

ONTARIO TRAIL RIDERS ASSOCIATION



**CRITERIA
FOR
HORSE CORRALS**

CORRALS

Corrals are a welcome luxury particularly for overnight campers as they provide the best security for the horse. As well as the horse being safely confined it has the comfort of an area in which it can enjoy some mobility rather than standing immobile all night after a trailride all day. Meanwhile the horseback rider will be well rested knowing that his or her horse is in a safe corral. Corrals are the preferred means of containment in areas with a high bear population.

There are a number of criteria for corral building to ensure that they serve the purpose and are a good long term improvement.

A corral must be strong enough for a horse. It must be a style of construction that is safe for horses. It must be efficient and durable. It is recommended that public corrals be about 5 feet high. The custodian of the horse campground and the horse owner will want to see a low maintenance improvement that has a long lifespan.

Attached are several excellent examples of corrals in use in public areas. In this document we discuss their attributes and shortcomings in order that we may learn from them.

Location

The site chosen for a corral or number of corrals should be level ground, and free of obstructions and objects such as tree roots or rocks to avoid horses or handlers tripping. Do not erect a corral close to a significant hazard such as a cliff or highway. A solid foundation of dirt or sand is ideal. This foundation will be an asset in seeing that the corral is well erected.

The site should be within view of the campers for easy and continuous supervision by nearby campers. The corral must also have a clear area around it for horse handling, safe passage into and out of the corral, and it is recommended that a separation of at least 20 feet, preferably 50 feet, exists between a corral and any trail traffic, parking area, other structures or facilities. This separation would reduce tendency of a horse being startled by noise or activity, or congestion in the vicinity of the corral gates as horses are led in or out.

Wherever possible a corral should be situated reasonably close to any water source that is provided. Ideally a water hydrant should be between 10 feet and 30 feet from the corral(s). If the terrain is hilly, it is preferred that the corral(s) be lower than or level with the water hydrant, in order that water pails are carried downhill, not uphill. Of course this is purely for the convenience of the horse handler.

Materials

Corrals are often constructed of a heavy gauge, round pipe material. This material is strong enough for a horse, extremely safe, being free of sharp corners or projectiles. It is extremely low maintenance and has the longest lifespan. A round pipe 3 to 4 inches in diameter is required. Public corrals appear to range in height from about 54 inches high to 72 inches high. Attached is a photo showing a 3-rail pipe corral adjoining another pipe corral. Pairs of corrals are very popular. This is a very good well-erected pair of corrals, with one exception. The narrow connecting reinforcement rods are a potential hazard as they appear to be rough and might cause an abrasion if a horse comes into contact with the rod in a rough manner. Also a narrow bar such as this adds a risk that a horse wearing a halter might rub a halter by the rod and possibly snag a halter on such a narrow object. **See photo.**

Small Pipe Corrals

Attached is another photo showing 2 pairs of corrals. Each corral measures about 10x12 feet. Therefore each corral accommodates 1 horse. Corrals should not be any smaller than this size.

The diameter of the pipe used to construct the rails of these corrals appears to be about 2 inches; whereas the pipe posts appear to be about 3 inches in diameter with a rounded cap on the top of each post (a good safety feature). It is recommended that no smaller than these diameters be used to maintain adequate strength.

The only aspect of these corrals that is not recommended is the grillwork in the corral gates. Each gate includes wrought iron letters representing the name of the park; however, this creates a potential hazard as a horse might paw at the gate resulting in a foot caught in the gate. Never create small holes that a hoof and/or leg might get snagged in. **See photo.**

A Quadrant of Pipe Corrals

In this example a pipe corral is made with 4 rails, the maximum number recommended as more rows results in narrower spaces that add risk of injury. Two pairs of identical corrals are connected to make 4 square corrals measuring about 15 feet wide.

An added feature is that the center dividing wall being a gate can be opened to provide 1 large corral if you prefer an area 30 x 15 feet for your group of horses.

Another benefit to this model is the easy access in the event that the parks machinery wishes to have access to the inside of the corrals. **See photo.**

A Quadrant of Wood Corrals

Often wood is of inadequate size and strength to provide a lasting and efficient corral. In the illustration attached a very efficient set of corrals has been constructed of huge wood planks. These measured about 5 inches x 8 inches, and were bolted on to enormous rectangular posts approximately 8 inches square. The corral is about 6 feet high.

One set of corrals was a quadrant of 4 corrals, each measuring about 10 ' x 20'. In a corral measuring 10 x 20, 2 horses that get along can be stabled together. Another quadrant of corrals was repeated with an aisle between.

This was the best example of wood material corrals seen to date. It is a safe, secure structure.

Disadvantages of wood materials is –

1. horses eat it.
2. weather affects its lifespan

Poor Quality Corrals

At a private horse farm or ranch a corral might be constructed of cedar rails and traditional fence posts; however, for a public use facility and a long term improvement, cedar rails are not recommended as they can be easily broken and on the whole do not provide the ideal security, safety and durability. **See photo.**

If you have any questions please feel free to contact Ontario Trail Riders Association, P.O. Box 64704, Unionville, Ontario, Canada L3R 0M9, or contact us through our website www.otra.ca.

Happy Trails,
ONTARIO TRAIL RIDERS ASSOCIATION

PAIR OF PIPE CORRALS

Good construction of 3” diameter rounded, heavy gauge pipe
Narrow connecting reinforcement rod is only shortfall –
this is a potential hazard to a horse

(Free range cattle grazing outside the corral are attracted
to the horse hay – “*The grass is always greener on the other side*”)

(Rio Grande National Forest, Colorado)



2 PAIRS OF PIPE CORRALS

**Some separation between 2 pairs of corrals
Pipe corrals well constructed & well erected but wider round pipe preferred
Each corral measures about 10' x 12'. Corrals should not be smaller.**

**Grillwork in these gates should be avoided.
Could a pawing horse catch a hoof in a small space?
Could a horse rub the gate & snag a halter on a narrow reinforcing rod?**

**Good view of corrals for supervision purposes.
Good location away from trail or parking lot traffic.**

(Dead Horse Ranch State Park, Arizona)



PIPE QUAD CORRALS

**Best construction, safe, efficient, durable
Gates are on east, west & center sides of the corrals.
This is repeated with an adjoining pair of corrals.
Corral can be 4 square corrals approx. 15' wide or
opening center gates makes 2 double size large corrals.**

**Corral within easy view for supervision
Water hydrant conveniently located just 15 feet to the side**

(Turpin Meadows, Wyoming)



QUAD CORRALS

Good construction, safe, secure, durable
5 – 10 inch heavy wood planks on posts about 8 inches square
6 feet high
4 quad corrals about 10' x 20',
then 8' aisle separation & a repeat of another 4 joined corrals

Disadvantages of wood –
Horses & insects eat it & weather affects its lifespan

(Green River Lake, Wyoming)



POOR QUALITY CORRALS

A line of 4 connecting cedar rail corrals about 15' x 15' each

In one corral posts are leaning out & fence is falling over.

Horse would likely escape from 1 of the 4 corrals.

Lifespan is likely less than 10 years in this area of severe winter.

Cedar rails appear to be inadequate to provide a safe, secure, durable corral.

Water hydrant is about 200 yards away

& a horse handler has to carry water up hill to water the horses in the corrals.

(Elkhart Trailhead, Wyoming)

