

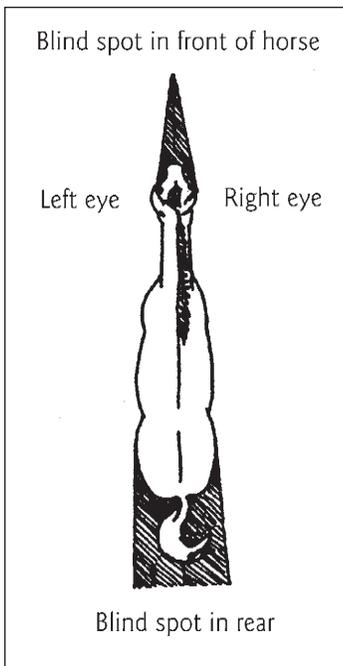
## Safety

### Safety is everyone's responsibility!

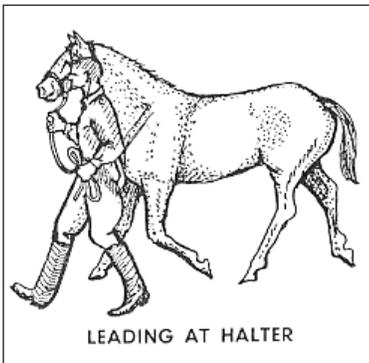
Safety is the most important activity when handling horses.

### Basic Safety Rules

Caution must be taken around even the quietest horse. Accidents can happen when you least expect them.

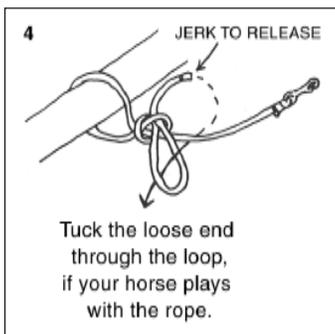
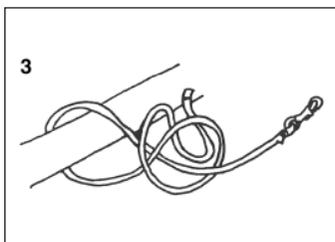
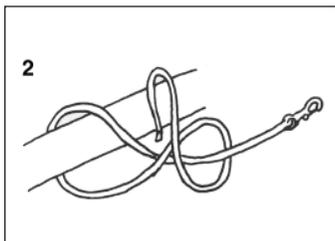
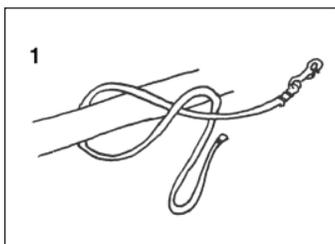


1. **Do not run around horses.** If horses see sudden movement without seeing the cause of it, they may kick, strike or bolt, causing injury.
2. **When approaching a horse,** always walk toward the shoulder; never from behind or ahead. Even in a stall, try to approach towards the shoulder. *Always let a horse know you are approaching by talking to it.*
3. **Horses have three blind spots** where they can't see you; directly between both eyes extending out approximately 10 inches (25 cm.), directly behind them and under their head. Their hips also block their vision of their rump area. Speaking to your horse lets it know where you are at all times.
4. **Lead** a horse from the left side, walking between the head and shoulder. This position gives you the best control while maintaining optimum safety. Place your right hand approximately 6 inches (15 cm.) down the shank, carry any excess lead rope in your left hand.
5. Never wrap the reins or lead shank around your hand or any part of your body so that if the horse were to bolt it would not wrap dangerously around you.
6. **When leading a horse, turn it to the right (away from you) so it won't step on you.** Push its head to the right using the leadshank, held in your right hand, and as you turn stay between its head and shoulder.
7. When the horse is tied do not go under the neck of a horse to get to the other side. If you do, you are passing through a blind spot and may frighten the horse. **Go around the hindquarters,** talk to your horse and keep hand contact on the horse as you walk around, so that it knows it's you when you pass through its blind spot. The closer you stand to a horse, the less likely you are to be injured if kicked. You may be shoved away, but not badly hurt.



