Pennsylvania 4-H Horse Safety Standards

4-H Horse Project

College of Agricultural Sciences
Cooperative Extension
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Introduction

Horse activities can be fun and rewarding for the entire family. However, everyone should understand that since horses are unpredictable, there is always a certain level of risk when we work with them. You can do many things to reduce the risks involved in horse activities.

Selection of a suitable horse, ongoing instruction, and proper supervision are vital to reduce risks and maintain safety. Work with a qualified instructor to find the ‘right’ horse for you and help you improve your horsemanship skills and safety habits.

Regardless of whether you keep your horse at your own farm or at a boarding stable, you can always improve your own safety habits. Always think of safety first whether handling, caring for, riding, or driving your horse.

Most changes to improve safety require minimal expense or effort on your part. Small adjustments to your horse’s environment and in your attitude can greatly increase safety for you and your horse.

“The design and management of your stable is very important to your horse’s health and safety and often to your own as well. If you have the luxury of building a whole new barn to your own specifications, you can avoid many problems. But, if like the rest of us, you have to make do with what you’ve got, you can improve your stable with some minor changes and careful management.” (From Safe Horse, Safe Rider, 1994).

The safety checklist and standards provide guidelines to help develop your safety attitudes and habits when working with horses. However, they should not be used without additional study and instruction. These materials can help leaders pinpoint strengths and weaknesses of safety knowledge within their groups and focus future lessons and activities in areas that need improvement. These materials should be used with hands-on instruction by parents, leaders, project helpers, and experienced horse handlers or professionals.

How to Use the 4-H Horse Safety Standards

DIRECTIONS

The following horse safety standards match your checklist with corresponding numbers for each item.

For example, if you want to know how many fire extinguishers your barn should have and how far apart they should be, look at SECTION A, numbers 1, 2, and 3 on your checklist and then look at SECTION A, numbers 1, 2, and 3 in this safety standards booklet. Compare your checklist with the guidelines in this booklet to see if your answers match what is stated in the safety standards.

For additional information, contact your 4-H leader or extension agent and refer to the 4-H Horse Safety Resources list available at http://www.das.psu.edu (click on horses, then 4-H Horse Program) or from your county extension and outreach office.
Notes:
SECTION A: Barn Fire Safety and Emergency Response

1., 2., and 3.
A charged, minimum 10 lb., ABC fire extinguisher should be available every 50 feet in the barn. An ABC fire extinguisher can be used on any kind of fire. Never use water on an electrical fire. Your local fire department can service your extinguisher to be sure it is charged and ready to use. Practice the procedures and steps involved with using the fire extinguishers at your barn. Remember that many fire extinguishers are useless after they have been discharged once. Replace or recharge fire extinguishers as needed after use.

4.
All electrical wires in the barn should be enclosed in conduit (metal or plastic casing). They should be located out of animals’ reach to prevent chewing by rodents or horses. Any frayed or damaged wires should be replaced.

5.
All electrical appliances should be kept in good condition and unplugged when not in use. Portable heaters, heat lamps, and fans should be used with caution and should not be left unattended.

6.
Electrical panels should be free from cobwebs and dust. The faceplate of the electrical panel should be attached to the panel. Doors should be on and kept closed, and the panel should be protected from horses and the weather.

7.
No Smoking signs should be posted, easily seen, and obeyed. No Smoking signs should be posted at every entrance to the barn. A no smoking policy should be enforced at your barn.

8.
A water source that can supply a constant stream of water should be located within 100 feet of the barn. A freezeproof faucet or hydrant with hose attached (or nearby in winter) is best. The hose should be long enough to reach all parts of the barn.

9. and 10.
Fire drills should be conducted routinely, preferably once a month. A fire escape plan should be posted in the barn. The fire department phone number and directions to your barn should be posted by a phone. Have a sign-in sheet for everyone present in the barn. Establish a meeting place outside of the barn in case of fire and assign one person to supervise the meeting place. Never go back into a burning barn even if you do not see any flames.

11.
An adult should be in charge if a barn fire occurs. Only trained firefighters with proper equipment should enter a burning barn. Extreme caution should be used to remove horses from a barn fire to avoid loss of human lives.

