

THIS OLD HORSE
VOLUNTEER
TRAINING

Welcome to our
community of
horse lovers.

A safe barn



THIS OLD
HORSE

MAINTAINING A SAFE BARN

- One of the core values of This Old Horse is that our barn are always clean, safe and welcoming places for humans and horses.
- We are proud of our barns. All efforts and suggestions around these values are deeply appreciated.
- Our whole mission is centered around a base of community support for our programs and we welcome horse lovers—those who have never been around a horse and those who have lifelong experience with horses.
- We are as eager to introduce newcomers to help them learn as we are to welcome experienced horse lovers into our family.
- Experience is gained and the only difference between someone who has never had access to horses and someone who has been blessed with a life with horses is a chance to learn. No one has horse experience if they have not been around horses.

BEST PRACTICE STANDARDS

- Our standards, procedures and protocols are developed based on well-researched and established best practice standards in horse care and handling.
- There are many, many good ways to care for horses and we have found the best way for us, for our horses.
- This does not discount other ways people have learned to work with horses but in order to promote a safe and consistent operation, we expect and insist that everyone adhere to the same set of standards.

SAFE HORSE HANDLING

- No one is permitted to handle any of our horses without approval of the barn manager. Volunteers can meet with our manager to assess their skills, experience and familiarity with our procedures and be qualified horse handlers.
- We offer ongoing classes, training and education to teach safe and effective horse handling skills.
- Many of our most experienced handlers and leadership team members came to us with no experience and gained all their skills through us!

MOVING HORSES

- Horses are moved only when wearing a properly fitted halter with an attached lead rope. No horses can be moved with a lead rope over their neck or by holding the halter even for short distances. Horses cannot be led by a bridle or reins.
- A handler may only move one horse at a time.
- Lead ropes with chains are not permitted. If a horse required a chain assist during moving or loading as a safety consideration, only a professional trainer can use a chain lead.

STALLS OR SERVICE DOORS

- Moving a horse through a narrow space is dangerous and must be done carefully and with close attention to the horse and surroundings. There is not enough room for a horse and a handler to go through a doorway together. One or the other has to go through first. And that puts the handler in a poor position for controlling the horse.
- The horse may be nervous and bolt quickly through a doorway because the lighting may be different on exterior doors (daylight to inside lighting, a lit space to a dark). If the handler is in front of the horse, they may be trampled or knocked down. If they are beside the horse, they may be crushed between the wall or door and the horse.
- It is not safe to be inside a stall with a horse for the same reasons.

GATES

- If at all possible, two people should turn horses out and bring horses in from turnout.
- Trying to manage a gate and a horse is a risky endeavor, particularly if there are other horses in the vicinity.
- This is the most likely scenario for injuries as loose horses might rush the gate or attempt aggression toward the incoming horse if they feel their space is being encroached.

TYING HORSES

- Tied horses cannot be left unattended in the aisle or arena, even for a brief time. If the handler forgets something, they must put the horse in a stall and go get it, then bring the horse back out.
- If a horse is cross tied, the handler must unhook one of the ties to let another human or horse pass in the aisle. It is not safe to 'duck under' the cross tie.
- If a horse is tied in the aisle, the handler is responsible for taking control of the tied horse if another horse or human is passing by.
- Horses may be tied only in designated areas. All horses must be tied with a quick-release method or panic snap.
- It is not safe to be inside a stall with a horse. Move horses outside of the stall to work with them.

LOOSE HORSES

- A loose horse is an emergency situation.
- If a horse gets loose from a handler, stall or enclosure, resist your instinct to chase it. Stop.
- As long as a horse is chased, it will run. Horse are herd animals and will attempt to return back to their herd if they are separated.
- If a horse gets out onto the public road, notify law enforcement so they can assist with traffic. A car hitting a horse on the road is likely to end as a fatality for the horse and passengers. A loose horse is an extremely dangerous situation.
- Calmly walk toward them, approach them with a halter and lead rope. If they run again, do not chase them. It might be helpful to bring some feed out with you to entice them closer.
- Anyone mounted when a horse is loose must immediately dismount and make sure their horse is in hand until the loose horse is secured.

