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## Approaching a Horse Safely

**There are many things to notice about a horse before approaching them to make sure you are safe. This pamphlet provides tips on safely approaching a horse.**

### Blind Zones

Horses have “blind zones” where they aren’t able to see anything. The two blind zones are directly in front of the horse and directly behind the horse. They are defined in the illustration below. It is important to recognize these areas and approach the horse from the front, but never directly in front of the horse. It is preferred that you approach the horse at an angle from its shoulder

### Flight Zone

The flight zone is important to consider when approaching horses. This is the horse’s “personal space.” When a person moves into the horse’s flight zone it causes the horse to move away from the person that is approaching it. The flight zone is also shown in the illustration. The size of the flight zone depends on temperament of the horse and its experience with people. With frequent handling the flight zone will decrease in size and may even disappear. But if a horse hasn’t had much handling, has not had positive handling experiences, or is constantly approached head on, it will have a much larger flight zone.

The edge of the flight zone can be determined by slowly walking up to a horse. The point at which the horse begins to move away is the edge. This is the best place for a handler to work. The point-of-balance, which is located at the shoulder, is perpendicular to the point of the

body. This is used to move horses back or forward. To make the horse move back, the handler should stand in front of the point-of-balance, and to make the horse move forward they should stand behind the point-of-balance.

### Body Language and Expression

*Always* take notice of a horse’s body language and expression before moving towards it. Try to make eye contact before moving towards a horse. If the horse is turned away from you, encourage the horse to turn and face you before you approach. Learn to recognize changes in head, ear, neck, and body position, and facial expressions of the horse. These all indicate the horse’s mood or temperament. Be careful when working around the horse’s head, legs, and tail. If it becomes startled or irritated, the horse may move suddenly and injure the handler.