12. and 13.
Flammable liquids (gasoline, oil, paint, etc.) should be stored in a secure, separate place away from the barn. No flammable liquids should be stored with any ignitable substances (hay, bedding, etc.). If at all possible, hay and bedding should be stored in a separate building away from the barn. If hay is stored in the barn, there should be a firewall between the hay and the horses.
**14. and 15.**
Fully stocked first aid kits for both humans and horses should be available in the barn at all times. Consult with your veterinarian for additional items to include for your horse. The following supplies should be included in both first aid kits:

- Doctor (or emergency contact) and veterinarian phone numbers
- Thermometer
- Stethoscope
- Bandage scissors/heavy scissors for cutting cloth
- Sterile gauze pads (several sizes)
- 3–4 inch gauze bandage
- 2 inch adhesive tape
- Self-sticking bandages (vet-wrap, etc.)
- Leg quilts and wraps
- Band-aids
- Large pressure bandage (8 inch X 10 inch)
- Triangular bandage
- Antiseptic scrub or wipes
- Antibiotic ointment for minor wounds
- First aid guide book, veterinary manual

**16.**
At least two persons should have current certification in first aid (within 3 yrs) and CPR (within 1 yr).

**17.**
You should have easy access to a telephone for emergency use, either located in the barn or a house if it is close by.

**18.**
Keep a laminated and easy-to-read list of the following phone numbers by the telephone.

- 911 or emergency dispatcher
- Fire department
- Local police/sheriff’s office
- Poison control
- Electric/gas supply
- Relative/neighbor
- Parent’s work number
- Veterinarian

**19. and 20.**
Always have the directions to the farm written down by the phone, for the emergency dispatcher. Always have specific directions, with mileage and landmarks clearly indicated. You never know who will be making the phone call and what state of mind he/she will be in at the time of the emergency/incident.

**21. and 22.**
You should know where you will be connected if you dial 911. If you do not know, contact your local police department. This is important so you know how to give correct directions. Give the emergency dispatcher the following information:

- your name and the phone number you are calling from
- location of the accident
- nature of the injury (to the horse and/or the rider)
- number of victims (animal and human)
- condition of the victims (animal and human)—bleeding, head injury, leg injury, etc.
- type of aid that has been given to the victim(s)
- who will meet the emergency personnel at the scene
- any special conditions that might hinder the rescue or treatment
SECTION B: Facilities

1. Box stalls should be a minimum of 10 ft X 10 ft for most horses. The standard box stall size is 12 ft X 12 ft. Larger stalls may be needed for larger breeds, foaling mares, or stallions.

2. A 4-foot-wide stall door is standard. This width provides enough room for the horse to walk through the doorway without bumping itself. Dutch or “half” stall doors should be at least as high as your horse’s shoulder (approximately 4½ to 5 feet high) to discourage your horse from trying to climb or jump over the door. Dutch-style doors are safer when they are hinged to open out. Roller-type doors are usually the safest.

3. In an emergency, latches must be easy for you to open but difficult for your horse. If your horse can open its stall door, your horse is not in a safe situation. The safest stall door has two latches, one at the top and one at the bottom. No latches are totally horseproof but you can try to baffle your horse’s escape attempts. Effective latches are kiwi gate latches, hooks with flanges, horse-resistant chain latches, and slide bars with bolt attachments. Always remember to position latches so that they do not protrude and possibly injure the horse’s side as it goes through the doorway.

4. and 5. Flooring should be non-slip and properly drained. Bedding should be free of dust, mold, and splinters. Good examples include clean shavings, sawdust, and straw. Hardwood shavings are not acceptable. Black walnut shavings should never be used due to toxins that can cause serious problems such as founder and hoof sloughing. Shavings should be deep; 3 to 4 inches or more are recommended. Rubber stall mats should be textured for good footing, be specifically intended for stall use, and covered with bedding.

6. All lightbulbs and switches must be out of your horse’s reach. Any lightbulb in a stall should be at least 8 to 10 feet high and enclosed or protected by a wire cage. The ideal light fixture is explosion proof. This means the lightbulb is enclosed in a glass jar and the glass jar is enclosed in a wire cage. The glass jar catches the broken pieces of lightbulb should it burst.

