

Toolbox Talks



We all need to remember

- If you are unsure of anything or feel that something you have been asked to do is dangerous, DO NOT begin the task. ASK for assistance or more information and we will work together to find a safe way to do the job or solve the problem.
- Ensure you are aware of the location of the nearest First Aid Kit.
- Make sure everyone is fit for work, free from signs of fatigue, drugs or alcohol. If in doubt, ask or talk to your manager.
- This farm is a workplace, but may also be a place of residence for the owner, their managers and employees. Be vigilant for children and bystanders at all times. Refer to *Child Safety on Farms*.
- The safety, health and wellbeing of all who live on, work on and visit this farm is the most important responsibility we all share.

Even if we are busy and under time or financial pressures, safety MUST come first.



emergencyplus

Save the App that could save your life.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

In case of emergency, CALL 000 or your local emergency service provider, then call your manager or supervisor.

POISONS 13 11 26
Poisons Information Centre

A Practical Guide

Working with Horses

Working with or around horses in a farm setting can be rewarding, but it also comes with hazards and potential risks. It's crucial to be aware of these hazards and take appropriate precautions to ensure safety.

The Hazards and Risks

Engaging with horses, whether for riding or other activities, comes with inherent safety concerns primarily due to the following factors:

- Horses have minds of their own and may choose to behave independently, affecting the degree of control a rider has at any given moment.
- Horses are substantial animals, and their size, weight, and speed can increase the severity of injuries.

Potential Harm

Horses are social, prey animals. If they are frightened or feel threatened, they will instinctively attempt to flee. If unable to flee they will fight. While horses aren't naturally aggressive toward humans they can display aggressive behaviour like charging, kicking, striking, trampling, and biting. This may become a learned behaviour triggered by negative experiences, including inappropriate handling/training. Due to a horse's size and weight they can cause serious injuries to people or other animals when in fight or flight mode.

Bites: Horses use their mouths for more than just eating. Horses might bite out of curiosity, affection, playing, or aggression. If a horse bites aggressively it may be attempting to protect itself, assert dominance, or communicate that it is feeling pain. Bites can result in bruising, lacerations, amputations, and other serious injuries.

Falls: A horse fleeing from perceived danger can be hard to control. Falling off a horse can result in injuries, including fractures, sprains, concussions, organ and brain damage, or even fatalities. There is also the potential for crush injuries if the horse falls with you.

- **Falls from a Stationary Horse:** Even when a horse is not in motion, there is a risk of falling. Mounting, dismounting, or simply losing balance while sitting on a horse can lead to falls and serious injuries.
- **Falls from a Moving Horse:** While riding a horse, there is a risk of falling if the rider loses balance or control. The speed at

which horses can move adds an extra layer of danger, as falls from a moving horse can result in severe injuries or death.

- **Falls involving a Falling Horse:** In some instances, the horse itself may fall, either due to terrain, obstacles, or loss of balance due to sudden movements. When a horse falls with a rider, it can lead to serious injuries for both the rider and the horse.

Kicks: Horses can kick when startled, or they feel threatened or agitated. Being in close proximity to a horse's hind legs without proper training can lead to serious injuries. Kicks can result in bruising, fractures, contusions, and tissue, organ, and brain damage.

Striking: A horse can lash out with its front legs either while standing or while rearing up on its hind legs. Lashing out from a standing position can cause leg and foot injuries to a person. Lashing out while rearing can result in injuries to the chest, upper body, and head.

Trampling: Horses can inadvertently step on or trample individuals if they get spooked, leading to severe injuries or even fatalities.

Zoonotic Diseases: Horses can carry diseases that are transmissible to humans (zoonotic diseases) through contact with faeces, urine, or bodily fluids, posing health risks to humans.



