

# Riding horses on farms

**JUNE 2014**



# **The purpose of these guidelines is to help reduce the risk of injuries and fatalities by providing practical guidance on how to manage various horse riding and handling hazards.**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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# **HORSE RIDING: KEY POINTS**

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**Only trained and experienced people should ride horses for farm work**

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**Match riders to horses within their handling abilities**

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**Always wear a helmet when riding a horse**

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**Always supervise children on/and around horses**

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## INTRODUCTION

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### IN THIS SECTION:

- 1.1 Purpose
- 1.2 Scope
- 1.3 Development

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**This guide provides practical advice for safe horse riding on farms. The guide covers using horses for farm work and recreational riding.**

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### **1.1** PURPOSE

This guideline outlines the main hazards of riding and working with horses and provides recommendations on how to eliminate, isolate and minimise them.

WorkSafe NZ accepts these recommendations in this guide as current industry good practice. They will help you comply with the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 (the HSE Act).

You need a combination of common sense and caution when dealing with horses. Injuries will happen and some have life-changing consequences, such as serious head and spinal injuries. These happen if:

- > you are thrown or fall from the horse
- > the horse crushes you
- > the horse kicks you.

You can't eliminate all these hazards, but you can reduce the chance of injury or being severely hurt if you have an accident.

### **1.2** SCOPE

This guide applies to people using horses to do farm work and recreational riding. It also covers ensuring the safety of non-riders.

### **1.3** DEVELOPMENT

Industry experts helped WorkSafe NZ develop this guide. WorkSafe NZ also conducted a thorough review of accident statistics and published academic literature, and looked at how overseas health and safety regulators manage the same issues.

WorkSafe NZ has made every effort to ensure the guide's recommended hazard controls reflect current good practice.

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## **HORSE BEHAVIOUR**

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### **IN THIS SECTION:**

- 2.1 The frightened horse**
- 2.2 General horse-handling tips**



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## Horses are prey animals and will run away when frightened. To handle horses safely, you must take their instincts and senses into consideration.

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Accidents can easily happen if handlers (or visitors) upset or frighten horses. Horses detect danger through their vision, sense of smell and keen hearing. When a horse lifts its head and pricks its ears, it is looking at something far away. A horse lowers its head to look at close objects. They have wide-angle vision, but they also have blind spots directly behind and in front of them. Remember these blind spots and know where your horse's attention is focused so you don't scare it. Approach a horse calmly and from a direction where they can see you coming.

Always handling horses the right way makes them more reliable and safe.

### 2.1 THE FRIGHTENED HORSE

#### IN THE Paddock

A frightened horse will throw its head up and prick its ears, tense its muscles from its muzzle to its tail, open its nostrils and fill its lungs with air to get ready to run.

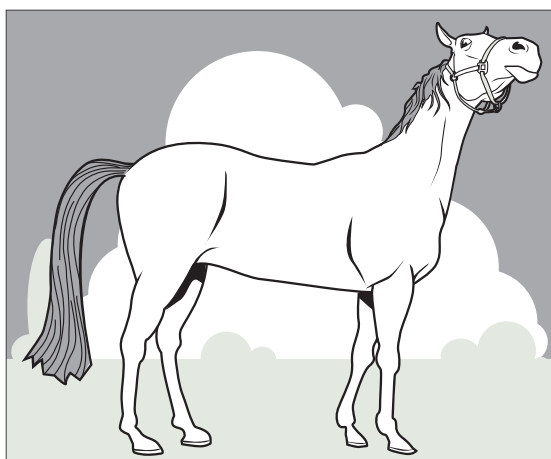


Figure 1: A startled horse, ready to run

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In a field, frightened bolting horses can knock people down or run into things because they're looking behind at whatever frightened them, instead of where they're going. This is called 'blind fright'.

#### IN THE STABLE

A frightened horse will still try to run away first, but because it's cornered in a stable its survival instincts will kick in. It will warn you by swinging its rear end, swishing its tail and flicking its ears.

If you ignore the warning, it will tense from muzzle to tail and clench the tail between its rear legs. It will either kick or lay its ears flat back with wide-open eyes, curl its mouth and lunge forward with a straight neck, ready to bite.

Everyone involved in handling horses must know these warning signs for their own safety.

Only experienced staff should handle temperamental horses.

#### CAUSES OF FEAR

Any sudden movement, noise or strange event can frighten horses and ponies. Horses are creatures of habit and have the instinct to flee in new and unfamiliar environments. If a horse is not used to an environment, it may react unexpectedly; even if there seems to be no obvious danger. For example, horses can be spooked by something different on a route they normally travel.

Horses easily sense human fear and this can lead to fearful actions from the horse. Keep calm.