7. Spaces should be no greater than 1½ to 2 inches between boards in the lower 4 to 5 feet of the wall. This spacing should prevent your horse from catching its hoof between the boards if it rolls or kicks.

8. The stall walls should have no splinters, protruding nails, broken boards, or sharp edges.

9. Spaces between the bars and mesh in the open work in the upper stall walls should not exceed 2 to 3 inches. Bars or mesh should be strong and reinforced so they do not spread apart and trap a hoof if the horse kicks.

10. The safest way to feed hay is to feed it on the floor or in a corner floor manger. The next best alternative is a hayrack. Hayracks need to be at the same height as your horse’s withers. If the hay is higher than your horse’s withers, it can cause dust and particles to go into your horse’s nose and eyes and can lead to problems with your horse’s lungs or eyes. Be aware that a horse’s leg may be caught in a hayrack and injured. Hayracks should be constructed as in item #8.
11. If you use **hay nets**, they must be high enough that when empty, your horse cannot put a foot into the netting. Hay nets should be used with caution!

12. **Feeders** should be hung as high as your horse’s chest and have no sharp edges. Feeders should be sturdy and easy to clean. Feed tubs on the ground may also be used, if they have no sharp edges and do not easily overturn.

13. The minimum **width of a barn aisle is 10 to 12 feet**. However, be aware that this width still does not give you enough room to walk around your horse without entering the horse’s comfort or flight zone. Therefore, when passing horses tied in the aisle, approach each horse carefully and pass in a safe manner. Keep aisles clear of junk. Aisle floors should be constructed with a non-slip surface.

14. and 15. **Grain** must be kept in a securely locked **grain room or container**. The grain room needs to be ventilated to prevent mold, dust, and spontaneous combustion. The grain **bin should be securely locked** so that a loose horse cannot gain access to the grain. Grain bins should be rodent-proof and protected from the weather to prevent spoilage.

16. Keep the barn neat. **Shovels, brooms, and manure forks** should be hung or stored in a designated place. Grooming tools and tack should be stored in the tack room. Loose hay should be swept; baling twine and trash should be removed regularly.

17. **Riding arenas** must have sturdy, safe fencing and gates that close when riders are inside. Fencing and gates should not have any protruding parts that may catch on riders’ clothing, knees, or toes, or on any tack. Riding arenas should be a minimum of 60 feet in diameter. A typical arena size for many uses is 120 ft by 240 ft. The arena should have level, soft footing with good traction. Avoid surfaces that are extremely hard or rocky.

18. All areas of horse facilities should be regularly inspected for possible hazards to horses, riders, handlers, or spectators. Work with your leader, project helper, or parent to identify and remove any potential hazards. Learn more about horse behavior to help you identify possible hazards to horses and humans.
SECTION C: Pastures

1. Check pastured horses at least twice a day for general health or condition, injury, illness, shelter, and lack of water.

2. Your horse needs a constant supply of fresh water at all times. The water source can be a clear running stream/creek, a pond, or water in clean buckets or troughs.

3. Machinery, equipment, and junk should not be left or stored in the pasture. If these items are in your pasture, remove them if possible or keep your horse from becoming injured by putting a fence around the machinery and junk.

4. and 5. Learn the plants in your area that are poisonous to your horse and remove them from the pasture. Most ornamental plants and trees are considered toxic to horses.

6. Fences for horses must be strong, visible, tall enough to discourage jumping, and in good repair. Avoid crowding groups of horses in small spaces or tight corners. Properly constructed board or vinyl fencing is usually the safest type of fencing. Smooth, high-tensile wire is not easy to see and should be kept electrified to keep horses away. Flags, signs, or colored polyvinyl wire can increase visibility. High-tensile wire fencing should be used with caution.

7. The top rail or wire of your fence should be at least 54 to 60 inches or more from the ground. The bottom rail or wire should be 8 to 12 inches off the ground. Woven or mesh wire fencing should extend to ground level and have no spaces to trap a horse’s foot or leg.

