



# PONY CLUB



# ACHIEVEMENT BADGES

## FIELD SAFETY

### Advanced Achievement Badge

#### Learning Objectives

Further understanding of how to enhance safety when handling horses/ponies in the field.

#### Syllabus

- 1 Mares and geldings
- 2 Which horse/pony to catch first. Awareness of the behaviour of the one left behind.
- 3 Being aware of clipped ponies/horses.
- 4 Understand that winter and less grass, means ponies may be hungrier, so more care needs to be taken to remain safe.
- 5 Knowing when help is needed to bring in/turn out horses/ponies.
- 6 Catching ponies/horses after school in the dark in winter.
- 7 Understand when it is less safe to skip out fields.

#### Teaching Ideas and Resources

- 1 Understand that mares and geldings turned out together may be a less settled group, generally with one horse trying to guard his/her friends. It is often livery yards where larger numbers of horses are turned out together. Discuss which of the class know of ponies/horses turned out in large groups. Would they choose to turn them out in these groups, or would they do it differently, and why?
- 2 Distribute a list of four horses, with a description of each of the horses' behaviour. Which horse would the members catch first and why? By adding other horses to the list, the answer will vary.

If catching one horse of two, how may the remaining horse behave, could this ever be dangerous?

- 3** Clipped horses and ponies can get cold in late afternoons or early mornings. How might they behave? (galloping, barging, being stupid, more likely to kick out). Divide members into pairs, which pair can suggest the most ideas to mitigate the potentially unsafe behaviour.
- 4** Hungry horses and ponies tend to be rough, pushing, barging and driving their companions away from food. Ask each member in turn to suggest a method of reducing the rough behaviour. (Feed more roughage, feed the same amount but divided into smaller feeds, feed at the same times daily, could hay be distributed into several piles along the fence so no need to enter the field? Catch the worse pony first).
- 5** Discuss horses/ponies that members have handled which ideally needed two people to bring them in or turn out. Are there any common characteristics among the animals mentioned? What help would have been useful?  
(Making the pony stop on the way to/from the field. Rope around the nose, natural horsemanship techniques)
- 6** Be aware that this is always more dangerous than handling horse/ponies in the light and should be avoided if possible. The dark reduces catcher's ability to see the whole situation and assess what is dangerous. The problems are on top of you before you have seen them coming. How can the risk be mitigated? (well-functioning gates, always catch in the same order, listen, listen, listen, for approaching problems.)
- 7** Secretly give each member a less safe situation and ask them to make a mini presentation to the class, saying what is the less safe situation and why it is less safe. (Wind, cold ponies, little food even in summer, muddy gateways, bored ponies hoping for a snack).

## Recommended Reading

- ▶ 14th Edition The Pony Club Manual

## Questions

- 1** Why might mares and geldings turned out together be a more volatile group?
- 2** How do you decide which horse/pony from a group to catch first?  
How might a horse/pony behave if left in the field on their own?
- 3** Why should you be aware of cold horses/ponies, especially those that are clipped?

- 4 Why should you be careful handling horse/ponies that are on less grass/hay in winter, or in summer when their grass is restricted?
- 5 When would you ask for help when turning out or bringing in horses and ponies? Who would you ask to help?
- 6 What problems can arise from having to catch horse/ponies in the dark.
- 7 When is it less safe to skip out the field?

## Answers

- 1 Some horses try to keep their others away from their friends, making all the group less settled and increasing the risk of being knocked over or kicked.
- 2 Usually the bossy/greedy one that is likely to cause trouble.  
Some horse/ponies dislike being left alone and can gallop up and down the fence, and in an extreme case, may jump the gate or fence. Often, they are difficult to lead in as they are upset.
- 3 They tend to be silly and strong to lead and are more likely to knock you over or tread on you.
- 4 Some horses/ponies that are, or imagine they are, hungry can become strong to handle, they can barge past you, knock you over or tread on you.
- 5 Any reasonable answer.
- 6 You cannot see what is happening around you, and horses/ponies' behaviour is often worse in the dark.
- 7 In high wind and rain, when ponies/horses have restricted keep, when there is a new horse/pony in the field, when the gateways are muddy and difficult to get through quickly.