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- When grooming the underside of a horse or working on the legs or feet, never sit or kneel. **Always keep your feet on the ground and a hand on the horse so you can react quickly** if needed. While handling or grooming do not drop grooming tools or equipment near the horse. Place them away from the horse so you will not trip on them, or they will not be stepped on by the horse.
- When you are working around horses, **wear protective footwear**. Do not wear runners, sandals or go barefoot. **When riding, always wear footwear with a heel. Gloves will help prevent rope burn.** Do not wear anything that dangles when working with horses.



- Do not mount your horse in a barn** or close to the overhanging edge of a roof.
- Never ride a horse into or out of a barn or stable.**
- Tying Your Horse:** When you tie your horse, tie it to a secure object (like a fence post secured in the ground) that will not break or move if the horse pulls back. Never tie a horse to the rail of a fence. It may break or the nails may pull out if the horse pulls back. If possible never tie below the level of the horse's withers. Tie your horse, using a quick release knot. Tie the shank to the post so that it is short enough that your horse can not get a leg over the rope. **Never tie a horse with reins.** Reins and/or the bridle are not strong enough and may break if the horse pulls back. Pulling back with a bridle on could also cause the bit to damage the horse's mouth. Always use a lead shank.
- Keep a pocket knife handy where you tie your horse and also one in the horse trailer, so that if you ever need to release your horse from its leadshank and you are unable to untie it, you can cut the leadshank. This may be necessary if a horse is frightened and pulls too hard on the leadshank.
- When working around your horse (grooming, washing, saddling, and so on) maintain space between your horse and any solid objects (fence or wall). Teach your horse to stand still at a 90 degree angle to where it is tied.
- Avoid accidents by **practicing safe management procedures**. Keep all equipment in good repair. Maintain clean aisles and well-constructed stalls and fences. Check equipment regularly to ensure a safe experience every time.
- If releasing your horse into a stall or field turn the horse around to face the door or gate before letting it go. Respect your horse's instincts.

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Any horse no matter how calm has a first instinct for survival. Try to anticipate situations that may make him nervous, and get him used to them. Get to know your, and your horse's strengths and weaknesses, and get help from a professional when you need it.

## Helmets



### 4-H Equine Helmet Requirement

Effective October 1, 2011, a properly fitted ASTM/SEI (American Society for Testing and Materials Safety Equipment Institute) or BSI (British Standards Institution) approved equestrian helmet must be worn by:

- U all Horsemanship Level 1, 2 and 3 members while mounted, and
- U all 4-H members born in 2000 and later, while mounted.
- U Members involved in Vaulting are not required to wear a helmet.
- U It is highly recommended that all other riders wear a properly fitted ASTM/SEI (American Society for Testing and Materials Safety Equipment Institute) or BSI (British Standards Institution) approved equestrian helmet.
- U For current helmet information, refer to the following websites:  
4-H Alberta: [www.4h.ab.ca](http://www.4h.ab.ca)  
Alberta Farm Safety Program: [www.agric.ab.ca/farmsafety](http://www.agric.ab.ca/farmsafety)

Here are some things to consider, when making the decision whether or not to wear a helmet when you ride:

- U Horseback riding carries a higher injury rate per hour of exposure than downhill ski racing, football, hang gliding and motorcycle racing.
- U Head injuries are the most common reason for horse-related hospital admissions.
- U Medical Examiner reports show that 60% or more of horse related deaths are caused by head injuries. Helmets can reduce this possibility by 70-80%.
- U Repeated trauma to the head, even when minimal, can cause cumulative damage to the brain. Each new incident expands the original damage and the brain cannot recover 100% from injury.
- U Non-ASTM/SEI or BSI certified helmets offer no protection whatsoever and are strictly for cosmetic purposes.
- U Death is not the only serious outcome of unprotected head injuries. Those who survive with brain injury may suffer epilepsy, intellectual and memory impairment, and personality changes.



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Tips for buying a helmet:

- U Only purchase an ASTM/SEI or BSI helmet. Look for the appropriate labels of approval, along with the date of manufacture. Helmets older than 5 years need to be replaced.
- U Be sure the helmet fits the intended rider correctly. Ask for help from a knowledgeable person.
- U Each rider should have their own personal helmet. Riders should not share helmets.
- U Any colour or style of equestrian helmet is acceptable, provided it is approved and fits properly. If the helmet is comfortable and the rider likes the style and colour, it will be used on every ride.