Toolbox Talks

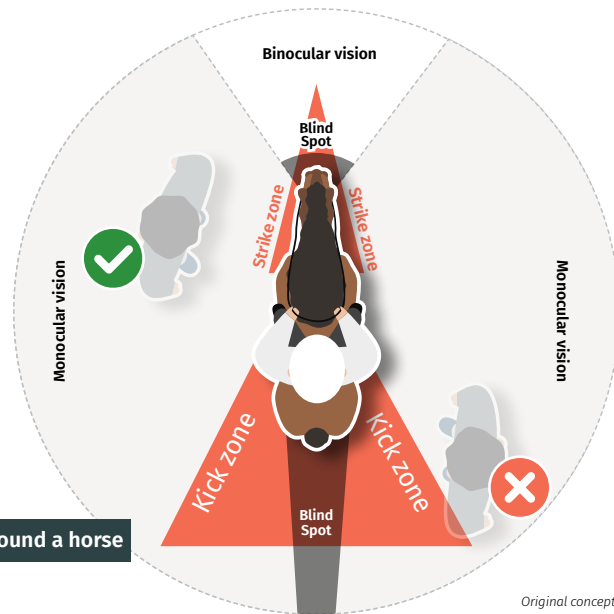
A Practical Guide Working with Horses

While Working around Horses

- **Maintain Awareness:** Always be aware of your surroundings when in the vicinity of horses. Pay attention to their body language, which can signal their mood and potential reactions.
- **Approach with Caution:** Approach horses calmly and confidently, speaking to them in a soothing tone. Avoid sudden movements or loud noises that may startle them.
- **Stay in their Field of Vision:** When walking around horses, stay within their line of sight. Avoid standing directly in front of or behind them, as these are their blind spots.
- **Watch for Signs of Discomfort:** Learn to read a horse's body language for signs of stress or agitation. If a horse appears irritated or restless, ensure a safe distance to avoid potential aggression. Avoid turning your back to the horse.

While Working with Horses from the Ground

- **Wear Protective Gear:** Sturdy enclosed shoes should be worn when working in close proximity to horses. Long-sleeved shirts and long pants can provide some protection from bites and kicks.
- **Mind your Approach:** Walk slowly towards the horse; never run. Approach from the front, towards the shoulder. Extend your hand and speak softly to let the horse know you're there. If the horse moves away, stop and wait for it to settle before trying again.
- **Maintain Visibility:** Ensure the horse always knows your location. Talk to them using low-pitched sounds. Avoid sudden, vigorous patting, and instead, pet them gently. Avoid turning your back to the horse.
- **Use Proper Haltering Techniques:** Ensure the halter and lead rope are in good condition and fit properly. Stand on the left side between the head and shoulder when haltering to minimise the risk of being kicked or stepped on.



Safe zones around a horse

Original concept credit: simonkneebone.com

Reducing The Risk

Horses are incredible creatures, and understanding their behavior is key to staying safe.

- **Properly Lead the Horse:** Use a lead rope to lead the horse. Hold the lead rope firmly about six inches from the halter. Avoid wrapping the lead rope around any part of your body. Maintain appropriate spacing to prevent the horse from pulling or pushing you.

While Tacking Up Horses

- **Inspect Tack:** Check the saddle, girth, and bridle for any damage or issues. Ensure all equipment is in good condition before use.
- **Inspect the Horse:** Inspect the horse for any signs of injury or illness that may make it unsafe to ride or may cause it pain or discomfort when tack is used.
- **Position Yourself for Safety:** Tack up from the near side (left) staying between the head and shoulder as much as possible. Keep control of the horse using the halter lead rope.
- **Maintain a Calm Manner:** Keep all movements smooth and calm. Place saddle cloths, pads, and saddles gently without startling the horse. Avoid sudden movements and loud noises.
- **Secure Tack Properly:** Ensure all tack is correctly and firmly buckled or cinched. Lead or lunge the horse around for a short amount of time and check tack positioning and the horse's comfort. Confirm tack is still firmly secured, especially the girth belts.
- **Maintain Awareness:** Monitor the horse for signs of stress, agitation, or discomfort.

