



Meet Police Horses



photos courtesy Bill Richey

If you live in a city, you may sometimes see police officers riding horses. The Mini Page talked with a trainer of police horses to find out more about these animals and the work they do.

What do police horses do?

The animals that police officers ride have many jobs. They might be used in search and rescue operations across large sections of land or forest. In this case, a horse has to be comfortable in the woods. It might have to drag heavy things, such as fallen trees, out of the way. It might have to go up or down steep hills.

In the city, horses might help with crowd control. These horses have to learn to push into a group of people to keep or move them back. They have to learn not to be afraid of people physically fighting. The sights and sounds of a large crowd can be frightening to some animals, so trainers work on getting horses used to these situations.

During a parade, a horse might spook, or startle, at the sight of a large float, especially one that has objects floating overhead. Trainers work with horses to get them used to things flying around.



Mounted police control crowds at the St. Patrick's Day parade in New York City.

Mini Fact:

Officers on horseback can see a wider area and can move quickly if they need to.

The trainer's job

To do these jobs, horses have to grow accustomed to the sights, sounds and cues from their riders that they might encounter. Bill Richey, a former police officer and trainer, says it's the trainer's job to find out what spooks a horse, then gradually expose the animal to those scary things to help it get over its fear.

For example, if a horse is startled by gunfire, the trainer will back the horse far away from the noise. The weapon will be fired again, and the horse will learn that it's OK.

Then the gun will be moved a few feet closer and shot again. Next, the horse will be moved a few feet closer to the weapon, and it will be shot again. Gradually, the horse learns that the gunfire will not hurt it.

Richey trains both horses and riders, helping the rider properly direct the horse by applying pressure with his or her legs or other signals.

Older is better

A horse between the ages of 8 and 10 is ideal for training as a police horse, Richey said.

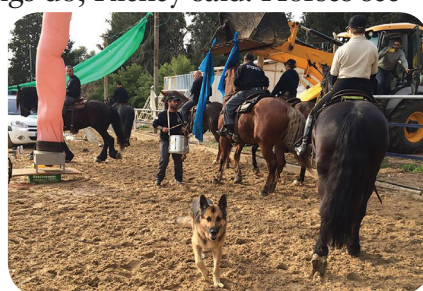
Richey's favorite horses to train are those that have worked as "pickup" horses in rodeos. These horses pick up a bronco or steer rider who has been bucked from his ride.



Horses are trained to remain calm around moving objects.

How horses see

Horses see things differently than human beings do, Richey said. Horses see only a few colors, so different objects may blend together. Horses might only see objects when they move.



Look at all the different objects in this photo that might spook a horse. Can you count at least three?

Also, a horse's two eyes see independently; their brains do not connect the images as ours do. A horse may spook more from things seen on one side or the other, or from things close up or far away. Each horse is different.

Caring for animals

When police horses aren't working, they are kept in stables. Most stables have pens outside where horses can spend some time running around or grazing.

"These horses have a real job, so police departments take good care of them so they can work," Richey said.

When a horse can no longer do police work, it may be retired to pasture, given to its rider or auctioned.

Resources



On the Web:

- bit.ly/2kHPf4T

At the library:

- "Crime-Fighting Animals" by Julie Murray

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of police horses are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



ANIMAL, COLORS, CONTROL, CROWD, FOREST, HORSE, MOUNTED, OFFICER, PICKUP, POLICE, RESCUE, RIDE, RODEO, SEARCH, SIGHTS, SOUNDS, SPOOK, STARTLE, TRAIN, WORK.

M C C O N T R O L S M Y N G Y
O S R O L O C J F L T I E E R
U E H C R A E S W F A H U D I
N S D E C I L O P R I C G I D
T O H O R S E S T R S C O I E
E E L T R A T S C E S G E N S
D T S P O O K O R Z A V E R E
W S P I C K U P S O U N D S T
K R O W C D A N I M A L C N Z
C W D W O R C W I T S E R O F

Cook's Corner

Oatmeal Applesauce Cookies

You'll need:

- 2/3 cup packed light brown sugar
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 cups applesauce

- 4 cups quick-cooking oats (cooks in 1 minute)
- 1/2 cup chopped dates (or 1/2 cup raisins)



* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

What to do:

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees; spray cookie sheets with cooking spray.
2. Using a large bowl, thoroughly mix the brown sugar, oil, vanilla and salt.
3. Stir in the applesauce, oats and dates.
4. Drop rounded teaspoonfuls of the dough about 1 inch apart on the cookie sheets.
5. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes until lightly browned. Makes 3 dozen cookies.

Puzzling

Unscramble the words below that remind us of horses.



dalsed _____
btsael _____
sneshra _____
cirgan _____

Answers: saddle, stable, harness, racing.

Mini Jokes



Hannah: What did the mare say to her foal?

Henry: "It's pasture bedtime!"

Eco Note



The din of traffic and other loud sounds of urban life are making birds easier prey for predators, according to a new study. Researchers from Vassar College in New York found that the noise makes it harder for birds to hear the alarm calls of other birds.

adapted with permission from Earthweek.com

Thank You



The Mini Page thanks Bill Richey, former police officer and founder and CEO of National Mounted Police Services, for help with this issue.

Teachers:

For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: bbs.amuniversal.com/teaching_guides.html

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