DISCIPLINING HORSES

- **Hitting or harsh interaction with horses is prohibited**
- Striking, whipping, swatting or using harsh interactions (such as hard pops on the noseband and fast backing) is prohibited. We are responsible for kind, respectful interactions with all the horses we care for and harsh corrections and punishment are inconsistent with this core value.
- Punishing negative behavior in horses certainly is one way to change or modify a behavior. But there are also many positive behaviors change techniques that are effective.
- Naïve or inexperienced onlookers may observe someone with more experience using harsh techniques on horses and try to emulate or copy these techniques without the proper training or foundation for applying them. Therefore, we will not defer to a handler's or trainer's experience and 'expertise' in using these techniques in our barns. **They are simply prohibited.**
- Rather than trying to figure out what is an 'acceptable' amount of punishment and who should be administering it. we have decided that no cruelty or any interaction that makes a horse fearful is acceptable.
- We can do better.

POSITIVE IS EFFECTIVE

- Sometimes people will strike a horse when it reacts to something that startles it (or the handler). They see the horse's natural reaction as 'naughty'.
- We try to better understand the behavior and learn to help the horse rather than punish the behavior.
- The following information on punishment hits the mark as to how sophisticated and planful one has to be to make punishment an effective behavior change technique.
- Punishment is simply not a good way to interact with horses (or humans) when we have so many more effective tools at hand.

ABOUT PUNISHMENT

- **Punishment** is also known as aversive conditioning. It is any unpleasant event that lowers the chance that a behavior will be repeated.
- Punishment is not the same as negative reinforcement. To be most successful, punishment must occur as early as possible (within a few seconds of the start of the behavior), and it must be consistent and appropriate.
- Critical factors in punishment include timing, consistency, appropriate intensity, and the presence of a reward after the undesirable behavior ends. This is the most frequently ignored part of treatment for people whose horses have behavior problems.
- Owners often resort to physical punishment as the first choice, but punishment does not need to be physical. *Furthermore, punishment is just as hard to use correctly as counterconditioning and desensitization. Punishment is never an “easy out” and has a high chance of failure. It can also lead to other negative consequences, such as increased fear or aggression.*

FIND A BETTER WAY

- If anyone is having trouble managing an undesirable behavior, our trainers will assist them to come up with a consistent and positive approach to teach the horse the expected behavior using positive approaches.
- If anyone is seen using punishment or harsh corrections, please intervene and refer them to the barn manager so we can give them additional training.
- Education and high expectations are what will create positive change.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

- There may be a time when you'll need to deal with an emergency.
- Emergency information and contact information is posted in the barn.

ACCIDENTS OR INJURIES

- If any person witnesses an accident or injury of any kind to a rider, handler guest, or animal, they must report it immediately to Stable management so that proper care and follow-up can be administered.
- All persons on Stable premises must follow posted emergency procedures.

POWER FAILURE

- In the event of a power failure, call the power company to report the power failure.
- The power to the fences will be down and the water pumps will not work.

FIRE

- Do not enter barn if it is in flames.
- 1. Do not attempt to move horses.
- 2. Evacuate people immediately.
- 3. Call 9-1-1.
- 4. Call emergency contacts.

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

- Fire extinguishers are hung throughout the barn and should be used only to help people escape.
- In case of fire, call 9-1-1 and evacuate the building immediately.
- Do not attempt to fight the fire yourself.
- Do not attempt to move horses. Evacuate the humans.

SEVERE WEATHER

- Monitor weather conditions.
- Severe weather shelter for people is identified in each barn.
- No one should leave the premises during a severe weather **WARNING**.
- No one should move or retrieve horses during severe weather **WARNINGS**.
- Do not attempt to bring horses into the barn during severe weather warnings or watches. They will be reluctant to come in and create a dangerous situation for themselves and for humans.
- They are well suited to weather and may be safer outside than inside during severe weather.

HUMAN INJURIES

- If the injured person is unconscious, bleeding severely or not breathing, call 9-1-1.
- Keep injured party comfortable and calm until help arrives.
- For minor injuries, administer First Aid.
- Call emergency barn contacts
- Complete incident report at www.thisoldhorse.com
- If a human is injured, a first report of injury for our insurance company is required. Contact the barn manager to get instructions for reporting.