## 2.2 GENERAL HORSE-HANDLING TIPS

- > Always work with calm, deliberate movements around horses. Nervous handlers make horses nervous, creating unsafe situations.
- > When handling your horse, talk to it and keep a hand on it, so it always knows where you are. Always understand what a horse's movements mean, and where it is in relation to you and its surroundings.
- > Horses are easily frightened by other animals or vehicles. Stay alert and be careful when riding in places that could upset your horse and cause unexpected behaviour.
- > Always be aware of where non-riders are when you are in charge of a horse; tell them where to stand and how to behave.
- > Always supervise children on and around horses.



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## HAZARDS AND CONTROLS

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### IN THIS SECTION:

- 3.1 Approaching the horse
- 3.2 Leading the horse
- 3.3 Lunging
- 3.4 Matching horse and rider
- 3.5 Difficult horses
- 3.6 Helping a beginner rider to mount
- 3.7 Riding
- 3.8 More than one rider
- 3.9 Riding horses on the road
- 3.10 Riding alone and in isolation
- 3.11 Personal factors
- 3.12 Grooming
- 3.13 Loading and unloading for transport
- 3.14 Zoonoses

The most common hazards faced by horse riders are set out on the following pages. Guidance is provided about ways for farmers, horse riders and handlers to effectively control these hazards.

### 3.1 APPROACHING THE HORSE

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.

#### MANAGING THE HAZARD:

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 the horse.

Some horses are one-sided – they can be trained, approached, caught, saddled and mounted from one side, but not the other. Never assume you can work equally well with both sides of a horse. If you are unsure if a horse can be handled from both sides, it is best to approach from the horse's left side, as most horses will be more used to being handled on this side.

When catching a horse, approach from its left shoulder. Move slowly but confidently, speaking to the horse as you approach. Read the horse's intent by watching its body language. Ears flat back is a warning sign.

Be careful when approaching a preoccupied horse, like when its head is in a feeder. When approaching a horse in a stall, speak to it to get its attention. Wait until it turns and faces you before entering. Make sure the horse moves over before you walk inside.

When moving around your horse, speak to it and keep a hand on it.

When approaching from the rear, move at an angle while speaking to the horse. Make sure you have its attention. Touch it gently as you pass by its hindquarters.

When around the hindquarters of a horse, stay well out of the way (ie over 2m) to avoid being kicked. If you have to be closer, get right in close so if the horse kicks, its legs have no space to build power behind the kick.

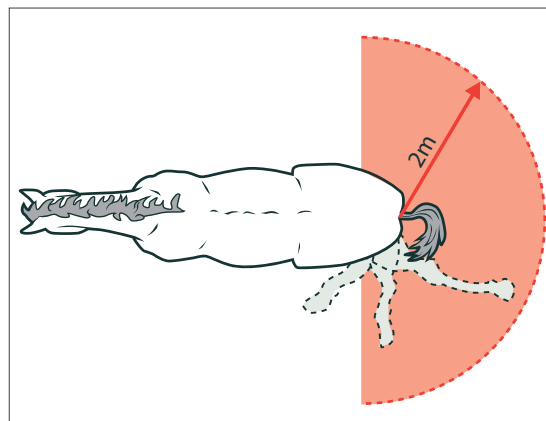


Figure 2: Horse kick zone

### 3.2 LEADING THE HORSE

Horses are strong and fast. They can injure you and themselves if you do not handle them properly. A startled horse can kick or bolt and knock you over. This can cause serious injuries or death.

**MANAGING THE HAZARD:**

Always use a lead rope attached to a halter so you have a 'safety zone'; don't hold the halter directly with your hand. Hold the lead rope with your right hand, 8 to 10 inches away from the horse's head, holding the end of the rope with your left hand.

Teach your horse to walk beside you so you can walk at its left shoulder. This puts your right 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 doorway, step through first and then quickly step to the side, out of the horse's way. Keep an eye on the horse, because some try to rush through narrow spaces.

Never wrap equipment attached to a horse around your hand, 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. The horse could pull back, making you trip over the rope. If the horse lunges forward, paws or tries to bite, you have no quick escape path. Never walk under any horse's belly.

**RETURNING A HORSE TO THE Paddock**

After you remove the halter, let the horse stand quietly for several seconds before letting it go. This stops the horse from developing a habit of running away in excitement and accidentally knocking over or kicking the handler as it leaves.

If the horse is likely to run away in excitement when released (such as if it's been in a stable for a long time), turn the horse towards the gate, put the lead rope around their neck, hold the rope as you undo the halter, then let the rope slide off as you step back, away from the horse.

**3.3 LUNGING**

Lunging is a useful horse training tool. The handler stands on the ground and directs the horse to run in a circle around them.

