

LOPING AREA ETIQUETE

1. Be aware of your surroundings

There are a million things going on at once in the warm-up pen. It is easy to get wrapped up in what you are working on with your horse. Be aware of other horses and people on all sides of you. If you are about to pull your horse to a stop, be aware of who is coming up behind you and how fast they are going. If you are going to steer in for a circle, make sure there is no one to your side that could potentially “T-bone,” you.

2. Don't be on your phone

Just like driving a car, distracted riding is not safe riding. Your phone takes you away from the immediate happenings of the warm-up pen, causing you to miss a warning sign from someone coming your way or causing you to accidentally walk into someone. If you need to make a call or text, pull over to the side of the arena and put your horse in park.

3. Be courteous to those around you who may not be paying attention

In a perfect world, every rider will be a tune to their surroundings. However, that is not always the case. Be aware of those who may not know the rules and may be wrapped up in their own situations. It is much easier to guide your horse away from a potential issue than to simply hope the other person will look out for you.

4. Go with the flow

This is one of the easiest rules to follow and can make the biggest difference in your warm-up experience. Often times, horses and riders will be going a specific direction. Reiners and Cow Horses, for example, may be circling to the right at the top of the arena, and circling to the left at the bottom of the arena. Go with the flow of traffic and do not try to go the opposite direction. When it is time for stopping, take that time and stop your horse, do not attempt to continue circling. Cutters will be loping a specific way as well. Go that direction until it is time to work in the the other direction. Faster gaits will work on the outside gradually working down to a walk in the middle.

5. Stationary maneuvers should be done away from traffic

Whether you are letting your horse air up, working on their patience or finessing a turn, keep these maneuvers out of the line of traffic. Move to the center or side of the arena, depending on which is less crowded. You will be able to focus on your horse without worrying about being run into.

6. Be heard, but be polite

Don't be afraid to be heard in the arena. You may be loping and need to move to one side of someone you are coming up on. Let them know by simply saying, “on your outside” or “on your inside” and ride on by. If you are fencing and fear you may run into someone, let them know by saying “heads up”. In all of these encounters, please be polite. We are all trying to enjoy ourselves and work with our horses.

7. When on foot, the horse always has the right of way

Whether you are walking on foot through the arena to hand someone a bridle or you just finished riding your horse and want to lead him out of the arena, be aware of the horses being worked around you. They are moving at a faster speed and it is more difficult for them to stop than it is for you. Look both ways before trying to pass through the line of travel. If someone is coming, they have the right of way. Once you have an opening to pass through, move with some gumption so you do not risk a collision.

8. Wait your turn

It can be difficult when you have a limited amount of time to prepare your horse, but you must wait

your turn. If you need to work the flag before your run, talk to the person in charge well in advance so you can get on the list at the appropriate time. This will lower your stress level and those around you. If you are trying to practice your run-in, wait in line to avoid any crashes.

9. Lunge in designated areas

If you need to lunge your horse before you show, be sure to take them to the designated lunging arena. Wait your turn and respect the boundaries that you may lunge your horse within. Do not try to lunge your horses in a warm-up arena that is filled with people riding their horses.

10. You are an ambassador for the sport

Each and everyone of us are an ambassador for the sport of horseback riding. How we treat each other and our horses reflects upon the industry as a whole. There may be people who are in the warm-up pen, or watching, for the first time. Let's make this a great experience for everyone.

We hope these guidelines help to improve your warm-up arena experience. We wish you the best of luck in 2016!