

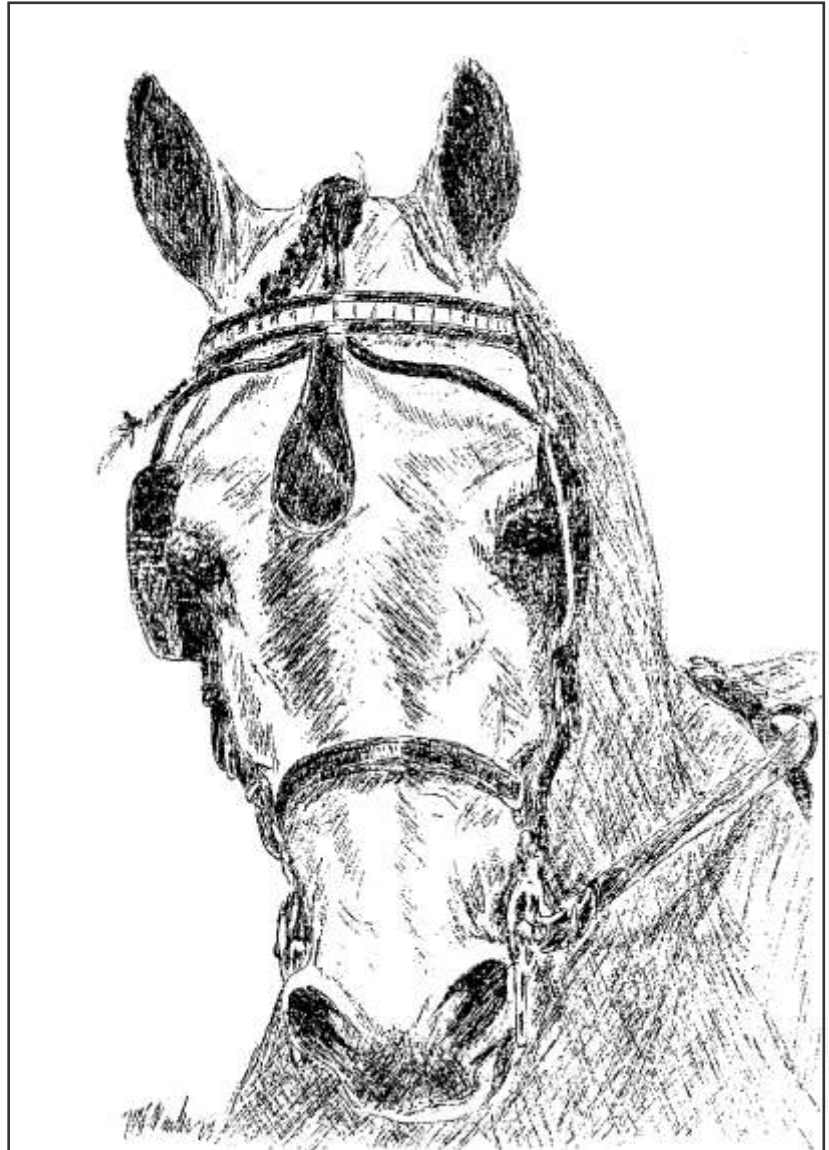
# SAFETY MANUAL



Dairyland and  
Driving Club

[www.dairylanddriving.com](http://www.dairylanddriving.com)

*Dairyland Driving Club's primary goals are safe carriage driving and fellowship among members and guests. We are eager to share our knowledge and to promote education and safety in the sport of driving.*





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Wisconsin Horse Council

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This compilation of this publication has safety as its foremost premise. However, we realize that methods suggested here are not the only correct and safe methods of accomplishing the same end...a safe driving turnout. We hope it provides useful information for the reader. It is impossible for any publication to include all possible situations and how to react to them. By its very nature, any equine sport brings with it inherent dangers. We urge readers of this book to be cautious and responsible in their dealings with equines in harness. Therefore, neither individuals nor organizations involved in the publication of this book can be held liable for accidents that may occur.

## Contributing Information

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Carriage Association of America

*Breaking and Training Driving Horses*

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*(permission of Wilshire Books)*

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## ORGANIZATIONS

### AMERICAN DRIVING SOCIETY

A non-profit organization devoted to the sport of driving horses and ponies. Activities included the organization and promotion of driving events and the establishment of rules, safety standards, and guidelines for driving, both competitively and for pleasure. Membership is per calendar year and includes a subscription to their quarterly magazine *The Whip*. Members also receive a monthly newsletter called *The Wheelhorse*.

To join, send the membership fee to:

American Driving Society, P.O. Box 278, Cross Plains, WI 53528, 608-237-7382

[www.americandrivingsociety.org](http://www.americandrivingsociety.org)

### CARRIAGE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

A non-profit organization devoted to horse-drawn vehicles; their preservation, restoration and use. In recent years, the focus of the organization has changed to include more about horses and the use of horsedrawn vehicles. Membership is yearly and includes a subscription to the quarterly magazine, the *Carriage Journal*. Members also receive a monthly newsletter called *The New Hub*. The Carriage Association also has an extensive selection of books dealing with driving and horse-drawn vehicles.

To join, send the membership fee to:

The Carriage Association of America, 3915 Jay Trump Road, Lexington, KY 40511, 859-231-0971

[www.casonline.com](http://www.casonline.com)



Dairyland  
Driving Club

## A Brief History of the Dairyland Driving Club

The Dairyland Driving Club developed as an outgrowth of the January sleigh rally for charity held at the Dean House in Madison. Participants from all over southern Wisconsin, who supported this annual event, had responded overwhelmingly to a questionnaire indicating they wanted to get together more often with their horses and vehicles to share their interest in the old-fashioned sport of driving. The rest is history.

The Dairyland Driving Club was organized on February 13, 1983, at the home of Rod and Jackie Sale of Mt. Horeb. About a dozen families attended the first meeting after participating on a winter drive with seven sleighs and bobsleds skidding over rolling hills. A great outing and good food made for a wonderful time as driving enthusiasts shared their ideas for continuing this type of occasion on a more regular basis. Thus a formal organization was begun, with by-laws, dues, and officers established. Mary Ruth Marks of Verona, Wisconsin was instrumental in this get-together and was elected as our first president.

The membership determined that the primary aims of the club should be safe recreational driving and socializing. This was backed up by sharing of knowledge, resources, and to promote education in the sport of driving. It was the consensus of the membership that the “drives” be informal and non-competitive. These three principles remain intact today.

A “drives” committee was formed and became responsible for setting dates and places for the drives, which now are held regularly from April to November and include sleigh rallies when the weather

cooperates. “Drives” are often held in conjunction with the state historical sites such as Old World Wisconsin and The Wade House Stage Coach Inn.

“The Coachman” became the title for our newsletter. This newsletter contains the minutes of the bi-monthly meetings of the Board of Directors. It also contains a calendar of events, lists of officers, an annual directory, and classified advertisements, articles, and safe driving tips are included as well.

An annual meeting of the general membership is held March. This meeting has been held at the McFarland Community Center for many years. A wonderful potluck dinner puts everyone in a great mood, and time is allotted for socializing. This is usually followed by the business meeting and elections. Games and activities are planned as well as a fundraising silent auction.

Dairyland Driving Club can frequently be seen at Midwest Horse Fair with displays and demonstrations.

The Safety Driving Clinic is a popular educational event.

A Coaching Run that may rank as the “all time” highlight of the club’s activities was held in conjunction with the State of Wisconsin Sesquicentennial in 1998. The club received a grant from the State and was supported by private donations as well. The Coach Run began at the Capitol Square in Madison and followed the historic coach route to Prairie du Chien. Team changes were made at approximately every ten miles and often at sites of historic stage stops. Many activities at old stage stops, school and nursing homes were held along the three-day route. The event covered 130 miles in what seems to be the second longest modern Coaching Run in the United States.

This fantastic feat was completed without accident or breakdown of any vehicle, or the need for veterinarian or farrier assistance. What a testament to the planning and hard work of the many volunteers. We were all very proud of this achievement and we received much coverage in the press.

# SAFETY IS NO ACCIDENT!

S *uitability*

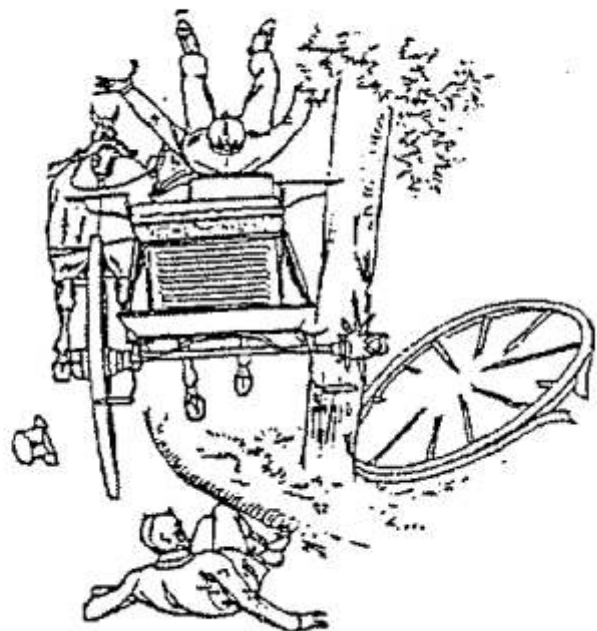
A *wareness*

F *oundation of skills for driver*

E *xperiencing a relationship  
with your horse*

T *raining of horse*

Y *our involvement in this sport  
should focus on enjoyment  
and safety for you, your  
horse and others Safety is the  
least thought about principle  
in the sport of driving*



Whether your driving interest is recreational, pleasure, endurance, or combined driving, the objective of this program is to make you as drivers, aware of potential situations that could lead to trouble. Through awareness and education, safety will become an everyday practice, making driving safe and enjoyable for you, the horse, other drivers, passengers, and spectators.



