

Foreword

For centuries people interacted with horses as part of their daily lives. They used them in war, as a means of travel from town to town, as equipment on the farm, as transport to school, and for many other purposes. In the 21st century, the horse is a recreational and a competitive tool and a pet, but not an integral part of our society. This has resulted in a different understanding of the horse's psyche, and widespread ignorance and misunderstanding of the horse's natural behaviour. Anthropomorphism (attributing human characteristics to horses) has crept in, often causing inappropriate human responses to a horse's actions and widespread beliefs such as 'the horse loves me' and 'wouldn't hurt me' because it is a 'good' horse. *Horse Safe* demystifies many of the current ideas of horse behaviour and motivations, and helps horse people see the patterns of natural stimuli that are the driving forces for horses' actions and responses. It covers the significant areas linked to interactions of horses and people in everyday life.

Jane Myers is well-qualified to speak in this field. She has a wealth of experience and knowledge in horse behaviour and responses, and is eminently qualified to write this book on sound philosophies of safe practices around horses. She has a strong background in academic pursuits, has written a number of books on horse care and keeping, has personal experience with horses covering many years, and recently has been involved with the Association for Horsemanship Safety and Education (AHSE) in Australia as a clinic instructor. That role involves her in assessing candidates as instructors and/or trail guides working in areas like trail riding, riding schools and camps, as well as private instructional situations. These workshops focus on the principles behind safe practices in and around horses.

Horse Safe includes the combined wisdom of the many staff who have run AHSE clinics for 15 years, and draws conclusions from joint discussions with over 1000 knowledgeable and experienced horse people.

One of the most outstanding features of AHSE clinics is the consensus of participants and staff that the general public knows very little about keeping safe around horses, and that most horse people either have not thought through the principles of safe horse handling, or knowingly break the existing rules! Horse people often excuse their inappropriate behaviour by one of three rationales. They believe that they 'know what they are doing' and can cut corners and still avoid the dangers, they do not believe their horses would do anything to hurt them, or they are confident that their responses will save them if something goes wrong. There are too many tales of experienced horse people getting badly hurt, even killed, using these rationales for inappropriate behaviour around horses.