



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from the First Lady.....	1
Overview.....	2
General safety.....	3
Barn aisle .....	4
Stalls.....	4
Barn organization and maintenance .....	5
Designated storage.....	5
Hay lofts .....	6
Barn allergies .....	6
Applying medications .....	6
Tying your horse safely.....	7
Grooming .....	7
Blanketing .....	8
Wash stall/bathing .....	9
Leading your horse .....	10
Fire safety .....	11
Emergency evacuation during natural disasters .....	13
Additional thoughts on barn safety.....	14
Saddle Up SAFELY Partners .....	16
Acknowledgements.....	17

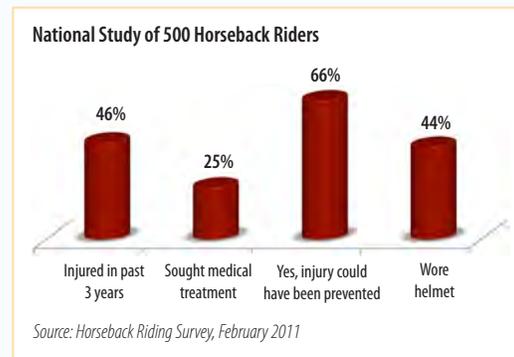


*Jane Beshear*

Dear Fellow Equine Enthusiasts,

As a lifelong equine enthusiast and First Lady of the Commonwealth, I understand the significance of the horse to Kentucky. We have long been known as the “Horse Capital of the World” and to ensure we retain this title we must focus on the health and welfare of horse and rider. This is why I am proud to support Saddle Up Safely, a rider safety awareness program sponsored by the University of Kentucky.

While most equine-related injuries are incurred while riding, many accidents take place in and around the barn or stable area. Daily chores such as leading, feeding or grooming can be the source of an injury when proper safety measures are not followed. Professional and amateur riders alike are susceptible to possible accidents that could be avoided by taking time to inspect equipment and review safety practices. Simple things such as forgetting to latch stall doors, practicing poor barn maintenance, and storing hay, grain and medication improperly can lead to unnecessary damage and injury to rider, horse and property.



As horsemen and women it is our responsibility to pay attention to our surroundings, not only for our own safety but also for the safety of the horse. Most of the barn accidents I have personally witnessed are a direct result of a lack of awareness and attention. I have seen riders talking on the phone while grooming, feeding or turning out, and this distraction has led to broken phones as well as broken toes and fingers.

These types of accidents are often avoidable. This booklet outlines potential causes of barn injuries and offers safety tips that will help you avoid harmful situations for you and your horse. Share your barn accident stories and safety precautions by going to [www.saddleupsafely.org](http://www.saddleupsafely.org). By sharing your barn safety practices you can help make a great sport safer and more enjoyable.

Sincerely,

Jane K. Beshear  
First Lady of the Commonwealth of Kentucky

## INTRODUCTION

While many people don't think of the barn as a dangerous place, about 30 percent of horse-related injuries are sustained on the ground, usually in and around the barn. Barn injuries can be sustained when horses kick, step on or push handlers. Though these injuries are often not as severe as those sustained while one is riding a horse, many lead to trips to the emergency room and hospitalization.

There are thousands of ways to be injured in the barn, and most of those injuries are preventable. In this booklet, we will examine some of the more important topics pertaining to barn safety.

*Note: In this booklet, when we refer to horses we also include ponies, donkeys and mules.*

Most horse riders have experienced or seen a barn injury. Even if you haven't been injured, it is likely you've had a close call that taught you to exercise more caution in the barn. Let us learn from your experiences. Share the story of your accident or near-accident as well as your safety tips by going to **[saddleupsafely.org](https://www.saddleupsafely.org)**.



## Overview

Most equine enthusiasts spend considerable time in a barn feeding, cleaning and interacting with a horse, and there are safe and unsafe ways to do so. This booklet provides an overview of safety tips you can use to reduce the likelihood of you and others becoming injured.



## General Safety

To ensure your personal safety, it is important for you to know and understand the rules specific to the barn you frequent as a boarder, visitor or employee. Always exercise caution when entering an unfamiliar barn by being alert and not touching anything. Avoid petting or feeding treats to horses without first obtaining permission because some horses do bite. Children should be supervised by knowledgeable adults, and you should leave pets at home.

Take precautions when working around horses. If you spend time around horses you should have an up-to-date tetanus vaccination in case of injury. Because horses are large animals and can be unpredictable, and because they may react quickly to sudden, unfamiliar sights and sounds, handlers and bystanders can become injured. Wearing a certified riding helmet, appropriate footwear (preferably sturdy boots) and gloves can help protect against injury. It is recommended that you carry an ICE (In Case of Emergency) card on your person when riding or handling horses. Saddle Up SAFELY has developed an ICE card for equestrians and one for each horse they own. Call 859-232-5508 and we will be happy to mail you a card. Or you may email us at [saddleupsafely@uky.edu](mailto:saddleupsafely@uky.edu).