Dairyland  
Driving Club

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# MEASURING FOR A HARNESS

These measurements, together with the body weight and type of horse and the style of the vehicle the harness is intended for, will assist the harnessmaker in filling your order.

## Measurements for a harness:

A. From corner of mouth, over the poll, to other corner of the mouth.

B. Circumference around nose, taken about two fingers width below the prominent cheekbone.

C. Circumference of girth.

D. Length of back from position of harness saddle to base of tail.

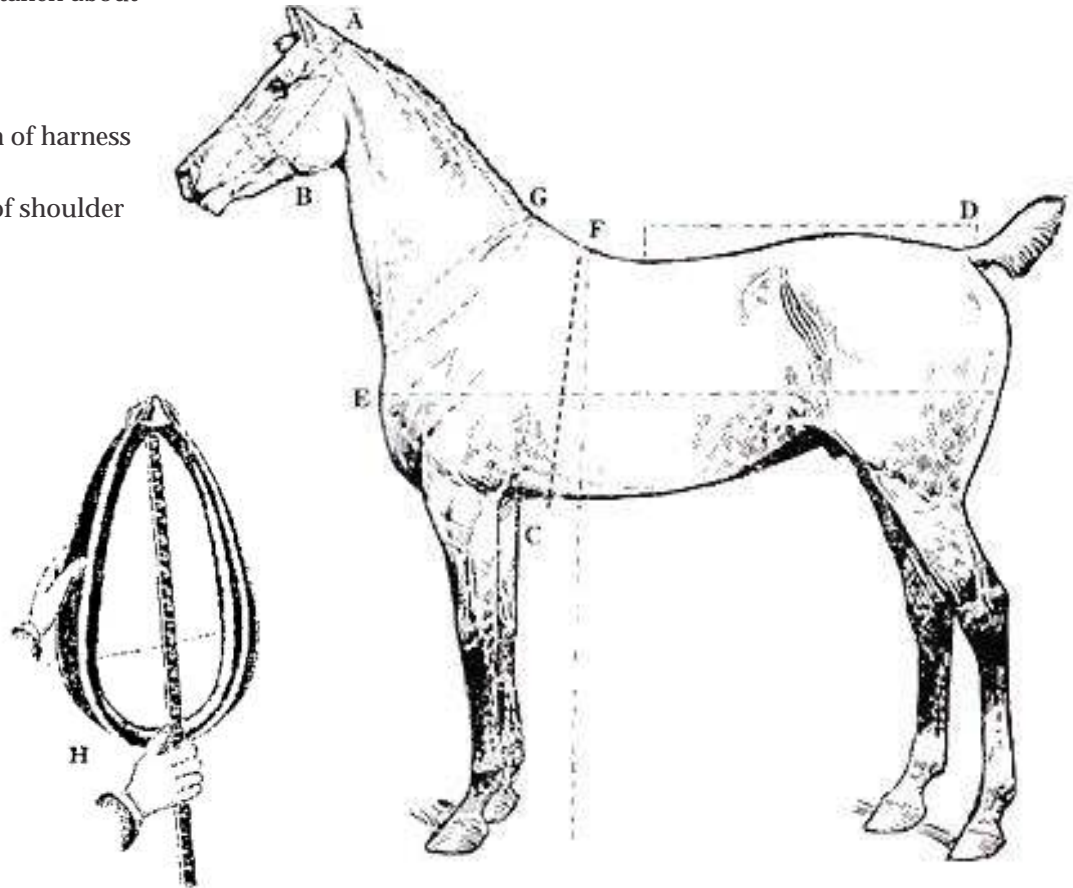
E. Length of horse, from point of shoulder to buttock.

F. Height at withers.

## Measurements for a collar:

G. Length from top to base of neck at proper position of collar. Line should be straight, not conforming to horse's body

H. If possible, measure a collar which fits the horse, using the inside dimensions of the collar, as shown.

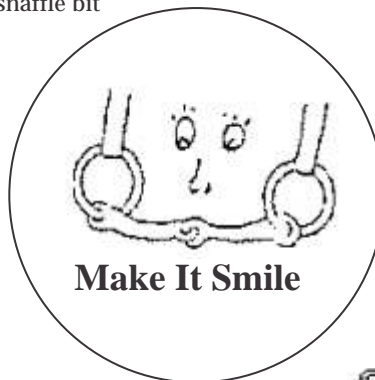




# PARTS OF A DRIVING BRIDLE



1. Blinder/blinker/winker
2. Blinder stay adjustment
3. Browband
4. Blinder adjustment
5. Throatlatch
6. Cheek piece
7. Noseband/Cavesson
8. Bit adjustment
9. Half-cheek snaffle bit

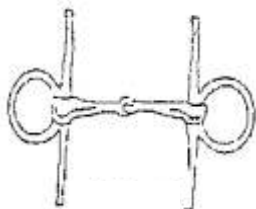
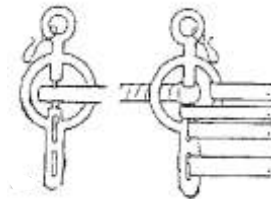


## Liverpool Rein Settings

Plain cheek – works like a snaffle

Rough cheek – light curb action

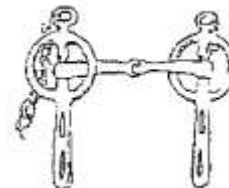
Middle bar – medium curb action



Full Cheek  
Jointed Snaffle



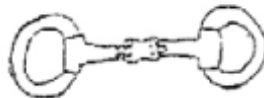
Eggbutt Snaffle



Jointed  
Liverpool



Mullen Mouth Snaffle



French Link Snaffle

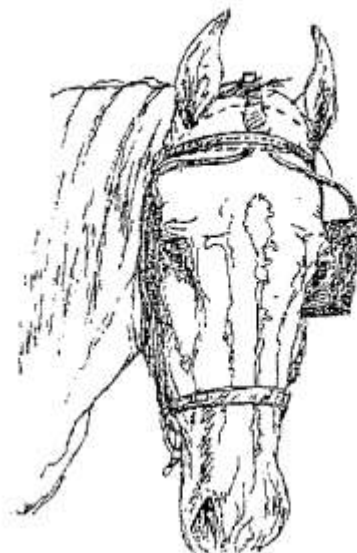
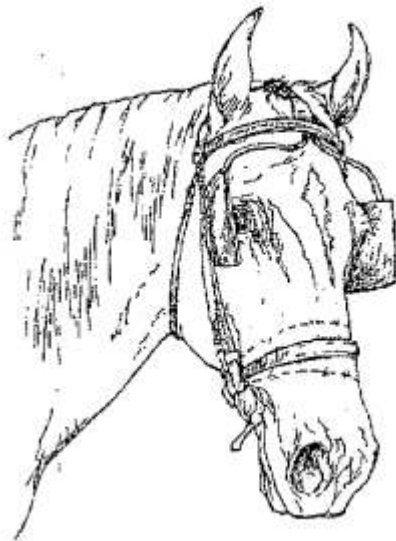


Half Cheek Jointed Snaffle

# FUNCTION OF HARNESS PARTS, BRIDLE & REINS

The bridle and the reins guide and cue to stop the animal. Do not drive an animal without blinders. The square or round blinders focus the horse's attention on where it is going and keep other things from distracting it. If the animal sees the action of the cart wheels, it may be frightened. A cavesson (noseband) keeps the mouth closed and allows more control with bits.

Dotted lines denote "too high" or "too low" placement of harness.



The breastcollar and traces pull the cart. The neck strap holds up the breastcollar.





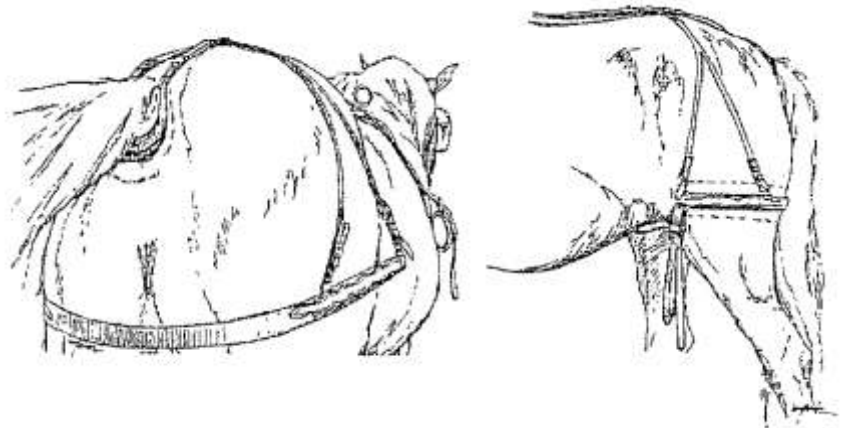
*Oh, so that's what that extra little strap on the girth is for!*

The backstrap connects the saddle and crupper and supports the hip strap, breeching and holdback straps on breeching-type harness.

There are several types of light driving harness. One includes breeching that goes around the hindquarters of the horse or pony. It stops the cart and keeps it back when traveling downhill or backing. Another type has no breeching, but uses thimbles that fit over the shaft ends of a lightweight cart. Use of the breeching or thimbles is a safety measure to protect the horse.

The saddle (backpad) includes the terret rings to hold up the reins, a fastener for attaching the backstrap and crupper, a check hook for the overcheck or side check reins, and tugs (shaft loops) on each side of the saddle to hold up the cart shafts.

Double straps, called wrap straps, attach to the girth to wrap tightly around the shafts. They keep the shafts from rising when the driver is mounting and hold back the cart when the breeching is not used. Some harnesses include a bellyband instead of wrap straps.



