

2.4.3  
492

# HORSE SENSE & SAFETY

JUN 1968  
LIBRARY  
APR 24 '68  
MAR 14 '68

FOR THE BEGINNER

University of Idaho



College of Agriculture



Bulletin No. 492

January, 1968

Idaho Agricultural Extension Service

## Table of Contents

	Page
Understand The Horse .....	3
Discipline and Training .....	5
Working With The Colt or Filly .....	6
Catch, Halter & Gentle Foal .....	7
Training To Lead .....	7
Picking Up The Feet .....	9
Sacking Out .....	10
Grooming The Horse .....	12
Riding Equipment .....	14
Safely Bridling a Horse .....	16
Safely Saddling A Horse .....	18
Safe Mounting .....	19
Control or "Aids" .....	20
Riding Your Horse .....	20
Vices .....	22
Transportation .....	23

## Illustrations

Properly Sitting Your Horse .....	4
Using a Rump Rope .....	8
Safely Picking Up Horses Feet .....	9
The Horse's Foot & How It Is Trimmed .....	13
The Bridle .....	16
Safely Mounting .....	19
Working a Horse on a Lunge Line .....	Back Cover

# Horse Sense and Safety

## For The Beginner

H. C. Tankersley — Edward Duren\*

The number of light horses has increased in the United States and in Idaho since the introduction of mechanization during World War II. There are an estimated 3,050,000 horses in the United States and approximately 53,000 in Idaho. The ownership, training and riding of light horses is enjoyed by many people, some of whom are poorly qualified from the standpoint of safety for both the horse and the animal. It is a business engaged in by many who, from over-confidence or from "lack of time," take short cuts leading to accidents. This is borne out by National Safety Council and Idaho statistics citing accidents in rural and urban areas involving animals. About three out of four accidents with farm animals are with horses. These accidents generally fit into the following categories: kicks from the horse; falls from the horse; falls with the horse; crushing against a building or object; bites; being dragged by the horse; and being struck by the horse.

The purpose of this bulletin is to provide the inexperienced horseman the information necessary to act with safety both to himself and the horse. It is also intended as a reminder to the experienced horseman and the horsemanship instructor to include safe precautions and handling methods.

### UNDERSTAND THE HORSE

Physical protection is important for the safety and well being of the horse and horseman. Safety has been stressed very little in horsemanship training programs until recent years. Some horses or horsemen have been labeled accident prone. With each venture these individuals suffer an accident. Other horsemen and their mounts seem to avoid situations whereby injury is caused. Why does this situation exist? Let's examine the basis for effective horse-handling safety. The horse by nature is very gentle. This is a valuable trait, making the horse a useful animal. On the other hand the horse by nature is easily frightened and confused. It is a

\*Safety specialist and Agricultural Agent for Livestock Programs, respectively, University of Idaho Extension Service.

creature of the open country and its first reaction to a strange object or situation is to panic and run. If the horse cannot run the reaction is to kick, strike, or bite. Every person knows their body will tighten up under the influence of fear or anticipation. This is true of a horse. In a frightening situation the horse is simply ready to protect itself. The actions of the handler can make him react adversely.



### **DEVELOP CONFIDENCE**

The first precaution in handling a horse is to do nothing that will spoil the gentle nature of the animal or make him feel he must protect himself. To do this the handler must first gain the horse's confidence. The horse who has developed confidence in man will be less fearful. A horse without this confidence can be very dangerous even to the experienced horseman. Fear will develop primarily in the early training stages. Each time a horse is exposed to new ex-

periences, a trainer must remain patient and calm to develop the horse's confidence in man. When frightened, the horse can become totally unreliable and oblivious even to its own safety. In recognition of these basic facts, let us review some positive actions in handling the horse. These may apply if the animal is an untrained colt or a mature horse.

Usually when approaching a horse we have him in an inclosure from which he cannot run. His reaction when frightened will be to kick or strike. **Always warn the horse when approaching**, even if approaching from the front. **Speak to the animal soothingly**, but loud enough to be heard. When working with a horse, speak his name and use the same voice inflections each time. This is important since the horse may recognize you by sound even before he sees you. **Approach the horse at an angle**. The horse will be able to see you easier and should he kick when you are close, you will not likely be hit. After approaching the horse, **speak each time before you touch him**. The horse may not expect you to be exactly where you are in relation to his position. **Stay in close** to the body of the horse when working around him. If he strikes or kicks when you are close he may not hurt you. If he contacts your body or legs, he will only push you away. Contrarily, if you are away from the animal when he contacts you at the end of his kick, the injury could be serious. Many trainers and farriers talk to the horse all during the time they are working with it. Soothing talk tends to calm the horse and to develop his confidence in men.

## DISCIPLINE AND TRAINING

A horse is exceedingly sensitive to strength used deliberately against him. It is foolish to provoke a horse to use his strength to escape when dominated by fear. A frightened horse is a very dangerous accident hazard. Discipline of the horse should begin when the handler first approaches. Discipline is actually the purpose of training. You are attempting to get the horse to act the way you want him to on command. Use your head. Don't match strength with him. The horse learns by punishment and reward. **The punishment is that which causes irritation without causing fright**. The reward is the cessation of the irritation when he responds as desired. The holding of the horse's foot until resistance stops; the tension and pressure of the rope or halter as long as he hangs back; the gentle pressure of the bit in the horse's mouth until he backs up; the annoying pressure of the rope around his buttocks until he moves forward in response to the gentle pull on the lead rope and halter are all examples of proper training and discipline. Training should be largely a program for development of a safe mount by the prevention of undesirable acts.

Before handling or riding any horse, get acquainted with his temperament and learn what to expect in all situations. Be able to anticipate the horse's moves and always be prepared. Determine if the horse is temperamental or docile. Decide if he has been properly trained or abused. Ascertain if he frightens easily and when frightened how he is most likely to respond. Generally, these are the prerequisites for safe handling. The modern horse is dependent on man for his own safety and his care. The horseman's safety is dependent upon his own horsemanship and on the training of his mount.

## **WORKING WITH THE COLT OR FILLY**

For instructional purposes we will use the term colt to refer to either a male or female horse under three years of age. The discipline or training of a colt begins when the handler first approaches the animal. The kind of mount the colt will become depends upon the methods employed by the trainer. The development of physical fitness and coordination through the general understanding of how to perform are the results of a training program for both people and horses. The human athlete knows the object of his training and clearly understands his trainer. Generally, there is no mental anguish. The training of a horse is more difficult. The horse is a sensitive and frequently nervous animal. Often the horse is handled and trained in a manner unknown to him and seemingly without purpose.