## The Riding Arena

An arena is a fenced or covered rectangular area set aside for training and riding horses. When it is outdoors it may be called a riding ring.

The “*track or rail*” is the part of the arena where the horses normally work. The outside track follows the walls or fence and the inside track is about 3 metres inside of the outside track.

When you are riding on the track with your right side towards the centre of the arena, you are on the **right rein**. When you are riding with your left side towards the centre of the arena, you are on the **left rein**.

## Rules of the Riding Arena

When riding in an arena with other riders it can become like a busy highway. It is important that you follow some basic rules to help keep the traffic flowing and to prevent accidents.

1. Riders must close gates behind them when they enter or exit the arena. Keeping the gates closed at all times ensures that horses will not bolt out of the arena. It is a good idea for riders to dismount and lead their horses through the gate.
2. Be aware of others around you. Be careful not to cut anyone off.
3. Keep at least six feet of space all around when possible (or one horse length between riders). The rider following another should be able to see the heels of the horse in front of him. Keep out of bunches.
4. Horses moving slower are given priority for using the outside track. Riders working faster must move to the inside track.
5. When riders are working in different directions, those riding on the left rein are given priority for using the outside track. Those working on the right rein would move to the inside track. This rule means riders know they will pass oncoming riders, left shoulder to left shoulder.



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6. When working at the walk, a rider should use the outside track to keep out of the way of faster horses, unless all of the horses are traveling at a walk.
7. If you have to stop for any reason, you must move off the track to the centre of the arena. e.g. to adjust tack.
8. If you must stop on the rail or slow your horse down, make sure there is space behind you for riders to respond to your transition.
9. When exiting the arena, do not rush. Leave the arena at a walk, in single file.
10. The order of the letters in the diagram are in a specific order and are used as markers for teaching and riding patterns.