By lunging your horse, you can watch it from the ground and check its movement, soundness and natural frame. Lunging before a ride releases some of a horse's pent-up energy, if they are 'hot' (full of energy), which increases your safety.

However, lunging a horse can be dangerous because the horse and handler work close to each other.

If not handled well, horses can get agitated, rearing up or kicking the handler.

The horse can also stand on the handler's foot, causing bruising or broken bones.

**MANAGING THE HAZARD:**

Never lunge a horse with a rider on its back.

Only competent people should lunge a horse.

- > The lunging area should be flat with good footing.
- > Handlers should wear protective footwear.
- > Consider wearing gloves to prevent rope-burn.



### 3.4 MATCHING HORSE AND RIDER

People need to know their limits around horses and avoid riding horses that could exploit their lack of experience. An inexperienced rider on a difficult horse increases the chance of an accident or fall.

#### MANAGING THE HAZARD:

Match riders to horses within their handling abilities.

Horses should be picked for each rider by the person in charge of, or most experienced with horses.

Treat all riders as beginners unless they can prove otherwise. The following definitions can help evaluate a rider:

- > Beginner rider: ranges from a person who has never ridden a horse to a person who can mount, dismount and stop a horse. They might be confident to ride the horse at a walk.
- > Novice rider: a person who is competent at riding the horse at a walk and can rise to the trot.
- > Competent rider: a person who is confident and competent at riding a horse at a walk, trot and canter. Displays the ability to control the horse.

Give beginner riders a well-trained, quiet, steady horse or pony of a size the rider feels confident to ride. Older horses (over five years old) are generally better. Always supervise beginners.

The person assigning horses should know all the horses' characteristics. The horse selected for the rider should be suitable and safe for that person, considering the rider's age, size, experience, riding ability and any limits or handicaps. Give every rider information about their horse's character and behaviour.

Carefully match the horse to its task. Not every horse can do every job. Closely supervise or control the horse when taking it out of its usual environment or activity.

### 3.5 DIFFICULT HORSES

Some horses frequently behave in ways that make them more difficult to ride and handle. For example, they can buck, bolt, rear or shy easily when being ridden. Some horses are 'hot'; they want to take off at speed and can be difficult to slow down or restrain. Some horses may try to kick other horses, which can injure both horses and riders. Accidents are more likely to occur with these horses.

#### MANAGING THE HAZARD:

Do not ride difficult horses.

Only tolerate a bucking or bolting horse during breaking-in and the early stages of training.

If a horse is likely to buck, saddle it and give it some exercise before mounting. Lunge the horse or lead it from another horse. Then mount the horse in a small yard before riding it in an unconfined area.

Lunging hot horses before riding them can make them safer to ride.

If a horse is likely to bolt, ride it in a yard first. If it bolts in an unconfined area, gradually circle the horse by applying pressure to one rein until it is under control (however, don't let the other rein drop).

Unless an assessment shows they are suitable for riding, do not ride:

- > stallions
- > mares in foal (pregnant)
- > lactating mares - ie those feeding foals (horses under one year old)
- > ill horses
- > horses that are too young or old.



You will need to take extra measures to reduce the risks of difficult behaviour.

Whenever possible, give horses the chance to exercise freely and graze in a paddock (rather than keeping them in a stable). This is good for their wellbeing and lets them burn off energy in the paddock – which is likely to result in a calmer horse when they are ridden.

### 3.6 HELPING A BEGINNER RIDER TO MOUNT

When helping a rider to mount, the helper gets into awkward bending and reaching postures while suddenly taking the rider's partial weight. They might have to take the rider's full weight if the rider doesn't help. This can result in back strains.

#### MANAGING THE HAZARD:

If riders need help with mounting, if possible, use a mounting block.

A mounting block removes the need to give the rider a 'leg-up'. It saves the handler from potential injury and reduces awkward forces on the horse during mounting. Make sure the block is sturdy and steady, and is placed where it is not a tripping hazard.

If it is not possible to use a block (for example, out on the trail):

- > Ask the riders if they need help and help only where needed.
- > Have the rider and person helping the rider stand on the left side of the horse.
- > The helper tells the rider to place their left foot in the stirrup, take most of their weight themselves and not depend on the assistant completely.
- > The rider takes up the reins, normally holding onto some mane, but faces the side of the horse. Their right hand is on the waist or pommel (front of the saddle) and their left leg is bent at the knee.
- > The helper holds their left hand under the rider's left knee and their right hand at the rider's ankle.
- > Tell the rider to spring up from their right foot on the agreed signal.
- > On the agreed signal (on the count of three) the rider springs up from the right foot and is helped high enough to get their right leg clear of the cantle (back of the saddle) and to ease into the saddle.
- > Ensure the rider is securely seated and has control of the horse.