8. You are responsible for making sure the gate to your pasture is closed and latched every time you enter or leave a pasture. Gates should close flush to the post with no gap in between. A gate latch should discourage your horse from opening it. Some examples are chain and hook, snap to fasten a chain together, and a latch with a flange.

9. The area and footing around feeders, water sources, and gates should be free of holes, rocks, junk, or other debris that may result in injury to horses. Well-drained soil or limestone screenings will provide good traction and prevent muddy, slippery conditions that may cause hoof/lower leg problems.

10. It is not safe to leave a halter on a horse that is loose in a stall or turned out in a paddock or pasture. A halter may catch on a post or other object and cause serious injury or death.
11. Your horse should have access to a windbreak or shelter such as a thick grove of trees or run-in shed. A run-in shed should be at least 10 ft X 10 ft or 12 ft X 12 ft or more in total area per horse. Adequate body condition (or fat) and a long-haired coat also help keep the pastured horse warm in cold weather. In extremely hot conditions, shade should also be provided.

12. You need to check your pasture fence and gate every day and walk around your entire fence at least once a week. Check pastures regularly for downed tree limbs, holes in the ground, and broken or loose fencing and gates.
SECTION D: Tack and Attire

1. To reduce the risk of head injuries, ASTM-SEI safety helmets should be worn when riding, driving, or working around your horse. Safety helmets should be used every time you ride or drive your horse!

2. Safety headgear should be labeled as certified by the Safety Equipment Institute (SEI) to meet the current applicable standards of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM). Bicycle helmets are not acceptable for use when riding or working around horses. Only use safety headgear intended for use with horses.

3. Your helmet must fit properly with the correct harness adjustment to be effective in preventing head injuries. The helmet should fit snugly and should not move around on the head without moving the chin. The harness should fit the chin when the strap is buckled. When properly adjusted, the helmet should not “roll” easily forward or backward, and should not be removable without unbuckling the harness strap.

4. Sturdy shoes or boots for riding should provide ankle support and have at least a ½ inch heel. A well-defined heel helps to prevent your foot from slipping through the stirrup and keeps you from potentially being dragged by the horse during (or after) a fall. When doing groundwork, sneakers and sandals are not acceptable. Leather, hard-toed shoes, or boots should be worn at all times and will help protect your feet if your horse should step on them.

5. Wear neat, well-fitting clothing that will not become snagged on equipment. Avoid loose, “baggy” clothing (i.e. shirts or jackets) that may become hooked over the saddle horn. Long pants are recommended for riding to prevent sores and to avoid cuts from brush. Many types of pants work well for riding, including denim jeans, chaps, riding tights, or schooling pants.

6. When the rider is mounted, a Western saddle should have about 2 inches of clearance between the withers and the gullet. Insufficient clearance means the fork of the saddle is too wide or the withers of the horse are too high for the particular saddle. More than 2 inches of clearance indicates that the saddle fork is too narrow for the horse. Both situations can cause your horse discomfort and decrease the safety of your ride.

7. With an English saddle, the distance between the saddle and the horse’s spine should be approximately 1 to 1½ inches. The saddle (English or Western) should not touch any part of the horse’s spine or pinch the horse’s shoulders, withers, back, or loin.
8. Safety stirrups are available for both Western and English saddles. English stirrups include various styles that either have one side of the stirrup free or a side that breaks away if a rider needs to remove the foot quickly. Western types include breakaway stirrups and tapaderos or covered stirrups. Tapaderos or covered stirrups cover the toe when the foot is in the stirrup and help prevent the foot from slipping through the stirrup. Tapaderos or covered stirrups are considered safe only if they are designed so the rider’s toe will not become entrapped.

9. Properly sized Western stirrups should have at least \( \frac{1}{2} \) inch between your foot and the sides of the stirrup. English stirrups should have 1 to \( \frac{3}{4} \) inches between your foot and the sides of the stirrup. Stirrups should have enough space to help prevent your foot from becoming trapped during a fall.