The person handling the colt may lack communication with the animal. Consequently the colt becomes more confused, magnifying the fear he needs to overcome. The trainer should strive to develop methods of communication which will strengthen the colt's confidence in man. Confidence is essential. Without confidence the horse cannot surrender himself mentally and physically to his trainer. Confidence is the route by which the trainer must control the voluntary and involuntary actions of the horse.

## **GET ACQUAINTED**

Become acquainted with the colt before attempting to proceed further. In the case of the foal, the mare must first be put at ease. If the mare exhibits fear of man, the foal will have the same fear. The nervous and fearful animal will simply try to protect itself and this can lead to serious injury to the handler from kicking, striking, biting, or in some cases crushing against the side of a stall, building, or fence.

## CATCH, HALTER AND GENTLE THE FOAL

Once the foal is used to having the trainer around, the next step is to catch and halter it. The foal should first be placed in a small corral or stall where it cannot run away. Work quietly and swiftly with soothing talk. By no means frighten the foal or it will distrust you. Gradually crowd the foal into a corner, taking care not to excite it, and gently slip on a halter. Keep your head in the clear, standing to the side and front of the foal. This will prevent the foal from bumping you if he strikes or throws his head. Be sure the foal cannot break the cotton rope halter or cotton lead rope. Be sure you can control the foal when the cotton rope is tightened.

After the foal stops struggling tie him along a sturdy, high solid board fence where he cannot injure himself. Securely tie the foal high on the fence with a minimum of slack in the rope to prevent entangling the feet. Let the foal stand tied for an hour or more. Soon he will learn not to fight the halter. If he should break loose at this point of training, the damage may never be overcome. He may continue to fight or break loose at each tying experience.

After the foal has stood quietly for awhile, walk up to him gently and speak confidently. He may struggle or attempt to run. Stroke him gently high on the shoulder, under the jaw, or on the chest. He will soon learn to like the treatment. While he is tied, walk up to him often. He is learning that he cannot get away and that you will not hurt him.

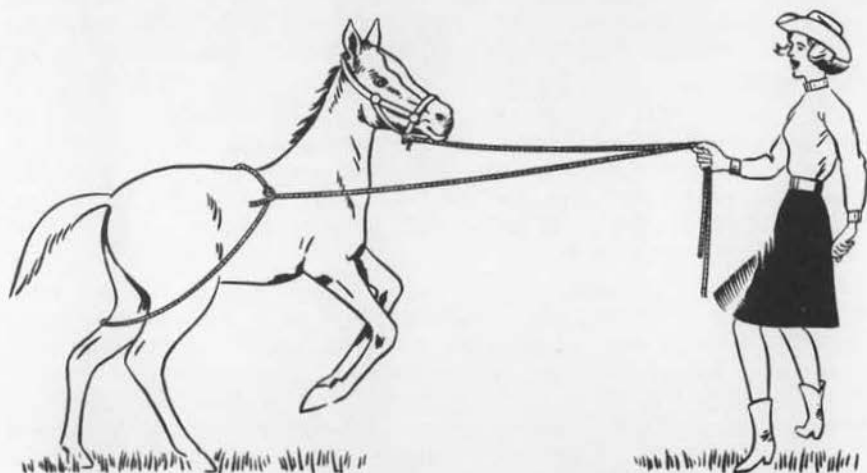
Once training has begun it must be a daily routine. A few minutes each day is the best schedule. Each day the lessons can be lengthened until you are working with the foal as much as an hour at a time. **Never tire yourself or the foal.** The foal may become disinterested and sulky. Consequently, the trainer will find his temper rising. This combination sets the stage for accidents and ill treatment of the foal which can undo days or weeks of training within a few minutes.

## TRAINING TO LEAD

After the foal is caught, halter broken and gentle he must be taught to lead. The colt learns to respond on command. Fit a stout halter with a cotton lead on your colt. Speak to him quietly, then give a steady pull on the lead rope to one side and then the other. As he responds, reward him with a firm stroke on the neck or a handful of feed. He should learn to respond to a gentle tug on the lead rope. When he learns to respond properly when pulling from side to side, try leading him straight forward. If he will not follow, rears or pulls back, you may want to use a rump rope, a large nonslip loop around the rear quarters, to encourage him to lead promptly.

Tie a large enough loop to fit around the hind quarters with the knot laid on the back. Bring the lead end of the rope forward. Pull gently on both the lead rope and the lead end of the loop at the same time. The loop will exert a gentle pressure on the rear legs and the foal will move forward to get away from it. When he begins to perform correctly with the tug on the lead rope of the halter, the rump rope may be removed. Work with the horse gently for about a half hour a day for several consecutive days.

Coil the lead rope neatly in your hand so that it will uncoil and leave you holding the rope if the colt pulls away. Never wrap the lead rope around your wrist or body as you could be dragged if the animal should get out of control. **Train the colt to lead with you at his near or left side and with his head about even with your body.** Should he shy or bolt, you will not be stepped on or trampled. When turning the colt, turn him to the right away from you. If he jumps or runs he will not run into you or step on you.



When the colt knows what leading is all about, he should be taught to lead at the walk and at the trot on a voice command. Next, he can be trained to back up. He should be taught to do this on command with slight pressure on the lead rope to the rear. Face the colt, hold the lead rope in the right hand and pull slightly to the rear of the animal. At the same time place the left hand on the chest of the animal and exert a pressure or tap him lightly on the chest. The colt should move back to relieve the pressure or to get away from the annoyance. He may try to throw his head. To prevent injury to yourself, stand clear with your head held straight and to the side, and keep a firm grip on the lead rope.

Give him a handful of oats occasionally when working with him, especially when he has performed the way he is supposed to. Make

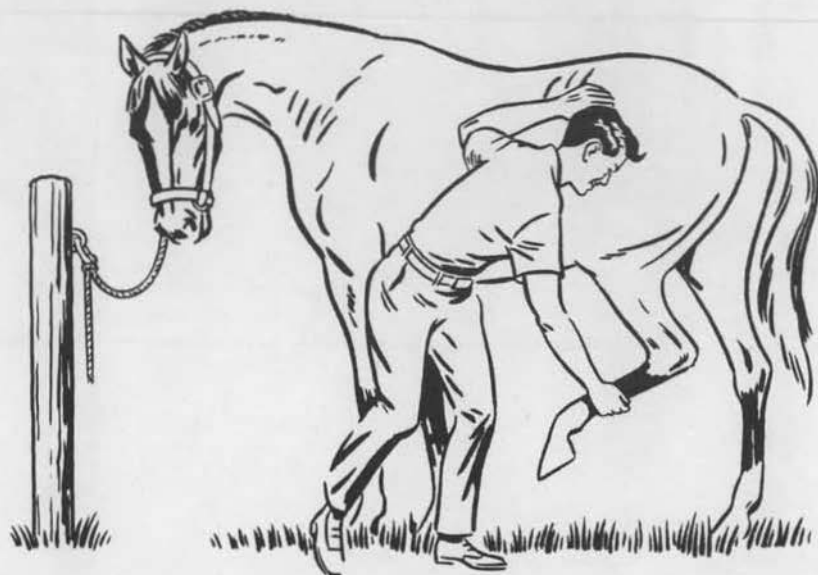


him eat from the side of your hand and keep your hand as flat as possible. That way he cannot accidentally bite your fingers. He will soon like to have you around. Untie him. Turn him around a few times. Lead him to water. Walk beside the horse. If he bolts or rears you can control him and he will not run into you. If you turn him loose at night be sure to do so where you can catch him easily the next day.