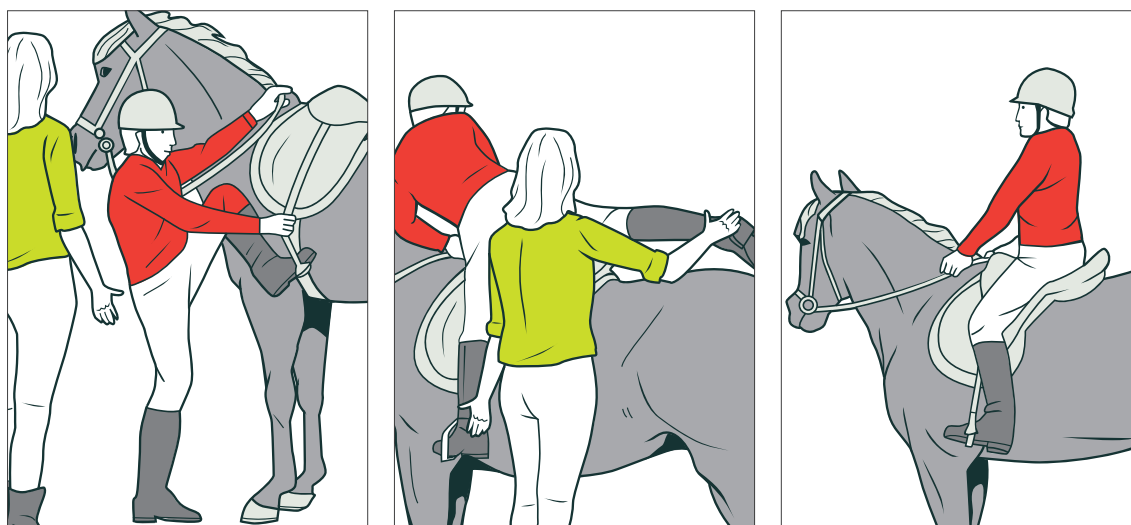


Figure 3: Helping a beginner rider to mount

To reduce the risk of back injury, the helper should stay close to the rider, keep the lower lumbar curve in their back and bend their knees before lifting.

### 3.7 RIDING

Most riding injuries happen from falls. Falling from a horse can cause serious injuries, like broken bones, and neck and head injuries. Falls can also kill.

#### MANAGING THE HAZARD:

Wear a helmet when riding a horse.

An approved helmet will reduce the risk of head injury if you fall or a horse kicks you, because it protects your brain. Properly fit the helmet so it sits one inch above your eyebrows. Show new riders how to adjust the chin-strap to fit. You can still get a concussion even if you wear a helmet.

Children should wear a helmet when around horses whether they are riding or not.

Read the equipment section of this guide for more information on the correct helmet type.

To reduce the chances of falling from the horse:

- > Always check the girth strap is tight before you get on the horse.
- > Stay alert and in a controlling position when mounted.
- > Only adjust equipment from the ground. Ask someone to help adjust your girth strap and stirrup length.
- > If riding through water or bush, kick your feet out of the stirrups in case you fall.
- > Galloping close to another animal puts you and your horse at risk. If you must, keep the animal behind your horse's shoulder point (wither).

- > Don't ride under low-slung wires or clotheslines.
- > Take care when riding in slippery or boggy conditions.
- > Slow down when riding downhill and lean back in the saddle.

If your horse slips and falls, stay calm and let the horse 'find its feet'. You may not have to get off. If you do, check the horse isn't hurt before getting back on from stable ground.

In difficult terrain such as narrow passes, paths and tracks, it may be safer to get off and lead the horse.

### 3.8 MORE THAN ONE RIDER

An extra rider can make a horse harder to control. The extra rider could fall off because they shift the horse's natural point of balance and are less able to anticipate the horse's movements.

#### MANAGING THE HAZARD:

Only one person should ride a horse.

### 3.9 RIDING HORSES ON THE ROAD

Horses are easily frightened by noisy, large vehicles and other things they don't normally meet in a stable or paddock.

Often motorists do not understand horse behaviour and drive too quickly and too closely to the horse.

Keep horses and vehicles apart. However, sometimes horses have to go on the roads to get to trails or when training either horse or rider.

**MANAGING THE HAZARD:**

Only horses used to traffic should be allowed on the road, especially if being ridden by an inexperienced rider.