10. To determine the correct length of stirrups when mounted on an English saddle, the bottom of the irons should be level with or at the bottom of your anklebone. For Western stirrups, when you are standing up in the saddle, with legs properly positioned, heels slightly down and knees slightly bent, you should be able to fit approximately 2 fingers to a hand width between your seat and the saddle. The same guideline for English saddles/stirrups also works well for Western saddle/stirrups.

11. A correctly fitting bit should rest comfortably in the horse’s mouth. The headstall should be adjusted so that the mouthpiece of the bit does not hang loosely on the tongue nor pinch at the junction of the upper and lower lips. A correctly fitting bit is wide enough for the horse’s jaw with the sidepieces just touching, but not pinching the lips. A bit that is too wide or too narrow lessens your control and increases your horse’s discomfort.

12. and 13. Every time you tack up your horse you should check the hardware, buckles, snaps, straps, stitching, and leather condition. Repair or replace worn, damaged, or broken equipment. Tack should be cleaned and conditioned on a regular basis. Sweat, dirt, hair, mildew, and other debris should be promptly removed to prevent damage to the leather and avoid irritation of the horse. Also check for correct fit of your tack and correct any problem that may cause discomfort to your horse or lessen your control and safety during your ride.
SECTION E: Ground Handling

1. When you **approach** your horse, walk slowly but confidently at an angle **toward your horse’s shoulder**. Never approach directly in front of or directly behind the horse. Be sure your horse acknowledges your approach. Try not to startle your horse and speak calmly as you approach.

2. When you enter your horse’s comfort or flight zone, the horse may move away, turn around toward you, turn away from you, or shift its weight. Some horses’ comfort zones are smaller than others. **Learn the boundaries of your horse’s comfort or flight zone!** If your horse moves away from you, **STOP** until the horse relaxes and try again!

3. **Always keep your hand on your horse** when you are working on it. **Talk to your horse.** Do not assume your horse is paying attention to you. Occasionally, horses may fall asleep or become distracted. Even when you have been working on your horse for a while, if you step away and then return, you can still startle your horse.

4. **Stay close** when **moving directly behind** your horse. Before moving, speak to the horse, **place your arm across its hindquarters**, then move quietly, yet quickly to the other side. If you need to walk around a horse, **leave at least one horse length (10 to 12 feet)** between you and the horse. You should stay very close (being careful of your feet) to reduce the impact of a kick or stay far enough away to be out of the horse’s kicking range.

5. Always **stand close** to your horse when **grooming**. Always keep your free hand on the horse’s body. **Face** slightly toward the horse’s **hindquarters**. Pay attention to your horse’s body language, particularly the action of its ears and tail. Ears pinned against the head and excessive tail swishing mean, **“Watch out!”**

6. When **brushing your horse’s tail**, stand close to the horse, but off to the side. **Do not stand directly behind the horse.**

7. The standard amount of lead rope, from halter to knot, used **to tie a horse is an arm’s length of rope**. You do not want your horse to get a front foot over the rope or its head under the rope if it is too long. Also, you do not want your horse to be tied so close that it panics, pulls back, and becomes injured.

8. Always **tie your horse at withers or eye level or higher to** help prevent the horse from becoming entangled in the rope. Also, a horse that panics when it is tied lower than recommended has a greater chance of injuring its neck or spine.
9. **Tie your horse** to a sturdy, immovable object. A sturdy post is ideal. Do not tie your horse to railings, boards, gates, or trailers that are not hitched. Your horse and/or you could be injured if your horse pulls the rail, board, or the gate free.

10. **Never tie your horse with your reins.** If your horse pulls back, its teeth and/or jaw may be hurt, or your reins may break. Carry a lead rope and halter with you on every trail ride. Use a lead rope if you need to tie your horse on the trail.

11. **Learn to make a quick-release knot for tying your horse.** There are different kinds of quick-release knots, but use the one you are sure you can tie properly. The safest knots will easily come loose if the horse pulls back. Even when using a quick-release knot, keep a knife handy in case you have to cut your horse loose in an emergency. Quick-release snaps may also be used.