HORSE INJURY OR ILLNESS

- Assess condition of horse and be prepared to describe behavior, symptoms and vitals to owner and vet
- Call Emergency Contacts, describe condition, ask for direction.
- **Serious wounds, severe bleeding, severe colic symptoms and choking are emergencies and the vet needs to be called even if the owner / manager cannot be reached immediately.**
- Complete a Change in Condition entry at www.thisoldhorse.com

PERILOUS SITUATION

- A horse in peril is loose, stuck, tangled or in danger and additional help is needed.
- Call 9-1-1 and explain the situation.
- Call emergency barn contacts and emergency vet if the horse appears to be injured.
- First responders are equipped with tools and equipment that can help extricate a horse from peril.

WATER SOURCES

- Horses need a constant supply of fresh, clean water that is neither too hot nor too cold-and they won't eat snow as a substitute.
- Our pastures have automatic waterers that provide a consistent water source. The pipes are buried below the frost line with electric supplemental heat that should keep them from freezing.
- The automatic waterers need to be checked at every feeding time.
- If any waterer fails, a stock tank should be placed in the pasture and filled from the hydrant.
- A tank heater should be placed in the tank if the weather is below freezing. Tank heaters are to be connected to extension cords that are then plugged into outlets in the barn.
- After filling the tanks, roll up the hoses and bring them back into the barn so they don't freeze.
- Remove hoses and manifolds (the "y" part of hydrant with spots for multiple hoses) from the hydrant so they don't freeze.
- If the water pipes inside the barn freeze, contact the barn manager.

QUARANTINE

- This Old Horse has quarantine procedures for newly admitted horses to assure they do not have a communicable infection.
- For most new admissions, there is a known health history and vaccination record and the quarantine period is limited.
- For horses who do not have a known health history, the quarantine period will be established by the veterinarian.

TRAILER LOADING AND UNLOADING

- Trailer transitions can be a stressful time for horses but also an interesting time for spectators excited to welcome a new horse or say goodbye to an old friend.
- In an abundance of caution, anyone not directly involved in the loading and unloading should stay clear and out of sight of the trailer until the loading and unloading is complete.

SECURITY

- Each barn has set hours of operation. In our private barn leases, our crews are allowed on the premises during their scheduled feed shifts or scheduled visits only.
- At our corporate barns (Wishbone and Phoenix) the hours are between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. daily.
- Exterior doors should be secured and locked when the barn is closed or when no one is there.
- Personal belongings should not be brought to the barn and owners are responsible for securing their tack and equipment. Parked cars should be locked.
- This Old Horse is not responsible for personal belongings stolen or missing from the barn or premises.

INFECTION CONTROL

- Horses can transmit infections between each other, and humans can transmit between horses and between barns by transmitting on boots, clothing and hands. If you visit more than one barn, you'll want to be aware of equine transmittable diseases and the proper techniques to avoid contagion.
- Disinfecting stations are near the entrances.
- If you are coming from another barn, please use the disinfecting station when entering and leaving the barn.
- If you typically visit more than one barn it is best to have individual sets of clothes and boots for each barn.
- If you have contact with horses outside of our barns, please do not wear the same boots, garments, outerwear or gloves to our barn.
- This applies to anyone entering the barn including staff, volunteers, boarders, vets, farriers, vendors and so on.

INFECTION CONTROL

- To avoid the possibility of exposure to contagions or contaminants from outside sources, please follow these infection control precautions.
- Disinfecting stations for hands and boots are located near the entrance. The disinfecting agent in the spray bottles is white vinegar.
- All visitors should enter through the main entrance and disinfect hands and boots before entering the stable area.
- There is no hand-treating or hand-feeding of horses.
- If you are in direct contact with horse saliva or nasal discharge, disinfect the contacted area again before coming in contact with another horse.
- Disinfect grooming tools before using them and in between horses.
- Disinfect bits before use. Do not share bits.

FIRST AID KIT

- Human first aid kits are located in the restroom. It also contains an eye wash bottle. If you use any supplies from the kit, notify the barn manager so it can be replaced.
- Bloodborne pathogen clean up kits are stored with the first aid kits and should be used for any spilled blood.

EQUINE FIRST AID SUPPLIES

- Horse first aid supplies are located in the in the feed room.
- Medications that must be temperature controlled are located in the lobby.