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY	
RIDER INFORMATION	
	
PERSONAL INFORMATION	
Name:	<input type="text"/>
Address:	<input type="text"/>
Phone:	<input type="text"/>
To schedule an appointment call 1-800-333-8874.	
1/2189	

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY	
HORSE INFORMATION	
	
OWNER INFORMATION	
Name:	<input type="text"/>
Address:	<input type="text"/>
Phone:	<input type="text"/>
For extra copies of this card call 1-800-333-8874	
1/2189	

## Could this happen to you?

"I was turning out several horses at my barn. I started messing with the tail of a relatively new horse. Either she didn't like it or felt crowded by the other horses and kicked out with both hind legs.

Luckily I was standing close behind her or the impact would have been greater. My left lower leg was swollen for several weeks and I limped quite a bit."

*ADVICE: Don't play with a horse especially when loose horses are around. The handler should exercise caution and recruit assistance when introducing a horse to a new situation or a new and unfamiliar activity. Always let someone know you are headed to the barn if you are going alone, and carry a cell phone at all times. Switching the sound to vibrate or off position is recommended while around horses.*



## Barn aisle

Barn entrances and aisles are high-traffic areas and, therefore, need to be wide enough and free of clutter in order to provide a safe environment for horse and handler. Ideally, aisles need to be a minimum of 12 to 14 feet wide to accommodate two horses and handlers safely passing or a



horse being turned around. Ceilings need to be sufficiently high to reduce the risk of a rearing horse striking its head. Additionally, it is important to position light fixtures high enough and enclose them in protective cages to prevent horses from breaking bulbs, injuring themselves and causing a fire hazard. Non-slip floor surfaces reduce the risk of horses or people sliding and falling. Barn aisles should be free of clutter from farm utensils such as rakes, pitchforks, wheelbarrows, buckets and tack trunks. Ample lighting is essential to safely complete grooming; vet; and farrier-related activities inside the barn. Avoid using extension cords in the aisle as a horse can slice through the outer protective covering and shock itself, leading to a spook at best or an injury at worst. Riders should avoid being mounted in the barn or while passing through the doorways, overhangs and narrow doorways. Fold up racks for saddle and other tack so they are out of the way when not in use, and do not keep tack boxes in the aisle unless it is wide enough to accommodate them without impairing traffic.

## Stalls

Since you and your horse might spend a good deal of time in a stall, it is important to understand safety measures you can take while in the stall. Box stall size should be appropriate for the size of your horse – a box stall 12 feet by 12 feet is reasonable for the average sized horse. The stall should allow safe movement for horse and handler. While sliding doors are ideal as they don't obstruct an aisle when open, swinging doors are often used on stalls. An outward swing is preferred because with an inward swing there is less area for maneuvering the horse and the handler must take extra care when entering or exiting the stall. Windows made of

glass or even hard plastic must be protected by bars or horse-proof mesh (e.g. hardware cloth, rat wire). Keep in mind the type of feeders you will use as there can be a safety issue for horse and handler. Optimally, feeders that can be accessed from outside of the stall are the safest but always choose stall equipment that is sturdy, secure and has no sharp edges. When working in the stall with a horse, make sure you leave yourself an escape route as you might need to get out of the stall quickly. For this reason, never latch doors while you are in the stall working with your horse.

Air quality in a barn is directly affected by cleanliness. Dirty, urine-soaked stalls mean an abundance of ammonia, which causes respiratory problems for humans as well as horses. Clean stalls frequently. Commercial products are available to reduce ammonia levels after cleaning.



Routinely check the interior of the stall for hazards such as protruding nails and broken boards. If your stall barriers include horse-proof mesh, check it for broken welds and repair or replace the mesh. The walls should be of sufficient thickness and sturdiness to withstand a horse's kick. Check hay feeders and bucket holders to ensure

they are in good repair. Door latches should work easily and be "horse-proof" – not only free of sharp edges but also engineered to prevent escapes as some horses are very adept with their lips. Some barns have stalls with two exits, one into the barn aisle and one that opens to the outside. In the case of an emergency such as a barn fire, this set-up is desirable as it allows the handler to access the horse without having to enter the barn. Always have halters and lead ropes easily accessible in case of an emergency.



Post owner/veterinarian/farrier contact information as well as any pertinent information about the horse (e.g. insurance directives) outside your horse's stall. In the case of an emergency, having this information readily available can optimize communication and save precious time.

## Barn organization and maintenance

Cleanliness and tidiness can greatly enhance barn safety for both horses and humans. Everything in the barn should have a designated storage spot and should be kept there when not in use.

Sweep up spilled feed immediately to discourage rodents, which not only carry diseases but also can chew on tack, potentially making it unsafe. Birds and their droppings also can carry diseases, so discourage birds from taking up residence in the barn and remove any nests they build.

Be sure to remove items that could cause injury or illness. Sweep up nails following a farrier visit. Dispose of baling twine immediately upon opening hay bales so it doesn't become a tripping hazard for humans and horses, or horses won't inadvertently ingest it. Remove wasp nests and any poisonous plants or shrubs such as poison ivy and poison oak from the barn area.

