



KITE FLYING and HORSES

These guidelines are based on an original text provided by David Ford and amended in consultation with the British Horse Society.

These notes provide practical advice for kite fliers of all types when coming into contact with horses. The guidelines are particularly relevant to Power Kiting, Boarding, Buggies and Stunt/Aerobatic Kiting because their ground position is often rapidly moving - but they also apply to single line kites.

Generally the sites used for kiting (downs, beaches and hillsides) are also popular with horse riders.

Horses are creatures of fright and flight - with the possible result of a frightened horse (weighing around half a tonne, potentially travelling at 45mph) tearing off taking all in its path - including you and your valuable kiting gear!

Horses can be unpredictable, fast, and they are very strong – whilst they are intelligent creatures with a mind of their own, some have been known to shy at a blowing leaf on a windy day! There are no reasons why Kite Fliers and Horse Riders should not get along together provided that both parties observe a few guidelines of good practice:

Kiters

Be aware of your environment – and keep a look out for horses approaching.

- Try to avoid them, but if you can't do that, then give them plenty of room.
- 50 Metres is a good guide as a minimum safety distance to avoid any problems, but if your kite is flying on a long line bear this in mind – it may land very close if the wind suddenly drops.
- If room is limited and it is practical, ground the kite and secure from flapping until any horse has passed.

Horse riders

Be aware of your environment and try and avoid areas where kites are being flown.

- Horse riders want to avoid trouble, but they must also avoid soft sand or uneven ground.
- The safest pace for a rider to pass you is at walk or trot.
- Horses may suddenly come upon you –
 - Ridden horses rarely travel faster than 15 – 20 mph (in canter)
 - Horses ridden at a gallop on the beach/downs may approach at up to 30mph
 - Loose horses who have been frightened by your kite and deposited their rider are much faster and therefore more dangerous !

Horses' vision is different to that of humans. Sudden movement overhead can lead to a 'spook' and the horse becoming difficult or unmanageable. Horses have an acute ability to detect movement, on a windy day they are much more alert to movement from things that are normally still and they now perceive them a threat.

- AVOID SUDDEN KITE, INDIVIDUAL, TOWED OBJECT MOVEMENTS OR SUDDEN CHANGES OF DIRECTION WITHIN 50 METRES OF ANY HORSE
- Consider carrying something to cut your lines with – in the case of entanglement.

Noise bears a very important part of the horse sensory apparatus, and it is similar in range and tone to that of humans - but far more sensitive. Horses' ears can also rotate about 180 degrees allowing horses to focus on the direction from which the sound is coming, isolate it, and if they don't like what they hear, run the other way!

- Sudden bangs, loud rustling noises, line whistle or a kite being stalled or luffed can frighten the horse.
- AVOID STALLING, LUFFING OR BRINGING A KITE TO LOW LEVEL OR GROUND WITHIN 50 METRES OF ANY HORSE.
- Try and reduce the sound of the kite by reducing load on the line/s and holding in a gentle hover/static flight mode.

Riders generally know their horse well, they know what will spook them and how to keep them calm.

- Listen to what a rider requests of you and do what they ask if you can, or advise them if you can't.
- Stay calm yourself and don't run about or panic
- Remember that inanimate objects can always be repaired or replaced – humans or animals can't.

What if it all goes wrong?

Spooked Horse (rider still on board)

- Communicate with rider (they have more of a problem now than you do!)
- Ask how you can help
- Avoid sudden movements or noises
- Minimise Kiting noise or activity
- Stand still at first until you see understand what is happening
- Walk calmly away from horse taking your Kite/s and gear with you if it is safe to do so

Loose Horse (riderless)

- A horse can change direction very quickly even at full gallop, 0 to 45mph instantly in any direction – so, unless you know what you are doing – get out of the way!
- If the horse is running directly at you – stand still as the horse should swerve around you.
- Be prepared to move out of the way if the horse doesn't!
- Don't run, because the horses' herd instinct will be to follow you!
- Locate and help the rider
- Unless you have handled horses before, be careful if you try and catch it – when frightened and/or injured they might bite or kick – especially if cornered.
- Call for help