



How Horses Communicate: Complete Horse Body Language Guide

in Horse Tips, Training Tips by Carmella Abel · 3 Likes · Share

UNDERSTANDING HOW HORSES COMMUNICATE

Learning to interpret a horse's body language is key to successful horse-human connection. Without a thorough understanding of how your horse communicates, you will find it difficult to train, care for, or enjoy your equine companion.

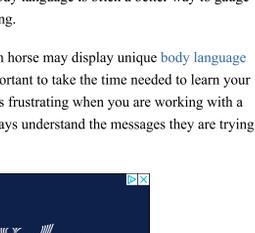
How do horses communicate? **Horses communicate through a combination of vocal cues and body language. However, when looking at horse-human communication, body language is the method that is most relied upon. Body language cues include movements of the ears, eyes, tail, and general demeanor of the horse.**

Whether you are new to the world of horses or simply trying to understand your horse better, taking a look at common body language cues will provide you with a greater insight into your horse.

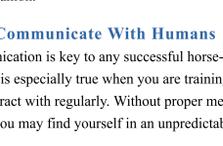
In this article, we will discuss some of the basic methods that horses use to communicate with both humans and other horses. We will also discuss some of the messages your horse is trying to send through their body language.

Horse Communication Methods

After spending any amount of time around a horse, you will begin to realize that horses communicate both through vocal cues and body language. Oftentimes, vocal cues are used more frequently in communicating with other horses. While an understanding of your horse's vocal cues can provide you with insight into their mind, body language is often a better way to gauge what they are thinking or feeling.



It is important to note that each horse may display unique **body language cues**. Because of this, it is important to take the time needed to learn your horse's cues. This is oftentimes frustrating when you are working with a new horse as you may not always understand the messages they are trying to send.



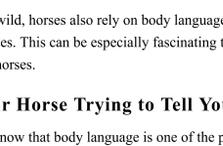
By investing in your horse by learning their body language cues, you will become a better listener, developing a greater ability to care for and train your equine companion.

How Horses Communicate With Humans

Effective communication is key to any successful horse-human relationship. This is especially true when you are training your horse to show, ride, or interact with regularly. Without proper means of communication, you may find yourself in an unpredictable and potentially unsafe situation.

Horses communicate with humans primarily through body language. We will take a closer look at some of the most common messages a horse may communicate later in this article. For now, let's look at the basics of horse-human communication.

A horse may communicate with a human through facial expressions, vocal cues, or body language. Many equine experts believe that these forms of communication go both ways. Your horse may respond to your facial expressions, vocal cues, or body language. Many times, you will find that your horse begins to associate certain tasks or movements that you make with a treat or activity.



How Horses Communicate With Other Horses

When it comes to how a horse communicates with other horses, you will find that they rely more heavily on their eyes and ears. However, vocal cues are also used frequently between horses to greet each other, warn of danger, or communicate other messages.

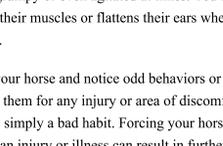
Especially in the wild, horses also rely on body language to communicate amongst themselves. This can be especially fascinating to watch, even if just among tame horses.

What is Your Horse Trying to Tell You?

So, now that we know that body language is one of the primary ways that your horse tries to communicate with you, how do you know what they are trying to tell you? In many ways, a horse's body language is similar to that of humans, making it easy to understand. Here are a few of the most common signs and what they may mean.

How Horses Communicate Illness or Injury

Perhaps one of the most important signs to understand is a sign of illness or injury. Learning how your horse displays discomfort allows you to provide proper care and work with an equine veterinarian before the injury or illness escalates.



A horse that is sick or suffering from a type of disease may seem reserved, quiet, and dull. Uninterested to participate in activities, they may eventually refuse to eat. Your horse's facial expressions may appear sad.

Many signs of injury are similar to that of illness. In addition to the dullness or lack of interest mentioned above, your horse may also guard the location of the injury. Additionally, the facial expression of a horse in pain may appear grumpy or even agitated at times. You may notice that your horse tenses their muscles or flattens their ears when they are experiencing pain.

If you are riding your horse and notice odd behaviors or movements, carefully examine them for any injury or area of discomfort before assuming that it is simply a bad habit. Forcing your horse to participate in activities through an injury or illness can result in further irritation or even physical injury to the rider.

How Horses Communicate Stress and Anxiety

Just like humans, horses can feel and exhibit stress. **Anxiety stress may be caused by travel, a new location, particularly difficult activities, or any number of environmental factors.** It is especially important to observe your horse for signs of stress during shows, competitions, or when traveling.

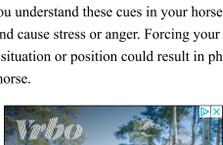
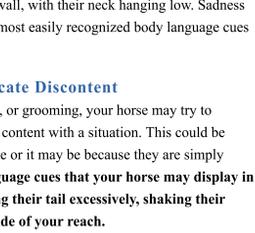


It is fairly easy to decipher the body language displayed by a horse under stress. Oftentimes, the ears will point forward with head held high and a stiff stance. Additionally, the eyes and nostrils may be held wide and the tail raised. If your horse is under stress, they may also begin to exhibit various involuntary reactions or ticks due to the response of the nervous system.