Keep barn areas clear of dirt, urine, manure, bird droppings, etc., in order to reduce risk of disease. If possible use a power washer. Remove manure promptly and regularly from common areas including aisles and grooming and bath stalls, and deposit it in an area distant from the barn to help with fly and parasite control.

Establish a plan for fly and pest control since flies, mosquitoes and rodents are potential sources of disease. Follow directions on poison labels to avoid accidental poisoning of horses or pets. Sources of standing water, such as buckets, tubs and tires, need to be identified and eliminated since standing water attracts mosquitoes. Carcasses of dead animals need to be properly disposed.

It is easy to overlook how unhygienic and untidy a barn has become. For the safety of yourself, your staff and your horses, make barn cleanliness a high priority. Lack of barn cleanliness also contributes to fire safety and health issues.



Potentially hazardous barn aisle at left; an organized, sanitary barn at right.

## Designated storage areas

Areas need to be designated for the storage of barn tools, tack and feed. Barn tools, including rakes, pitchforks and brooms should be stored away from "high traffic areas." Avoid leaning tools against a wall in the barn aisle where they may be knocked over by a curious horse that can then spook and potentially injure its handler. Wheelbarrows and empty buckets should also be stored away from the aisles. Store all tack, including saddles and bridles, properly to minimize damage and ensure rider safety.

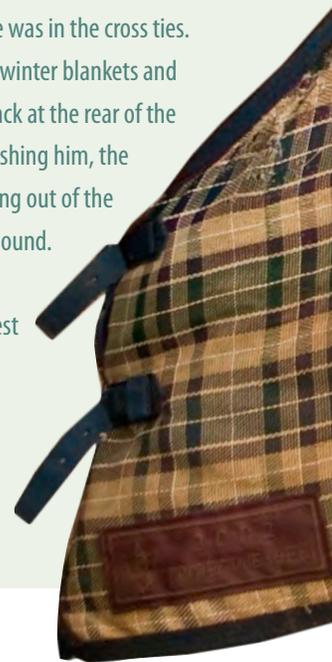
Store feed and supplements in secure, rodent-proof containers inaccessible to horses if they get loose and away from high-traffic areas. This will minimize unwanted horse behaviors including the risk of horses "dragging" their handlers to feed areas.



### Could this happen to you?

"I was kicked in the hip by my horse while he was in the cross ties. It was a very cold day and I had removed his winter blankets and stuffed them into the grates of his wall hayrack at the rear of the stall. I started to groom him and as I was brushing him, the blankets came loose from the hayrack, slipping out of the grates. When they fell they made a rustling sound. Immediately my horse cow-kicked me at the sound and hit me in the hip, breaking the crest of my hip bone. I had emergency surgery to repair the damage."

*ADVICE: Designate a safe place to hang blankets once removed from your horse.*



## Hay lofts

Some barns are equipped with hay lofts for storage. These can be very functional but they pose a few risks as well. If you must access the loft by a ladder, make sure it is properly secured and in good repair. When throwing hay bales down, be sure the area below is clear of horses and people. Hay bales are very heavy and will usually hit the ground with a loud thud that can startle horses. It is a good idea to alert people that you are throwing down hay so they are ready in case a horse startles. Also, if a finger or article of clothing gets caught in the baling twine, the momentum of the falling bale can pull you over the edge. It is better to place the bale at the edge of the loft and push it over. The risk of fires in hay lofts is covered later in this booklet.



## Barn allergies

Barns can be sources of common allergens, including pollen, dust, horse dander and mold spores. Talk to your doctor about allergy medication if you have a history of allergies as this may help you avoid a dangerous health situation.

Some actions you can take to minimize barn allergies include:

- 1) Take steps to improve ventilation in your barn and keep stalls and aisles clean to reduce the amount of allergens present.
- 2) Keep windows and large sliding doors open to maximize ventilation.
- 3) Select low-dust horse bedding such as wood shavings or pelleted bedding.
- 4) Purchase good-quality hay (avoid dusty or especially moldy hay).
- 5) Use a dust mask when cleaning. These are available at most hardware stores.



Dust mask



## Applying medications

Read medication labels prior to administering drugs to horses. Be sure to wash hands before and afterwards. Understand the purpose and effects of the medication and topical agents such as fly spray on horses and the potential adverse side effects to both handlers and horses.

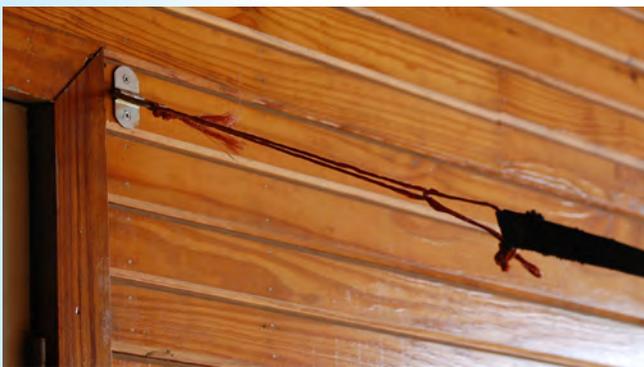
Keep all medical supplies in a locked cabinet or container and dispose of all used syringes and bandages properly. Syringes should be placed in approved containers and not in the general trash. Having all pertinent horse health/medication information on one card is helpful. Saddle Up SAFELY has developed an ICE card for riders and horses. Go to [www.saddleupsafely.org](http://www.saddleupsafely.org) to download a horse information card, or email us at [saddleup@uky.edu](mailto:saddleup@uky.edu) for a free card.