To reduce the risk:

- > Avoid busy main roads as much as possible.
- > Give clear and accurate signals. Be considerate of other road users.
- > Avoid riding in failing light or darkness. If you have to, wear reflective gear and fit leg bands above the horse's fetlock (ankle) joints.
- > When teaching a horse to be ridden safely on the road, have a steady horse between the horse being trained and the road.
- > Never ride more than two horses abreast on the road.
- > Don't ride on the road in foggy conditions.
- > If there is more than one rider, cross in a group. If necessary, get a senior rider to dismount and control the road traffic while others cross.
- > Most road surfaces are slippery, so ride at a walking pace. Don't canter on grass verges.
- > Riders must be clearly visible to motorists. Wear fluorescent and reflective vests and armbands, and provide horses with leg bands.
- > Ensure workers have enough information and training to ride safely on roads without putting themselves or others at risk.
- > Acknowledge and return courtesy – a smile and a nod helps keep a good relationship between riders and other road users.

When leading a horse on a road:

- > Horses led on foot or from another horse should be on the left-hand side of the road.
- > Lead the horse using a lead rope attached to a halter.

**3.10 RIDING ALONE AND IN ISOLATION**

Riders often work alone. When a farmer working alone in a remote area has a riding accident, there can be dangerous delays in getting help. Sometimes this leads to death.

**MANAGING THE HAZARD:**

Tell someone where you are working and when you plan to return. Carry a mobile phone, radio or emergency locator device. Have regular check-in times. This helps make sure there is a quick response if you do not return.

You should have a way of raising the alarm if you are injured, like a mobile phone or emergency beacon. Some mobile phones have GPS, which helps people find your location. You can also download applications (apps) onto smartphones that help you monitor where a phone is in real time.

Develop an emergency plan with workers and family members so they know what to do if something goes wrong.

**3.11 PERSONAL FACTORS**

Sometimes fatigue, stress, attitude (eg over confidence or recklessness), drugs or alcohol can impair riders. These cause poor judgement, reduced balance, co-ordination and reaction times, which increase the risk of a serious injury or death.

**MANAGING THE HAZARD:**

Never ride a horse while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Reassess tasks and find alternatives if the worker is stressed or tired.

Employers must make sure riders know the hazards of riding horses and how their behaviour and attitudes affect these hazards.

Riders must take responsibility and let someone know if they're not up to the job for any reason.

### 3.12 GROOMING

Some horses become sour and begin nipping at you if they think they're going to be uncomfortable during grooming. Other horses love grooming so much they will want to give you a love bite.

#### MANAGING THE HAZARD:

If the horse has a history of biting, tie it with a very short lead rope to the halter to restrict movement. It won't be able to bite.

Don't hurry the grooming, especially with a young or easily spooked horse. Stay near the horse and always keep one hand on it so you can anticipate its movements.

### 3.13 LOADING AND UNLOADING FOR TRANSPORT

Horses can get stressed when loading and unloading them onto trucks and floats (towed horse trailers). This can lead to accidents.

#### MANAGING THE HAZARD:

Use anti-slip loading ramps with shallow inclines. Do not stand directly under the ramp when lowering or raising it.

Make sure the truck or float is safe and suitable for the horse's size. Make sure there is enough lighting to avoid loading problems, and if possible, use two people to load and unload.

Keep the horse calm, particularly if it has not been transported before.

You should not transport a horse that could give birth during the journey. Take extra care if you are transporting horses that are young, old, pregnant or difficult to handle.

Keep horses on floats for as short a time possible. They are more likely to panic and hurt themselves and others when in a confined space.

### 3.14 ZOOZOSES

Zoonoses are serious diseases that humans can catch from animals. They cause mild to life-threatening human health problems. People working with livestock may be exposed to these diseases.

Occasionally horses get infected with problems like ringworm, leptospirosis and gastrointestinal infections like salmonella, which they can pass on to humans.

You can be exposed to zoonotic diseases by:

- > animal blood, urine or manure splashed in your eyes, nose or mouth
- > bugs entering your bloodstream through cracked skin or open cuts
- > inhaling dust or micro-organisms in the air
- > eating or drinking infected animal products
- > being bitten by flies, mosquitoes, ticks or fleas that have also bitten infected animals.

#### MANAGING THE HAZARD:

Manage zoonoses through good health and hygiene practices.

- > Run vaccination and parasite control programmes (eg for ticks and worms).
- > Tell, teach and supervise workers to stay clean and healthy when working with horses and in animal areas.