# PROPER HARNESSING SEQUENCE

1. First the saddle-crupper. As to the proper order, it makes little difference whether a breastcollar is put on over the horse's head before or after the saddle-crupper-backstrap combination. Though when putting on either a breast or neck collar with a false martingale, the collar must be put on first so the martingale can be fastened to the girth. The important thing is that it be done the same way each time. However, we prefer to work from back to front. This means that we put the saddle-crupper-backstrap on first. The harness saddle should sit behind the withers by several inches – in the middle of the area that would be covered by a riding saddle. It is held in that position by the girth, and by the backstrap, which is attached to the crupper under the horse's tail. The girth must always be taken up slowly for there is just as much chance of a "cold-backed" (sensitive) horse resenting the abrupt tightening of the harness girth as there is when saddling a riding horse. The bellyband can be left loosely attached at this point. The backstrap should be taut and the crupper should be snug against the root of the tail. Nothing looks worse than a crupper dangling below the root of the tail or a loose backstrap bouncing up and down on the horse's spine.

Caution is taken when placing the crupper under the tail to make sure that none of the tail hairs are caught in it; this is to avoid any irritation of the under part of the tail. A helpful hint: if getting the tail through the crupper opening proves difficult, the tail can be neatly folded, pulled through, then straightened out when through.

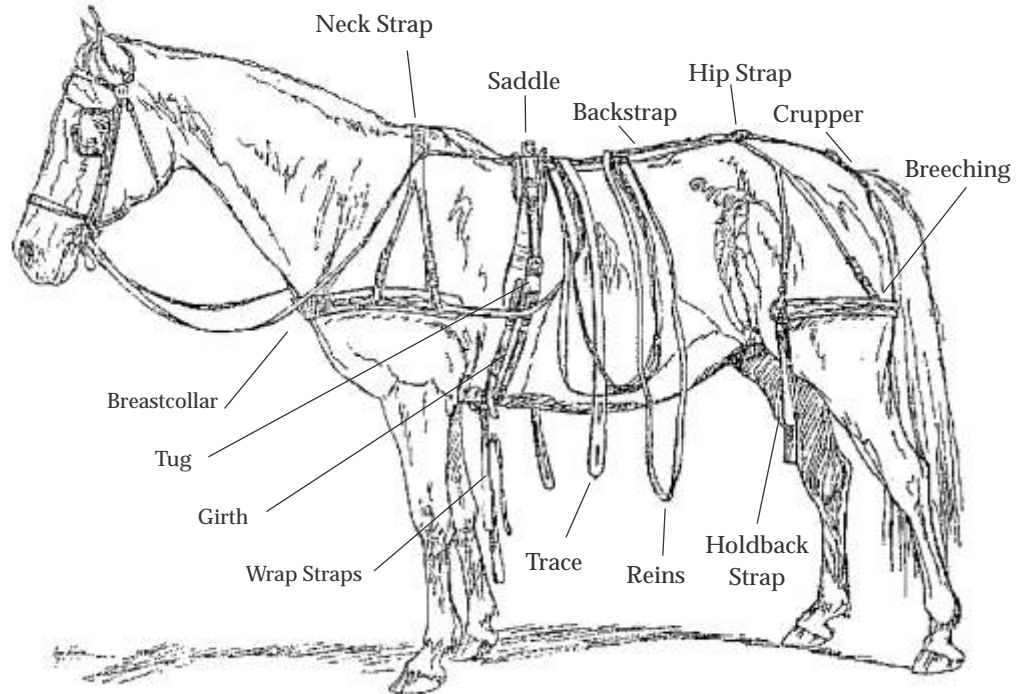
2. Next the breeching. Once the saddle-crupper-backstrap combination is secure, it is time to run the hip straps through the backstrap; there is a specific slot for this. The breeching placement must be neither too high nor too low. The horizontal breeching should rest just where the rump curves into the leg. Have it too high and the breeching tends to ride up over the rump toward the root of the tail; have it too low and the weight of the carriage inhibits the freedom of the action of the hind legs, and on some steep grades can actually exert a lifting pressure against the hindquarters.

3. Next the breastcollar. The collar goes on with the traces (the heavy leather straps which run along side the shafts and serve to attach the vehicle to the horse's collar) already in place. Its fit is very important; as the harnessing sequence shows, it should rest a finger or two below the very base of the

neck, but in no case lower than the middle of the shoulder – any lower than that will interfere with the free movement of the forelegs, which is so necessary. As we said earlier, if we were using a neck collar, the order would be reverse, with the collar going on first and then the saddle-crupper combination.

4. Next the bridle and reins. Our next step is to run the driving reins through the saddle terrets, letting the bit ends hang loose but not low enough to be stepped on. The hand ends are looped around the back strap using a slip knot which can be pulled free instantly, when/if needed. Next, the bridle goes on, and then the bit ends of the reins are attached to the bit. The throatlatch and noseband are fastened and the position of the blinkers checked.

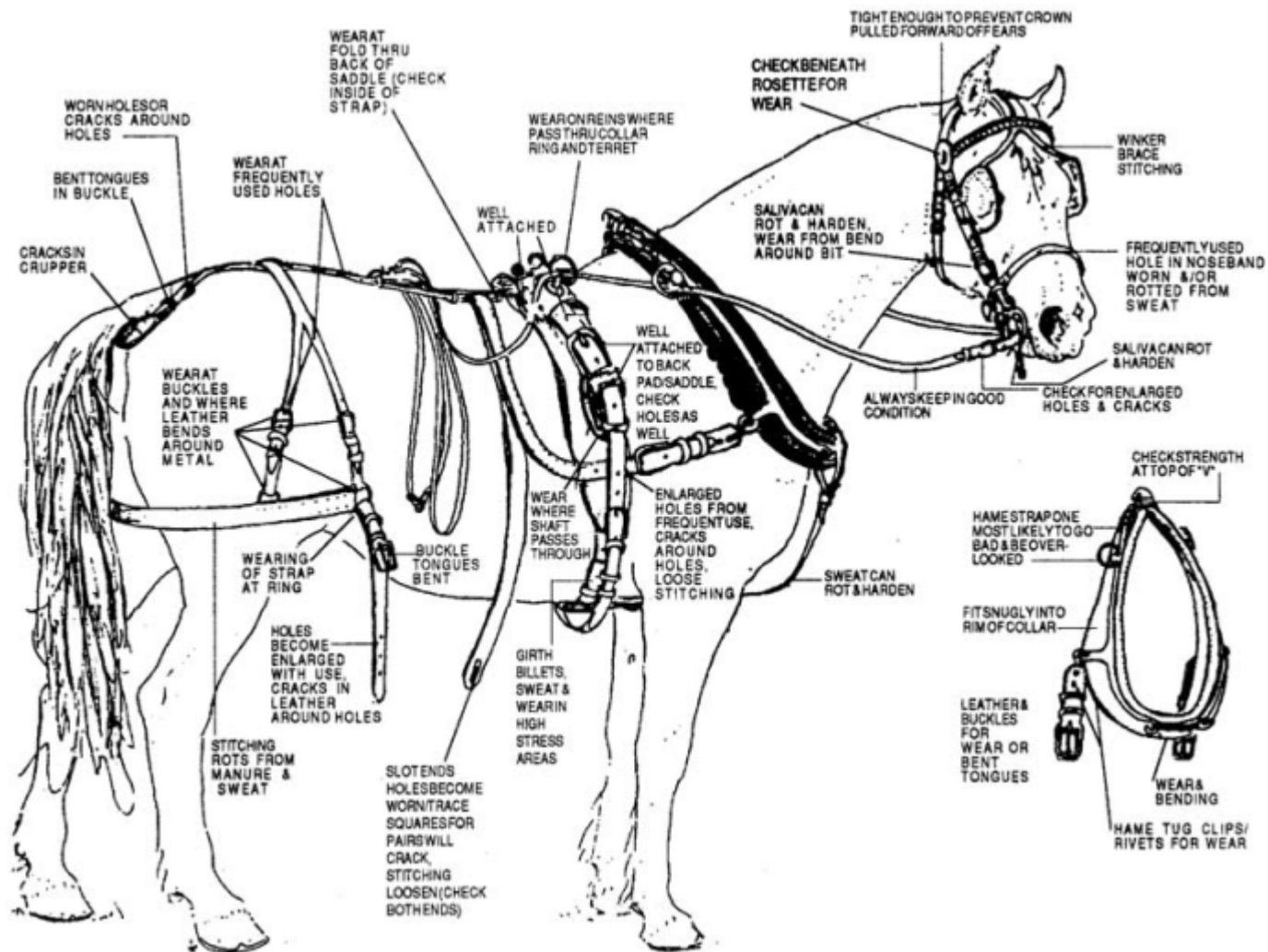
5. A final check. When the work at the front end is finished, we return to the mid-section to recheck the girth and to make sure it is pulled up to its regular snugness. Usually by now the horse knows you mean business and this will be no problem.



## CORRECTLY HARNESSSED HORSE



# HARNESS WEAR & TEAR POINTS



# TRAINING

Before driving training starts the horse or pony should lead well, longe easily and obey the command, “WHOA”.

## Sacking Out

Make sure that the animal has been thoroughly sacked out, especially with ropes or leather straps rubbed and pulled all over the body and legs until it does not object. Along with the strap work, press a smooth broom handle against the sides of the horse where the shafts will be positioned.

## Preparation for Harnessing

To accustom the horse or pony to a crupper, begin by lifting the tail gently and holding it up for a few seconds. Increase the height and length of time until the animal relaxes when the tail is lifted straight up.

Using only a crupper, place it under the tail and let the tail down slowly. If the animal accepts this, leave it a few seconds before raising the tail and removing it. Gradually increase the time. If a harness is not available, use a rolled cloth pad about one inch in diameter. Introduce your horse to the whip, rub it all over the body, then move away and wave it.

