

FINAL
MNPC ARTICLE 15. ADDRESSING DANGEROUS BEHAVIOR

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this article is to ensure safe practice and play by promptly and fairly addressing any incidences of biting, kicking, or other dangerous behavior on the field during either practice or games.

Rehabilitation is the goal

It is the MNPC's sincere desire to help horses and riders succeed in playing the sport while also keeping our players and horses safe from undesirable behaviors.

DEFINITIONS:

The following definitions are provided for clarity surrounding what constitutes dangerous behavior and the application of this article.

Dangerous Behavior: Any horse/rider behavior that is typically deemed unacceptable by reasonable standards and threatens the safety of horses or riders. Examples of dangerous behavior are listed below:

Biting: Biting is defined as a horse's open mouth making contact with another horse or rider.

Kicking: Kicking is defined as a horse striking out with its back leg or raising both back legs in the direction of another horse. Distinguishing kicking from a horse striking out due to an issue with its wraps or bell boots can often be difficult. For the sake of safety, we will treat all acts of striking out with one or both back legs, regardless of whether contact is made, as kicking.

Green Horse: A green horse is any horse that has little to no experience with the game of polocrosse and can include horses that have recently been started under saddle and/or have not been exposed to riding at speed or in close proximity to other horses.

Grievance Panel: The grievance panel is comprised of 3 board members assigned by the MNPC president, with responsibility for addressing any kicking or biting incidents that have come to their attention, by direct observation or from the MNPC president or another MNPC member.

Incident: An occurrence of dangerous behavior that injures, or has the potential to injure, another horse or rider. Incidents include biting, kicking, rearing, and other uncontrolled horse behavior. This is generally deemed dangerous behavior.

Muzzled: Muzzled is defined as any physical method used to prevent a horse from being able to bite another horse, the most common being a drop noseband that is snug enough to prevent the horse from getting its mouth open to bite.

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Probation: The period and actions after an incidence where a horse and rider's behavior will be assessed against their agreed upon plan. The action plan and period of time for probation may differ per horse/rider as incidences of dangerous behavior are unique (striking due to a wrap/boot issue vs. striking out due to invasion of "bubble").

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

Riders are encouraged to notify others of a green horse in practice/play to gain support in ensuring that the green horse has a good experience and to avoid any incidents of unwanted behavior. A green horse can be identified with a green ribbon in its tail until the rider feels confident that the horse will not demonstrate any unwanted behavior during practice or games.

Other riders can support the integration of a green horse into the game in many ways, particularly during line ups and while introducing the horse to close play. As one example, riders could avoid running across the back of a green horse when getting into the lineup.

INCIDENT REPORTING:

Reports of an incident may be made directly to or by any grievance panel member, or via the MNPC board president. If an incident is directly observed by a grievance panel member, there will be an immediate discussion with the rider to ensure that corrective action is taken.

Incidents should be reported to a grievance panel member or MNPC president as quickly as possible and be described in as much detail as possible, to aid in addressing the underlying behavior. For example, include whether it occurred in a lineup or during a drill, what other horses were involved, what was happening just prior to the incident, whether the rider aware of it, and if so what actions were taken.

Riders are encouraged to take swift action in response to an incident in which they are involved. The rider responsible for an incident is encouraged to voluntarily take corrective action and redirect to another activity. Grievance panel members and the MNPC president also have the discretion to immediately redirect the horse and rider to another activity to ensure the safety of others.

Members of the grievance panel are available to provide suggestions for appropriate exercises and corrective action that a rider could take to address biting or kicking. The grievance panel will convene as necessary to evaluate the severity of any observed or reported incident of biting, kicking or uncontrolled horse behavior that may adversely impact others, and provide recommendations to the MNPC president.

INITIAL WARNING:

An observance of a first incidence of dangerous behavior that is deemed by the grievance committee to be minor (e.g. a horse kicking out due to wraps or a horse threatening to bite but not actually biting, a horse rearing on the field) will be handled by notifying the rider of the behavior, explaining the club policy regarding this type of behavior, and asking that attention be paid to curb/eliminate the behavior without the need for probation.

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CORRECTIVE ACTION:

Riders of any horses with observed or reported dangerous behavior will be asked to provide a corrective action plan to address the source of the behavior and corrective actions that will be taken to eliminate the behavior. Below are specific instructions for biting and kicking.

Biting:

Any horse that attempts to bite (to include muzzled horses) must be appropriately schooled to discourage the behavior. Riders of any horse with confirmed attempts to bite will be requested to use a drop noseband or other device that prevents the horse from opening their mouth to bite, hereafter referenced as muzzled.

Riders with horses that exhibit biting behavior will be asked to demonstrate the proper way to keep the horses head turned away from others so as to block the unacceptable behavior.

Riders of a horse that has been requested to be muzzled can request a trial practice without the restraint to determine if the behavior has been eliminated.

Kicking:

Riders of any horse that has kicked and made contact with another horse/rider will be asked to put a red ribbon in its tail to serve as a warning to other riders for a minimum of three months. Riders of any horse that has exhibited kicking behavior are also encouraged to put a ribbon in the horse's tail to warn others. The ribbon should be worn until the rider is confident that the horse's kicking behavior has been eliminated.

TERM OF PROBATION:

A horse will be on probation once there has been a confirmed biting, kicking, or other incident for the remainder of the current season. Terms of the probation will be based upon the corrective action plan brought forward by the rider. Probation concludes after the horse and rider demonstrate the elimination of the behavior during play (includes chukkas at practice and at tournaments) for three consecutive sessions, or after a full playing season without any dangerous behavior incidents, whichever comes first.

BANNED FROM PLAY:

Any horse serving probation due to a confirmed dangerous behavior with a second occurrence of that same behavior while on probation will be banned from play for the remainder of the season. A horse that has been, or is on, probation for a specific dangerous behavior (i.e. kicking), that then demonstrates another dangerous behavior (i.e. biting) will be subject to the determination of the grievance panel on application of probation or ban from play. A horse that is banned from play may continue to be ridden in drills so long as there is an ongoing effort and corrective action plan to rehabilitate the horse, and to demonstrate that the dangerous behavior has been corrected.