### PICKING UP THE FEET

The colt should be taught early to have his feet picked up and handled. This lesson is important and can result in injury to the handler if not properly done. To pick up a left front foot, stand facing near the left shoulder, hold the cotton lead rope in your left hand resting on top of the withers. Then with your right hand work quietly down the leg to the pastern. Grasp the pastern firmly applying pressure pushing the back of the knee forward as the colt raises the foot. After the foot is raised, grasp the toe firmly to avoid him jerking away and putting the foot down. Reverse the procedure to pick up a right front foot. After the colt rests a few minutes, repeat the operation.

To pick up the left hind foot stand facing the rear of the colt; place your left hand on the colt's hip for support, slide your right hand down the leg past the hock then firmly grasp the pastern



with your right hand. Press against the hip with your left hand to shift the horse's weight to his right leg. Lift with your right hand and pull the foot up and forward so that it bends at the hock. If the colt struggles, raise the foot up close to the flank. Grasp the toe with your left hand and move to the rear, keeping the hind leg next to your thigh. Place your left leg underneath the fetlock to support the leg firmly. Work quietly but surely. Hold the foot firmly in the left hand. Let him rest, then repeat the lesson. Reverse the procedure to pick up a right hind foot.

He will soon willingly let you pick up his feet. The trainer must remember to teach the colt only one thing at a time. When training the colt to yield his feet, this should be the only thing taught until he has learned. Catching, gentling, teaching to lead, teaching to yield his feet, and then to ride are the things you want to teach your colt. These should be accomplished in order. He may also be trained to show properly at the halter. After the colt is a year old he may be acquainted with the saddle, but riding should be postponed until the horse is two years old.

### **SACKING OUT**

Tie him up and rub him with a soft sack. Then flip the sack over and about his body and legs. This lesson should be repeated several days until the colt has no fear of the sack or saddle blanket. When this is evident you are ready to saddle.

## SADDLING

First, review the colt's previous lessons with him so he is quiet and understands no harm will come to him. Now work on getting the colt over his fear of movements. When he is used to the activity about him slip the saddle blanket on and off of his back several times. Then place the saddle on the colt's back gently but firmly, being sure the stirrups or fenders do not bump him on the side. Cinch the saddle moderately tight with a single cinch. Lead the colt around the corral, keeping him to your side. Turn him each way and lead him straight ahead. Lead him close to you but be sure you are out of the way should he jump or run. Gradually tighten the cinch and continue to lead. Saddle and unsaddle several times to get him accustomed to the saddle. This lesson should be repeated several days before proceeding.

Before riding the first time, tie up the reins and work the colt on the lunge line at a trot and canter until accustomed to the feel and squeak of the saddle and the slap of the stirrups. (See illustration on back cover.) If he bucks, check the colt to a walk before working at a trot or canter. When the colt is at ease with the saddle on his back, you are ready to ride him the first time. The suggestions for mounting and riding contained in the section on riding a saddle horse apply here.

The horse does not have to be trained from the time he is a foal but the training will be easier and more satisfactory if this is done. The trainer, starting out with a one or two year old, will have to accomplish the same tasks as with the foal and in about the same order. Many of the activities in training the colt are more dangerous than with the foal and greater care must be taken when working with these horses.

Training a mature horse that has never been trained is no job for the beginner. These horses, unless they are very gentle, will probably require some special handling and they can be spoiled very easily. Nearly any older youth or adult can hold a foal's feet up until he quits struggling, but this may not be possible with a mature horse without the use of ropes and other equipment familiar to the professional trainer or experienced horseman.

"Breaking" a horse by the rough handling and expedient methods sometimes employed on mature animals will seldom yield a true pleasure horse. Our interest is in developing a horse that is easy to ride and to show and a companion to the owner. This horse must be gentle, friendly and even tempered. In short, he must be ruled by the handler through affection and confidence rather than manual restraint or fear.

## GROOMING THE HORSE

Grooming is essential to developing and keeping a healthy, good looking mount. It also develops the animal's confidence in the horseman. The equipment for keeping a horse well groomed is neither elaborate nor expensive. A curry comb, a soft brush, a stiff brush, a soft wool cloth for cleaning and brushing the coat, and a hoof pick to remove the mud and manure from the bars and frogs of the foot, complete your grooming kit.

Use the soft brush and cloth to clean the coat. A curry comb is used lightly to remove excess mud and manure but primarily helpful to clean the brushes. Keep the coat clean by brushing daily. To remove dust brush briskly with the soft brush, cleaning the brush often with the curry comb. When you have removed all the dirt you can by brushing, lightly dampen a handful of straw and rub it lightly over the coat. Wait a few seconds and brush again or rub with a wool cloth. The bloom will return to the hair and the coat will be clean and glossy.

To improve sheen, stroke the coat with the palm of your hand after brushing and rubbing with the cloth. Move your hand in the direction the hair lies as though you were smoothing it down. To keep the horse looking its best this must be done regularly. When grooming the horse, stand close to his body. In the event he should kick or strike injury is less likely than if you were at enough distance for him to "get a swing" at you.

