickly through reward and discipline, but if he does not understand why he is being disciplined or is punished too severely, he rapidly becomes a jittery, neurotic and frequently unmanageable horse.

There are many questionable training aids or gimmicks used—leg chains, tack boots, tack collars and breast plates, sharp spurs, electric shockers, tack bars, wire nose bands and tie downs. Some are effective when properly used, some not. Again, it is not the instrument in itself, but the manner in which it is used that makes it brutal. The best answer is to take your time and use your head in training the horse rather than using the gimmicks to rush the training and possibly spoil him.

### ABUSES TO SICK AND INJURED

The problem with many sick or injured horses is that they receive too little attention—or the wrong kind of treatment. For example, people who know no better often toss things like table salt or lime into wounds or pour caustics such as turpentine or iodine into them. All are severely painful and irritating and greatly retard healing. Fortunately, the wound eventually heals, in spite of the treatment—not because of it. Wounds should be kept clean, free of insects and treated with only mild, non-irritating medicines.

Any time a horse refuses to eat or for that matter shows other abnormal behavior, he should be suspected of being sick and should be closely observed. If symptoms of consequence develop, a veterinarian should be called at once. A sick horse, like a sick man, should receive prompt attention, a comfortable bed, a chance to rest and special food, if necessary.

Leg bandages can be dangerous if not correctly applied. Ample padding must be

used between the horse's skin and the bandage or it must be adjusted so that no pressure points can develop. Tight rest bandages have been known to injure tendons, causing them to swell and disable the horse.

### **TRANSPORTATION ABUSES**

Most common abuse is the transporting of horses for too long without feed, water or rest. Riding in a trailer or truck for most horses is as tiring as being ridden under saddle, and they should be handled accordingly. Long hauls further complicated by too much or too little ventilation, forced inhalation of motor exhaust fumes and chilling from rain or cold can severely stress a horse. Many sicken, even die, from stresses that should have been avoided.

Another transportation problem is faulty equipment—trucks and trailers with unpadded, slick floors or deteriorating, weak floors or walls that a horse's foot can break through—a back end gate or door that does not securely fasten or someone forgets to fasten—sharp objects on, in and around vehicles—all are unnecessary hazards that cause numerous avoidable injuries.

The floor of any horse transport vehicle should be padded in some manner and then covered with sand to assure firm footing for the horse while loading and in transit. Good ventilation is essential, but chilling drafts and motor fumes must be avoided. A stop for water and a brief rest should be made every three or four hours and horses should be unloaded for exercise and a chance to relax every seven or eight hours. Feed lightly, but water liberally. Boots and rest bandages will prevent foot and leg injuries. Most important, the driver should maintain a consistent, not jerky, speed and never start, stop or turn the vehicle abruptly.

### **RENTAL HORSE ABUSES**

Owners of most riding academies or "rent horse" strings take good care of their animals. Since rent is their livelihood, it is only good business to have horses fit and ready for hard work. Most owners instruct riders to walk their mount the first 5 or 10

minutes to allow him to warm up and relax—also to walk him the last 15 minutes of the ride or sufficient to bring him in cool and dry.

There are exceptions, especially where inexperienced help or an excessive demand for horses are involved. Lame horses will be seen due to injury or improper shoeing and foot care. Sore backs, also sore mouths caused by ill-fitting and misused equipment will be observed, as will horses poor in flesh due to overwork and insufficient time to eat and rest. When renting or borrowing, one should refuse to use a lame horse or one with a sore back or one with any other obvious painful disabling ailment.

### **ENDURANCE RIDE ABUSES**

There are two types of rides involved. One is the competitive trail ride where the horse is judged on his ability to cover a specified course in a given period of time and remain sound and healthy, e.g. 40 miles in 7 hours for two or three consecutive days. Here the condition of the horse, rather than speed, determines the winner. Consequently, horsemanship is usually good and horses well cared for.

The other type is the endurance ride where horse and rider must cover extended distances, 25 to 100 miles in a fixed time limit. In such rides, speed is a determining factor. Consequently, adequate check points, rest stops, and tight veterinary supervision is absolutely essential to prevent horses from being over extended and injured. Endurance riding has recently become very popular. Properly managed and supervised, it is one of the most exhilarating and educational of all equine sports.

### **RODEO ABUSES**

To the unsophisticated, rodeo may appear to be cruel. However, by definition, it is far from cruel. Like football, hockey, skiing, polo and many national sports, it is dangerous, but not cruel.

There are two good reasons why bucking and other horses are rarely abused in rodeo. First, they are owned by a stock

contractor whose business it is to find and provide good performing horses.

Good bucking horses are rare. They cannot be taught to buck—they are born with that instinct and capability. Very few are good enough to make a rodeo string. But those that do generally receive good care. The animals are worth considerable money to their owners, who realize performance would be adversely affected by overwork, lack of care or any cruel practice.