## Harnessing

Training to harness may take several days or weeks. Be patient, do not be discouraged and do not rush or eliminate steps. Before harnessing, the horse or pony must obey the command, “WHOA”. Have an assistant help. Slide the saddle with the lay of the hair to a position about four inches, or one hand’s width, behind the withers. Fasten the girth at least one hand’s width behind the elbow, so it will not interfere with the animal’s elbow at the trot. Tighten this after the animal relaxes. It should be snug, but not as tight as a regular saddle cinch. Lift the tail, slip the unbuckled crupper around it, slowly let down the tail, and buckle the crupper. Adjust the backstrap so that the crupper hangs about 1/2 inch below the root of the tail. Smooth the tail hair away from the bare part on the underside of the tail. This is a very sensitive area. Keep the crupper clean, smooth and soft. If the crupper has no buckle, let it hang down on top of the tail; reach through the crupper and grasp the tail near the end of the bone, and pull the long hair through. Slide the crupper the rest of the way up while holding up the tail. Carefully pull all the hair



## Training (continued from previous page)

through the crupper before letting the tail down. If there are wrap straps on the girth, buckle them into the tugs to keep them out of the way – they will not be needed at this training level. When the horse is relaxed and willing to stand, lead it around to adapt to the feel of the crupper or girth. The horse should be familiar with all the harness: it should be properly fitted. The breastcollar should lie where the animal's neck meets the chest. It is adjusted by the neck strap, which hangs in front of the withers. The trace ends should be crossed over the horse's back and secured to the backstrap near the saddle, or tied in a loose knot to keep them from flapping. If using breeching, it should hang below the point of the buttocks, but not so low that it interferes with hock action. Buckle the holdback straps to keep them out of the way. Longe the animal at a walk and trot using a regular halter and wearing all of the body harness. Make sure all loose pieces and straps are securely attached.

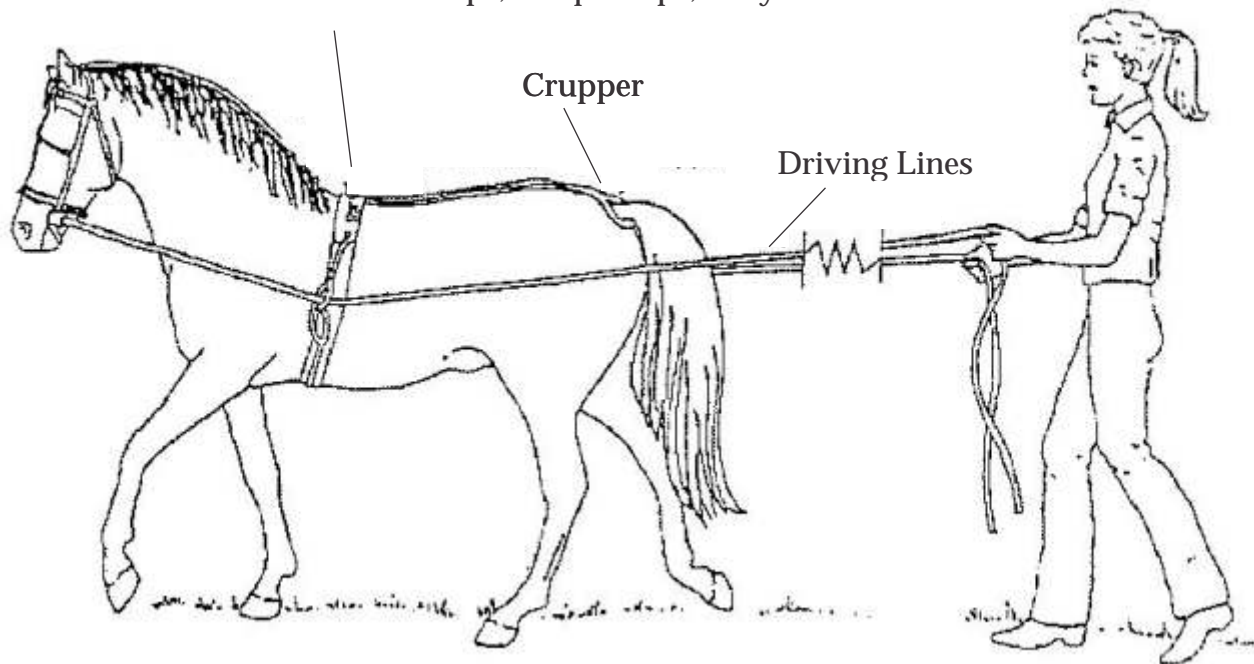
## Ground Driving

Place a halter over the bridle to help control the horse or pony without abusing its mouth. Lead the animal out watching carefully for reactions to noise unidentifiable by sight. Since driving reins are too short to give you enough space behind the horse's heels, use two longe lines or light ropes about 25 feet long. As soon as the animal is calm, attach the lines to the bit. Run the lines through the tugs (shaft loops) to help keep them up. Follow one horse's length behind the horse, but stay inside the circle. Work the horse on the lines until calm. Hold the lines high enough so that a foot cannot get tangled; yet allow enough to control the hindquarters.

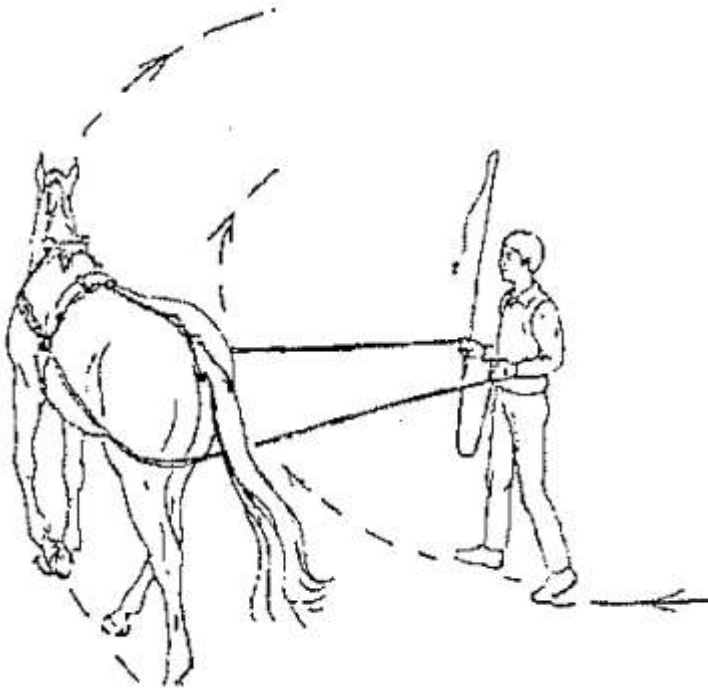
When longeing in a large circle, run the lines through the tugs and run the outside line back behind the hindquarters so you can stand in the middle of the circle and guide the horse or pony. Keep the outside line steady and gently use the inside line to control the horse's or pony's head in the correct arc (See figure – page 15). When the animal is relaxed, it is ready for driving. An assistant at the head of the animal is helpful when starting ground driving in harness. Teach the horse to start quietly with the voice command “walk-on”. If

necessary, touch the whip lash up the shoulder. Be careful not to jerk the lines. Keep constant contact with the mouth using both lines. Also, teach the animal to back. Practice making wide gradual turns, as sharp turns are difficult with the cart attached. After the horse responds well to the gradual turns, work on round figure eights, keeping the gait steady. Use “WHOA” only for a full stop. Say the equine’s name to call attention to the command. To slow down, use “EASY” or “STEADY”. When teaching the trot, keep the hands steady to avoid hurting the mouth. Practice driving everywhere, especially where the animal might go pulling a cart.

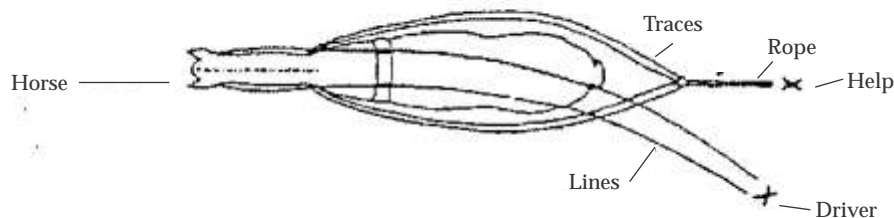
Saddle with Shaft Loops, Wrap Straps, Bellyband



## Putting Pressure on the Traces



The horse must get used to the feel of weight behind it. With the breastcollar in proper position, untie the traces; bring the ends together behind the animal. Attach a six-foot line through the holes in the traces. Have your helper hold the line, keeping the traces up and walk about five or six feet behind the animal. The driver follows off to the side. The helper will gradually put pressure on the traces by holding back, then releasing for a few seconds and repeating. This gives the horse its first experience with pulling. The animal will probably hesitate or stop, but keep it going. Have your helper continue pulling on the traces for short distances with a complete release between pulls to relax the animal and as a reward. The feel of the traces on the flanks also prepares it for the feel of the shafts. Ground driving is the most important phase in driving training. The animal must be completely manageable and able to do all the maneuvers before being hitched to the cart. This may take several weeks.



# Training Poles

A travois-like device made of two poles joined together introduces the horse to dragging an object without risking damage to the cart.

At first, have the helper drag the poles in front of the animal while it is being driven. Ask your helper to stop, and then drive the horse past. Take turns passing each other, and then have the poles follow directly behind the horse until this phase of training is accepted.

The horse is now ready for hitching to the poles. Put a lead rope on the halter and ask the helper to hold the animal in front of the poles. Pick up the poles and bring them down over the horse's back into position on either side, sliding the tips through the tugs. Figure eight the wrap straps around the pole and tugs.

Fasten the traces into the screw eyes.