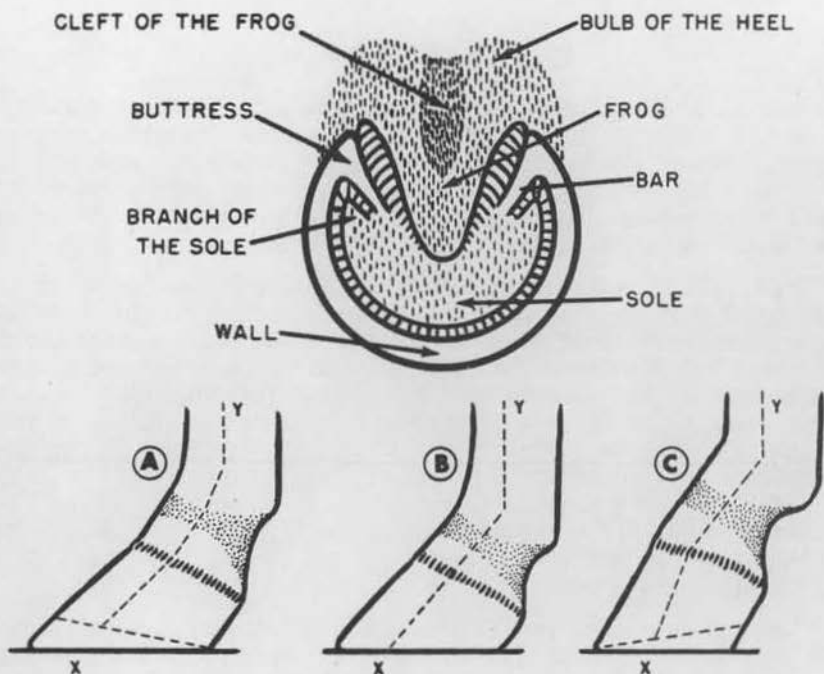
When brushing the horse's legs, stand facing to his rear in about the same position as when picking up his feet. Should he kick or strike you would not be in the way. Work carefully and gently but confidently always. Know exactly what you want to do and how to go about it before you start. This will give you confidence and the horse will sense it immediately. He will likewise sense lack of confidence, which will tend to make him uneasy.

Proper and regular foot care is essential. A horse with unsound feet has limited value. Unsound or sore feet causes the horse to travel in discomfort and the horse is unsafe to ride. Hoofs should be trimmed level so the horse stands normally and does not develop poor leg posture. Level hoofs also allow the frog to have proper contact with the ground and to perform its shock-absorbing function.

The hoof is leveled by carefully rasping the bottom of the hoof wall. The wall is the tough part around the outside when you look at the hoof from the bottom. Little if any of the horny sole of the hoof should be removed. Avoid trimming the frog unless disease is evident which requires treatment by a competent horseman. The hoof can be too long in either the toe or heel. See the illustration for the correct position of the hoof when properly trimmed. When trimming the horse's feet the same safety precautions

should be observed as suggested for handling the feet for any purpose.

Depending upon the traveling surface, horses may require shoeing to insure safe dependable footing. It may be desirable to learn this skill, but have a trained farrier show you the proper method. After observing his methods and becoming familiar with the pro-



cedure, have him assist you as you proceed to shoe your own horse. Shoeing presents some accident hazards not in evidence with other activities. Be sure to observe the safety precautions the farrier uses as you watch him shoe a horse.

For the colt this is a new experience. He may require special restraining during the shoeing process to prevent injury to both the farrier and himself.

If you plan to trim your horse's mane, you could add electric clippers to your grooming kit. The noise from the motor will prob-

ably frighten the colt the first time or two he is trimmed. Acquaint him with the clipper noise by holding them where he can see them and let them run. Move them around his head without touching him and show him they are not harmful. Tie the horse up short and high; stand in close and proceed with the clipping. Occasionally it is desirable to clip the fetlock and legs of the horse. When this is done the position the handler takes to perform the task is again important to avoid injury should the animal kick or strike. Be sure to observe the same safety precautions for handling the feet and legs.

## RIDING EQUIPMENT

For many years, leather was predominant in the construction of riding equipment. In recent times synthetic materials of plastic and nylon have been introduced. Synthetics may have eye appeal to inexperienced horsemen. However, most horsemen prefer leather for comfort. Riding and driving equipment should be selected for strength, pliability, service and quality.

Frequent inspection and repair will insure safe equipment. Inspect each part carefully, particularly around buckles, bends and attachments. Stiff, hard, dried-out leather with cracks is very brittle and may break under a minimum of stress. Leather may tear or rip around buckle tongues or rivets. Dried thread in stitchings is very weak. Weak and worn buckles or snaps break readily. Flimsy leather should be repaired regularly. Metal parts must be replaced frequently. Whenever stirrup leather, bridle reins, cinch or latigo strap shows signs of wear, these parts should be removed and replaced. Even experienced riders may be injured by accidents resulting from equipment breaks when riding fast and hard on a highly spirited horse.

Leather riding equipment will be kept pliable by frequent cleaning with saddle soap and occasional oiling. Sponging after each use to remove dirt and sweat is very important. Leather equipment should be maintained dry and clean. A barn is an undesirable place to store leather tack because mildew may result from moisture and ammonia in the manure. A tack room should be dry, dust free, rodent tight, and ventilated for air circulation. Commercial preparations of saddle soap, leather conditioners, neatsfoot oil, glycerine, or vaseline are readily available and economical. Synthetic materials used in tack should receive care according to the manufacturer's recommendations. Serviceable tack should receive proper care to insure maximum rider safety at all times.

For proper cleaning and oiling, the equipment should be completely taken apart and all buckles undone so that the oil can penetrate the leather. Use a small sponge to apply saddle soap or oil. When the leather is dry, wipe it with a clean soft cotton cloth.

After each use, wipe all metal parts, including the bridle bit, with a damp sponge to remove dirt and slobbers.

Manufacturers produce a large assortment of riding and handling equipment. Almost any type of bridle, saddle, or accessory is available at the nearest saddle dealer. Quality equipment is the most desirable. For example, the saddle should be suited to the style desired by the rider. Various types of saddles have been developed for specific purposes. Riders of park hacks or gaited horses usually prefer the regulation English flat saddle with stirrups set fairly well forward, dropping about midway of the saddle flaps. The "forward seat" or Italian saddle is characterized by skirts or flaps which slant well forward and sometimes by knee rolls particularly adapted for riders of hunting and jumping horses. In the west, the stock saddle was developed for riders who spend long hours on the range, rounding-up, or cutting out cattle and horses. The western stock saddle is used most in the Intermountain area of the Rockies. The stock saddle is characterized by a deep seat, strong double cinches, swelled fork, and strings to attach equipment.

In choosing a saddle, a horseman must take into consideration the use and the conformation of the horse. Proper fit is emphasized for the maximum safety and comfort of both horse and rider. The western stock saddle should be built high enough in front to clear the withers and constructed to apply pressure on the back muscles and not on the bony vertebrae. If possible take the saddle on trial and fit it on the horse before purchasing. A saddle should have a spread in its tree to fit comfortably on the withers of your horse. An improper fitting saddle can cause a sore back. Your horse may require a narrow, high-saddle tree or it may be better to have a saddle tree cut back. Regardless, seek advice in fitting the saddle to the horse. Don't just use any saddle available. A horse with a sore back from ill-fitting equipment will be difficult to control.