A - all

C - can

K - King

M - make

with "X" in the center

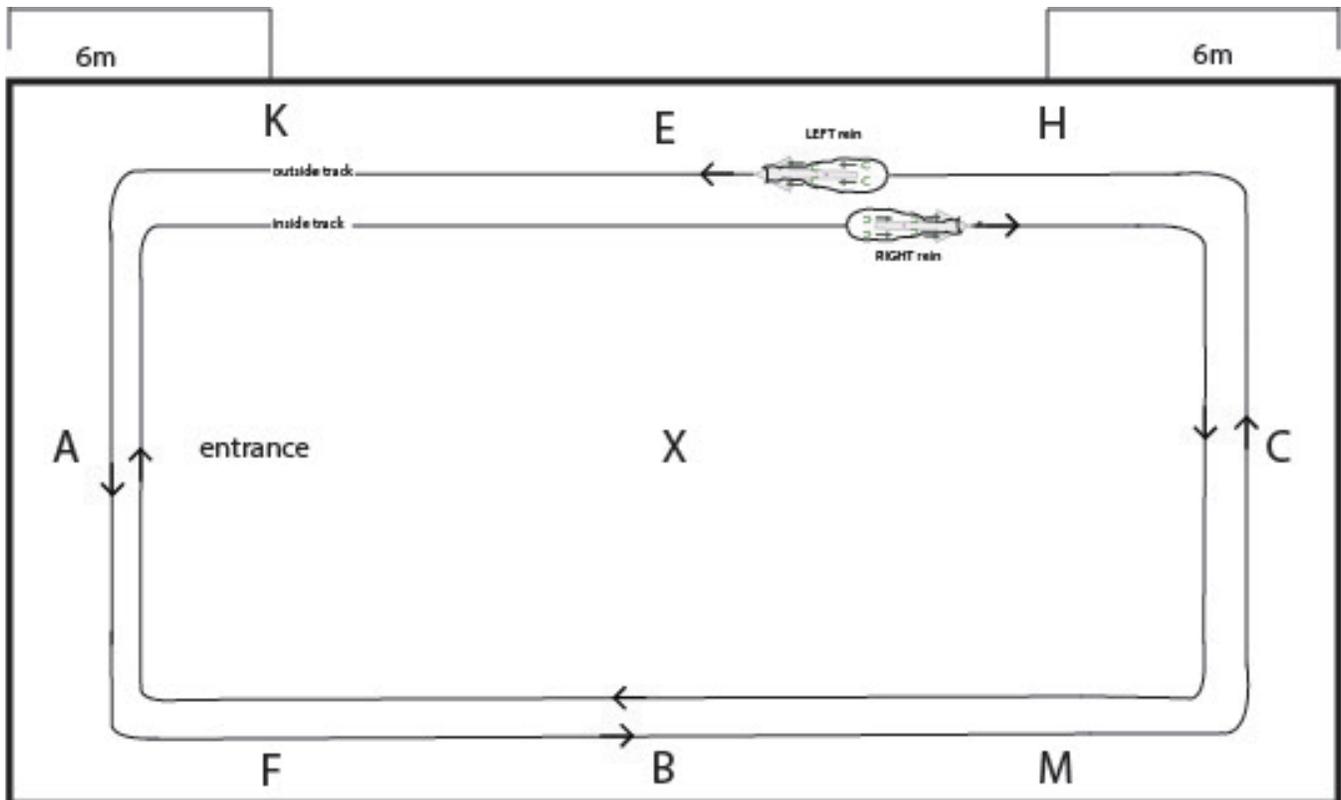
E - Edward's

B - beautiful

H - horses

F - foals

### The Riding Arena



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## Safety on the Trail

Riding with a group of people on a trail can be a lot of fun. There are some basic rules to follow for the safety of people and their horses. Don't show off. This is not the time or place.

1. Always allow one horse length or more between yourself and the next rider.
2. Have a designated, experienced lead rider (trail boss) and someone experienced to bring up the rear. This will keep your group as a tight unit. Keep a calm horse at the front and rear of the group.
3. If someone needs to stop, to adjust equipment, etc., have everyone stop. This will prevent runaways as horses left behind may try to catch up to horses that have continued on ahead. If there is a runaway horse all riders should stop. A horse is a herd animal and will likely return to the group.
4. When crossing roads, have everyone line up along the road and cross over together at the same time when traffic is clear. This gets the group across safely and quickly and prevents a long string of horses crossing the road. Reassemble in a line on the other side.
5. When crossing streams or rivers, be careful to cross where it is shallow and safe. Have someone experienced remain behind to help any horses through that may not want to go. Undo standing martingales and tiedowns before crossing in case your horse hits a deep spot. Your horse needs the full use of its head and neck to swim.
6. If you are riding and get caught in a thunderstorm, avoid riding under trees, on hills or along stream beds. Try to obtain shelter under a lean-to shed or a properly grounded barn. Horses can be a high risk in electrical storms especially if they are wearing metal shoes. Try to stay in a low, heavily forested area.
7. Suggested equipment to take on a ride:
  - protective clothing or carry rain gear,
  - sun screen and hat,
  - carry small first aid kit, phone, hoof pick, pocket knife, water/sponge, wire cutters and rope.
8. Avoid trail riding alone; but if you do ride alone tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return.
9. Avoid riding at night on roads or highways. Wear light colored clothing and put reflective tape on rider or tack if you choose to ride at night.
10. A red ribbon tied into the horse's tail indicates a kicker, so stay away!!!



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11. A blue ribbon tied in the horse's tail indicates a stallion, so use caution.
12. Be patient with less experienced riders.

Knowledge of proper horsemanship with regular use and review of safety guidelines will make horse experiences safer and more enjoyable. Recognize that there are no short cuts to becoming a knowledgeable horseman or woman. Be prepared to spend considerable time developing safe horse handling and riding skills.

Keep an open mind, continue to seek more information, and be receptive to ideas of reputable, experienced people. If you have a problem with your horse, or are unsure how to safely handle a situation, do not hesitate to seek professional advice. Remember, safety is everyone's responsibility!

### **Trailer**ing Horses

Trailer

ing should be done with two people if at all possible. Seek advice of people experienced in transporting horses before trailer

ing for the first time.

Consideration should be given to the size of trailer and weight to be towed when selecting a towing vehicle. The size of the vehicle should be sufficient to stop the load as well as to pull it.

