

## HORSE SENSE SAFETY RULES

### BASIC RULES FOR SAFETY WHEN WORKING WITH HOPE THERAPEUTIC RIDING PROGRAM HORSES

- 1 Understand that equine-assisted activities involving working with, on and around horses is inherently risky and can be dangerous. All the more reason to know how to be SAFER!
- 2 Students **MUST ALWAYS** wear a helmet when working on or around horses!
- 3 Unless deemed fully independent, students **MUST** wait for a Volunteer to be with them before entering a horse's stall or approaching a tied horse.
- 4 **ALWAYS WALK**; do not run when working with horses.
- 5 Never approach a horse directly from the rear! A horse cannot see back there and is more easily startled and may resort to a "Kick first, ask questions later" approach. ☹ It is better to walk towards the shoulder and neck.
- 6 Always speak to the horse before approaching or touching him. Let the horse know you are not there to hurt him and wait for him to accept you. ☺
- 7 After he accepts your presence, keep a hand on his body as you walk around him and talk reassuringly to him. ☺
- 8 **NEVER** tie a horse using the reins and bridle! If you have to tie him, use a quick-release knot, ground tie or simply wrap the lead rope attached to his halter around the hitching post.
- 9 Traditionally, you lead from the left side, placing your inside hand about 12 to 18 inches from the halter. Keep the excess lead rope folded, never wrapped, in your outside hand. Be careful not to let the rope drag on the ground to avoid you or the horse tripping on it. Learn to lead from both sides.
- 10 When leading, place yourself between the horse's head and shoulder. **NEVER** get in front of the horse and try to pull him. You will lose that tug-o'-war!
- 11 When leading, Volunteers always stay between the student and the horse, unless otherwise directed by the instructor.
- 12 **NEVER** yank or jerk the horse's halter or lead rope! Use gentle 'pressure and release' commands. Remember, some of our HOPE horses may be a bit elderly and need more time to react.
- 13 Keep at least two (2) horse lengths between your horse and the next. To increase the distance either slow down, stop, make a short circle towards the inside of the arena, or safely cut across the arena and then get back on the rail.
- 14 If the horse pulls backward, step back with him rather than pulling against him. He will usually be ready to go forward again, since you have acknowledged his need. Also, look around. He may have seen something of concern that you had not noticed.