

The Induction

- Horse instincts and their response to fear.
- How to behave around horses.
 - How to recognise a horse's individual characteristics.

This induction is a basic overview to assist you with being safe around horses, in conjunction with this overview one of the Leaders will show you the practical side of caring for and walking with horses.

- Moreton Trips- Please ensure no electronics or valuables in panniers, including any required medication – the ford is still quite high and while the ponies & packs can safely pass through, best to be careful!

Instinct & Work

Horses are herd animals – as such they like being around others and like to have a leader. We train with them daily to become this figure in their herd – we show them that we provide for them, we meet their needs, we ask them to behave in a certain way during 'work' time.

Horses are also prey. They are built to run from danger and this is their first instinct. With an insightful pack leader – you – they won't need to. Be careful to act calmly, kindly, predictably and confidently with them and they'll feel safer with you and want to please you.

During 'work' time, they are not allowed to eat. This does them no harm and keeps the group safe and on track.– for example if they saw something on the other side of the road and went for it across traffic. They are allowed to eat only when they're tied up. Please don't be tempted to give them food while we walk – this might not be appropriate food for them and might become a hazardous situation as they'll keep pushing you for more. You can give them a treat at the end of the walk when we've unloaded the panniers – we have some treats that won't cause them digestion issues.

They recognise the following voice commands which might be helpful for you today:

Woah, stand

Walk on

Head up

No!

Waalk, waalk (said in a deeper, steady voice to slow their pace)

Back, Back.

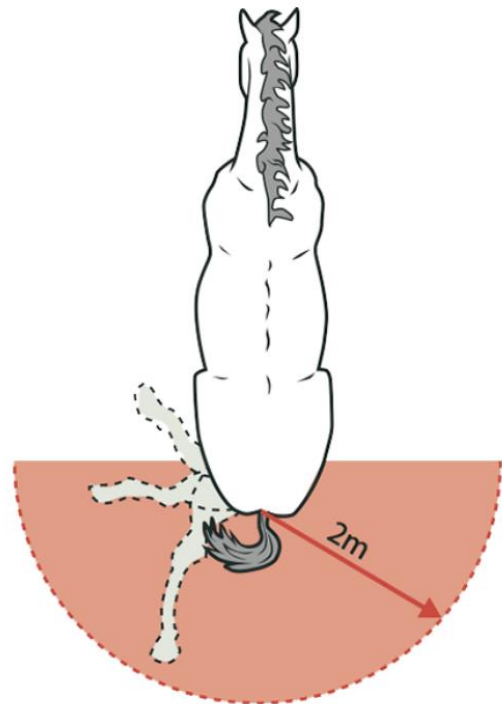
I have read this and understand my role, the risks involved and how to manage them safely
(print and sign)



1. Approaching

No walking up to a horse in its kicking zone.

If walking behind a horse, walk close with a hand on its rump. A horse's hind legs are very strong and can deliver a powerful kick. A horse can also lash out with its front legs. A stressed or frightened horse might kick you. Even if the horse knows where you are, quick movements can startle it. One well-placed kick can kill or cause serious injuries, like broken bones. Always approach your horse from the front or side. If he's turned away from you, call to him or entice him with a treat to get him to come to you. Never approach your horse directly from the rear.



Always approach a horse in a calm way, making sure they can see you.

Do not approach from their blind spot (directly in front or behind) – this could startle them. Read the horse's intent by watching its body language. Ears flat back is a warning sign.

2. Leading

Always use a lead rope attached to a halter/ head collar so you have a 'safety zone'; don't hold the halter/ head collar directly with your hand. Hold the lead rope with one hand, 8 to 10 inches away from the horse's head, holding the end of the rope with your other hand. This puts your elbow near the horse's shoulder so you can anticipate its actions.

Don't let the horse pull ahead of you. Don't let it get behind you either, as it could jump into you if spooked. You set the pace; you are in charge.

To lead a horse through a gateway, step through first and then quickly step to the side, out of the horse's way. Keep an eye on the horse, because they might try to rush through narrow spaces.

Never wrap the lead rope around your hand, wrist or body, even with small loops. It could wrap around your hand and seriously injure you if the horse startles.

Don't climb over or under a tied horse's lead rope

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The horse can also stand on the handler's foot, causing bruising or broken bones – be aware of where your feet are!

3. Characteristics:

Both of these ponies are very friendly to handle – we've yet to have any biting or kicking because they've always been handled kindly and with consideration. If they spook, it's because they've seen, smelt or heard something they're genuinely frightened of. When they spook, they do what we call '*hold onto the floor*' – this might be a sudden lunge in an unexpected direction. This is when you need to 'be the leader' - firm and reassuring. Both like *being rubbed behind the ear and on the withers*, both respond to their name and to a gentle voice. If they are 'on their toes' – ie walking quicker than you're comfortable with in an agitated way – a deep, strong, 'Walk, walk' instruction is effective.

Evie – things waving around behind her head might startle her, for example if someone walking by her side starts taking off a flappy jacket.

- Things she 'half sees' ie if someone is walking behind a hedge and she keeps getting glimpses of them
- If she scrapes the panniers on something she might panic – if you see a narrow area approaching, please alert a Leader.

Bob – Bob is younger than Evie at just 5 years old – as such he can be a bit 'teenagery' – rushing into things without thinking, being reluctant and yet still panicking when he can't see his 'big mama' – Evie!

- He has a tendency to stop – in this instance please call a Leader.
- Bob can also get a bit 'bargy' pushing tightly round a corner or walking you off the path. In this case gently slow his pace down (use the 'walk, walk' command), keep good contact with his headcollar through the lead rope (ie hold him firmly) and talk slowly and firmly. If this doesn't help please call a Leader.
- Bob hates puddles, particularly muddy ones – please lead him round where possible and where not possible one of the Leaders will walk him through.

4. Leading horses on the road

Horses are easily frightened by noisy, large vehicles and other things they don't normally meet in a paddock. While both of these ponies regularly go on roads and are used to tractors, trailers and tankers, we have seen them scared of quad bikes and even a push chair!

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As their handler, if you see anything that might be out of place, pay them extra attention – talk calmly, stroke their withers, use the ‘Walk, walk’ command if you sense they’re picking their pace up in fear.

Often motorists do not understand horse behaviour and drive too quickly and too closely to the horse – you can use the ‘*slow down*’ signal if you feel it is appropriate.

Acknowledge and return courtesy – a smile and a nod helps keep a good relationship between horses and other road users

5. Spacing

Avoid being on the inside of the pony on a turn – our ponies are trained to be led from either the left or right.

Even when you are not leading the pony, you should be aware of keeping yourself safe by acting in a predictable way.

Ensure you stay with the group and adhere to any rendez-vous agreements – please call if there are any problems

If you do get separated from the group, please stay where you are and we’ll come back for you.

6. Practice

We’ll start with a few small walks before leaving to see how you get on with the ponies – if there are any concerns, our Leaders can walk them along difficult bits until we reach a safer area and you can have another go.

The Leaders will wear hi-viz along/ at roads and stay at the front of the group and the back.

If we see any hazards or we anticipate an issue, we might ask for the lead rope- please hand the pony back to a Leader upon request. For example, we might ask to take the ponies for narrow paths, steep paths or if other horses are approaching.

Finally, all of this might seem like a big responsibility – you are welcome to do as much or as little as you’re comfortable with – we’re happy to take over from you if you are uncomfortable or want a break and equally we’re happy to keep an eye on both you and the ponies to ensure things are going safely and smoothly – please don’t worry and just enjoy your trip!

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