## Safely tying your horse

There are several safety considerations you should keep in mind when securing your mount to a solid object. A horse that is improperly tied can become injured or injure someone else.

- Use a rope or nylon lead instead of a lead shank that contains a chain.
- Tie a rope in a quick release knot or secure it to a breakaway device.
- Use natural baling twine as a breakaway device.
- Carry a pocket knife to help release a horse in an emergency.
- Tie a horse at a height no lower than the top of its shoulder.
- Tie to sturdy objects intended for this purpose. Barn or stall doors, gates, blanket bars, car doors or car mirrors, for example, are not intended to be used as a hitching post and thus may pose a danger to the horse and others.
- When placing a horse in cross ties, be sure the “quick-release” end of the cross ties are attached to a ring at the wall and not to the halter.
- Remove the lead rope on a cross-tied horse so he does not step on it and startle.
- If your horse does not stand tied, work with a professional.



One method of implementing a breakaway device for tying a horse is the use of natural baling twine.

## Grooming

- Taking time to care for and groom your horse daily, especially before a ride, helps you notice any scratches and injuries. Identifying these early will help prevent you from causing further physical harm. Also, a horse that is uncomfortable or in pain is more likely to cause further injury to himself or riders under saddle.
- For safety reasons, groom and bathe your safely tied horse in a sufficiently large area with a non-skid surface and good lighting. It's important that there be ample room to accommodate the person and the horse so the handler is less likely to be pinned against a wall by the horse. If you are not grooming your horse in a wash or grooming stall, tie him away from high-traffic areas such as barn or tack room entrances. To avoid potential harm to the handler or horse, the area should be free of clutter and/or equipment.
- Gather your grooming, bathing or riding equipment prior to tying or cross-tying your horse. Having these items easily accessible means you'll be less likely to leave the horse unattended.
- Never walk under your horse's neck when he's tied. Never kneel or sit on the ground or sit on an overturned bucket or chair while grooming or tending to your horse. If your horse were to startle and move quickly, such positions will not allow you to get out of the way fast enough; you could get knocked over or stepped on. Always stand or crouch so you can move quickly in such a scenario.
- Even though you may know your horse well, always remain alert when working around him as he may spook at something and kick out or attempt to bolt.
- Talk quietly to your horse as you move from side to side. It might be beneficial to keep a hand on your horse as you do, with the aim of helping the horse know where you are at all times.



## Blanketing

Placing any type of a blanket or sheet on a horse can present challenges to the handler and potentially place her in danger. The following suggestions can minimize this risk:



1



2



3

- 1)** If you are unsure whether a horse has been blanketed before or if he seems nervous about the sheet or blanket, have a person hold the horse rather than tying him. Make sure you are in an area where someone can control the horse safely. **2)** Assure that the blanket is in good repair and is the correct size for the horse. Make sure the horse has been groomed. Fold the blanket so it is easy to handle and so the straps/buckles are not dragging on the ground. **3)** Approach the horse, allowing him to smell and “inspect” the blanket.



4



5



6

- 4)** Move to the side of the horse in a position as if you were putting on the saddle, then place the still-folded blanket gently over the horse's back. **5)** If the horse remains calm, gradually unfold the blanket until it is in its correct position. **6)** Most blankets have two to three belly straps, a front closure and perhaps a tail/butt strap. While standing at the horse's shoulder, secure the front closures.



7



8



9

- 7)** Next, move to the horse's side and make sure the blanket is in the proper position on the horse. **8)** While standing at his side, reach under and grab the belly straps. These should be at a length to secure the blanket snugly to the horse but not so tight that you cannot place your fingers between the belly and the strap. Make adjustments if necessary. Never position yourself under the belly while reaching for or adjusting straps. If necessary, have another person stand on the other side of the horse and pass the straps under the belly to you so you can reach them safely. If the blanket has a tail/butt strap, stand at the horse's hip, lift the tail, reach for the strap and connect it to the appropriate fastener. **9)** If the blanket has rear leg straps, reach for these and attach them from beside his hip – do not stand directly behind the horse.



10

- 10)** If your horse is a blanket novice, walk him using a halter and lead shank into a safe area after blanket placement to judge his reaction to this new experience before turning him loose in his stall or field.