When Loading a Horse

- **Inspect Facilities and Equipment:** Check vehicles, loading equipment, and ramps prior to use. Ensure the loading area is well-lit and free from obstacles.
- **Lead or Guide with Confidence:** Lead the horse onto the transport vehicle confidently. Some horses are trained to load themselves and should be guided appropriately. Use a lead rope to guide it without force.
- **Securely Restrain:** Always use appropriate methods, preferably quick-release knots, to secure the horse for transport.

When Releasing a Horse

- **Position the Horse:** Before removing the halter and releasing the horse, position it facing the gate or exit. This helps prevent the horse from bolting sideways or spinning when freed.
- **Be Patient:** Allow the horse to relax before taking off the halter. If the horse is very tense, excited, or anxious to join its herd, extra caution is required. If releasing multiple horses, ensure all handlers are ready to release simultaneously.
- **Remove the Halter Safely:** Once the horse is calm and standing still, remove the halter carefully. Be prepared for any sudden movements but avoid making quick, abrupt actions that could startle the horse.
- **Maintain a Safe Distance:** As you release the horse, move away calmly but stay alert. Avoid turning your back on the horse, as it may react unexpectedly. Keep a safe distance from the horse's hind-quarters to avoid potential kicks.

Links and Resources

Farmsafe Australia
Practical Guide Zoonotic Diseases -
Toolbox Talk
farmsafe.org.au

Guide to Managing Risks when new
and inexperienced persons interact
with horses

[safeworkaustralia.gov.au/system/files/
documents/1702/horse-guide.pdf](http://safeworkaustralia.gov.au/system/files/documents/1702/horse-guide.pdf)

Safe Work Australia -
Work-related Infectious and Parasitic
Diseases Australia

[safeworkaustralia.gov.au/system/files/
documents/1702/workrelated_infectious_
parasitic_disease_australia.pdf](http://safeworkaustralia.gov.au/system/files/documents/1702/workrelated_infectious_parasitic_disease_australia.pdf)

NSW DPI - Zoonoses
Animal Diseases that can infect people
[dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/animal/
humans](http://dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/animal/humans)



While Riding Horses

Wear Protective Gear

Always wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including helmets and suitable riding attire.

- **Footwear:** Prevent foot injuries by wearing sturdy closed in shoes with ankle support and smooth treads.
- **Helmets:** Head injuries are a common injury that may be sustained from horse-related activities. Protective helmets are recommended. Helmets should meet current Australian Standards, be correctly adjusted and fitted, and periodically replaced according to manufacturer recommendations. Helmets that have been dropped, damaged, or worn during a fall should be replaced.

Match Horse and Rider

A rider's skills and experience should match the task, the horse's level of training, and the horse's temperament. Riding a horse is an acquired skill that requires continual learning and assessment.

Stay Prepared

Learn and understand your horse's temperament and reactions. If the horse becomes agitated or uncontrollable, dismount in the safest manner and handle the situation from the ground.

Monitor your Surroundings

Take extra care when riding on muddy, slippery, or loose gravel surfaces. Constantly check your path and surroundings for holes, rocks, timber, gullies, and other obstacles that may cause your horse to slip, stumble or fall.

Be aware of Animal Interactions

When riding horses around other livestock, such as sheep or cattle, be aware of how the livestock behaviour may impact the horse. A bull, or cow with calf at foot, for example, may show aggression towards the horse, and the horse may respond with abrupt flight.

Maintain a Positive Energy

Remember, your energy is transferable to the horse. Approach, mount, and work with your horse with a positive, quiet, confident, and calm energy to promote a sense of safety and trust.

General Considerations

Zoonotic Diseases

Be aware of zoonotic diseases that can transfer between horses and humans. After coming into contact with a sick animal follow proper hygiene practices, such as washing hands and disinfecting contaminated equipment and clothing. If an animal is showing signs of being unwell only an experienced person wearing the appropriate PPE should handle the animal.