The seat of the saddle should fit the rider. Length and depth must be suitable. Stirrup hangings are placed in various positions on western stock saddles. Stirrups should hang and be adjusted to provide the rider opportunity to put full weight in them. As an example, stirrups set too far forward may throw a rider into the fork. A rider cannot sit properly if the saddle does not fit.

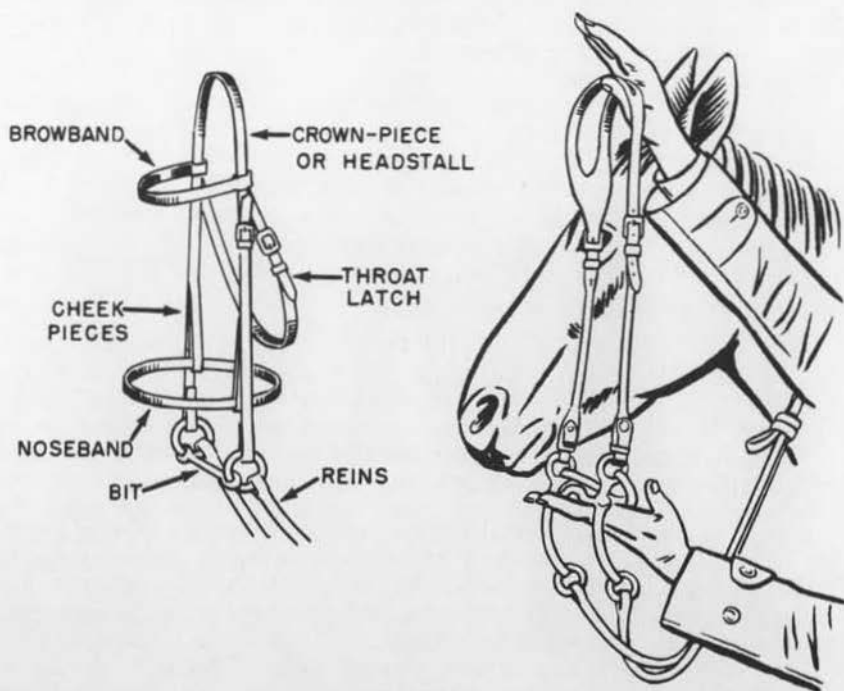
Bridle adjustment is vital for control and comfort of the horse. The bit should fit the horse's mouth according to style and construction. Care should be taken to see that the cheekpieces are evenly attached to the crownpiece and the bridle hangs straight. The throat latch is fastened securely to allow three fingers to pass between the horse's throat and throat latch. The curb chain or strap should lie loosely; you should be able to insert two or three fingers between the curb strap and chin groove without disturbing the position of the bit. Avoid curb straps which may be too

tight or too loose for proper and complete control of your mount. Refrain from using extreme and severe bridle bits. These are for use only in special circumstances and only by the most experienced horsemen.

## SAFELY BRIDLING A HORSE

Bridling a horse is simple . . . to one who has had long experience. To the beginner it seems well nigh impossible.

To bridle a horse take the crownpiece of the bridle in the left hand, the reins in the right hand and approach the horse from the left side at about his shoulder. If you come at him directly from the front he will back away from you. With your right hand slip the reins over his head, allowing them to rest on the crest directly behind the ears. The reason for this position of the reins rather than sliding them back immediately on the withers is to





give the horse control should the horse, relieved of his halter, attempt to pull away suddenly. Should this occur, the horseman may grasp the reins together under the horse's throat and thus retain control. The horseman then places himself just behind the horse's head, and slightly away from the shoulder. Facing front, take the crownpiece of the bridle in the right hand. Slip the nose between the cheek-straps and through the cavesson or noseband if the bridle is so equipped. Raise the bridle, using the right hand until the crownpiece is just in front of the ears and the bit dangling against the teeth. It is at this point that the beginner will come to grief. Many otherwise amiable horses are reluctant to open their mouths and accept the bit. The solution is simple if one remembers that a horse has no teeth at the bars, and that the taste of human flesh on his tongue is extremely repugnant to him. With the left hand cup the horse's chin firmly, holding the bar of the bit across the palm and keeping it against the teeth with the thumb. Next, slip the ends of the fingers between the horse's lips on the far side and into the animal's mouth. The horse will immediately open his mouth and curl back his lips. With a quick pull on the crownpiece, bring the bridle into position and slip it back over the ears. The whole thing can be done in a flash but takes dexterity. The important thing to remember is to use the right hand on the bridle crownpiece for pulling the bridle up. The left hand should cup the chin and balance the bit in a correct position.

Handle the ears gently. Move the left hand to hold the crownpiece of the headstall high above and in front of the ears. Cover the left ear and gently fold it forward with the right hand. Move the crownpiece back over the ear and the hand, then release the ear. Repeat with the right ear. Don't pinch the ears.

Check the fit of the bridle. The bit should rest in the corner where the lips join. Some horsemen want the bit tight enough to form a wrinkle in the skin just above the corner of the lips. The curb strap should be loose enough to allow two or three fingers to be inserted between the jaw and the strap. Buckle the throat latch with enough slack to prevent choking when the horse flexes at the throat. Check to be sure all strap ends are properly fitted through the keepers.

There is a proper way to remove the bridle. Use the left hand to slide the crownpiece forward over the ears. When free of the ears hold the headstall loosely just long enough for the horse to "spit out" the bit. You will feel this happen. Then lower the headstall for the bit and curb strap to fall freely from the mouth and chin. Continue holding the horse and rub the head and poll where the headstall has rested. Your horse will soon learn to expect this rubbing and will wait patiently instead of trying to break away.

## SAFELY SADDLING A HORSE

You are ready to saddle up. Stand on the near side just to the rear of the horse's shoulder. From this position you can reach any part of the back and will be out of the way should the animal kick, strike or bolt. Lay the saddle blanket on the horse's back. Be sure it is even on each side. Always lay the blanket several inches forward and slide it to the rear. This smoothes the hair under the blanket. Remove all wrinkles.

Fold the off stirrup, cinches and saddle strings up over the seat of the saddle. If the stirrup leathers are short, hook the stirrup tread over the horn. Slip your right hand into the hole formed by the fork in front of the seat and lift the saddle over the horse's back. Lift just enough to clear the withers and hold the saddle steady at the top of the lift so it will settle easily on the back. You can steady the saddle at the top of the lift by placing your left hand on the edge of the front skirt. Smaller riders will find it necessary to use both hands and hold the saddle under the gullet with the left hand while grasping the rear skirts or cantle with the right hand. Some western riders have the habit of swinging the saddle up with the off stirrup and cinches flying. The stirrups are heavy and the cinch rings are hard. The horse will flinch, move away or bolt when the stirrup or cinch ring hits the legs. Don't develop this poor habit. Lift the saddle and settle it on the back. Now ease the off stirrup and cinches down from the seat holding them enough to prevent dropping. Walk to the off side and check the stirrup, cinches, and strings. Be sure your saddle blanket is even. Keep close to the horse when moving around him.