## Wash stall/bathing

- Aim to make a horse's first bath a pleasant experience. Gather a sponge, cloth, shampoo, scraper and hose. Take time to introduce a new or young horse to the wash area or wash stall. In order to minimize discomfort to the horse and potential harm to the handler, slowly accustom the horse to the flowing water and its temperature by applying water on his legs first. Continually check and adjust the water temperature as needed. Avoid spraying water directly at the horse's face and ears; these areas are usually best cleaned with small sponges or cloths.
- Wear proper footwear to avoid slipping in the wash area.
- A young or inexperienced horse will benefit from having a second person standing at his head.
- Just as for grooming, the ideal wash stall or wash area should be sufficiently large for you and your horse. It should be well-drained, have non-skid footing and should be as free of clutter as possible. It also helps to have safe storage for frequently used items.
- Avoid pulling the hose over or under the horse's body while using it, and do not leave the hose lying under or around the horse's feet. It can be both a startle and a safety hazard.



### Could this happen to you?

"I was grooming a horse when it was spooked by some loose dogs who were barking and running nearby, and the horse stomped my feet. I broke a toe on my right foot. I also broke an artery and had to have blood drained from beneath my toenail to relieve the pressure on my nerves. I couldn't wear a regular shoe on that foot for two months."

**Advice:** Know what is going on around you. Try to anticipate how your horse might respond.



## Leading your horse

Always use a correctly fitting halter and a lead rope when leading your horse. A halter that is too big will give you no control, while a halter that is too small will most likely pinch your horse's skin (causing discomfort and potentially poor behavior).

Never lead the horse by the halter alone (with no lead). Your hand could get caught if the horse tosses its head and/or spooks or bolts. Instead, when leading your horse, hold the lead close to the snap with your right hand while holding folded excess rope in your left hand. Never wrap or coil the lead rope around your hand because if the horse pulls, the rope could tighten around your hand and cause you to be dragged.

Always be aware of your surroundings and prepare for the unexpected. Every horse perceives situations differently and has the potential to react in unexpected ways. Use caution whenever you are leading a horse through an entranceway or doorway that is narrow. Some horses might try to "rush" through, causing injury to the handler.

Teach horses to respect the handler's space and lead quietly without pulling. Horses should "whoa" and stand when asked, and they must yield to pressure.

## Some tips for leading a horse

- Lead from the left side; most horses are accustomed to this practice.
- Ideally, when leading your horse, position yourself between the muzzle and the shoulder. Don't let the horse wander off, get too far in front of you (you could get kicked) or too far behind (you could get run over). Too much rope can allow your horse to gain momentum before you can regain control, and it could lead to him getting loose.
- Do not allow your horse to crowd you. If the horse starts moving in closer, apply pressure to his shoulder to get him to move over. As soon as he takes a step in the right direction, remove the pressure – this is his reward. If he does it again, repeat the process. Don't get impatient.
- When leading a horse by the bridle, always hold both reins in your right hand, near the bit, holding the excess in your left.
- When working around horses, always wear footwear that will protect your feet in case they are stepped on (avoid wearing sneakers or sandals).



## Fire safety

Barns contain a variety of flammable materials, so barn fires are quite common and can be devastating. Most stables are (or should be) well ventilated to promote horse health. Add a buildup of heat or a spark to the highly flammable, well-ventilated materials – from hay and beddings to wood and cobwebs – and a barn fire can easily ignite.

Following are suggestions for fire prevention and emergency management. Recommendations are not comprehensive and do not replace the need for professional consultation. It is gravely important to seek professional advice from a fire safety expert when planning and implementing your fire safety plan.

## Fire prevention/safety tips

- Post signs and enforce a no-smoking policy.
- Remove brush, mulch and other combustibles from around the barn.
- Frequently clear cobwebs from walls, rafters, light fixtures, electrical devices, etc.
- Store hay and bedding in a separate building set away from the stable.
- Store combustibles and machinery in a separate building away from both the stable and hay/bedding storage.
- Properly install electrical wiring with covered GFI (Ground Fault Interrupter) outlets, caged lights and conduit-encased wires. All electrical circuit panels should have closing and latching doors.
- Use heavy-duty extension cords with three-prong plugs that include the ground.
- Do not plug multiple extension cords together to obtain desired length but use one cord for the required length needed. Remove extension cords that have frayed plugs or have cuts in the external rubber-insulated sheathing.
- Avoid overloading electrical outlets and breakers. Do not plug in any more cords than the outlets have, i.e. a two-gang outlet for two cords and a four-gang outlet for four cords.
- If employing heat lamps, use infrared bulbs that have auto shut off when turned over.
- Do not use equipment with faulty or old wiring.
- Do not leave electrical devices running unattended.
- Do not leave gas or propane devices running unattended.
- Mount properly grounded lightning rods on the barn roof.
- Make sure your fire department knows your barn location.



## Be prepared

- Keep horse owner/user emergency contact and medical information in an easily accessible location.
- Post fire and emergency phone numbers.
- Post the barn's physical address and any special driving instructions to give to first responders during an emergency call.
- Stock and maintain a human first-aid kit and post its location.
- Stock and maintain a horse first-aid kit (the barn or stable will usually supply this or individual horse owners might have their own) and post its location.

## Have an emergency plan

- Design an emergency evacuation plan in case of a barn fire, designating a particular meeting area.
- Designate paddocks and space well away from the barn (several hundred feet or more) for housing horses temporarily during fire or other stable evacuations.
- Review fire safety and evacuation plans with your family and employees and practice them.
- Ensure every stabled horse has a halter (that fits) and attached lead rope hanging by the stall. Leather is preferable as it will break away in an emergency and a nylon halter will melt when exposed to extreme heat.