Toolbox Talks

Facilitator Guide

INSTRUCTIONS

The information sheet is background information ONLY. Be sure to customise your talk to your operation and facilities.

How to deliver an effective Toolbox Talk

- Know your Topic. If you don't understand the material it will be hard to explain and make it relevant.
- Print copies of the Toolbox Talk Info sheet for yourself and each of the participants.
- Hold the talk in a location relevant to the topic being discussed.
- Explain why the Toolbox Talk is being held.
- Stay on topic and keep it simple.
- Encourage conversation and participation.
- Be sure to give real life examples whenever possible.
- Be open to questions.
- Read through the provided cases studies.
- After each study ask attendees what could have been done to prevent this situation.
- Conclude with a brief review of the main points or a summary based on the discussion.
- Record the details of the Toolbox Talk including the location, date and names of attendees.

Note: This Facilitator Guide is intended to provide a basic structure for conducting a Toolbox Talk. Customise it as needed to suit your specific audience and objectives. Always prioritise safety and ensure that participants have a clear understanding of the information presented.

A Practical Guide

Working with Horses

Introduction

- Welcome everyone.
- Emphasise the importance of working with horses safely on the farm.
- Mention the objective: to raise awareness and provide practical tips for working with horses safely.

Icebreaker Consider starting with a brief question or scenario related to working

with horses to engage participants.

For example, "Have you ever had a close call when working with horses, or do you know someone who has?"

Distribution of Resources Handout printed Toolbox Talk Information Sheets and any other resources related to working with horses safely.

Key Points

Understanding the Dangers

- Discuss the inherent safety concerns related to working with horses, focusing on the following factors:
 - Independent behaviors of horses
 - Size, weight, and potential speeds of horses.

Discuss ways to Stay Safe while Working around Horses

- Discuss how to reduce the risk of:
 - Bite injuries
 - Kick injuries
 - Trampling.
- Discuss signs of increasing aggression in horses
- Discuss prey animal behaviour
- Discuss herd instincts.

Discuss and Demonstrate Handling Techniques

- Demonstrate techniques (as appropriate) for:
 - Haltering
 - Leading
 - Loading
 - Checking tack
 - Using tack
 - Checking horses for illness, injury, or discomfort
 - Checking the horse's feet and shoes.



Interactive Discussion and Case Studies

Encourage participants to share their experiences, challenges, or questions related to horse handling.

Use the Case Studies on the next page to prompt conversation. Read the case studies out loud and ask participants for their thoughts.

Q&A Session

Allow participants to ask questions and seek clarification on any topics covered.

Conclusion

Summarise the main takeaways from the talk: how you want workers to stay safe.

Reiterate the importance of everyone's commitment to safety on the farm.

Closing Remarks

Thank participants for their time and attention.

Remind them to apply the knowledge gained from this Toolbox Talk in their daily work.

Feedback

Ask for feedback on the Toolbox Talk content and delivery to improve future sessions.

Toolbox
Talks
Facilitator
Guide

CASE
STUDIES



Risk Management Tools

[DOWNLOAD ONLINE MATRIX](#)

Use this simple and effective tool to assess and manage the risk of your farming activities prior to commencing.

All team members can join in and contribute, developing different ways to manage risks on your farm. Doing a risk assessment helps determine hazards and develop appropriate control measures to lessen risks.

farmsafe.org.au

P. +61 2 6269 5622 | E. info@farmsafe.org.au

Disclaimer: This *Toolbox Talk* is intended as a *general* guide only and is designed to be used to increase risk awareness and safe work practices - it is not legal advice and does not take the place of proper individualised on-farm workplace inductions, work, health and safety training, or any other tailored steps which may be necessary to protect health and safety at specific worksites.