Drive the animal forward as the helper leads from the side. Do not allow the horse to back. Make wide turns with this training step. Some may adapt quickly while others take much longer.

Close-Up of Wrap Straps on the Shaft

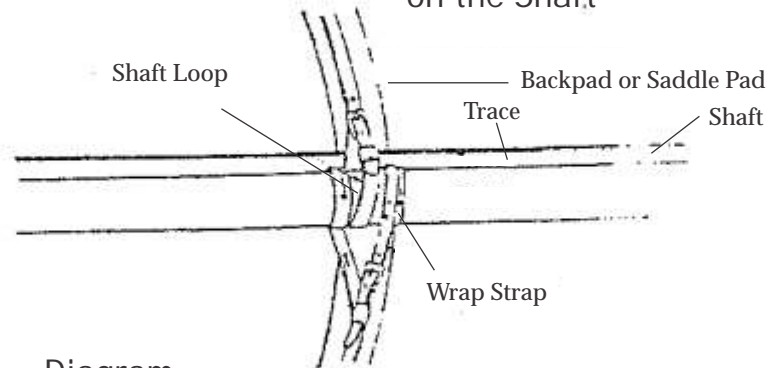
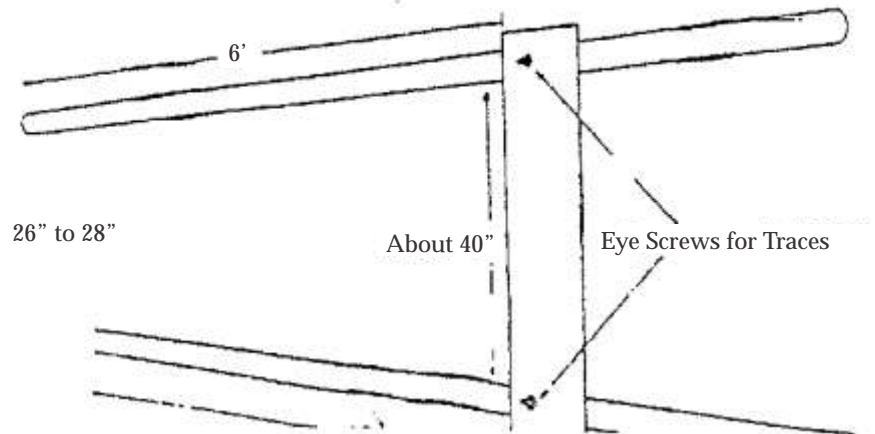


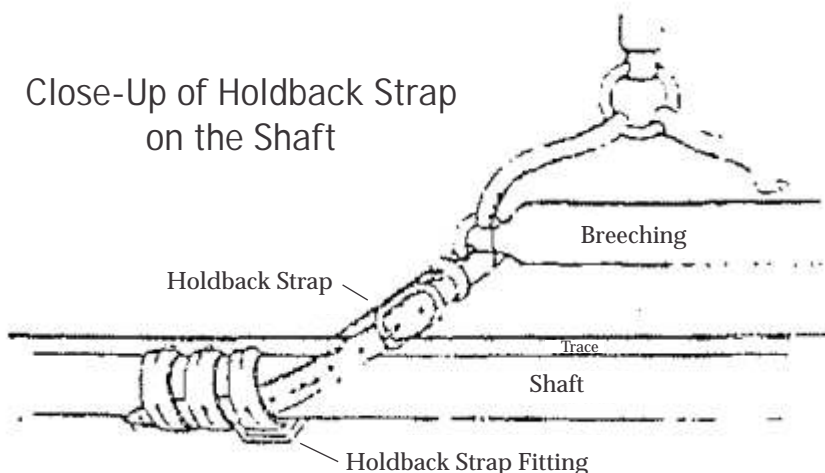
Diagram of Poles



# Connecting the Cart

When the horse is quiet and relaxed in the poles, it should be ready to hitch to the cart. Bring out the cart and let the animal investigate it. Have someone pull it around so the horse can see and hear it. Drive the horse a little ahead of the cart until it is ignored. A confined area is best when the horse or pony is first hitched to the vehicle. Exchange the longe lines for reins. Put the halter over the bridle again and use an assistant with a lead rope. Have another helper on the off (right) side to connect the cart. Hold the reins off the ground away from both the animal's and the driver's feet. Keep them in hand. While one helper holds the horse, pull the cart into position. Always bring the cart to the horse. Do not back the animal into the shafts as that may startle it. Approach the horse with lifted shafts, then gently lower them on

each side. The shafts must go through the tugs. Untie the traces, run them under the tugs, through the trace keepers on the shafts, and fasten them to the trace hooks or singletree on the cart. The traces must be the same length on each side. The holes used depend on the length of the traces, the size of the animal, and the type of cart. The horse must have room to extend his legs while trotting, but not so much that he is out of the shafts. The tips of the shafts should come no further forward than the point of the shoulder. If they are back too far, they will catch behind the shoulder. Figure eight the wrap strap around the shafts and tugs on both sides to hold them firmly. If breeching is used, attach the holdback straps as follows: go under the trace; through the metal loop (holdback strap fitting) on the underside of the shaft towards the "outside" of the cart; around the shaft to the front as many times as needed to take up slack; under the wraps; then over the top of the trace to the buckle.



## Mounting the Cart

With an assistant at the animal's head, take the reins and walk to the side of the cart. Ground drive the animal five or ten minutes with your assistant walking alongside. (If you have an assistant with a long lead rope attached to the halter over the bridle; you can probably avoid a mishap.) After the animal has accepted pulling the cart with no weight, the driver may mount. Hold the reins in the right hand and get into the cart from the right side (unless it is a cart that can be entered from the rear). It may be easiest to sit on the seat and swing both legs in at the same time. The additional weight will press the shaft on the tugs and saddle. When driving alone, sit in the center to balance the load. Keep the reins out of the wheel and clear of the driver's feet by sitting on the excess reins. Reins should not drag on the ground. Reins should be buckled together.

## Training with the Cart

With the assistant leading, drive around slowly the first few times, adding the trot only after the animal has relaxed and is responding to directions. At the trot, there may be a definite jogging motion of the cart, but keep the reins steady. Alternate walking, trotting, stopping, and going both directions. Vary the sequence and place of gait transitions to avoid establishing a habit. Always walk the horse or pony to the barn to reduce the chance of a runaway. Do not trot for extended periods until the animal's wind is built up. A common mishap is for the horse to clamp its tail on the rein. Immediately say, "WHOA", but **DO NOT PULL ON THE REINS**. Have your assistant lift the tail below the bone to keep it relaxed and quietly free it from the rein. Pleasure carts are not tip proof; avoid leaning to the side.

## Driving Position

Sit up straight with the arms extended, elbow slightly bent and close to the body. This position lets a driver respond quickly with maximum strength. Look ahead between the ears of the horse, keeping constant contact with the animal's mouth. Control by first using the fingers, then the wrists, and if necessary, the arms.

# VEHICLES

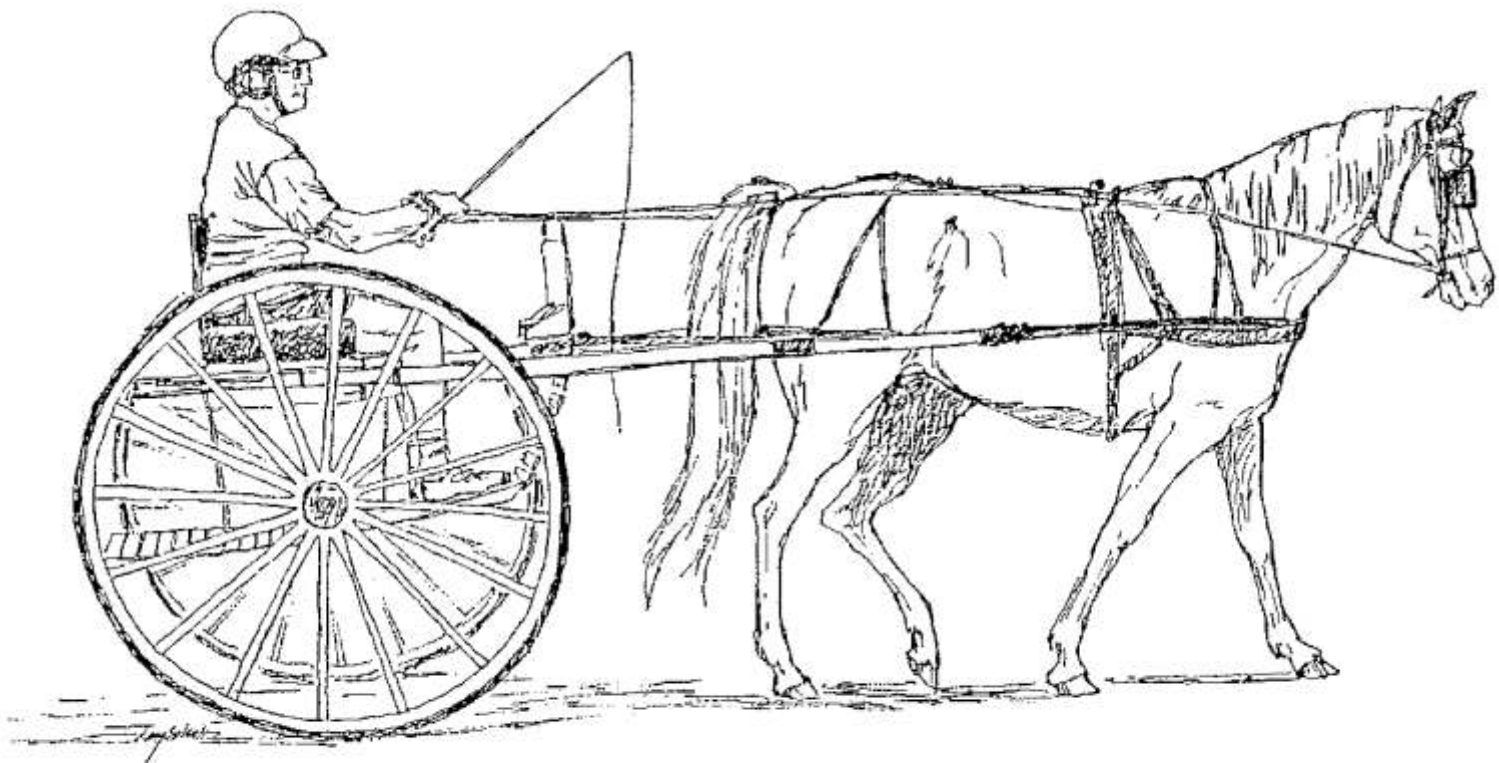
Carts, buggies, and wagons come in all sizes, shapes and styles, and prices. The most common is a simple two-wheeled pleasure cart with a straight seat and a basket-like arrangement for the driver's feet. Any cart should have a firm footrest or brace to help the driver maintain balance. Short-legged children may be bounced off if they cannot brace their feet. Make sure the basket is made so the driver's feet cannot catch in it.