## No smoking

There is no place for smoking in or near a barn. Post “no smoking” signs and enforce a strict no-smoking policy.



## Fire extinguishers

Your barn should have fire extinguishers beside each exit, next to the electrical utility box and at roughly 30-40 foot intervals throughout. There are different types of extinguishers designed for a variety of fire types (electrical, ordinary combustible, liquid combustible). Experts recommend ABC extinguishers, which are considered general purpose, for stables.

Make sure a licensed professional inspects and recharges extinguishers annually. If you and others at your barn do not know how to use a fire extinguisher, seek training. Check with your local fire department for course offerings near you.

A water supply at the outside of the barn is a must for fire fighters. Installing water faucets at the outside of both ends of a stable is highly recommended.



## Electrical devices

Professionals should install and inspect all electrical wiring, positioning it well out of reach of horses. Again, ensure electricians encase wiring in conduit throughout the barn. The electrical box should be installed away from the barn exits to protect it from the elements and somewhere a horse is not likely to access it. Covered GFI (ground fault interrupter) electrical outlets are safest for barn use. Cages for light bulbs are important for fire-prevention reasons or use light bulbs designed for barn use, keeping them free of debris. Unplug electrical equipment and store it properly when not in use. Inspect fans, clippers, blowers and other electric equipment regularly, and clean them with compressed air to remove dust and debris.



## Fire evacuation procedures

Human safety must be your top priority; ensure your safety and that of others in all fire situations before attending to the animals. Be sure to follow firefighters' instructions at all times. Once they say it's safe to enter the barn:

- Remove the horses closest to the exit first.
- Handle horses one at a time.
- Lead the horses from the barn into the designated paddock.
- Maintain control of each horse until it is secured in the designated holding area. Avoid letting them run loose in the barn area/outside pasture because loose horses are likely to re-enter the barn.
- If at all possible, keep horses pastured in groups.

## Article: "Preventing Barn Fires: Tips for Horse Owners"

Link: [www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/asc/asc184/asc184.pdf](http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/asc/asc184/asc184.pdf)

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE - UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, LEXINGTON, KY, 40546  
ASC-184

**UK**  
UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY  
College of Agriculture

### Preventing Barn Fire: Tips for Horse Owners

*Fernanda Canargo, Animal and Food Sciences, and Essie Rogers, Kentucky Horse Council*

Every year, close to 200 horses are reported to have died in barn fires in the United States. Although less frequent than house fires, barn fires are more common than we would like. Many barn fires could be prevented by good barn design/construction, strict personnel policies, and clear directives about how the barn and equipment should be maintained. Horse stables should be well-ventilated. Hay, straw, shavings, cobwebs, and wood are highly flammable. Add a bit of heat or a spark to that highly flammable, well-ventilated material, and a barn fire can easily happen.

Common reasons these barn fires start include smoking inside the barn (bedding materials, wooden structures, and hay are all fuel for fire), spontaneous combustion of hay improperly cured before storage, lightning - sparks from live electrical wires, and circuit breaker sparks during or after storms.

In case of barn fire, horses ideally will be outside the barn, but that does not always happen. So it is important to learn how to fireproof your barn. Be proactive and start implementing new routines before a fire happens.

The following are suggestions for fire prevention and emergency management. They may not cover every situation, so it's highly recommended that you seek advice from a fire safety expert as you develop your fire safety plan.

**Have a Plan**

- Post fire and emergency numbers in prominent locations in the barn or by the barn phone.
- Post in prominent locations in the barn or next to the barn phone, the barn's physical address and any special driving directions that emergency responders might need.
- Post other emergency contact information in a convenient, prominent location.

**Barn aisles should be kept uncluttered.**



**Designate paddocks away from the barn (several hundred feet or more) where horses can be temporarily housed in case of fire or any other emergency stable evacuations.**

**Teach your family and employees the fire procedure for your facility.**

**Make sure every stabled horse has a halter (that fits) hanging on the stall door with lead rope attached. Leather is preferable; a nylon halter will melt in heat. Consider marking each halter with glow-in-the-dark paint or reflectors.**

**Electric outlets should be kept clean of cobweb and other debris.**



**Light bulbs should be caged to prevent fire.**



UKAg  
Agriculture and Natural Resources • Family and Consumer Sciences • 4-H Youth Development • Community and Economic Development

HORSE INFORMATION		
Registered Name:		
Barn Name:		
Gender:	Color:	Markings:
EMERGENCY CONTACTS WITH LEGAL AUTHORITY REGARDING HORSE		
Name:		Name:
Address:		Address:
Phone:		Phone:
VETERINARIAN / MEDICAL INFORMATION		
Vet #1:		Phone:
Vet #2:		Phone:
Stable Manager:		Phone:
Farrier:		Phone:
Insurance Company:		
Insurance Agent:		Phone:
Major Medical Problems/Medications and Dose:		

