

## Rules for Safety in the Equestrian Sector

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### Objectives

In this analysis the evaluation of risks is essential to prevent any and every possible danger for operators' and riders' health and safety both on working, competitive and fun places. A detailed search of risk derives from the fact that the legislator implies that all the obligations contained in the norms in force has already been carried out, and therefore, to promote the improvement of safety, imposes to the employers to examine and to potentially intervene on all those possibly dangerous situations, not yet disciplined by specific norms of law. It is obvious that all the people who operate in the horse sector know safety rules, but these are often badly practised and therefore cause of frequent physical damages.

### Methods - Principal procedures of prevention

In this document we report the following 10 recommendations to minimize the risks to which workers and riders are exposed:

#### *1- Approach with the horse*

Going near the horse, it is necessary to speak to him, to call him, to look at him in his eyes. A good thing is to caress the animal as a light rubbing, avoiding the point of his nose. Check his expression before going near and be calm and concentrated, never be nervous. Make him understand what you are going to do and therefore learn how to interpret his temperament and his reactions. If the horse is tied up, make him look towards you.

#### *2- Grooming skills*

Before entering the horses' stall, wear a working overall, gloves and accident preventing shoes and check that the area in which you are working is clear from trash, old utensils and nails.

Enter in the stall with caution, avoiding to make rough movements or noises that could bother the horse. Go near to him from the front and caress him; fasten the leadropes to the headcollar and conduct the horse outside. Cross-tie the horse, fastening the headcollar to two appropriate chains with a rapid release knot. Then begin cleaning skills remaining on a side, even while brushing the tail: in this way if he kicks you will not be stroke with full strength. Do the same if you have to pass behind the animal. When hoofs must be cleaned, slowly lift one leg at a time, making your hand slide down from the hip to the legs and then to the foot. When you have finished all these operations, you can bring the horse back to his stall passing for first through the door. Once inside, move by a side and let him enter completely.

#### *3- Saddling the horse*

The first thing that must be done is to inspect both the horse and the saddle before saddling; verify in this way that all the buckles are sure, that the saddlecloth is clean as well as the horse's back and belly. Place the saddlecloth on the withers, making it slightly skid towards the back, smoothing the hair of the horse; make the saddle fit to the horse's back, without

letting it fall brusquely, with stirrups tied up. First fasten loosely the girth strap, then, after the saddle is well positioned, hook up all the accessories. Before sitting on the saddle, make the horse walk a bit. The girth must be checked three times: after having saddled, before mounting on the horse and after having the horse walked for a brief line.

#### *4 – How to put on the bridles*

Untie the horse, staying next to his head, just a little bit back and on his side, preferably on the left side, maintaining the control of the horse. Handle the horse's ears with care and watch out to not bump his teeth when putting on or pulling off the bite. Insert two fingers at the angle of the mouth, so the horse will open it. Verify that the bridles are worn correctly and check the bite before riding. The drawstring under the horse's throat should be settled so to be able to insert three fingers between the throat of the horse and the drawstring itself. The headcollar should be relatively tightened so to be able to insert only a finger between it and the nose of the horse. Never leave the horse eat while he is wearing bridles.

#### *5 – How to lead the horse from ground*

Always go near the horse from the front, calling him first and possibly caressing him on the neck, then fasten the leadrope to the halter. When leading the horse, walk on his side, between the head and the shoulder. Use a rather long leadrope and hold it with both hands; a good habit is to extend your right elbow and hold it slightly behind compared to the horse. If the horse comes too near, his shoulder will bump the elbow first and he will move over. Don't wind the leadrope or the reins around your hand, your wrist or any part of your body and don't drape it around the shoulders or the body. Jewels, rings, earrings or bracelets shouldn't be worn. Pay a lot of attention when leading the horse through a tight opening: get through quickly for first and then move on a side to make him pass too.

#### *6 – Mounting and dismounting*

Don't mount or dismount the horse near fences, trees or prominences in which you can remain trapped. Keep the horse still while you get on or off: to do this you have to have the control of his head with the reins. After dismounting, tie up the stirrups and bring the reins over the horse's head so to lead him easily.

#### *7- Riding*

When riding, wear appropriate boots and a protective helmet, which must be adherent and laced. Until you haven't got a feeling with the horse you are going to ride, it is better to stay inside a delimited area. If the horse gets frightened, it's important to stay calm, to talk to the horse with a quiet tone and give him the time to overcome his fear. It's a good habit to walk slowly where there is danger of slides or falls. When crossing roads with a lot of traffic, the horse should be conducted by hand and if riding along a road, stay on the edge with a distance equal to the length of the horse. In the last part of your ride, before the arrival, it is opportune to proceed with a slow step.

#### *8- Mucking litter from the stalls*

This operation must be carried out after the horse has been taken out of the stall. Wear overalls, gloves, accident preventing shoes and masks, especially those who suffer from allergies. In the initial phase the material used for the litter is withdrawn from specific storing zones, using proper mechanic means (pitchfork, tractor, wheelbarrow) and positioning it near the stalls. Then remove the dirt from the bedding with appropriate equipment and trying not to lift dust. The litter removed with shovel, pitchfork and plastic comb will be set inside containers positioned outside the stables (or in a ribbon conveyor). Proceed distributing with shovel and rake the new bedding material over the litter remained after cleaning. At the end of these operations, it's a good habit to brush the working garments and wash them with frequency, at least two times a week.

### 9 – Feeding inside the stalls

Always wear working overall, gloves and accident preventing shoes. In inside stalls, feed is withdrawn from silos or sacks and mixed with other components if necessary. During these operations, watch out for not inhaling feed's dusts. Subsequently, feed and hay are transported with a wheelbarrow or with a tractor provided with pitchfork and positioned near the stalls. Distribution of feed must be done remaining outside the stalls (if the structure is endowed with specific openings). If it is necessary to go inside the stall to feed the horse, follow meticulously paragraph 1.

### 10 – Feeding in paddocks

If feeding takes place in paddocks, after having withdrawn and prepared feed or hay, distribution will be done without immobilizing the horses. During these operations take care to not lift and inhale the dusts originated from moved materials. If lifting manually some loads, it is preferable not to move loads heavier than 25 kilos for man and 15 kilos for woman. The use of the mechanical equipments must be done in base of what described on use and maintenance manual of each equipment. Entering the paddock, we recommend caution, avoiding abrupt movements and excessive noises that could bother the horses.

## Results

The need to keenly reduce the risks of every activity that concerns the horse and the operators that work in this sector, is a fundamental aspect on which every form of safety control, worth this definition, founds itself. The rigorous and systematic application of the above specified procedures (mainly because they are simple, linear and therefore easily feasible) automatically gives place to a diminution of critical or dangerous situations and, side by side, the control of safety levels, both of the activities of the horse and of whom works in the horse sector, will be more easily realizable and it will always improve the quality of the life for both.

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