12. When **you lead your horse,** walk off to its left side between the head and the shoulder. Do not allow your horse to push ahead of you. Walk close to the horse, yet keep enough space between you and the horse so that the horse does not crowd you or step on your feet. Turn the horse away from you and avoid pulling the horse toward you when turning. Hold the lead rope just below the snap. Be aware of your surroundings. Be calm and confident. Be in charge!

13. **Never wrap the extra length of lead rope around your hand.** If your horse spooks or runs away, your hand may be crushed, or you may be dragged and severely injured or killed. Loop the extra rope in a **figure eight** and hold the rope in the center of the figure eight.

14. **Avoid feeding treats** since you may be training your horse to push you or bite when looking for the treat. If you feed your horse treats, feed them from a bucket or on the ground in a stall or pasture. **Do not feed treats by hand.** Your horse does not know the difference between your fingers and a treat!

15. Before you **turn your horse loose,** always lead your horse completely through the gate or doorway. Then, **turn your horse toward you or back toward the gate or doorway BEFORE you release the horse.** This method has less chance of the horse running off or kicking out its feet in your direction. Make sure your horse does not pull out of its halter, but stands quietly while you release it. Have a preplanned escape route in case of an emergency.
SECTION F: Saddling and Bridling

1. Saddle your horse before you put on the bridle. Keep your horse tied or have a helper hold the horse to keep it under control when saddling. If you are working alone, it is safest to keep a horse tied while saddling.

2. Before saddling, check the saddle pad and saddle area of the horse. Make sure both are clean and free from any objects (i.e., burrs or dirt) that may cause the horse to buck or cause saddle sores.

3. Place the saddle pad slightly in front of the horse’s withers. Slowly and deliberately, swing the saddle onto the horse, being careful not to startle the horse. Do not drop the saddle onto the horse’s back, which will cause pain or injury. Slide the saddle and pad backward into position. This will ensure that the hair is smooth and laying in the right direction. The saddle should be placed so that it does not pinch the horse’s withers or shoulders.

4. When using a double-rigged Western saddle, always fasten the front cinch first, then the rear cinch, and finally, fasten accessory straps (breast collars, martingales, etc.). When unsaddling, reverse the order by always unfastening the accessory straps first, then rear cinch, and finally, the front cinch.

5. The girth should be placed so that it does not pinch the skin behind the horse’s elbow. Check the tightness of the girth by sliding two fingers under the girth in the middle of the horse’s belly. Insert your fingers from the back to the front to keep the hair smooth. The girth should fit snugly to prevent the saddle from slipping, yet not be too tight and irritate the horse. Check your girth at least three times: before mounting, after mounting, and then 10 to 15 minutes into the ride.

6. Always untie your horse before you put on the bridle. After untying, remove the halter and refasten it around your horse’s neck or loop the lead rope around the neck to control your horse.

7. Do not stand directly in front of your horse when bridling. Stand close, just behind and to one side of the horse’s head (usually the left side). Face the same direction as the horse and never stand with your head over the horse’s head. In the correct position, you can safely control the horse and avoid getting hit with the horse’s head or run over if the horse moves forward. Keep your feet away from the horse’s feet to avoid getting stepped on while bridling.
8. 
Be careful not to bang your horse’s teeth with the bit when bridling or unbridling. When bridling, insert one or two fingers into the corner of the mouth (where there are no teeth) to get the horse to open its mouth to insert the bit. When unbridling, stand in the same position as when bridling. Slide the crown piece off of the poll and hold it until the horse opens its mouth before lowering the bit. This will prevent banging the bit against the horse’s teeth.

9. 
After bridling, you should be able to fit two to three fingers width between your horse’s throat and the throatlatch.

10. 
After bridling, you should be able to fit one finger under the noseband and one or two fingers under the curb strap. The noseband and curb strap should fit snugly to control the horse, but not too tight as to cause the horse discomfort.
SECTION G: Riding

1. Before mounting your horse, first check the tightness of the girth. The girth should be snug but not too tight. Take the reins in your left hand and place them on the horse’s neck. Facing the rear of the horse, grasp the stirrup with your right hand and turn it toward you. Place your left foot in the stirrup and make a three-hop pivot, resulting in you standing up in the left stirrup with your toe facing forward. You may use your right hand to firmly grasp the saddle as you mount. Gently swing your right leg over the horse’s back and sit down softly and quietly. Check the length of your stirrups and be sure your reins are not twisted or tangled.