EMERGENCY CONTACTS	
Name:	Name:
Address:	Address:
Phone:	Phone:
DOCTORS	
Family Doctor:	
Phone:	
Doctor (Specialist):	
Phone:	
Pharmacy:	
Doctor (Specialist):	
Phone:	
Last Update:	

MEDICAL INFORMATION	
Allergies:	Current Major Health Problems:
Medications and Doses/Medical Devices:	
Blood Type:	
Advance Directive / Living Will:	
Insurance:	Plan ID:
Pharmacy:	Phone:
Last Updated:	On anticoagulants (blood thinners):
	Y N

## Emergency evacuation during natural disasters

As with barn fires, you will need to develop an emergency evacuation plan to employ during natural disasters. Your plan will vary depending upon the type of disaster; make a plan for each type of natural disaster possible in your area (flood, tornado, hurricane, wildfire, etc.). Periodically practice each evacuation plan with horse owners and staff.

Anytime you evacuate, take your horse's health and ownership records with you. This will help you prove that you own the horse and confirm that he is properly tested and vaccinated. Thus, those documents should be kept organized and readily accessible.

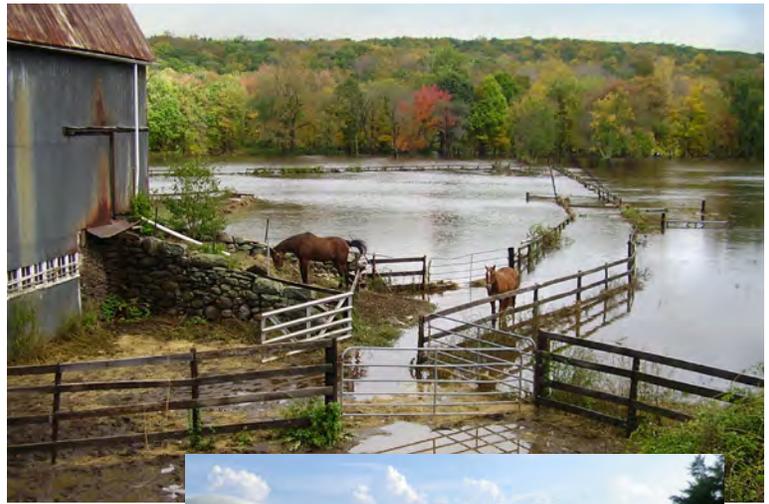
If leaving animals behind at the farm or turning them loose during a natural disaster, it is important to ensure they are marked with clear identification. Many owners place permanent identification tags, including owner contact information, on the horse's halter or neck straps. Realize that a halter can come off a horse easily in disaster situations, so consider taking steps now (before disaster strikes) to identify your horse via methods such as microchipping, tattoos, brands or iris scans. If you have to leave your horse behind when evacuating, you might also elect to use livestock-marking crayons to write your phone number on the horse's body.

Provide horses left at your property during evacuation enough water and forage to last 48-72 hours. Leave your contact information and instructions for their care somewhere obvious at the barn so that emergency workers and/or volunteers can care for them while you are away.

It is vitally important to remain calm while evacuating your horse. Your own safety is your first priority. If at all possible, evacuate before the disaster strikes. First ensure you have somewhere safe to take the horse. Pack enough hay and water to provide for the horse's care for 48-72 hours. Follow the plan you established previously and work methodically through the process. Making sure your horse is properly trained to trailer-load well in advance of any emergency is critical for successful evacuation.

Often during a natural disaster, officials establish livestock evacuation centers. Talk with your emergency planning officer(s) before disaster strikes so you are ready.

Practice loading your horse several times a year so there are no needless delays or panicked horses in a situation where every second counts.



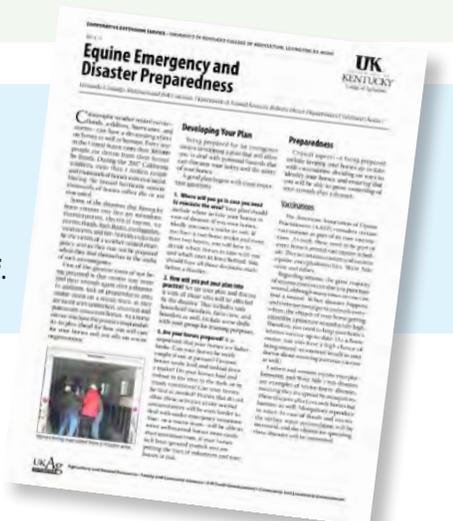
## Additional thoughts on barn safety

Each barn should have rules that are posted and enforced. Always post your state's farm or equine animal liability law and barn rules in readily visible areas, such as at each barn and arena entrance. In most states, if these signs are not posted you are not covered from inherent risk.

Obtain permission before bringing a dog to a barn. A loose dog running through a barn is hazardous and unsafe. It is best practice to leave dogs at home. If you must bring a dog to a barn, it should be kept on a leash to avoid spooking horses.

Position light switches and fire extinguishers near entrances. Keep a flashlight in the barn, especially during winter months. Change lightbulbs and flashlight batteries during the fall in preparation for winter.