If you expect that your horse is under stress, do your best to create a peaceful environment in which they can return to a normal state. Chronic stress can have long-term effects on the health and happiness of your equine companion.

How Horses Communicate Sadness or Depression

There is not much that is sadder than a horse that exhibits signs of sadness or depression. Similar to humans, horses display sadness or depression through a dejected demeanor. **Most often, their eyes are held wide open while their ears remain still. They will seem disinterested in their surroundings and may even refuse food.**



Horses that are **trying to communicate** a message of sadness or depression will often stand still, facing a wall, with their neck hanging low. Sadness or depression are some of the most easily recognized body language cues that your horse will display.

How Horses Communicate Discontent

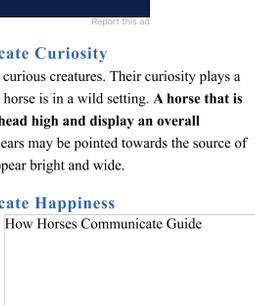
Whether while riding, training, or grooming, your horse may try to communicate that they are not content with a situation. This could be because they are uncomfortable or it may be because they are simply bored. **A few of the body language cues that your horse may display in this situation include swishing their tail excessively, shaking their head, or trying to move outside of your reach.**

It is crucial that you understand these cues in your horse so as not to exasperate them and cause stress or anger. Forcing your horse to remain in an uncomfortable situation or position could result in physical harm to both the horse and the rider.

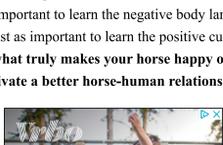


How Horses Communicate Anger

Understanding the signs of anger or aggression in a horse is the key to avoiding unnecessary injuries. Many equine-related accidents could be avoided if people would simply pay attention to the body language cues of the horse. Horses rarely react angrily without warning. By educating yourself on the body language of an angry horse, you can save yourself (and the horse) from unfortunate situations.



A horse that is angry will have pinned back ears, tense muscles throughout their body, and the whites of their eyes will be visible. Additionally, the horse could stomp or paw the ground or begin baring their teeth. If you find yourself in a situation with an angry horse, it is important to carefully remove yourself from immediate proximity until the situation has relaxed.

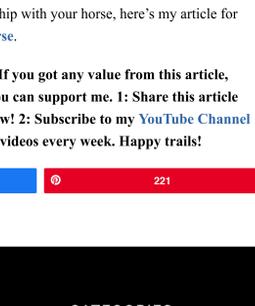


How Horses Communicate Curiosity

Like many animals, horses are curious creatures. Their curiosity plays a large role in protection when a horse is in a wild setting. **A horse that is curious will often hold their head high and display an overall demeanor of alertness.** Their ears may be pointed towards the source of curiosity and their eyes will appear bright and wide.

How Horses Communicate Happiness

The best body language cues to see in your horse are those of happiness and content. You see, not all body language is negative! While horses may not be able to "smile" in the traditional sense of the word, any equestrian will be able to describe a horse's smile.



Often displayed through half-closed eyes and a slight tilt to their necks, a horse's smile is hard to beat. Just as it is important to learn the negative body language cues of your horse, it is just as important to learn the positive cues. **Understanding what truly makes your horse happy or content will allow you to cultivate a better horse-human relationship.**



To understand more about how your horse is feeling, here's my article on **How Horses Show Affection**. If you feel like there's still some room for improvement in your relationship with your horse, here's my article for **How to Bond With Your Horse**.

P.S. Thank you for reading! If you got any value from this article, there are a couple of ways you can support me. 1: Share this article using one of the buttons below! 2: Subscribe to my YouTube Channel here where I'm sharing new videos every week. Happy trails!

Having Trouble With Your Training?



LEARN MORE

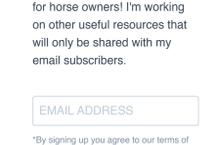
About Us



Hi! I'm Carmella. My husband and I started Equine Helper to share what we've learned about owning and caring for horses. I've spent my whole life around horses, and I currently own a POA named Tucker. You can learn **more here**. Thank you for reading, and happy trails!

Check Out My YouTube Channel!

Do you love horses? Then you'll love my new YouTube Channel! I'm sharing horse videos EVERY WEEK, so **Subscribe Now** to stay up-to-date.



Free Gift

Sign up for email updates to receive a free gift I made just for horse owners! I'm working on other useful resources that will only be shared with my email subscribers.

*By signing up you agree to our terms of use and to receive our email updates and offers. You can unsubscribe any time.

SUBSCRIBE

Legal Information

This site is owned and operated by Wild Wire Media LLC. Equinehelper.com is a participant in the Amazon Services LLC Associates Program, an affiliate advertising program designed to provide a means for sites to earn advertising fees by advertising and linking to Amazon.com. This site also participates in other affiliate programs and is compensated for referring traffic and business to these companies.



RECENT ARTICLES

- How To Fly Spray A Horse (The Right Way)
- How To Care For A Horse: Ultimate Guide for Beginners
- Top 10 Horse TV Shows (Picked By A Real Equestrian)
- Why Horses Neigh: Essential Behavior Guide

CATEGORIES

- Disciplines
- Featured
- Gear
- Health
- Horse Tips
- Lifestyle
- Riding Tips
- Seasonal Tips
- Training Tips
- Uncategorized