Alberta Transportation has specific regulations regarding trailers, for example, recommended weights, brakes etc. Contact them for the most current regulations.

### **Check Trailer**

The towing vehicle and trailer should be serviced and checked regularly for the following:

1. Rotting or weakened floor boards.
2. Open, rusted or weakened door hinges and latches.
3. Proper and safe operation of hitch, lights, brakes and safety chains.
4. Wheel bearings, tire wear and proper inflation.
5. Sharp projections inside or outside the trailer

Be sure the trailer is properly constructed and that it meets provincial requirements for brakes and lights. The trailer should be of sufficient height to give the horse ample neck and head room, and be free from sharp or protruding objects.



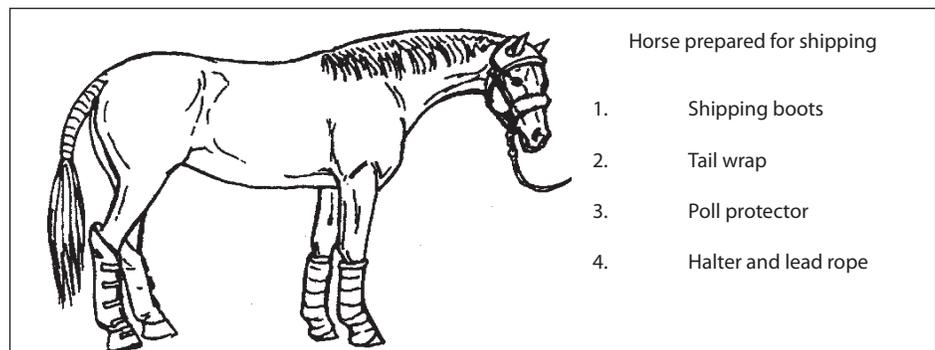
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**Before Loading** Before loading, be sure the ground area behind and around the trailer to ensure safe footing. Be sure the trailer is level and steady and cannot move as the horse enters. If necessary, place chocks (blocks) behind the wheels to keep the trailer steady.

Unless you and your horse are experienced, remove the bridle, saddle and other equipment before loading. Use a properly fitted halter and a good sturdy lead shank (wearing gloves reduces the risk to you). Avoid the use of nylon lead shanks because of potential rope burns. Always pack a spare halter and lead rope in case your halter or lead rope breaks.

Leg injuries may be minimized or prevented by putting on shipping boots. Give your horse a chance to get used to the feel of the protective boots before you load him. Always include a well-stocked first-aid and tool kit when trailering.

## Leg Wraps



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**Allow Time** It is natural for horses not to want to go into a small space like your trailer. Teach your horse to load days, weeks or months before you have to haul him. Don't wait until it's time to go. Always allow sufficient time for loading the horse, and remain calm but firm with the horse at all times! One of the most common mistakes when teaching horses to load in a trailer is not allowing sufficient time to properly accustom the horse to the process. A horse that has a positive experience will become easier to load with each lesson.

### **Loading Safely into Trailer!**

The loading procedure should be done with at least two people whenever possible. If you have trouble loading or unloading, get experienced help!

When attempting to load, position the horse so that it is straight with the trailer entrance. Be sure that the safety-escape door is unlatched so you are not trapped if the horse begins to panic. Secure the butt-bar (if the trailer has one) immediately after the horse is loaded and before the horse is tied. Opinions vary on hauling a horse tied or loose. If you tie, allow sufficient length of rope so the horse can move its head for balance and comfort, but tight enough so the horse cannot turn around or bother the horse next to him. Always tie with a quick release knot or use panic snaps on the trailer ties. Be sure all doors and latches are secured.

### **Hauling**

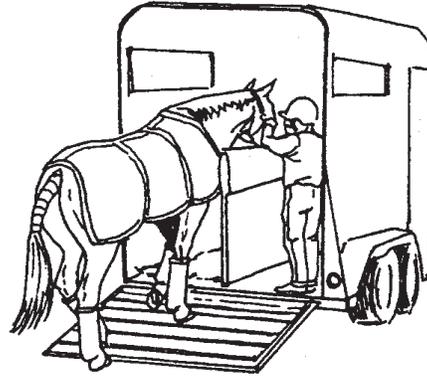
When hauling only one horse in a two-horse trailer, it should be hauled on the left side. If two horses are being hauled, the heaviest animal should be hauled on the left. Due to the crowning structure of most roads, this assures a smoother tow and an easier ride for the horse. When hauling, all normal driving laws should be observed. Drive defensively, avoid sudden stops or turns, and allow additional distance for braking. Remember that the weight and movement of horses and the trailer will often push the towing vehicle. Look far ahead to avoid emergencies. Allow extra time for slower driving and unexpected delays.