Another good reason very little abuse is seen is that, through two national rodeo associations, rodeo is a well-organized and administered sport. Several years ago, these associations joined with The American Humane Association in writing and enforcing rules to insure humane handling of rodeo livestock. These are published in the A.H.A. booklet, "Rodeo Livestock Uniform Inspection Standards."

If one understands the rules and what he sees in the arena, he knows no cruel devices or practices are authorized or allowed. He understands that the padded flank strap (bucking strap) properly adjusted, should not be painful and that it does serve a purpose in a horse's top performance. The same is true of properly adjusted spurs, also the proper use of the electric prod. Used as authorized, neither need be painful and both are useful and effective for the purpose designed.

What is not generally known is that humane officers are most welcome at rodeos. Also, rodeos are required to provide a veterinarian and facilities for prompt handling of sick or injured animals.

## HORSE SHOW ABUSES

These are usually the result of ignorance or an overzealous competitor. Show horses, like any other working horse, should be serviceably sound, free of lameness, physically fit and ready to do the job at hand. He should be trained and encouraged to put on his best performance but should not be subjected to cruelty in attaining it.

Old abuses have been sharply curtailed, but may still exist, such as the use of stimulants, irritants and tranquilizers, "soreing" to enhance the Tennessee Walking gait, the use of heavy or painful boots to produce higher action, unauthorized poling of hunters and jumpers, the overuse of whips and electrical devices in a stall to "animate" halter horses just prior to showing.

Practically all horse shows are recognized by or operate under the rules of the American Horse Shows Association. This Association has long had an excellent set of rules covering all aspects of horse shows, including rules to prevent abuse of horses. Some years ago, The American Humane Association joined with AHSA in developing uniform standards and a more comprehensive program for inspection to ensure humane treatment of animals at horse shows. While great progress has been made, enforcement is still lacking in some areas, mainly due to lack of information on the part of show management and a shortage of humane supervising officers.

Without doubt the most vicious abuse of horses in the horse show world is the "soreing" of the Tennessee Walking horse to affect and accentuate his gait. Enactment of the Federal "Horse Protection Act of 1970" was brought about in an attempt to stop this cruel practice. Responsibility for enforcement was placed with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This is a specialized problem, peculiar to the breed. It is discussed in depth in The American Humane Association publications, "The Tennessee Walking Horse" and "Horse Show Uniform Inspection Standards," as well as the USDA regulation publications cover all aspects of all horse show events and are excellent guides for inspectors.

## PULLING CONTESTS

Years ago, when there were many working draft horses, a popular contest was to match one team against another to see which could pull the biggest load. These contests have become more popular in recent years. Properly managed, they are an intriguing event. A team of well-conditioned, well-trained, willing horses

performing smoothly under the eyes of a conscientious horseman, who at heart is part of the team, is a thrilling thing to watch.

When less qualified personnel become involved in such contests, there are many abuses that may occur—overexertion, overwork, dangerous equipment, unfit horses, dangerous footing and whipping or punishing in urging the horses to do the impossible.

### THE UNUSUAL

Abuses, generally through ignorance or neglect, may be found anywhere horses are found—the carnival kid pony ride, the traveling circus, the itinerant horse trader, the side show. Most such owners have compassion for their animals and give satisfactory care. However, the occasional money-motivated individual may overwork and underfeed—as will the man with financial reverses.

The appearance of the horse is the key to the situation. Normal appearing horses in reasonably good flesh are usually receiving adequate treatment. Horses that are poor in flesh, show a dejected, irritable attitude, appear sick or have sores on their bodies caused by equipment, are probably being overworked and underfed and obviously not receiving proper care.

### PONIES, BURROS AND MULES

While ponies, burros and mules have not been mentioned in the foregoing, it is equally applicable to all three. All are quite similar and all experience the same problems except that the burro and the mule have one added problem in that there is an

established belief that they are more durable and tougher than a horse. The result sometimes is that they are not as well cared for as horses.

### PREVENTION

The greatest means of prevention of abuses is thorough education. The more people know about horses, understand their nature, necessities, limitations, capabilities and proper useage, the less abuse horses will be subjected to. Only the sadist is intentionally cruel. Most people want to give their horse the best of treatment but simply do not know how. However, a wealth of information now appears in numerous horse books and magazines available at most book stores and magazine stands.

One recent comprehensive, but simple, publication is U.S. Department of Agriculture Handbook No. 394, "Breeding and Raising Horses," for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, price \$1.00. Informative pamphlets on the riding and care of horses are also available from The American Humane Association. Another excellent source of information, especially for young people, is the Federal and State Extension Services, County Agricultural Agents, Horse and Pony Clubs and especially 4-H horse programs where more than a quarter million boys and girls are now enrolled. For firsthand information locally in most communities, one can now find a veterinarian who specializes in equine practice, also many horse and riding clubs and associations. All are willing and valuable sources of knowledge.