Return to the near side, check the position of the saddle, raise the blanket edge where it rests over the withers to allow air space, swing the near stirrup over the seat, and cinch up.

Reach under the belly with the left hand to get the cinch. First tighten the front cinch. Learn to tie the cinch knot. If properly tied this knot will never work loose and allow the saddle to slip or turn. Even though you use a tongued cinch ring or a tackaberry buckle you should know the cinch knot in case you need it.

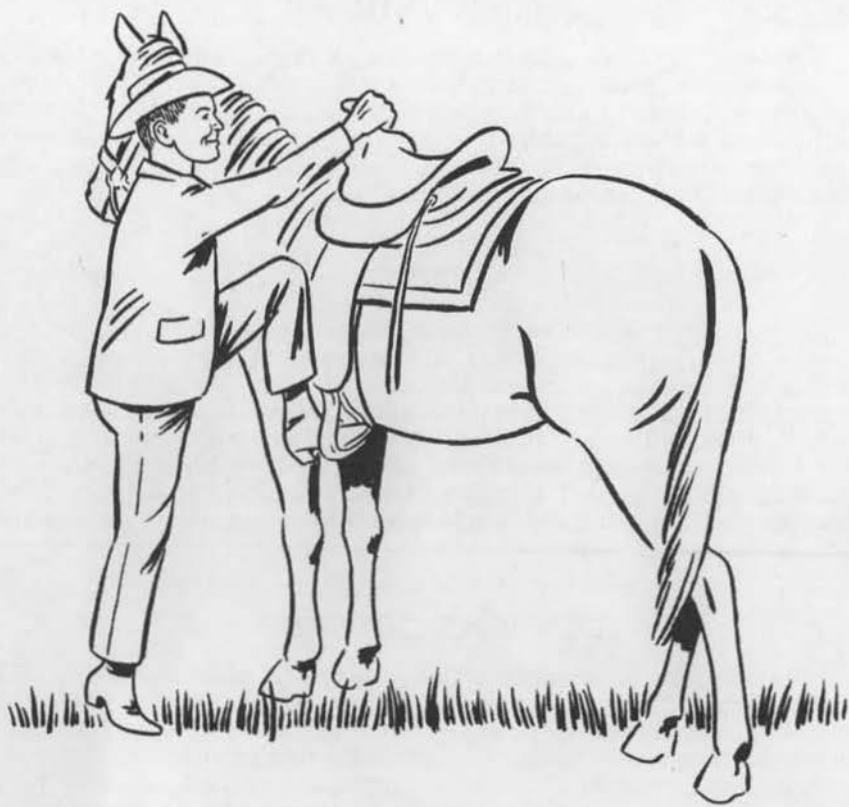
On double-rigged saddles remember this rule. Front cinch first, then back cinch when saddling—back cinch first, then front cinch when unsaddling.

Tighten your front cinch just enough to allow your hand with fingers held flat, between the horse's body and the cinch. The rear cinch should be loose but not dangling so low your horse can catch a foot through it.

You are ready to ride, but one more step must be taken. Un-track your horse. This means to lead a few steps. Then check your front cinch again. You generally will be able to tighten it several notches. Check this front cinch again after you have ridden a short distance.

## SAFE MOUNTING

Mounting is the first step in riding. Before mounting your horse, see that the bridle is properly fitted, the saddle correctly cinched, and the right stirrup set so you can slip your foot into it the instant you mount. The safest approved method of mounting, especially with "green horses" is as follows:



**FIRST:** Stand near the horse's left shoulder, facing slightly to the rear. In this position you will not be struck or run over should the horse strike, kick or try to run away. Take up the reins in your left hand short enough to hold your horse still. Place your left hand over his neck a few inches ahead of the saddle. A handful of mane along with the reins will help.

**SECOND:** Turn the left stirrup around with your right hand and put your left foot in the stirrup. Put your foot in the stirrup only to the ball of your foot. In this position your foot will not get hung up in the stirrup if the horse moves.

**THIRD:** Place your left knee against the horse's shoulder, take the saddlehorn in your right hand and step up.

**FOURTH:** Swing your right leg over the horse, put your right foot in the stirrup and you are ready to ride.

## **DISMOUNTING**

Dismount by first taking up the reins as you did when starting to mount. Slip your left foot backward in the stirrup with your weight on the toe only, take hold of the saddle horn with your right hand and swing off with your left knee against the horse's shoulder. As your right foot touches the ground turn your left foot up and in to avoid getting "hung up."

## **SITTING**

Sitting your horse properly is important. First, adjust the length of the stirrup until you can raise yourself about three inches off the seat of the saddle; with stirrups the proper length, a good "seat" is when you sit erect with more weight on your own legs than on the horse's back, your legs nearly perpendicular from the knees down, your heels down and your toes slightly out. This position will keep most of your weight near the horse's center of gravity which is about six inches behind his elbow. (See illustration on page 4.)

## **CONTROLS OR "AIDS"**

Controls or "aids" with which you guide your horse are (1) your hands, (2) your legs and (3) your weight. Your hands via the reins, control the front end of your horse, while your legs control the hindquarters. Your weight helps to emphasize the signals you give with your hands or legs. Do not use more force with your "aids" than necessary. Too much force may make your horse senseless to any controls. "Light" hands will put an "easy" mouth on your colt.

## **RIDING YOUR HORSE**

Riding accidents commonly occur as a result of a hazardous riding surface. Unfortunately riders may not always control or select the surface on which to ride. Obviously the rancher riding a horse to work cattle on the range is confronted with different surface problems than a packer on a hunting trip over a mountain trail or a person on a pleasure ride in the park or in a show arena.

Generally a firm, smooth surface is ideal. Slick or slippery surfaces are very hazardous. This type of a surface may be muddy trails, snow pack, wet blacktop or concrete roads, green grassy meadows, or wood shavings in an arena. Horses should be worked at a reduced speed on these surfaces. It is risky for horses and riders to execute sharp sudden turns or rollbacks under these conditions. A rider should employ sound judgment to allow a horse sufficient opportunity to maintain his footing. In the event it is necessary to work a horse over slick surfaces the horse should be shod to insure footing. It may be necessary to have the horse sharp shod—that is the addition of calks to the shoes.

In riding over rough, rugged mountain trails, slow to a walk and allow the horse to have its head to pick safe footing. A rider should make every effort to shift his own body weight to aid the horse's balance and maneuverability.