SECTION 3.0 // HAZARDS AND CONTROLS

- > Make sure workers have a clean place to wash their hands. It should include running water, liquid soap and a way to dry hands, like disposable paper towels. Buckets or troughs of water that are used by several people are not suitable. Use waterless alcohol-based hand rubs to sanitise clean hands.
- > Tell workers to wash their hands:
  - after touching horses, handling horse equipment, removing PPE and on leaving animal areas
  - before eating, drinking and smoking
  - following accidental contamination with a horse's blood and body fluids.
- > Supervise young children with washing their hands.
- > Provide eating areas away from animal areas and stop workers from eating, drinking and smoking in animal areas.
- > Keep stables and yards clean. Remove horse manure and soiled bedding.
- > Regularly clean horse tack and tools, including any equipment that has touched horses' blood and body fluids.
- > Provide PPE to protect workers' clothing, exposed skin and face, from contact with a horse's blood and body substances. For example, if examining a horse's wound, wear disposable gloves.
- > If using sharps like needles and syringes, use them safely and carefully dispose of them in a rigid-walled, puncture-resistant sharps container.
- > Tell workers to avoid touching areas, such as the muzzle, where horse saliva or snot can be transferred to a worker's face. For example, discourage workers from kissing horses on the muzzle.
- > Tell workers to cover cuts and scrapes with a water-resistant dressing. If people are hurt at work, clean the wound properly and cover with a water-resistant dressing.
- > Injured people should seek medical advice, particularly if they have a serious or open wound, or have a health condition that increases their chances of infection.
- > Make sure a veterinarian checks all horses regularly.
- > Isolate horses showing signs of illness from people and other animals. Keep riders away from sick horses and make sure sick horses receive the right veterinary care.
- > Run a pest control program and keep feed bins covered to discourage rats and other pests.

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## EQUIPMENT

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### IN THIS SECTION:

- 4.1 Personal protective equipment (PPE)
- 4.2 Tack/riding equipment



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## The vast majority of riding injuries come from falls. Protect yourself from injury with the right protective gear.

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### 4.1 PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Research shows that while most riders know about safety equipment, over three-quarters of riders don't use any.

Use PPE if health and safety risks can't be properly controlled by other means. This includes wearing suitable footwear if there is a risk of foot injuries, helmets for head injury risks and suitable outdoor clothing.

You might have to think about protective equipment for horses, like breastplates and cruppers to keep the saddle in place if you are riding in steep country, and boots to protect their legs from injury.

#### HELMETS

Always wear a helmet when riding a horse. Suitable protective helmets meet AS/NZS 3838 Helmets for Horse Riding and Horse-Related Activities standard. You can also use helmets that meet other helmet standards, as long as they are the same as or better than this standard.

Replace helmets when the manufacturer recommends you do. Do not wear damaged or dropped helmets until they have been checked by the manufacturer or other competent person.

#### CLOTHING

Cover arms and shoulders to reduce cuts and grazes in a fall, even in hot weather. Fasten loose clothing so it can't flap or distract the horse or rider. Avoid tight clothing that restricts your movement, such as skinny jeans.

Tie back your hair so it doesn't block your vision. Avoid wearing jewellery, in particular rings and earrings. Rings can catch in the horse's mane and cut fingers (or wear gloves to protect your hands). Earrings can tangle in helmets and might rip your ear lobe.

Do not wear a backpack, or carry a camera or other loose items that could affect controlling the horse.

Use reflective clothing if riding at night.

#### BODY PROTECTORS

Body or back protectors are padded vests designed to protect the back and chest if you fall or are kicked. Adjust a body protector to fit securely and reasonably tightly around the upper body.

#### GLOVES

Non-slip gloves stop rope-burn injuries to your hands from lead ropes or reins. Never hold reins or ropes in a loop – this can trap fingers.

#### FOOTWEAR

Riding boots have been developed over centuries for safety and durability. They come in a range of styles and costs for any budget. Riding boots should have a good heel (up to 2.5cm) to help stop the foot from slipping through the stirrup iron. Boots protect the feet and ankles, and tall boots protect the shins and act as splints for the lower legs if you fall. Horses can easily crush feet, so wear sturdy footwear. Gumboots are not ideal.

Riders should not wear sneakers or sandals. Make sure your shoes can slip out of the stirrup easily, ie they are not too wide or bulky. You do not want your foot to get wedged in the stirrup if you fall off.

## 4.2 TACK/RIDING EQUIPMENT

Keep your tack in good condition to stay safe and in control when riding. Check it for flaws every time before you ride. Falls happen if old or worn tack slips or comes off. Look for signs of wear. Always adjust tack to fit correctly.

Check the stitching, as the thread's life is short compared to the leather. Horse sweat rots the stitching and leather, so keep tack clean, supple and well-maintained.

Clean your tack with saddle soap often and oil it regularly (or use other suitable leather treatment products). This will make your tack last longer and be more comfortable for you and your horse.

The tack must be suitable and comfortable for both horse and rider. Each horse needs its own correctly-fitted tack that's suitable for its work. Do not use equipment on a horse in a manner intended to cause pain, injury or distress to the horse.

### THE SADDLE

If properly looked after, saddles will last for many years. Carry out regular safety checks on the saddle.

**Girth straps and their attachment:** Make sure your saddle is secure before you ride. Use a girth strap with two buckles at each end, in case one fails. If you don't have one, then use a single buckle girth and a surcingle (a long strap that goes around the horse) or other extra support. Whatever you use, it must keep the saddle properly in place.

