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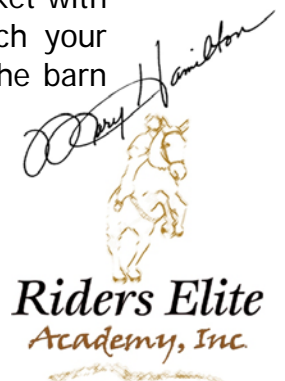
"Loose Horse!"

Nothing incites panic in a horse person like the shout, "Loose Horse!" Images of dangling limbs from wire cuts or a loose horse running across a busy road flash through our mind. What is the best way to catch a loose horse? Here are some tips and techniques to catch a loose horse as quickly and safely as possible.

Your personal safety is paramount. Loose horses are excited, unpredictable and may be dangerous. That docile trail horse can run over you in a frightened spook. If you are in his path, raise your arms and slap your sides, make some noise to make your horse aware of your presence. Don't assume because you are standing there, your horse will stop for you. If necessary, get out of it's way.

Horses are easier to herd than they are to catch. The harder you chase your loose horse the faster and farther he will run. If you live near a busy road, block their path by staying between them and the road to prevent a bad situation from becoming even worse. Now is the time to think and act calmly. Get some help if it's available. This task is a lot easier with more than one person. Instead of chasing your horse further and further from the barn, open his stall door or an empty paddock (a place of comfort and safety). Carefully, get in front of your horse, Speak firmly but quietly. As mad as you may be, this is not the time to yell at an already excited horse. Slowly and calmly, herd them back toward the barn. Move them in the direction of their stall or your open paddock gate. Once inside, close the gate and you now have your horse in a contained area.

If your loose horse is halterless, grab a halter, lead rope and a feed bucket with a little grain in it. (Your emergency loose horse kit). Even if you catch your horse, without these tools it will be very difficult to lead them back to the barn safely.





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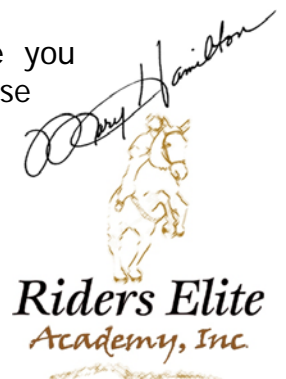
Remember; quiet a frightened horse by using a slow, calm voice. Say the words, "Easy" or "Whoa" as you slowly approach. Remember to look at your horse's shoulder not directly in his eye. (Direct eye contact is aggressive horse body language, challenging him. He may run away instead of standing for you to approach him). Shake your grain bucket to encourage his interest. Food is a great motivator for a horse. Reach out and offer the grain bucket for them to eat out of. Slide your lead rope around your horse's neck as he eats out of the bucket. Clip the snap of the lead rope around itself so you have a secure loop you can handle with one hand. Put the halter you carried with you on your horse. Then clip the lead rope to the halter ring and walk back to the barn. If the horse is jittery it helps to walk them in circles in the direction of the barn as it helps them get their nervous energy out in a safe way.

What if more than one horse is loose/ I'd recommend trying to catch the "Leader" of the herd first. Often caught and calmed, the other horses will follow their leader back to the barn.

Whenever you have a loose horse, be very alert to all that is around you. For example if there are children near by, get their attention and get them to move out of the way quickly. They may not realize the danger of a loose horse. Are there dogs or other animals around? If possible, have others remove them as a barking dog can escalate the situation.

That loose horse is not only your responsibility but also your liability. If it damages other people property or injures someone, you will be held responsible. The best way to prevent a loose horse scenario is to be vigilant about the following:

- Eyeball your fence lines daily, are they in good repair, especially check your steel fence posts as they have a tendency to rust at ground level, become weakened, and even snap off over time
- Check your gate chains, latches, posts and hinges, if they are loose you can be sure it is only a matter of time before you have a loose horse





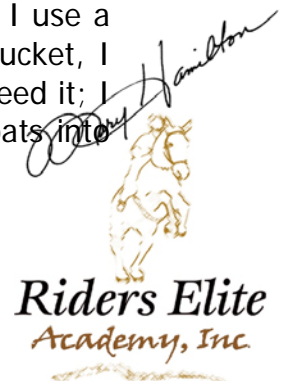
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- Check your halters, are they too loose? Wearing out? Replace them immediately
- Use a halter and lead rope when leading your horse, don't take unnecessary chances such as leading your horse with a lead rope around its neck without a halter
- If folks on your property have a tendency to leave gates open, put signs spray paint the gates red or some other color to help remind people to close the gate!
- Sometimes double gates are necessary in situations where you have heavy traffic in and out of a paddock or fenced area. There are many ways to create walkthroughs for humans that minimize the need to open gates.
- When integrating a new horse into your herd, do so over time instead of just putting him in the pasture with all the other horses
- Be aware that portable fencing is a wonderful convenience but it is not designed to contain a horse for any length of time, never put a horse in such temporary fencing without a halter, and keep the horse under your vigilant surveillance at all times
- Overall, minimize the risks, prepare and plan for the unexpected, show others what to and not to do, and you will likely never experience the terror of the call "Loose Horse"!

Emergency Loose Horse kit contents:

- Plastic gallon ice cream bucket with cover and handle
- Halter
- Lead rope
- Plastic sandwich baggie containing oats

Another solid strategy is to keep a loose horse emergency kit ready to go in your barn. I carry an emergency horse catching kit in my squad car as well. I use a plastic gallon ice cream bucket with a cover and a handle. Inside the bucket, I store a halter, lead rope and a sandwich baggie full of oats. Any time I need it; I open the bucket, remove the halter and lead rope. Then I empty the oats into





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the ice cream bucket and I have my own portable grain bucket. This emergency loose horse kit could save valuable time.

Minimize the inconvenience, liability and potential for injury, of a loose horse by these common sense steps. Regularly inspect your fences to ensure they are safe, strong and functional. Use a halter *and* lead rope when leading your horse. Don't take short cuts like leading the horse by the halter or looping the lead rope around it's neck.

Police Story

I arrived at work and was told by my sergeant I had a "ride along" scheduled that day. A writer for a local paper was to shadow me on horseback to see what a mounted police officer did on a daily basis, and then write an article about it. I was not thrilled with this idea. Nevertheless, I was assured the writer was an avid horse rider and because the sergeant said so.

I selected "Ace" for the writer's mount. Ace was old and had a nice flat trot you could sit for hours. He was the perfect horse, quiet and not too tall only 15 hands. I groomed Ace and waited for the writer to arrive.

He was an hour late. His name was Jerry and he was full of enthusiasm. "I've ridden for years, I used to be a trainer, I've ridden this event and that event". I thought to myself, "oohh a real horse expert. This was going to be a long day." I pointed to the saddle and said, "there's your saddle". I pointed to Ace and said, "there's your horse."

I saddled my horse and waited for Jerry. He slung a camera around his neck, placed a tape recorder in his pocket and held a notebook pad in his hand. As he mounted Ace, the saddle slipped sideways. Jerry seemed to hang there, askew, unsure of what to do next. Ace began bucking and the saddle slipped completely under his belly. Jerry was catapulted into the air. "Smash" went his camera. "Smash" went his tape recorder. Ace, this twenty five year old horse jumped the paddock fence and galloped toward County Road 50. "Loose Horse!" I caught Ace and Jerry wasn't injured. However, the interview was over.

