



# Safe Tying Practices

By Heidi J. Potter

Things happen..... Unexpected stimulus, bee stings or other unforeseen incidents can happen while your horse is hitched up. Horses, being prey animals, are naturally claustrophobic. If they feel trapped while being threatened or scared, to the point of flight, they can seriously injure themselves or anyone nearby. Here are a few thoughts on how to help prevent this from happening.

Not unlike duct tape, baling twine has many different uses. Here is one idea on how to “recycle” the twine that seems to collect around most barns. Once your horse has been trained to give to pressure you can avoid serious injury by adding a piece of baling twine to your stationary hitching areas. The baling twine remains attached to your cross tie rings or hitching rail. You simply then attach your cross ties, or lead rope, directly to the twine. The twine will break if the horse pulls back in a panic, thus reducing the chance of serious injury to you both.

If you are using cross ties with panic release snaps on one end they should be attached to the twine, not the horses head. This leaves more room to safely release him if he is in a panic.

There are a few items on the market that also help to make tying your horse more safe. One of these items is known as the “Blocker” ring. This neat little device offers a few different tying options. Some of the options allow the leadline to release as the horse pulls back, but in a much slower manner. Therefore, if he pulls back in a panic he experiences a slow release and not firm resistance.

I also recommend avoiding cross ties made of stretchy, bungee-type materials. If stretched beyond their capacity they can break. The result can be a dangerous, fast moving, whipping piece of rope and metal, ricocheting around the horse and human.

Lastly, use a safety release knot whenever tying up your horse. That way you can quickly release and move your horse if the need arises.