

Containment of Horses

Free-roaming horses band together naturally and move as a group. Many horses allow themselves to be caught, especially if they are encouraged by the offer of grain. A horse usually can be caught by placing a rope loosely around its neck and fitting a halter. If a large group of horses cannot be caught, the animals should be rounded up in smaller groups and corralled in smaller confinements. If the horses cannot be caught at all and have not suffered any obvious injuries, they can be kept fenced in and fed without further human contact. Horses that are injured badly enough to need emergency treatment can usually be caught.

When horses are moved into unfamiliar environments, they should be allowed time to investigate the new surroundings. Not all horses are familiar with being tied to a stationary object. If horses are tied, a quick-release knot must be used. Horses should be tied only to solid objects because they can easily pull down an entire fence that has unstable posts.

The fencing material in paddocks for horses should be free of projections. Barbed wire is not a suitable fencing material for horses. Many horses have been kept only in wooden fenced paddocks. If wire (including electric) fencing is used to confine horses in an emergency, colorful ties should be placed on the top wire every 6 to 10 feet.

Most horses get along well, but when horses that are unfamiliar with one another are mixed for the first time, they should be supervised until they have established their own hierarchy. If the stocking density is too high, hierarchical struggles may continue and horses can become violent toward one another and toward humans, resulting in serious injury.