

***** PLEASE READ *****

A reminder on safe harnessing and hitching

We all can become complacent at times as we think we know our animals so well. However, things can happen when we are away from our normal venue so I thought it would be a good time to reiterate some safety measures. Note this is for the single horse.

Note: Never hitch to a carriage before your horse is bridled and the lines are attached so you have control of the horse.

1. When harnessing our horses one should always have the horse tied/held by the halter and lead rope or with a neck rope.
2. Harness in the same order that you do at home as horses like consistency. If using a collar set up then the order normally is collar, hames, saddle, breeching, traces, bridle, lines (reins). If using a breast collar setup the order normally is breast collar, saddle, breeching, traces, bridle, lines (reins). Sometimes the traces are already attached to the hames or the breast collar so they would go on at the same time as either the hames or breast collar.
3. The bridle should always have the lines (reins) attached as soon as possible so that one has some control over the horse if the horse should get excited or nervous. Check to make sure that lines (reins) go through the correct terrets as sometime one could be missed and that can cause an accident.
4. With someone at the head of the horse holding the lines (reins) and possibly the neck rope or the horse tied by a neck rope or over-halter, one can now bring the vehicle up to the horse for hitching. As soon as the shafts are at the side of the horse they should be put through the tugs then immediately take the traces and attach them to the vehicle so that at least the vehicle is held onto the horse should it get excited.
5. Attach the holdbacks and wraps (if your harness has these) next so that the vehicle is attached to the horse now.
6. Check the girth to make sure it secured tight enough so that it will not slide. If using a sliding back-band (on a two-wheeled vehicle only as they do not work on a four-wheeled vehicle) make sure that the sliding part is not binding.
7. Check over your horse and vehicle to make sure that everything is connected and all the buckles are in their keepers.
8. The driver then can get into the vehicle with the lines (reins) in hand and once seated comfortably and in control of the horse, the passenger (header) can also get into the vehicle.
9. Enjoy your drive.

Once you have returned from your drive, one must still take safety steps in order not to have any issues while unhitching.

Note: Never remove your bridle while your horse is hitched to a carriage.

1. The passengers dismount the carriage with the driver still in control of the lines (reins).
2. The header then places a neck rope on the horse if using.
3. The driver dismounts while still in control of the lines (reins).
4. To unharness first undo the holdback straps from the breeching, then the wraps from the tugs if there are some on your harness and then the traces connecting the vehicle to the horse.
5. Always remove the horse from the vehicle before removing his bridle.
6. Remove the vehicle from the horse. During this time the driver still has some control of the horse as the driver will still have the lines (reins) in their hand(s).
7. After the vehicle has been removed then the harness can be removed in the reverse order that it was put on.
8. First remove the lines and then the bridle so that the halter can be placed on the horse. Make sure to use your lead rope if not using a neck rope to keep the horse from exiting without permission.
9. Once the header has the halter on you can now remove the breeching, then the saddle, then the breast-collar or the hames depending on which one was used, then the collar if this was used.
10. Give your horse a rub down then put the horse away as you have both completed an enjoyable drive.

Keep safe and enjoy Driving your horse/horses.