When choosing a vehicle, check the condition of the shafts, and the length and space between them (some may be too narrow for a blocky horse or pony). The shaft tips should reach nearly to the point of the shoulder. There must be enough clearance behind the animal to allow for free hock action. The shafts should slant slightly upwards, because down-slanting shafts put a strain on the shoulders and tilt the cart seat forward. Shafts should be made of a smooth material that cannot splinter and injure the horse.

Regular bicycle wheels are not strong enough for a cart and will warp. Make sure heavy-duty wheels, 20 gauge or heavier, are used. Check the wheels to be sure they are evenly balanced and that there are no loose spokes. Wooden spoke wheels are the best. Carts with air-filled tires are lighter than those with wooden wheels. An animal can usually pull its own weight, but you need to add the weight of the driver and the vehicle for the total weight.

Wagons and carts require a breeching type harness. Keep the cart and harness in good repair. Do not use wire or twine in place of leather straps, as it may be difficult to release an animal in an emergency. Always have a knife handy if necessary to cut the animal free!





Horse Put Correctly to a Meadowbrook Cart

# PRE-DRIVE CHECK LIST

1. Check that all buckles are buckled and secure in keepers and at the proper fit and adjustment.
2. Check high stress areas at EVERY use – they will be the first to give if you have an incident.
3. Check every hole for cracks or enlargements.
4. Check buckles for bent tongues – if bent, they are too soft and could break or pull through.
5. If using a neck collar, check hame strap every time, and don't forget to tighten it securely once collar is placed on horse...be sure hames fit snugly into collar rim and are in good condition.
6. Check bit for wear or cracks.
7. Check sewing behind buckles.
8. Check leather for dryness and cracking.
9. Backstrap should be checked where it fits through saddle – it wears on the inside.
10. Breeching straps should be checked around ring as well as holes and on up-tugs where leather and ring attach to breeching.
11. Check carriage thoroughly for looseness in wheels or wear on metal parts.
12. Check underneath the carriage for loose bolts or cracks.
13. Are spares on board? Binder twine, knife, hammer and block included.
14. Replace any area or part in question. Equipment failure is one of the leading causes of accidents.

## Proper Use, Care & Cleaning

1. Clean with sponge and water, restore and examine harness after every use. Dirt acts like sandpaper.
2. Use a glycerin or castile soap to remove sweat, hair, and dirt.
3. Restore leather if dry or wet.
4. Wash and polish metal – rust is destructive to leather.
5. Do not dry leather by leaving in the sun or heat.
6. Do not store in hot, dry areas or in the cold and damp – 70 degrees is ideal.
7. Give extra attention to bridle billets and rein billets – due to contact with acid in saliva.
8. Keep leather in proper ph balance.
9. Avoid oil on patent leather.
10. Switch leather that can be switched from side to side, or if possible, alternate holes to reduce wear.

## Warning Signs

1. Stiffness and cracking
2. Stretching or elongated holes.
3. Limpness = over oiled.
4. Broken loops or keepers.
5. Cut or warped straps.
6. Bent tongues or worn or bent buckles.
7. Broken stitching.
8. Cracks in metal hardware.
9. Loose stitching – may give way.

*Quality will not protect against misuse, neglect or abuse.*

## How to Clean & Polish Leather Harness

*By Barry Dickinson*

Mix a clean solution in a pail by first dissolving one cup of Arm & Hammer Washing Soda in just enough hot water, then fill the pail with cold water. Use a rough piece of cloth to wash the leather with this solution. Make sure the water is very cold – as cold as your hands can stand it. Then the washing removes dirt, but does not open the leather pores and take out oils. Wipe with a chamois and clear, cold water. Apply a harness dressing such as Lexol or Adam's Tack Wax and let the leather absorb this. Two thin applications are better than one thick coat. After the dressing has soaked in, polish the leather with a cloth. Then apply a black boot polish (if black harness) and polish as one would a pair of dress shoes. Clean the metal parts with a commercial product for that purpose, being careful not to touch the leather. This polished finish to the leather is durable and can be kept clean by wiping with a damp rag between cleanings.

# GENERAL CARRIAGE DRIVING SAFETY

Before hitching a horse for the first time, it is essential to know if the horse has been trained in the principles of driving, and that the horse has pulled a vehicle safely before. If the horse has not been driven recently or you personally have not seen the horse in harness pulling a vehicle willingly, preliminary steps need to be followed to alleviate any uncertainty about the horse's suitability for driving. To avoid any possible mishaps, ground driving the horse should be used as a first step in the evaluation of the animal. The following ground work is not intended to be used in training a horse that has never driven before, but as an outline of exercises that can be used to determine if the horse has in fact driven before, and to refresh the memory of a horse that has not been driven recently. The safe driving horse must perform these exercises flawlessly before being hooked to a vehicle.

Ground driving in harness only, without the vehicle may take several days to several months before the horse is ready to move to the next step. The horse is ready when it is comfortable in and accepts all parts of the harness; will "walk-on" on command; "trot-on" on command; halt and stand quietly for extended periods of time; back readily on command only; and turn.

Once the horse has willingly demonstrated the above commands, slowly introduce it to the vehicle. Do not hook the horse directly to the cart. Have experienced help head the horse with a lead shank and a halter under or over the bridle. The driver should walk alongside the horse's hindquarters with the reins as if in the cart. Two other capable aides should hold the cart shafts on either side of the horse, actually pulling the cart as the horse walks along. Once the horse is accustomed to the noise of the cart and the feel of the shafts touching its sides as it turns, the helpers can slowly insert the shafts into the saddle tugs to familiarize the horse with the weight of the vehicle. Do not hook the traces. Once the horse readily accepts the feel for the vehicle's weight, the traces may be hooked. A person should remain at the horse's head, the driver should still be walking alongside and the two other aides stay walking alongside the cart in the event the horse needs to be unhooked quickly. This process may take weeks. Once the horse seems steady, the driver may enter the vehicle, but it is a good idea to keep the header until the horse is used to pulling the weight. This whole process may seem slow and unnecessary, but in the long run can prevent many accidents that may permanently ruin the horse for driving and seriously injure all involved. A driving horse requires a certain temperament. A horse that willingly pulls a carriage may still be too much to handle in harness although it is

safe under saddle. Not all horses, not matter how well mannered under saddle, will be well mannered under harness. To persist in driving a horse of this nature will only lead to unsafe conditions.

Once it is established that the horse will pull a vehicle, there are many other precautions and training techniques that must be mastered and adhered to before taking the horse on the road or in public.

Foremost, any time the driver or passengers are in the carriage, they should be wearing a safety helmet approved by ASTM/SEI for equestrian use. Driving accidents happen suddenly without warning and are often serious. If a passenger refuses to wear a helmet, they should not be permitted in the vehicle for liability reasons.

After the horse is harnessed, it should stand quietly while being hooked. If possible, always have someone head the horse when hooking to the carriage. This is a must at any horse show, pleasure drive, or other activity no matter how still the horse stands at home. Never trust a horse in an unfamiliar environment. Distractions such as strange noises, smells, horses and other activities may unexpectedly set off even the quietest of horses.

If someone has assisted the driver in the actual hooking of the horse, it is the responsibility of the driver to check the other person's work to ensure that everything is properly adjusted, buckled and secure.

NEVER REMOVE THE BRIDLE OF A HORSE PUT TO A CARRIAGE AND NEVER HOOK A HORSE THAT IS NOT WEARING A BRIDLE.

NEVER TIE A HORSE BY THE BIT, AND NEVER TIE A HORSE PUT TO A CARRIAGE TO A TREE, TRAILER OR ANY OTHER STRUCTURE. Unhook the horse from the carriage before tying the horse.

NEVER LEAVE A HORSE PUT TO A CARRIAGE UNATTENDED, EVEN FOR A SECOND. It only takes a fraction of a second for something to spook a horse.

When you are first learning to drive, or anytime you drive cross-country, out on the road, it is important to have someone competent with you that can help in case of an emergency. Small children or people that have no knowledge of horses are not recommended as passengers on the vehicle of a novice driver. The passenger or groom on the carriage should be able to competently assist the driver in case of emergency.

# General Carriage Driving Safety (continued from previous page)

NEVER TIE YOURSELF OR PASSENGER INTO THE CARRIAGE.

Seat belts are for automobiles, not carriages. The driver should never enter or exit the vehicle unless reins are in hand.

THE DRIVER SHOULD BE THE FIRST PERSON IN THE CARRIAGE AND THE LAST ONE OUT.

NEVER LEAVE A PASSENGER IN THE VEHICLE WITHOUT A DRIVER WITH REINS IN HAND.