CASE STUDY 1

Horseplay around Horses

Scenario

Steve and Sally are getting their horses ready for the day's work. Steve decides he wants to try to scare Sally. Steve jumps out from where he is hiding behind Sally's horse. Sally's horse gets frightened and kicks out hitting Steve in the stomach with his hoof.

QUESTION	ANSWERS MAY INCLUDE
What could have been done to prevent this accident?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not making sudden movements in a horse's blind spot. • Not making sudden noises. • Staying out of a horse's kick zone.

CASE STUDY 2

A painful lesson in tacking up

Scenario

One busy morning, Jake was assigned to tack up a spirited mare named Bella. Bella was known to be a bit temperamental, but Jake had experience with her and felt confident in his abilities.

Jake approached Bella calmly and began the process of tacking up. As he carefully placed the saddle pad on Bella's back and started securing the saddle, Jake noticed that Bella's ears were pinned back, a sign of discomfort or irritation. Ignoring this warning sign, Jake continued fitting the saddle. While adjusting the girth Bella swung her head towards Jake and made biting movements. Ignoring Bella, Jake continued on and pulled the saddle girth tight which put pressure on a sore spot on Bella's back. As Jake secured the girth Bella suddenly turned her head and bit down hard on Jake's arm.

QUESTION	ANSWERS MAY INCLUDE
What could have been done to prevent this accident?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being more vigilant and remaining aware of demonstrations of aggression. • Checking the horse for illness or discomfort before applying tack. • Having someone else help with a horse that is known to be spirited.

CASE STUDY 3

The dangers of releasing a horse out of sync

Scenario

At the end of the day workers were releasing their horses back into the paddock. Emma, a new worker, was having trouble with a stiff buckle on her horse's halter. The other workers released their horses without waiting for Emma. Emma's horse, seeing her mates gallop away jumped forward, knocking Emma over and dragging her to the ground.

QUESTION	ANSWERS MAY INCLUDE
What could have been done to prevent this accident?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release all of the horses into a small enclosure and let all of the horses out of the enclosure at the same time. • Other workers could have waited and verbally confirmed with everyone that they were ready to release their horses before doing so.

On-farm Toolbox Talk Sign-off Sheet

Please list and/or attach all documents that have been provided including checklists, policies, safe operating procedures, etc.

INSTRUCTIONS

This sign-off template is available for you to use as part of your training packages. You will need to attach all evidence of all information given to the person that you have spoken with regarding this specific Toolbox Talk. This may include checklists, policies, safe operating procedures or notes about the conversations had, questions asked and other information provided.

Holding Toolbox Talks or safety meetings are not just about checking a box - they need to be tailored to your farming environment, meet the legislative requirements, and designed to support your employee, contractor, family member or visitor throughout the time that they spend living or working on your property. Inductions are only the first step in your WHS journey and it is important that you continue to create a safety culture on your farm by continuing to engage with your employees on any matters that may affect their health, safety and wellbeing.

The employee/contractor/visitor/family member that you have had this conversation with should acknowledge that they have received, discussed and understood all the relevant information that has been presented to them and attached and sign in the relevant space provided. A good practice is to ensure that the employee initials or signs each relevant piece of information that is attached and retains a copy of each for their own information. Records of WHS conversations should be kept alongside records of employment or in your work, health and safety management system and be updated as needed or as required by law.

On-farm Toolbox Talk Participants

EMPLOYER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have provided a relevant safety meeting to our farming business and that the employee has received, discussed and understood the listed and attached information.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature

1. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature



Toolbox Talks Facilitator Guide

A Practical Guide Working with Horses

On-farm Toolbox Talk Sign-off Sheet

CONTINUED



Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

This project is supported by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), through funding from the Australian Government's National Farm Safety Education Fund.

2. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)
Surname
Property Name
Date
Signature

3. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)
Surname
Property Name
Date
Signature

4. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)
Surname
Property Name
Date
Signature

5. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)
Surname
Property Name
Date
Signature