

SOUTH AFRICAN PONY CLUB



pony behaviour mini achievement badge

WORKBOOK



key points:

- ⦿ To recognize when a pony is angry, happy and sad
- ⦿ To understand how ponies live in the wild as part of a herd etc
- ⦿ To have knowledge of safety around a pony, e.g. where to stand, how to approach the pony and the reasons for this

name

branch



Ponies living in the wild

Herd animals

Why do ponies act like they do?

We need to see what their lives were like *before* they became tame and came to live with humans.

- They used to live in the wild as part of a family group called a *herd*
- If they stayed in a group, and in places they knew well, they could be safe from danger
- Our ponies also prefer being with their friends, in familiar places (like at home)
 - Your pony may be scared when you take him/her away from home (out on an outride, to a new place or into the arena at a show)

Prey animals

Since horses were seen as food by hunters like lions out in the wild, they had to be very careful. While the herd grazed or slept, a lookout /guard horse kept an eye out for predators, using its excellent sense of hearing and smell. If the lookout spotted a meat eater close by, s/he would warn the herd. They would either run away to safety or the strongest stallion would attack the hunter. This is called a *flight or fight reaction*.

- Our ponies respond to danger in the same way. They may run away from the threat (like 'bolting' back home when on an outride.)At other times they may attack the thing that scares them by biting or kicking
- Sometimes our ponies 'shy' at unexpected things, because things that don't frighten us do scare them. They may spook by running away , or refuse to pass it (preferring to stand and stare at it)
- Our ponies may become even more sensitive in bad weather , when it is more difficult for them to see, smell or hear danger

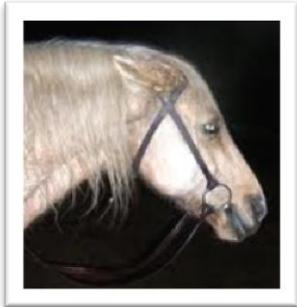
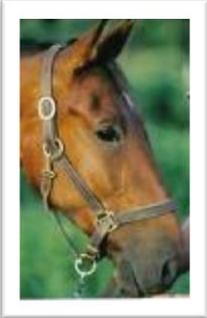
Herd hierarchy

Each herd is led by a mare, which is usually older and wiser. She controls what the herd eats and drinks, and where. She also keeps the herd safe.

- For our ponies to respect and listen to us , we need to act like the lead mare



A pony's feelings

How are they feeling?	What do they look like?	How can we tell?
Angry		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ears are back • Eyes are small • Nose is pinched • Teeth can be bared • Mouth is tight
Happy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ears can be forward or floppy • Eyes are open and watching • Nose is relaxed
Sad		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eyes are sometimes closed, or smaller • Head is droopy and neck is low • Ears are not listening

Safety around your pony

When you want to go and say hello to your pony in the field, how do you walk up to them?

- Wear closed shoes, and your hard hat. Take a halter, lead rein (and a friend if needed) with you. Avoid taking food along, as this could cause a fight between ponies.
- Respect your pony's personal body space when catching him, by not approaching him in the blind spots directly in front or behind him
- Walk up to his head/shoulder and give him a moment to check you out (extend your hand, palm down with fingers curled under)
- This mimics another horse extending his nose in friendship or greeting
- When your horse puts his nose into your space, he is asking who is dominant



- A medium, gentle, yet deliberate poke of a horse's nose on your hand indicates that he is saying "hello"
- However, if he moves his body into yours in an attempt to push you over, he is displaying dominance
- Step aside and continue to talk quietly as you put on the halter
- Lead safely next to your pony's shoulder



How do you think these ponies are feeling?

I feel...



I am ...

I feel so...



Who do you think the boss is in this photo? →
Explain why you think this...