Girth straps are stitched onto webs that pass over the saddle tree. The stitching will eventually rot and need replacing. Girth straps wear out – they usually stretch and split around the holes. When this happens, replace the strap. Avoid saddles that have girth straps tacked to the tree – they are more likely to fail.

### STIRRUP LEATHERS

Check stirrup leathers thoroughly before use for:

- > leather thickness – how easily does it slip out from behind the stirrup bar? (If it's too loose, replace the strap)
- > broken or decaying stitching holding the buckle
- > damage around the holes.

Do not use damaged stirrup leather (ie with cracked, worn leather or rotten stitching).

Punch extra holes in the stirrup leathers if they are too long for the rider. Do not wind them around the stirrup iron to make them shorter.

**Stirrup bar safety catch:** If there is one on the saddle, always keep it in the open or down position. This allows the stirrup leather to pull free from the saddle if the rider falls, reducing the risk of dragging the rider.

### STIRRUP IRONS

High-quality stirrup irons are less likely to snap or bend. Soft metals like brass are not recommended.

The stirrup iron must be the correct size for the rider. It should easily slip off the foot in an emergency, but it shouldn't be too big for the whole foot to slip through and get trapped. You can be badly injured if you can't get your foot out of the stirrup when you fall; the horse can drag you along the ground. Have a minimum of 1cm between the boot and stirrup on each side.

Safety irons are available for children and novice riders. All safety irons use a design or device that releases the foot if the rider falls off the horse.

### BRIDLES

Bridles should be good quality. Regularly inspect the stitching, buckles and hook studs.

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## TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

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### IN THIS SECTION:

- 5.1 Riding
- 5.2 Rider instruction
- 5.3 Children
- 5.4 Training for health and safety representatives

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## Anyone who rides a horse for farming must have the right skills.

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### 5.1 RIDING

Only trained and experienced people should ride horses for farm work.

Recreational riders must be trained and experienced or supervised by someone who is. Get them to demonstrate this skill before riding, under direct supervision.

Provide riders with information about the best routes to take, 'no-go' zones and what tasks are suitable for using horses. Have a map of the farm that identifies which areas are unsafe.

Riders must learn how to control their horses before leaving the safety of the lesson environment.

### 5.2 RIDER INSTRUCTION

Before riding, instructors should advise riders about:

- > their horse's characteristics and behaviour
- > hazards and controls (like wearing safety helmets when riding)
- > selecting and using riding equipment
- > the riding environment
- > procedures they have to obey (like following instructions)
- > riding and stable protocols.

Use demonstrations to improve understanding.

The instructor should make sure a novice understands the advice.

Give beginner riders 10–20 hours of instruction in horse handling and riding before letting them ride alone. This will vary depending on the rider's skill, training, the horse's temperament and the farm's terrain.

### 5.3 CHILDREN

Make sure children aren't put at risk from riding. Horses are a significant risk for children and young people unless you take special care. They are at particular risk of falling.

### 5.4 TRAINING FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES

The Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 gives employees the right to be involved in workplace health and safety matters.

One way to do this is by electing a health and safety representative. This is someone employees can go to when they have any concerns or suggestions about health and safety in the workplace. The representative will work with the employer in good faith to find a solution.

This representative can take two days paid leave each year to go to approved health and safety training.

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## REFERENCES

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### IN THIS SECTION:

- 6.1 Glossary
- 6.2 Bibliography

6.1 GLOSSARY

TERM	DEFINITION
All Practicable Steps	<p>‘The steps taken to achieve the result that it is reasonably practicable to take in the circumstances, having regard to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the nature and severity of harm that may be suffered if the result is not achieved; and</li> <li>2. the current state of knowledge about the likelihood and severity of harm that will be suffered if the result is not achieved; and</li> <li>3. the current state of knowledge about harm of that nature; and</li> <li>4. the current state of knowledge about the means available to achieve the results and about the likely effectiveness of each of those means; and</li> <li>5. the availability and cost of each of those means.</li> </ol> <p>‘To avoid doubt, a person required by the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 to take all practicable steps is required to take those steps only in respect of circumstances that the person knows or ought reasonably to know about.’</p> <p>Section 2A Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992.</p>
Bit	<p>The bit goes in the horse’s mouth to help communicate with the horse. It is usually made of metal or a rubber. It rests on the bars of the mouth in a spot where there are no teeth. It is held in the horse’s mouth by a bridle and has reins attached for the rider to use.</p>
Bridle	<p>A piece of equipment used to control a horse. It includes both the headstall (which holds the bit, which goes in the horse’s mouth) and the reins that are attached to the bit.</p>
Cantle	<p>The raised, curved part at the back of a saddle.</p>
Contractor	<p>‘A person engaged by any person (other than as an employee) to do any work for gain or reward.’</p> <p>Section 2(1) Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992.</p>
Crupper	<p>A crupper is used to keep equipment placed on a horse’s back from slipping forward. The crupper is made up of a loop (the crupper itself) and an adjustable strap (crupper strap or back strap) that connects the crupper to the back of the saddle.</p>
Employee **	<p>‘Any person of any age employed by an employer to do any work (other than residential work) for hire or reward under a contract of service and, in relation to any employer, means an employee of the employer.’</p> <p>Section 2(1) Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992.</p>
Employer**	<p>‘Employer,—</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) means a person who or [organisation] that employs any other person to do any work for hire or reward; and, in relation to any employee, means an employer of the employee; and</li> <li>(b) includes, in relation to any person employed by the chief executive or other employee of a Crown organisation to do any work for the Crown organisation for hire or reward, that Crown organisation.’</li> </ol> <p>Section 2(1) Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992.</p>



