

HORSE COMMUNICATION



Photo courtesy of Nancy Hoffman

WHAT HORSES ARE
REALLY TRYING TO TELL
YOU!

J. Ameigh, 2017

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**.



Photo from <https://15minutehorsefix.wordpress.com>

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.**



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>

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.safehorses.org>

SIGH

- MUCH LIKE A HUMAN, A HORSE'S **SIGHS** CAN EXPRESS **BOREDOM OR RELIEF.**



Photo courtesy of <http://www.safehorses.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.**



Photo courtesy of Nancy Hoffman

Click here to hear a Nicker:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4s3VIn2GVac>

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**.



Photo courtesy of www.nps.gov

Click here to hear horses squeal. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JWfWouuBgk>

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