When riding uphill lean forward and brace yourself with your right hand on the horse's neck or take hold of the horse's mane. This will get your weight off the horse's hindquarters so he can climb the hill more easily. When riding downhill, sit back on the saddle and check your horse lightly. This will keep your weight off his front feet so he is free to catch himself in case of poor footing.

When riding on a road or trail, keep your horse on the right-hand side except to pass another horse and rider traveling in the same direction. In this event, pass to the left of the rider ahead but return to the right hand half of the road. Avoid riding too near a horse since the other horse may kick and injure you or your mount. A gentle, trustworthy horse may kick instantly as a result of being startled. Stallions and mares in heat should be ridden a safe distance from other horses regardless of how well mannered they may be. All riders should remain constantly alert to these animals in addition to their own mount. Adjust the speed of your mount to the other mounted riders when you meet on the road. Horses are easily led by the example of other horses. Therefore, meeting other mounted riders at a fast gait may excite their horses, causing them to bolt or rear, resulting in an accident.

Manners are important to saddle horses whether used for work or pleasure. A horse which constantly tosses its head or nibbles at green grass is a nuisance. In addition, this horse should be considered unsafe because it is not under control of the rider. If spooked he may run away. Well trained saddle horses line out at a steady comfortable gait at the rider's command. A poorly trained horse with bad habits will cause anxiety in the rider and possibly cloud his judgment. Horses must be trained to stand quietly while being mounted. Restless and nervous horses can cause serious accidents if exposed to strange situations.

A rider should be extremely cautious riding horses in urban areas, particularly during periods of poor visibility. Most riding

horses have received training around automobiles, trucks, and trains. However their presence may still cause nervous excitement in well trained animals. Avoid riding horses close to heavy traffic. When riding on public roads obey all traffic regulations and restrictions. During periods of night riding or low visibility due to weather conditions, ride a safe distance from the lanes of traffic. The rider should wear light colored clothing and in practical situations carry a flash light or a reflector. During these conditions, give the horse its head and rely more on the horse's judgment as its senses are keener than yours.

## VICES

Vices commonly developed by horses may jeopardize the safety of the horseman. These vices include kicking, biting, rearing, bucking, whirling, bolting, shying and restlessness. These may occur the first time as a response to fear. If repeated, a reaction may develop into a vice or habit. The rider must be constantly alert to avoid situations which may cause a horse to respond in such a manner. Horses which have developed a vice are unsafe as pleasure mounts and should be handled only by experienced horsemen. The experienced horseman will attempt to cure the horse by various punishments and rewards depending on the nature and seriousness of the vice.

Generally a horse will display some warning prior to exhibiting a vice. The alert and experienced rider will be observant and prepare himself to face the situation. A rider should be careful to prevent himself from being hungup in the saddle or equipment in the event he is thrown from the saddle. When working around the horse, the handler should stay in close in order to push the horse away to avoid a kick or strike. Several common vices are discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

**SHYING**—No matter how gentle or well trained, a horse can become scared or spooked and shy away from an object. Also a horse may develop the habit of shying for no apparent reason. A perceptive horseman can anticipate when a horse is about to shy. When possible, a rider should employ strong aids such as leg pressure, firm hands, and a quiet voice to instill confidence in the horse to overcome fear. Avoid punishment to horses immediately after shying away from a strange object. Allow the horse to see, smell, and listen to the object. Then gently urge the horse past the object by increasing the leg pressure and shortening the hold on the reins. Beating or spurring a horse past a strange object may get him to by-pass the object but the horse will have additional fears at the next encounter. He will associate the punishment with his fear of the strange object.

**BOLTING OR RUN-AWAY**—The run-away horse can be of two types. Namely, the young untrained colt who runs from fright and the older horse who has developed a vice. Bolting can be very dangerous to the young horse. He may run headlong into an approaching vehicle, fence or other obstacle. The rider should restrain and ease the young horse up slowly. The handler should use voice and muscle pressure to reassure and calm his mount until it is under control. An older horse which has developed the vice of bolting generally is not dangerous. These horses are generally stubborn and consequently are not running from fright but from stubbornness. Horses of this type should be ridden to a standstill in heavy soil such as a plowed field. A run-away horse can be dangerous simply because it is out of the rider's control. Therefore, it is important for the rider to remain calm and regain control. Generally, carelessness of the rider is the cause of the run-away.

The rider should pull the run-away horse's head around to one side. This will cause the horse to travel in a short circle and he will very soon be willing to stop. Pulling straight back on the reins does little good as the horse is much stronger than the rider. Sawing on the reins is sometimes effective. A sudden jerk on the reins followed by a complete release of the reins will often take the horse by surprise resulting in his release of the bit and tossing his head. He will then slow down. The rider must remember to remain calm and to regain complete control.

## TRANSPORTATION

Most accidents to handlers transporting horses result when loading or unloading. The handler is sometimes kicked when walking into a trailer or truck or crushed against the side of the vehicle while tying or untying the animal. Often these accidents occur when the horse is taken into unfamiliar surroundings with other horses or to a fair or show where there is a lot of commotion. The horse, used to the relative calm of his usual environment, will become nervous. This sets the stage for an accident unless the handler uses every safety precaution he knows.

Under these conditions the handler must make no move or do anything that will surprise the animal. He should try to unload at a site where there is little commotion. Whenever possible the horse should be led into and out of the vehicle with the handler remaining on the outside. If this is not possible the handler should speak calmly to the horse and be sure he has the animal's attention before walking into a trailer or truck. While in the truck or trailer keep close to the horse and stand near his head. Standing near the horse's midsection will allow the horse to crush the handler against the side of the vehicle should he move sideways.

