**Need to Know**

**How to restrain a horse**

There are many different methods of physical and chemical restraint that are used to avoid injury of both horses and people. Restraints are used to supplement control obtained from the halter. Methods should temporarily decrease the desire of the horse to react aggressively or attempt to escape without causing any adverse after effects. If used properly, dangerous situations that cause injury to people and horses can be avoided with simple, effective restraint methods.

Any restraint method used to assist normal management or treatment of the horse should be the most mild and effective method available, and should be applied for the minimum amount of time necessary to carry out the task.

**DO YOU KNOW**

that restraint of a horse should always be managed by a professional or experienced and trained handler.

**KNOW WHEN VETERINARY SERVICES SHOULD BE INVOLVED**

Many veterinary medical procedures require chemical restraint. A licensed veterinarian should direct the use of tranquilizers and other drugs, as side effects can be harmful to the horse. Also, horses under the influence of medication respond differently than normal. Anyone who handles medicated horses should receive specialized training.

Leg hobbles of one design or another are used to raise legs for veterinary treatment or inspection. Additionally, hobbles are used to restrain horses from vices such as pawing and kicking. Hand, chain or rope nose twitches have proven effective for temporary restraint of unruly horses.

Unless all other methods have failed, avoid twisting or pulling on a horse’s ear to restrain a horse. This practice causes horses to be head shy and resist future handling of the ears.

Training should be received before attempting to use hobbles so they are used effectively and safely. One piece of equipment that is recommended for all horse operations is an examination stock.

Need To Know: How to restrain a horse

What does the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines say about handling and restraint equipment?

Equipment used for restraint and handling should be effective without causing stress to the horse and should be designed for maximum safety of the handler and horse. Any restraint method used to assist normal management or treatment of the horse should be the most mild and effective method available, and should be applied for the minimum amount of time necessary to carry out the task.

A halter and lead rope is the most common form of restraint. Generally, the safest knots are those that can be quickly untied even if the horse has pulled on it. When used by knowledgeable handlers, other acceptable forms of restraint include hobbles, twitches, lead chains, stocks and chutes.

Tethering is a form of restraint that brings a high risk of injury to horses unless used correctly. For the purpose of this Code, tethering means attaching a long rope or chain to the halter or leg hobble so the horse can graze. Tethering does not refer to tie stalls or briefly tying a horse to a fixed object.

The following requirements are identified in the Code of Practice.

Corrective action must be taken if restraint devices or equipment cause injury to horses.

Tethering must not cause injury and must only be used if the horse is under supervision. The person applying the tether must be knowledgeable in its use.

Electric cattle prods must not be used for the routine movement or handling of horses on-farm or during loading/unloading. Discretion must be used in an individual extreme situation when animal or human safety is at immediate risk, but prods must never be used repeatedly or used on the face, anus or reproductive organs of horses.

These recommended practices are also provided in the Code of Practice.

a. Use properly designed and maintained restraint devices in the manner they were intended to be used.

b. Do not turn horses loose in a pasture or stall with a halter on unless the halter has a break-away design.

c. Ensure the handling equipment is engineered to minimize noise. Loud noises are disturbing to horses.

d. Ensure chutes used to restrain horses have break-out walls to assist horses that go down during handling.

Excerpts from the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines (©2013) have been used with permission, Equine Canada and the National Farm Animal Care Council. www.nfacc.ca/pdfs/codes/equine_code_of_practice.pdf

The process for the development of Codes can be accessed through the National Farm Animal Care Council at www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice.