

Safekeeping

Cross-tie Myths

by Ruthann Smith
©2007 Top Turnout, Inc.,
all rights reserved

Horsemen agree that it is preferable for a horse to break the cross-ties rather than injure himself. And, if the ties don't break, someone will usually get hurt. Unfortunately, most people have beliefs about cross-ties that are not based in truth. They are about what they think will happen, instead of what really does. This article will share the easiest and most effective safe cross-tie practices for every barn.

- **Do not use baling**

twine. It can have different properties. And, I have never seen it break except for a strand that was at least 20 years old. For a number of reasons to follow, there are easier, more reliable and attractive solutions. Baling twine is out. Now we have better options that are also essentially free.

- **Refocus.** If the safety breakaway is at the wall, when the horse shoots back, the tie whips around and hits everyone in the head. You can really get hurt. And, it spooks the horse into becoming defensive on the ties. If it does not break (most baling twine won't), the horse sits back and slips, likely straining something. In short, by planning the break at the wall, you are increasing the propensity for you and your horse to get severely hurt.

- **Break at the halter.** If the breakaway is at the halter and works, you solve a lot. Usually the horse stops when one side breaks. So, he is less apt to injure himself. And, the tie falls away from you and your horse. Avoid the snowball effect by putting the break at the halter.

- **Pick a side.** While two breakaways are fine, one usually does the trick. When the horse starts to blow, just stand back. Most horses will stop when one side lets go. If I am braiding, I put the break on the right side, so it



About the author: The lack of healthy and effective grooming products inspired Ruthann Smith, world-class groom and braider, to develop the economical Lucky Braids™ solutions: All-In-One Shampoo, Whitener/Dry Wash enzymatic spray, Handy Salve and braiding products prized by top horsemen. For more grooming tips, please join at: www.luckybraids.com.



PHOTO: RUTHANN SMITH

Yarn or cable ties break when they should. The cable tie on the cheek ring is for a pony. Horses can go to the bigger and more standard size.

Grooming halters are great!

FOR:

- Use in barn, on ties or in stall; not leading outside.
- Easy, vigorous and relaxing face cleaning and toweling; feels good!
- Avoiding injury. A worried horse usually runs backward. Without snowballing panic and getting hurt, a horse will usually slip out of a well-fitted grooming halter easily enough. So, when the horse starts to sit back on the cross-ties, just step away and wait with a calm “whoa.” He generally won't go far when it releases. Then you can instill confidence and regrop. ❖

releases before knocking me off the ladder.

- **Keep it simple.** The best answer is also the easiest. I like to use a medium weight cable tie. That's right, a ZIP TIE. It will break when it should. Plus, it looks neat when left on the halter. A great idea is to buy a big pack and give them away.

- **When you use yarn as a breakaway device, fold three pieces in half.** Tie a loop onto the halter ring with three knots. Cut the fray for neatness. That loop will break well. Braiders use a yarn breakaway for tying horses in stalls with great success.

- **Leads should not break.** Be sure to attach a leadline to the halter, not the breakaway. When leading, you want don't want your equipment to fail. Let go if you will, but if you have the rope, you don't want it to