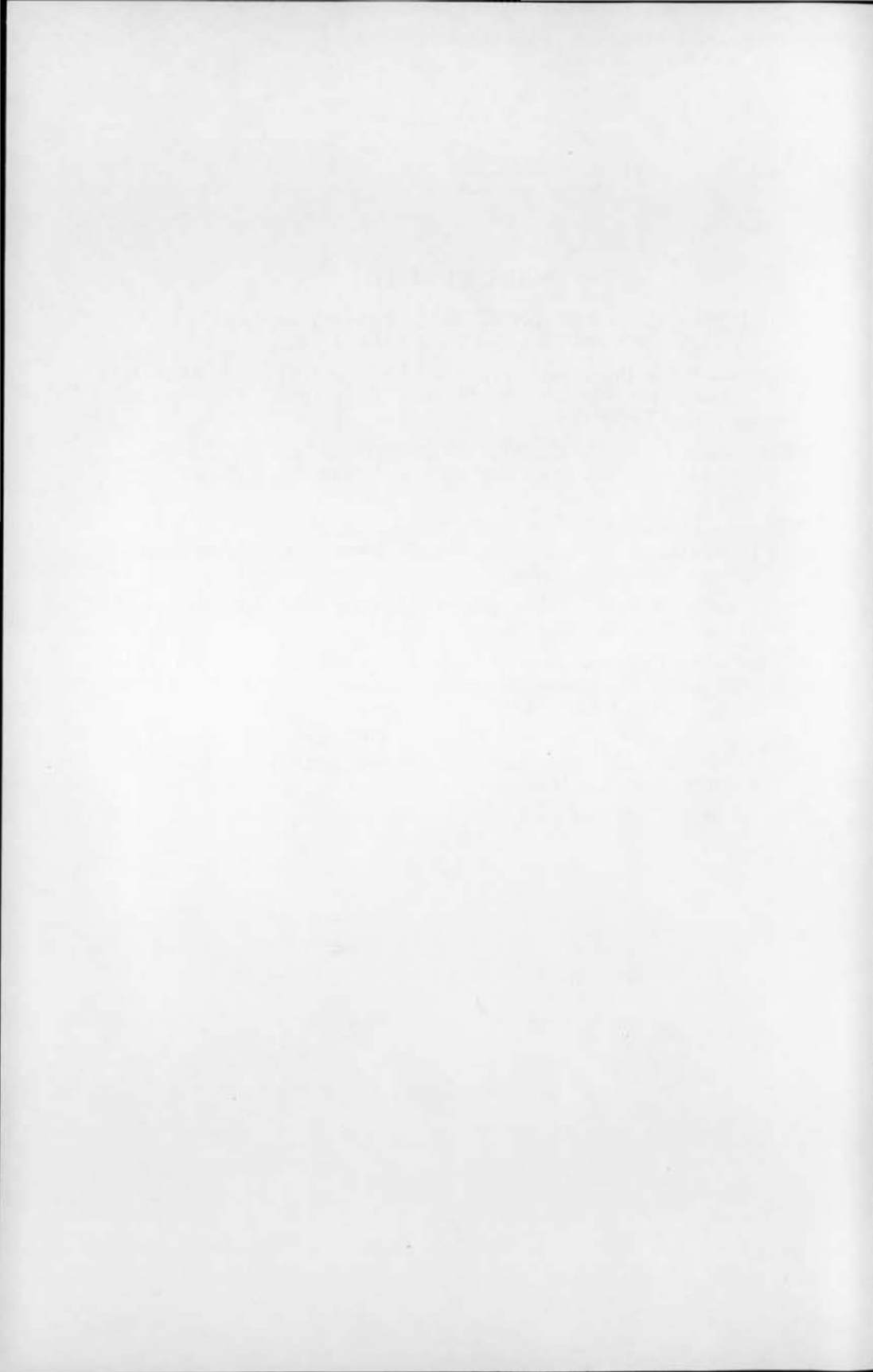
As when riding, the handler must always be alert to any indication the horse is frightened or is about to kick, strike or move. A calm, reassuring familiar voice will usually quiet an excited animal. The handler should always have a way out of the vehicle should the horse become too frightened or nervous to manage. This route of escape should be determined before entering the vehicle.

If horses appear excessively nervous when arriving at an unusual location leaving them in the vehicle a short period will usually calm them. Then they can be unloaded in greater safety.

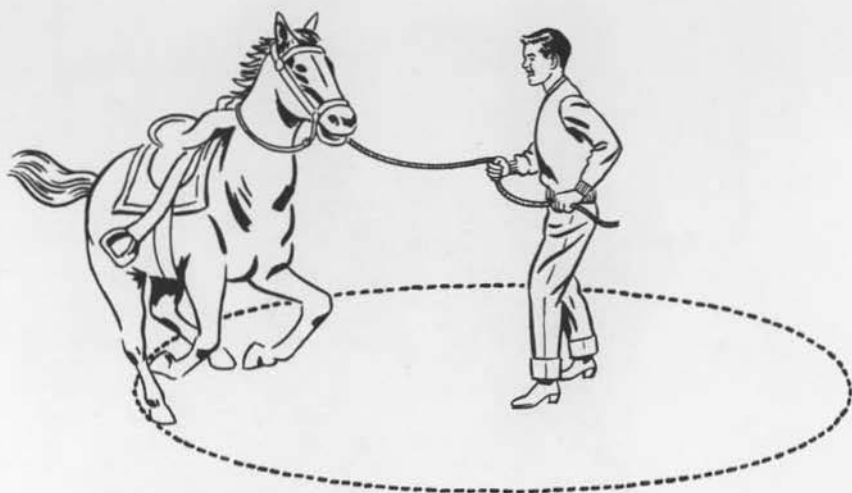


## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- "The Horseman's Encyclopedia," Self, Margaret Cabell  
(A. S. Barnes and Co., Inc., New York, 1963)
- "Horses—Their Breeding, Care, and Training," Gorman, John A.  
(Agriculture Experiment Station, University of Wyoming,  
Laramie, 1960)
- "Horses and Riders," Densmore, Wayne (Horse and Mule Association  
of America, Inc., 4th edition booklet No. 280, Chicago,  
Illinois)
- "Horses and Riding for 4-H Clubs," Jacobsen, N. A.  
(Cooperative Extension Service Bulletin 259, Montana State  
College, Bozeman, 1962)
- "Safe in the Saddle," Nicol, Marvin J. (National Safety Council  
Leaflet, Chicago, Illinois)
- "Some Basic Horsemanship," Culbertson, R. William and Richardson,  
Allen G. (Extension Service Bulletin Colorado State University,  
Fort Collins, 1962)
- "Suggestions for Judging and Showing 4-H Colts and Horses,"  
Jacobsen, N. A. (Cooperative Extension Service, Montana State  
College, Bozeman, 1962)







## OTHER USEFUL PUBLICATIONS

Safety is For You, Division I 4-H Project — PNW 80. Agricultural Extension Services of the University of Idaho, Washington State University, and Oregon State University.

Horses and Horsemanship, the 4-H Horse Program — National 4-H Service Committee. Available from the state 4-H office, University of Idaho Agricultural Extension Service, Moscow, Idaho.

How to Obtain Help in Time of Natural Disaster — Bulletin 472, University of Idaho Agricultural Extension Service.

You and Your 4-H Horse — Circular 2410, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

The Western Horseman, a monthly magazine published at Colorado Springs, Colorado.

The Appaloosa News, a magazine published at Moscow, Idaho.

The Young Sportsman's Guide to Western Horseback Riding—by Glenn Balch, Boise, Idaho.

Published and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, by the University of Idaho Agricultural Extension Service, James E. Kraus, Director; and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, cooperating.