Once in the carriage, the driver should always carry the whip in hand. The whip in driving replaces the legs used in riding. The driving horse should respond readily to cues from the whip and not be startled by its use. (The horse should become accustomed to the use of the whip during ground driving.) The whip socket is meant to hold the whip when the driver is out of the carriage.

Before taking the driving horse out of the home environment, it should stand quietly upon command and for long periods of time, both on the flat and on a slight incline. The horse should also back readily, but only on command. A horse that suddenly flies backwards in harness is very dangerous. When a driving horse gets excited or in trouble, the best thing to do is keep the horse moving forward.

DO NOT ALLOW THE HORSE TO RUN BACK. A driver has no control of a horse that is running backwards.

Also familiarize driving horses with anything they might be faced with in public or on the road; such as street signs, painted road lines, storm drains, manhole covers, mail boxes, garbage cans, bridges, dogs, cars and trucks, horns, air brakes on large trucks, bicycles, joggers, skateboards, horseback riders, other carriages, umbrellas, balloons, water crossings, and sleigh bells.

If you plan to do horse shows, pleasure drives, polo drives or parades, the horse should be used to: sirens, flashing lights, marching bands, loud speakers, coaches, coach horns, and firecrackers.

When parking a horse trailer at shows or events, give yourself plenty of room to work. Do not be afraid to ask someone not to park too close to you. Make sure there are several “escape routes” big enough to get a carriage through in case you get into trouble once the horse is put to the carriage.

Do not allow people to come up and pet your horse once it is put to the carriage. The horse cannot always see the people because of the blinders on the bridle and may become startled with unexpected hands touching his body. Also keep people away from the wheels and back of the carriage for safety reasons.

On pleasure drives and special exhibition drives, make sure you can manage your horse in the presence of strange horses and people. Your horse should be content to remain 10 to 20 yards behind the carriage in front of you and tolerate numerous stops and starts. A well-mannered driving horse will not rush or become aggressive when passing another carriage or when being passed.

When driving on the road, the horse's feet should be shod with borium, or have studs put in its shoes for added traction on the smooth pavement surface. The back of the carriage should be equipped with a "slow-moving vehicle" triangle and reflectors. Know and obey all motor vehicle regulations, and obey all traffic signals. Use hand signals when making a turn. Drive the carriage in the lane, not half in the lane and half on the shoulder. By driving half in and half out of the lane, cars often will not slow down and use caution when passing. A car just touching the hub of a carriage can cause the carriage to flip over. If you feel a car or truck is approaching too fast for the safety of you and the horse, motion them to slow down. If a line of traffic is accumulating behind you, look for a safe place to pull off the road, halt, and allow traffic to pass.

Before driving cross-country, make sure you have permission from the landowners of the property you will be crossing, and be familiar with the trails you use. Often riding trails become impassible for carriages in some spots, and offer little room if any for turning around. Don't get yourself into a dead end.

If you approach riders while out driving, slow down and stop until the rider signals you to continue on. Many riding horses are not accustomed to carriages and spook easily at the sight and sound of them.

As a driver, if you can remember the safety precautions mentioned above and your horse can handle the common obstacles it may be faced with on the road and in public, then you are sure to have a safe, enjoyable time with your horse and carriage.



# SHOW RING ETIQUETTE

First and foremost of all procedures is to listen to your announcer and/or ringmaster for specific instructions. If they tell everyone to come in at a walk and line up, that is what you do. However, there are some standard accepted practices that you are expected to know. They are as follows:

## Entering the Arena

Always avoid crowding one another waiting for entrance to the arena. In many places, the entrance to the arena is also the exit. Therefore, be courteous and wait until all vehicles have left the arena. As turnouts begin to enter the arena, be sure not to crowd in. Maintain sufficient space to be safe. Keep your horse calm. Have a ground person help you to avoid accidents. As you approach the gate, wait until the person in front of you has created enough space before starting to trot in and turn to the right. If you were the first to enter the ring, you may have gone a full round of the arena and are back at the gate before all exhibitors have entered. If so, glance at your ringmaster. If he doesn't give you specific directions, halt and wait until everyone is in. Another possibility is to move off the rail and begin a second circle of the turnouts to the inside of the first. Once everyone is in the arena, find your way carefully to the rail.

## Maintaining Safe Space

Never follow so close that you cannot stop without smashing into the person in front of you! The very minimum you should give is a full turnout length. This space should be even greater at the strong trot. If you find yourself in a tight group, glance about the arena. If there is more room elsewhere, cross the arena and move to that space. (Don't run over the judge or the ringmaster.) If your horse or pony's gaits are faster than the individual in front of you, it is quite all right to pass. However, always come to the inside, never along the rail, and pass carefully, giving enough room for the turnout you pass before returning to the rail. If the entire ring is crowded, be extra alert. The judge may separate the class. Listen carefully for instructions.

## Changing Direction

Again listen for announcer's or ringmaster's directions. Most likely, you will be asked to come to the walk and cross the arena on the diagonal. After coming along a short side of the arena, cross to the opposite corner and

when you return to the rail, go the other direction. Usually, the ringmaster will choose someone to start the turn and all other turnouts will follow. Also, if you are the first person to complete the turn, you may arrive at the beginning before all entrants have turned. Just stop and wait quietly.

## Lining Up & Rein Back

When the judge has completed inspection of the turnouts on the move, you will be required to line up for further inspections and at this time, you will also be asked to display your ability to rein back. Instructions will be given by the announcer and/or ringmaster as to which direction to face in the lineup. The ringmaster usually stands in the center of the arena with his arms wide spread. You are to come in at the walk facing him. Always leave enough space between you and other competitors. If you feel your animal may have a hard time standing still, choose a spot at the end of the line. This will give you enough room to walk the horse off in a big circle and bring him back into the line. Never cross through the line, turn around and come back into the line. This is confusing and disruptive to other competitors. Some horses need to see others to stand willingly. If yours is one of these, keep him back just a bit so he can see the horses on either side of him. The judge will start inspections at one end of the line up. Usually you will be asked to rein back at this time. If your horse or pony is one that “parks” or “stretches”, ask it to take one step forward before beginning the rein back. Usually, three or four steps are sufficient. Return to your original position and stop. If your vehicle has four wheels, make sure your horse and carriage are in a straight line before backing, otherwise your turnout may jackknife instead of going straight. If the arena is outdoors or on uneven ground, try not to stop with your wheels in a depression, as this will make backing very difficult. Again, you may take a few steps forward before backing. This will get you out of the depression.

## Individual Workouts

At this time, the judge may place the entrants and ribbons will be awarded, or the individual workouts may be asked for. Several things could happen. The judge may dismiss a portion of the class and only ask certain competitors to do the workout. Listen to instructions very carefully. The judge may ask for figures of eight or circles, or any combinations of gaits and halts. Before you take your turn, it is customary to salute the judge. This is very simple to do. Put both reins in your left hand and raise your whip in front of your face. Lower the

## Show Ring Etiquette (continued from previous page)

whip. The judge will usually nod in response. Perform your workout and return to the line up. If you were so lucky as to be placed and get a ribbon, do so gracefully. Be extra cautious as your animal may act up during the process of receiving a ribbon or trophy. If it is difficult, go up to the person handing them out and ask to come back later to pick it up. Also, be ready as photos for publicity are frequently taken at this time. It is OK to have assistance as the judging is now completed.

## Leaving the Arena

Usually, horses and ponies are asked to walk out of the arena. Once you have passed through the gate, keep moving. Do not stop and create congestion for the people behind you, or those ready to enter for the next class. As with any competitions, check your local rules to make sure you comply with them. Some shows permit “headers”. That is a person who comes into the arena and stands at the front of the turnout during the line up. This is a safety measure as this person can help if the horse gets unruly.

## CLASS ROUTINE FOR PLEASURE DRIVING

1. Large classes should be split by the judge or technical delegate. The size of the ring will determine when a class will be split. The judge may separate the class based upon driver age, horse or pony size, or two-wheeled and four-wheeled vehicles. Final placing will be determined by a work off of the leaders in each split.
2. Excessive use of the voice may be penalized.
3. No turnout may leave the arena after judging has begun without permission of the judge or ringmaster. If asked to leave by the judge, the driver must leave immediately.
4. Minor adjustments may be made to the harness, upon permission from the judge, without incurring a penalty.
5. Enter the arena to the right at a working trot. The driver will show both ways of the arena at a walk, slow trot, working trot, and a strong trot, stand quietly and rein back.

6. WALK: should be free, regular and unconstrained with moderate extension. The horse should show energy, but be calm and even. The walk is a four-beat gait.
7. SLOW TROT: the horse should maintain impulsion while submitting to the bit and showing some collection. The horse should be steady with a regular cadence.
8. WORKING TROT: the horse should go forward freely and straight on a taut but light rein. The hocks should be engaged with the rear feet covering the prints of the front feet. The horse should be supple and balanced.
9. STRONG TROT: the horse should show a clear increase in pace over the working trot. Light rein contact should be maintained. The horse should extend, overstepping the front prints with the rear feet but remain balanced. Excessive speed or any apparent loss of control will be penalized. The announcer may signal by saying, “trot on” or “strong trot”. Listen for the commands carefully.
10. The horse must HALT squarely without veering. The horse should stand quietly with even weight on all feet.
11. When asked to REIN BACK, the horse should back straight for at least four steps. The horse should then stop, and move forward willingly to the starting position. Aids should be light.
12. Pleasure Driving will be judged 70% on performance, manners, and way of going of the horse, 20% on the condition and fit of harness and vehicle, and 10% on neatness and appropriateness of attire.