TERM	DEFINITION
<b>Fetlock</b>	The first joint above a horse's hoof. The fetlock is sometimes called an 'ankle' because it is roughly in the same place as a human's ankle. The fetlock joint actually corresponds to the human upper knuckle, such as that on the ball of the foot.
<b>Girth Straps</b>	A girth strap, girth or cinch (Western riding) is a piece of equipment used to keep the saddle in place. It passes under the chest of the horse and attaches to the saddle on both sides by two or three leather straps, sometimes called billets.
<b>Halter</b>	A device made of rope, webbing or leather straps that fits around the head of a horse and is used to lead or tie up the horse.
<b>Hot Horse</b>	A very energetic and forward-moving horse. Hot horses may spook and shy at strange objects more than a quieter horse.
<b>Lead Rope</b>	A lead rope, lead line or lead is a flat line or rope that can be attached to a halter and used to lead the animal when the handler is on the ground.
<b>Leptospirosis</b>	A disease caused by bacteria ( <i>Leptospira</i> ). It affects both humans and other animals. Leptospiral infection in humans causes a range of symptoms, some very serious. But some infected people may have no symptoms at all.
<b>Lunging</b>	Exercising or training a horse on a long line from the ground.
<b>Pommel</b>	The upward curving or sticking up part, at the front of a saddle.
<b>Principal</b>	A person who or [organisation] that engages any person (other than as an employee) to do any work for gain or reward.  Section 2(1) Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992.
<b>Person who Controls a Place of Work</b>	'A person who is—  (a) the owner, lessee, sublessee, occupier, or person in possession, of the place or any part of it; or  (b) the owner, lessee, sublessee, or bailee, of any plant in the place.'  Section 2(1) Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992.
<b>Place of Work</b>	'A place (whether or not within or forming part of a building, structure, or vehicle) where any person is to work, is working, for the time being works, or customarily works, for gain or reward; and, in relation to an employee, includes a place, or part of a place, under the control of the employer (not being domestic accommodation provided for the employee),—  (a) where the employee comes or may come to eat, rest, or get first-aid or pay; or  (b) where the employee comes or may come as part of the employee's duties to report in or out, get instructions, or deliver goods or vehicles; or  (c) through which the employee may or must pass to reach a place of work.'  Section 2(1) Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992.
<b>PPE</b>	Personal protective equipment, eg helmet, body protector, gloves.

TERM	DEFINITION
Ringworm	A fungal infection of the skin in humans, pets (such as cats) and other animals (such as horses and cattle).
Saddle Tree	The frame of a saddle.
Safe	(a) in relation to a person, means not exposed to any hazards; and (b) in every other case, means free from hazards and unsafe and safety have corresponding meanings. <sup>7</sup>  Section 2(1) Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992.
Salmonella	A type of bacteria found in the gut of humans and animals. Many salmonella infections are caused by eating contaminated food.
Stirrups	Light frames or rings that hold the foot of a rider, attached to the saddle by a strap, called a stirrup leather. Stirrups are usually paired and are used to help get on the horse and as a support while riding.
Stirrup Bar Safety Catch	A releasable latch on the stirrup bar intended to release in the event a rider falls and the rider's foot is stuck in the stirrup.
Stirrup Irons	See Stirrups.
Stirrup Leathers	The strap used to attach a stirrup to a saddle. Also called stirrup strap.
Surcingle	A strap made of leather or leather-like material (such as nylon or neoprene) – sometimes with elastic. It goes around a horse's girth area. A surcingle may be used for lunging and over a saddle to stop it slipping.
Zoonoses	A disease that can pass between species, from animals to humans or the other way round.

<sup>77</sup> Both these definitions also cover volunteers and loaned employees, see sections 3C to 3F of the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992.

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