WHAT HORSES ARE REALLY TRYING TO TELL YOU!
HORSES COMMUNICATE IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS:

They communicate with their entire bodies, including their:

• Ears
• Eyes
• Nose
• Tail
• Head/Neck
• And their voice
EARS

• If a Horse's ears are pointing to the back or side, it’s listening to something in that direction.

• It’s also relaxed.

Photo courtesy of Nancy Hoffman
EARS

• **If a Horse's ears are pointing to the back, it's listening to something behind it.**

• **It can also be relaxed.**

Photo courtesy of https://www.nps.gov
EARS

• **If a Horse's ears are pricked forward, that means it's alert.**

• **It has noticed something that's either interesting or frightening.**
EARS

• **If a Horse’s ears are pinned back,** it’s showing **aggression.**

• It’s **upset.**

• A **bite or kick threat** could follow.

Photo courtesy of Jennifer Ameigh
EYES

• A horse is usually looking in the direction that its ears are pointing.

• This horse’s eye is bright.

• He’s content but alert.

Photo courtesy of https://www.nps.gov
EYES

• **This horse’s eye is closed.**
• **He’s resting or sleeping.**

Photo from https://15minutehorsefix.wordpress.com
EYES

• **Showing the whites of the eyes** can mean a horse is feeling **aggressive**.

• **Watch out! He may bite, lunge, or kick!**

Photo from https://15minutehorsefix.wordpress.com
NOSE

- **This Horse’s nostrils are flared.**
- **This shows fear or nervousness.**

Photo from https://15minutehorsefix.wordpress.com/
NOSE

• This Horse’s nostrils are pinched.
• He’s feeling Aggressive. He looks like he’s ready to bite!

Photo from https://15minutehorsefix.wordpress.com/
TAIL

• **This Horse’s Tail** is hanging normally.

• He’s **relaxed and content**.

[Image: Photo courtesy of Nancy Hoffman]
TAIL

- This horse is swishing his tail at flies.
- He’s relaxed and content.

Photo courtesy of en.wikipedia.org
TAIL

- A HORSE’S TAIL THAT IS RAISED OR SWISHING RAPIDLY SHOWS ANNOYANCE AND IRRITATION.

Photo courtesy of [http://www.horseforum.com](http://www.horseforum.com)
HEAD AND NECK

• THIS HORSE’S HEAD IS RAISED.

• HE IS ALERT AND IS RAISING HIS HEAD TO BETTER SEE WHAT’S IN HIS ENVIRONMENT.

Photo from https://15minutehorsefix.wordpress.com/
HEAD AND NECK

• **Notice that the mare in this photo is holding her head more horizontal.**

• **She is relaxed and may be resting or even sleeping.**

• **The foal is sleeping.**

Photo courtesy of Nancy Hoffman
HEAD AND NECK

• A SLIGHTLY LOWERED NECK SHOWS AGGRESSION.

• DURING THIS TIME, THE HORSE MAY ALSO WAVE HIS HEAD BACK AND FORTH IN A MOTION CALLED SNAKING.

• WE SEE THIS BEHAVIOR IN STALLIONS WHO ARE FIGHTING OR HERDING AN UNCOOPERATIVE MARE.

Photo courtesy of http://www.horseforum.com
VOICE

• Horses don’t use their voice too often, but each sound can carry a general emotion or idea.

Photo courtesy of http://www.safe-horses.org
• Much like a human, a horse’s sighs can express boredom or relief.

Photo courtesy of http://www.safe-horses.org

Click here to hear a horse sighing. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAvG3pW8bjE
GROAN

• A HORSE’S GROAN CAN EXPRESS PAIN OR DISCOMFORT.

Photo courtesy of http://www.safehorses.org

Click here to hear a groan. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CfuJ8KQyrlY
**NICKER**

- **A NICKER IS A SOFT SOUND**
- **IT’S OFTEN USE TO SHOW RECOGNITION OR WELCOME.**
- **A MARE MAY USE A SOFT NICKER TO CALL HER FOAL BACK TO HER SIDE.**

Click here to hear a Nicker:
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4s3V1n2GVac](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4s3V1n2GVac)

Photo courtesy of Nancy Hoffman
BLOW/SNORT

• THESE SOUNDS ARE CAUSED BY AIR BEING FORCED OUT OF THE NOSE.

• THEY CAN EXPRESS ALARM.

Photo courtesy of Nancy Hoffman

Click here to hear a blow/snort. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtxecUYUH8A
SQUEAL

- **This is a high-pitched sound.**
- **It is used as a warning to “back off!”**
- **Stallions often squeal when fighting.**

Click here to hear horses squeal. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JWfWouuBgk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JWfWouuBgk)

Photo courtesy of [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)
BODY POSITION

- The way a horse’s body looks can tell you a lot about what it’s feeling.

Photo courtesy of www.nps.gov
ROLLING

- A HORSE THAT ROLLS IS FEELING VERY SECURE AND HAPPY.
- ROLLING CAN ALSO HELP SCRATCH AN ANNOYING ITCH!

Photo courtesy of www.zoocomedy.com
RESTING / SLEEPING

• The foal in this photo is resting sternally, which means it is resting on its chest (sternum).

Photo courtesy of Nancy Hoffman
RESTING / SLEEPING

- **Now the foal is lying laterally**, which is a perfectly normal thing for a horse to do.

Photo courtesy of Nancy Hoffman