## CLASS ROUTINE FOR REINSMANSHIP

1. The class will be judged primarily on the ability and skill of the driver. The judge will watch for correct use of whip, hands, and voice. Drivers may drive with one or two hands. Posture and steadiness are important.
2. Drivers shall enter the arena to the right at a working trot. Drivers will show at a walk, slow trot, working trot, and strong trot, halt and rein back. Discussion of gaits in previous section.
3. All drivers chosen for a workout may be worked at any gait requested by the judge. The judge may request a figure eight or other pattern.
4. Reinsmanship will be judged 75% on handling of reins and whip, control, posture, and overall appearance of the driver, and 25% on the condition of harness and vehicle and neatness of attire.

## Show Ring Etiquette (continued from previous page)

### CLASS ROUTINE FOR OBSTACLE DRIVING – CONES

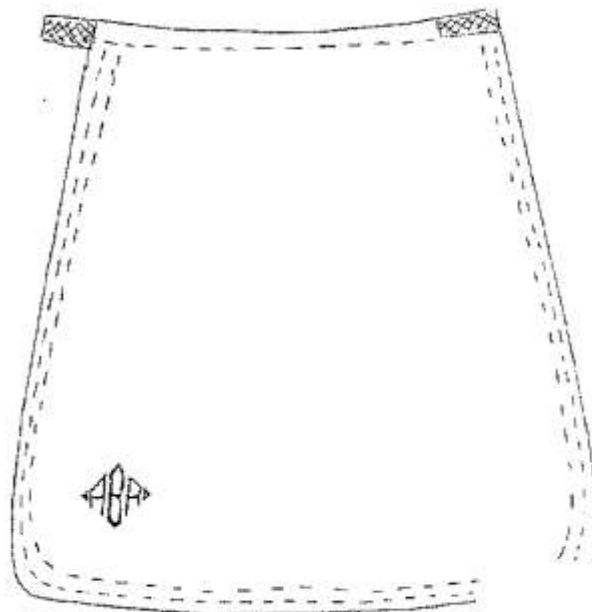
1. Driver, and groom if carried, should dress as for pleasure driving.
2. A horse may not be entered more than once in classes using the same course.
3. A person riding as a groom or passenger may not compete as a driver in a class using the same course.
4. Drivers will be allowed to walk and inspect the course. Have an attendant or groom prepared to head your horse. Any questions should be directed to the Technical Delegate, who will be situated at the course to receive questions. Horses may not be driven, led, or ridden over any portion of the course prior to the competition.
5. A practice obstacle may be provided.
6. The course is composed of a series of consecutively numbered cones arranged as individual (paired cones) or multiple obstacles (e.g. cones placed in an L, U, or serpentine). The right cone is marked in red, the left in white. A ball is placed on top. The course diagram will be posted at least two hours before competition begins.
7. The cones may be set at a certain distance wider than the carriage track of each vehicle. Thus they may have to be altered between competitors. Track width of the vehicle is measured at the ground on the widest pair of wheels. The inches are added to the measurement and the cones are set from corner to corner. If a whiffletree or splinter bar is wider than the widest wheel and is low enough to strike the cones, the measurement shall be taken off the whiffletree, but the cone set measurement shall be at the height the whiffletree is above the ground.
8. The time allowed is calculated by dividing the length of the course, in a driveable line, in feet, by the course speed. The suggested course speed for horses is 800 feet per minute. The time limit will be twice the time allowed.
9. Time is begun when the horse's nose crosses the start line and ends when the nose crosses the finish line. Start is marked S. Finish marked F.

## DRIVING THE CONES COURSE

The driver must be prepared to enter the ring when it is his/her turn. Drivers not ready at the gate may be eliminated, so it is important to be at the gate on time. Enter through the gate at a walk. It is a tradition in driving to salute the judge before beginning the cones course. This is done by driving into the arena and proceeding towards the area where the judge is positioned. Always remember when entering the arena to salute, not to drive between the start/finish markers or any of the sets of cones. The competitor may drive around the sets of cones, but not between a pair. Failure to do so will be considered off course and incur elimination. After reaching the judge, the driver should show his/her respect for the judge by properly saluting. The method of saluting is listed under Individual Workouts above. Following the salute, the judge will blow a whistle or ring a bell to signal that the driver may begin the course. The driver then has one minute to begin the course. To begin, the driver must go through the markers labeled “start”. At all times during the course, the red marker should be to the driver’s right side and the white marker to the left. After proceeding through the start, the driver then continues on through the obstacles (pairs of cones) in numerical order (1,2,3,4, etc.). After passing through the last numbered set of cones, the driver should continue on to and pass through the “finish” markers. The class is now completed. The driver should bring his/her horse back to a walk and exit the ring.

# DRIVING APRON DIRECTIONS

The driver should wear a driving apron. The apron serves to keep the driver's clothing clean. Remember that the driver originally was going to a social occasion and needs to appear neat and clean after driving. The apron keeps the mud or gravel that the fast trotting horse throws over the dash from landing on the driver's clothing. Therefore, the driving apron should cover from above the waist on the outside of the jacket to the ankle. When fitting or measuring the apron, it is wise to make it as long a possible while still being able to walk without tripping on it. When sitting in it, the bent knees will make it quite a lot shorter. Make sure the apron fits around the body so you can sit on both sides tucked well in underneath. The apron should match or harmonize with the carriage and its upholstery. It can be monogrammed or topstitched in contrasting colors. It is certainly not necessary or practical to spend one's allotted driving dollars on aprons of every color; therefore, a neutral apron is a good choice. There are several styles, both lined and unlined. Wool gabardine, with a hard finish, shows the least amount of wrinkles and soil. Heavy-duty wide Velcro makes a good and quick closure. A rain apron in a waterproof canvas is a good "extra" for foul weather driving.







# Safety Checklist

## CHECK THE HORSE/PONY

- ☒ General Condition
- ☒ Shoe Condition if shod—*shoes should be tight*
- ☒ Girth sores—*signs of injury, distress or poor hitching can cause girth sores*
- ☒ Signs of vision in at least one eye

## CHECK THE HARNESSING

### ☒ Cleanliness and Fit

• Breeching and Breast Collars relative to the haunches/shoulder: Breast collars should neither obscure the movement of the forelimbs nor impinge upon the trachea. The breeching should not sweep the hind legs from the horse/pony when in use and it should not slide up under the dock when not in use. It should also be tight enough to act as a breaking mechanism (about a hands breadth of space is recommended).

• Blinders: The eye should be centered; the cheek pieces should be tight enough so that they do not gap, allowing the horse to see between his cheek and the blinders, but not too tight so they cause the blinders to press against the eyes.

• Crown Piece: Should fit securely so the bridle won't slip off over ears.

• Throat Latch: Should not fit too tight, but if concern for bridle coming off, suggest adding gullet strap.

• Nose Band: Should fit snugly but not too low to inhibit breathing.

• Bit: Should fit correctly in horse's mouth. Horse can get tongue over a bit positioned too low in his mouth.

• Reins: The reins should be in the proper position. Reins in the bottom slot may be indicative of a problem.

### ☒ Condition

• Excessive wear: Harness and buckles should not show evidence of excessive wear or cracking.

• Reins: Should not show evidence of wear where attached to the bit

• Buckles: All buckles should be buckled; straps should be in the keepers

• Quick Releases: If used, are quick releases appropriately applied and are pull tabs/straps/cords set up to reduce chance of snagging and releasing inadvertently? Check that quick releases are turned with the pull to the outside.

• Safety Belts: If used, are safety belts appropriately fastened to carriage and releasable in case of emergency. *Note: Drivers with disabilities may have special requirements for safety harness.*

• Connection to Vehicle: Are connections to the vehicle taped where appropriate? *Note: excessive taping is not desirable.*

• Spares (optional): Spares should be in good condition. Rein and trace punches/splices should be appropriate to material that the harness is made of.

• Pole Straps or Chains: Should be proper length and properly fastened.

• Full Collar: If full collar is used, it should be the proper size and fit well.

• Breast Collar: Breast collars should be used with a carriage that has singletrees.

• Saddle: Should be positioned correctly, without pressing on horse's spine. If a 2-wheeled vehicle, the saddle should be wide enough to carry the additional weight on horse's back.

• Tug Stops: Should be properly adjusted. Wrap straps and over-girth should not be excessively tight.

• Back Strap: Should be adjusted to proper tightness to keep saddle in place and crupper in proper position.

*see next page*

## CHECK THE VEHICLE

- ☒ Wheels: are they solid with all hub bolts present?
- ☒ Bolts: King Bolts, Singletree Bolts and all other bolts: should be tight and in good condition; check for any missing bolts.
- ☒ Shafts/Pole/Singletree: should be in good condition.
- ☒ Brakes: If applicable, are they working properly? Have you checked the brake fluid?
- ☒ Harness: Check for any unattached harness or improper hitching.
- ☒ Balance: Is carriage balanced correctly?
- ☒ Shafts: Are shafts the proper length?
- ☒ Slow Moving Vehicle Sign: Required by law for any horse-drawn vehicle on public roads and should be attached on the back of the vehicle at least 3 feet

## CHECK THE DRIVER

- ☒ Helmet(s): Not required but encouraged for all persons on the vehicle.
- ☒ Control: Do you feel your horse/pony is sufficiently trained for this drive?
- ☒ Whip: An appropriate whip should be carried in the hand at all times when the driver is in the seat.

*Portions of this Safety Checklist have been reprinted with permission of the National Drive — Drivers should review the checklist prior to every drive. It is easy to overlook something in your hurry to pack before traveling to an event. Some things can be checked at home, others should be re-checked again, and others are last-minute items and may be easily overlooked.*





# Dairyland and Driving Club

[www.dairylanddriving.com](http://www.dairylanddriving.com)

*Dairyland Driving Club's primary goals are safe carriage driving and fellowship among members and guests. We are eager to share our knowledge and to promote education and safety in the sport of driving.*