



## SAFETY CONTRACT

All Willaway Farm programs emphasize creativity and responsiveness in relating to horses. The only rules we stress are safety rules and respect for the horse. Anyone who knowingly or maliciously breaks these rules is a safety risk for the entire group and, as such, will not be allowed to participate in the program. Horses are prey animals and are easily startled into flight or fight mode. The following guidelines will prevent serious mishaps and make the experience more enjoyable for everyone involved.

- Do not touch or feed horses you have not been introduced to or without permission from one of the facilitators.
- When leading the horse, never wrap the lead line around your hand. Do not lay the line over your neck or shoulder.
- Avoid standing directly in front of or directly behind the horse. When walking behind the horse to get to the other side, put your hand on the horse's hindquarters and move around him with your body close to his body. This allows the horse to know where you are and keeps you from stepping into kicking range (about 2 feet out from the horse's body). Children who cannot comfortably reach the horse's hindquarters are not tall enough to walk safely behind the horse in this manner and should always ask for assistance in walking around the horse. When two people are working with the same horse, they should stand on the same side of the horse.
- Do not hit nor yell at the horse. Physical or perceived physical violence only escalates the horse's impulse to run or fight.
- Stop what you are doing and move away from the horse or return to the neutral leading position when the facilitator calls a "Time Out" or "Loose Horse". Relax and breathe.
- As prey animals, horses are very sensitive to the feelings of their herd members as well as the human beings who interact with them. Feelings are a primary source of information to this species. Pay attention to your feelings and how these feelings are changing. If you get frustrated, fearful, or angry, call your own "Time Out" and reassess the situation. Do not hesitate to ask for help.
- It is not uncommon for human handlers to pick up feelings that actually belong to the horses. If you have distressing feelings that you cannot name or have no logical reason for, call your own "Time Out" and consult with a facilitator. Many instances of horse panic can be avoided by listening to and analyzing these feelings before they evolve into extreme behaviours.
- Do not hold your breath. Horses give and receive information through the quality and frequency of their breathing. Holding your breath or producing quick, shallow breaths conveys feelings of stress and fear to the horses and can cause them to become stressed or fearful.

I have read the safety guidelines above and will listen to the accompanying demonstrations. I agree to follow these rules to the best of my ability and ask for help when I am having trouble with any of the Willaway Farm activities. I agree to be responsible for my own safety and thus contribute to the safety of the group, the horse and everyone at Willaway Farm.

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_