

## Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

Information guide – Rural industry

## 17. Horse riding

This fact sheet provides information on safe horse riding.

### Riders

- Develop a sound knowledge of horse behaviour and horse handling techniques.
- Plan ahead - consider safe work practices. Get assistance if necessary.
- Be suitably clothed - leather soled riding boots are designed to easily slip out of the stirrup in the case of an accident. Do not use boots that have been repaired with half soles. Jeans, jodhpurs or long trousers will prevent chafing and a hat will provide protection from the sun.
- A safety approved riding helmet that meets AS/NZS 3838, or equivalent, should be worn, particularly by inexperienced riders and children, or during high risk activities e.g. horse breaking, buck jumping events at rodeos, mustering in rough terrain, or when working in enclosed yards.
- Make use of aids - whips, spurs, breastplates, running rings, etc.
- Know your limitations and avoid riding horses which are likely to exploit those limitations.
- Concentrate and be alert –horses often react to sounds or things such as snakes or objects you may not be aware of.

### Equipment

- Keep bridles, bits, saddles and girths in good condition and fitted so the horse is comfortable - stirrup leathers, girth straps and surcingles should be well oiled and checked regularly.
- Stirrup irons should be strong enough not to collapse in the case of a horse falling. They should be comfortable to ride in and of a size that allows the foot to slip in and out freely without allowing it to be forced completely through. Safety stirrups are designed to enable a rider to get a foot free in the case of a mishap.
- Keep saddle cloths free from burrs and other foreign material.
- Horses vary in conformation, temperament, ability and in levels of training. Some require breastplates or cruppers to keep the saddle in place and running rings, nosebands or head checks to keep their head and neck in a position for easy control.

### Consider the horse

- Riders need to be very careful when galloping close to a horse. It is extremely dangerous to allow the horse to touch another horse behind the point of the shoulder. If this occurs, the horse can fall by touching another horse's hind legs or from another horse turning under the horse's neck.



- In stockyards, be careful riding under gate caps. Some are too low for horse and rider to pass under safely.
- High speed chases on horses can cause accidents - try and use alternative means to control stock.
- Extra care should be taken when riding in slippery or boggy conditions.
- Riders should be matched to horses within their handling capabilities. It is not advisable to persevere with horses which are likely to buck, bolt or become uncontrollable. Some tolerance is generally accepted during the breaking-in and early stages of training. Persistent offenders may need to be retrained or withdrawn.
- If a horse is likely to buck, it is best to saddle it and give it some exercise prior to mounting. This can be carried out in a number of ways, e.g. by lunging or leading it from another horse. The horse should then be mounted and ridden in a small yard before being ridden in an unconfined area.
- Cull horses that display poor temperament. Ensure horses are selected with good conformation and a good nature for your breeding program.
- If a horse is likely to bolt, it should first be ridden in a yard. If a horse bolts in an unconfined area, the rider should remain calm and gradually circle the horse by applying pressure to one rein until the horse comes under control.
- Riders should remain alert and in a position of control. Adjust equipment while on the ground.

RESPECT horses. They have the strength, speed and ability to cause injuries.

Be sure to:

- wear approved safety riding helmets and maintain that riding equipment is in good order
- know your limitations
- develop a good understanding of natural horse behaviour and horse handling techniques.

### **More information**

Further information is available from [www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au) or by calling the WHS Infoline on 1300 369 915.

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