



# Animal Handling: Horses

Toolbox Talks are intended to facilitate health and safety discussions. Find more Toolbox Talks on the [Occupational Safety web page](#).

## General Information

The majority of injuries associated with horses occur during human/animal interactions. Handling horses can cause falls, bites, and kicks. Working with horses requires recognizing the hazards. In addition, the horse's size, and its behavior compounds the dangers. Horses tend to react suddenly and unexpectedly. When working with horses, remember to:

## Preventive measures

- Know the characteristics of the animal
  - Claustrophobic-fearful of tight places
  - Neophobic-afraid of new things or new situations
  - Eyesight is designed to detect motion or potential danger
- Approach horses at an angle between their head and shoulder.
- Be calm and quiet. Sudden moves or loud noises can cause a horse to jump sideways or kick out.
- The safest place to stand is beside the 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 the horse.
- The safest way to lead a horse is with a halter and lead rope.
- Wear sturdy, hard-toed shoes or boots that will protect your feet if a horse steps on them.
- When tying use a quick release knot or panic snap, so if the horse gets scared and pulls, they can easily be freed. The feeling of being constrained can make a scared horse panic to the point of hurting itself or you.



## Safety tips when working with horses

- Do not hook your fingers through the halter straps or loop lead ropes around your hands. If the horse pulls away, your fingers could be caught, injuring them or catching your hand, so you are dragged.
- Avoid standing directly behind a horse.
- Avoid squatting or kneeling when cleaning a horse's hooves. Instead, bend over so that if the horse moves you can get out of the way quickly.

**Discussion Date:**

**Supervisor:**

**Participants:**

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