Always speak to a horse that is in a trailer before attempting to handle it. When traveling, check the horse, hay net or bag, trailer tires, lights and hitch at every stop before continuing. Adjust the feeding schedule to avoid traveling immediately after feeding grain. Feed smaller amounts more often if necessary. This will help prevent digestive upsets due to hauling. Water the horse as frequently as possible, especially in hot weather. When hauling a horse in the winter, the horse must be protected against windchill (by closing off openings, hooding, blanketing, etc. to match the severity of the conditions).

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Loading safely into a trailer



**Ventilation** Be sure that proper ventilation is provided in the trailer at all times, but especially during the summer months e.g. roof vents, screened windows etc. Often horses that are “poor haulers” have had bad experiences such as being blanketed and getting too hot on the trip due to poor ventilation. Never allow anyone to throw cigarettes or matches out of the moving vehicle. The air currents can pull these items into the trailer and cause a fire.

**Footing** Use rubber mats with sufficient bedding for secure footing. Shavings or sand are commonly used to provide adequate footing and to keep the horse comfortable during hauling. For example, a horse on a long haul may not urinate without bedding to absorb the sound and splash. However, for a short haul if you are using a trailer which is not completely enclosed, the bedding may blow around and irritate the horse’s eyes and respiratory system. In this instance, you might choose to eliminate the bedding.

**Unloading** Before unloading, be sure the ground area behind and around the trailer to ensure safe footing. When unloading, use caution when dropping the ramp/tailgate or opening the rear door. The horse may try to back out as soon as the ramp/tailgate is opened. Having the butt-bar secure will prevent the horse from flying back, breaking the tie or halter, and falling over backwards. Always untie the horse first before opening the rear door. Back the horse out slowly and straight or slightly to the center. After a long haul, walk the horse to restore circulation and ease stiff muscles before the horse is put into a stall.

When the trailer is disconnected and parked, be sure to place chocks (blocks) to secure the wheels. Never load or unload a horse into or out of an unhitched trailer. Never tie a horse to a disconnected trailer.

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If you require further information on hauling horses check out the resource “**Codes of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals**”. This is available through Alberta Agriculture field offices or at <http://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice>.

## **Transportation Regulations**

When you transport your horse within Alberta (e.g. to 4-H shows, agriculture fairs, pastures), provincial regulations do not require that the horse is accompanied by an Alberta Livestock Manifest. A complete manifest is only required when your horse is being transported for sale (to a neighbor, auction market) or for slaughter. Horses being transported out of the province are required to be inspected and issued a livestock permit from Livestock Identification Services Ltd. (LIS). If you frequently transport your horse outside the province contact your local Livestock Inspector about a special permit which allows multiple return trips. Website: [www.lis-alberta.com](http://www.lis-alberta.com)

## **Premise Identification Program (PID)**

Horse owners over the age of 18 are required to have a Premises Identification (PID) account. If you are boarding your horse at someone else’s place, you are still required to have your own PID account but you will use the landowners PID number on your manifests and other official forms.

For more information, contact the Ag-Info Centre at 310-FARM (3276) or online at: [www.agriculture.ca/premises](http://www.agriculture.ca/premises).

## **First Aid**

Having some knowledge of first aid is important. It is a good idea for 4-H members to take a certified first aid course. At riding clinics and club activities identify a parent or leader as the designated first aider before the event starts.

Information about first aid for horses can be found in the chapter on “Health”.

Here’s one important tip for foot injuries for people who work with animals:

- U If you ever receive a foot injury when working with your horse (stepped on, kicked in the ankle, and so on) ***leave your work or riding boot on*** as this will help to prevent swelling. Once you find medical assistance, the boot may need to be removed.