For more information on emergency procedures:  
[www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/id/id173/id173.pdf](http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/id/id173/id173.pdf).



## Purpose of Saddle Up SAFELY

Saddle Up SAFELY is a coalition of 40-plus medical, public health, educational, retail and horse organizations from the United States and Canada led by University of Kentucky's UK HealthCare and UK College of Agriculture Equine Initiative. SUS is actively supported by the U.S Pony Clubs, Certified Horsemanship Association and the Kentucky 4H Horse Clubs. Saddle Up SAFELY goals are to: 1) raise awareness and understanding of rider/handler safety; 2) reduce the number and severity of horse-related injuries; and 3) encourage injured riders to return to the sport safely.

## Resources available

Saddle Up SAFELY offers a number of brochures on its website at [saddleupsafely.org](http://saddleupsafely.org). In addition, you can find an online safety quiz, expert columns and safety blog by Dr. Fernanda Camargo. You can also find us on Facebook. Perhaps the most valuable resource is the collection of more than 300 safety tips offered by our website visitors. We encourage anyone who has been injured to share their story and the advice they would give others to avoid or reduce the severity of a similar accident or injury.



If you have been injured or have caught a disease from being around horses, tell us about how it happened and how it might have been prevented by going to [saddleupSAFELY.org](http://saddleupSAFELY.org) and using the advice/tip registry.

Brochures available online at [SaddleUpSAFELY.org](http://SaddleUpSAFELY.org) or call **859-257-1000** or toll-free **1-800-333-8874**.

## How to reach us

**Saddle Up SAFELY**  
**2333 Alumni Park Plaza, Suite 300**  
**Lexington KY 40517**

Email Us: [saddleup@uky.edu](mailto:saddleup@uky.edu)  
 Facebook us: [www.facebook.com/pages/saddleupsafely](http://www.facebook.com/pages/saddleupsafely)  
 Phone: **859-257-1000** or toll-free **1-800-333-8874** / Fax: **859-257-5509**

## SADDLE UP SAFELY PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Alltech	Medtronics Inc.
Ariat International Inc.	Mid-East Kentucky Quarter Horse Association
Brain Injury Alliance of Kentucky	National Thoroughbred Racing Alliance
Brumfield Hay and Grain Co.	North American Racing Academy
Buffalo Trace Mounted Patrol	Northern Kentucky Horse Network LLC
Cardinal Hill Healthcare System	Ohio Quarter Horse Association
Certified Horsemanship Association	Pegasus Helmets
CMD Health	PHI Air Medical of Kentucky
DiscoverHorses.com	Point Two Air Jackets USA
Equine Guelph	Red Bay Group LLC
Equestrian Medical Safety Association	Rood & Riddle Equine Hospital
Folck Insurance	Safe Kids Fayette County
TheHorse.com	Troxel Helmets
Jockey's Guild	UK College of Agriculture Equine Initiative
Junior League of Lexington	UK College of Public Health
Keeneland	UK Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation
Kentucky 4-H Horse Program	UK Psychiatry
Kentucky Department for Public Health	UK HealthCare
Kentucky Equine Education Project	UK Spinal Cord and Brain Injury Research Center (SCoBIRC)
Kentucky Horse Council	United States Pony Club Inc.
Kentucky Horse Park	United States Dressage Federation
Kentucky Horseshoeing School	United States Equestrian Federation
Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center	US Rider Equestrian Motor Plan
The Lane Report	Welch Printing Company
Lexington Herald-Leader	

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication was developed by the Saddle Up SAFELY Auxiliary. Extra thanks to those with an asterisk next to their name for writing a section(s).

Polly Haselton Barger*	Amy Lawyer*
Karen Branham	Toma Matott*
Fernanda Camargo*	Carol Noriega
Joan Darbee*	Beth Taylor*
Ann Emmerson	Linda Truscott*
Pamela Florence	Holly Wiemers
Connie Jehlik*	Doreen Yanssens*
Doreen Jezek*	

Editorial review was provided by a number of individuals including Debbie Stanitski, Carl Stanitski and Bob Coleman. Special thanks to the Saddle Up SAFELY Steering Committee and the Saddle Up SAFELY National E-Advisory Group for their input and to Stephanie Church of TheHorse.com for her final review and editing.

*Many thanks to the following for their invaluable photographic contributions to this publication: Joan Darbee (p. 5 lower left, upper right; p. 14 left); TheHorse.com (p. 7 lower left and right; p. 9 lower left, upper right; p. 10 center and right); StockImageServices.com (p. 8 spread); United States Pony Club Inc. (p. 10 lower left); Savanna Farm (p. 4 lower right).*

“As an Olympic athlete, I take my sport seriously, and when it comes to safety, I take my equipment very seriously. I never get on my horse without a helmet”.

– Ann Kursinski  
*U.S. Olympic Medalist, Jumping*

*Information in this booklet developed by*

University of Kentucky

---

UK HealthCare

---

UK College of Agriculture  
Equine Initiative

---

UK College of Medicine

---

UK College of Public Health



**saddleupSAFELY.org**