2. Do not mount your horse inside a barn or area with a low ceiling. Do not mount your horse while it is tied. The horse may move or pull back after you mount even if it usually stands tied quietly.

3. Ask your horse to stand still for several seconds after you mount. Keep contact on the horse’s mouth with the reins. Do not let your horse walk off until you ask him to move.

4. When dismounting, first stop your horse. Hold the reins in your left hand and place them on the horse’s neck. Drop both stirrups, swing your right leg over the horse and slide down to the ground. Do not leave your left foot in the stirrup. If your horse moves off, you will have to hop on one foot or possibly be dragged.

5. After dismounting, immediately take the reins over your horse’s head or grasp both reins (if using split reins) and prepare to lead your horse. Lead the horse, being careful not to wrap the reins around your hands or arm.

6. If you are riding English, you should run up your stirrups immediately after dismounting.

7. When passing another horse, allow plenty of room so that you do not crowd the other horse or cause it to break gait. Keep a safe distance between horses to avoid being kicked, although this may be difficult in a crowded show ring. A good rule of thumb to use is approximately one horse length or 10 to 12 feet between horses. If you can’t see the hind feet of the horse in front of you when looking between your horse’s ears, you are too close!

8. A skills test should be required before you ride without adult supervision or go out on the trail. Have your instructor or an experienced rider determine if you can control your horse before you ride in open spaces. You should be able to guide, control, stop your horse, and execute an emergency dismount before you ride without supervision.
9. **Halters and lead ropes** are important to carry in case of an emergency on the trail. You will need them for tying your horse on the trail. If your reins should break, you will have something to use for the ride home and will have an alternate way to control your horse.

10. At least one experienced rider and horse should always accompany a novice horse or rider on trail rides. When riding in a group, there should be experienced riders in the front, middle, and rear of the group. It is important to keep in mind the abilities of all of the horses and riders in the group. You should always ride at a speed that is safe and comfortable for the least experienced rider and/or least trained horse.

11. **Never trail ride alone.** Try to use the buddy system. If you need to ride alone, be sure someone knows the approximate route you are taking and when you are planning to return.

12. To **emergency dismount**, first kick your feet out of both stirrups. Place the reins up on the horse’s neck. Vault off of your horse, pushing up, out, and away as you go. You should land on both feet facing the direction your horse is going. Practice this from both sides of your horse in a controlled situation. Never try to hold on to the reins in an emergency. You can catch the horse later!

13. Your horse should be trained to respond to “whoa” and a gentle pressure or backward pull on the bit to stop. Use a tension and release motion if you do not get an immediate response. If your horse begins to go faster than you like, shorten, pull, and release the reins. Sit deeply in the saddle with your heels firmly down. In a runaway situation, it may be necessary to turn your horse’s head toward you by putting pressure on only one rein. In a worst-case scenario, use your emergency dismount technique. Remember your safety comes first. Do not put yourself in a situation where you will be dragged. If your horse is still running after you have dismounted, let go! If you find yourself in this situation, you and your horse need more training **BEFORE** you go out on the trail or ride in the ring again. Practice safe stopping and emergency dismount methods with your project helper or instructor.

14. If you trail ride in popular hunting locations, **DO NOT RIDE there during the hunting season.** Even when you are riding on your own property during hunting season, wear orange reflective clothing and add some reflective attire to your horse as well.

15. When riding behind another horse on the trail or in the ring, you should be able to see the feet of the horse in front of you between your own horse’s ears. If you cannot, YOU ARE TOO CLOSE!
4-H Club Motto
“To make the best better”

4-H Club Pledge
I pledge
my head to clearer thinking,
my heart to greater loyalty,
my hands to larger service, and
my health to better living, for
my club,
my community,
my country, and
my world.

4-H Club Colors
Green and White

Name ______________________________________
Address ___________________________________
___________________________________________
Zip ______________________
Phone number _____________________________
Club name _________________________________
___________________________________________
County ____________________________________