



4-H Horse and Mule Packing



Horses were used to carry loads long before they were used to carry people. Horse packing as we know it was developed hundreds of years ago. Genghis Khan is believed to have first used horses as pack animals 700 years ago.

Horse packing provides opportunities to enjoy nature in a way that is otherwise difficult to achieve. It requires a great deal of basic skill and knowledge. To achieve these skills and knowledge, it is necessary to study, to pay attention to details and to practice.

Packing has developed to the point where it is a combination of art and science. Packers take pride in their animals and in their ability to pack them in a professional manner.

The art of packing is not learned overnight, but takes many hours of study, practice and actual packing.

Objectives

The goal of this program is to provide an opportunity for 4-Hers to learn:

- The types of equipment available and packing equipment needed
- To handle, care for and pack the mature equine
- What to take on a pack trip, how much and what makes for a successful pack trip
- To accept the results of your work and how to use these in planning goals and future endeavors
- To develop skills and knowledge which can be used for a lifetime as a means of enjoyment and/or a career
- To share knowledge gained with others

Recommended references:



Hoverson, Bob, *The Packer's Field Manual*, Stevensville, MT, Stoneydale Press Publishing Company, 2005

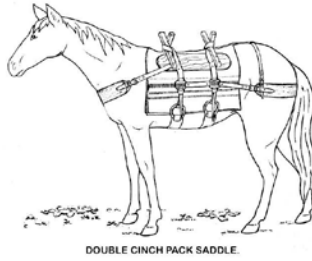
Elser, Smoke & Brown, Bill, *Packin' in on Mules & Horses*, Missoula, MT; Mountain Press Publishing, 1980

Davis, Francis W., *Horse Packing in Pictures*, Second Edition, NY, Howell Book House, 1991

Hill, Oliver, *Packing and Outfitting Field Manual*, B636R, University of Wyoming, Bulletin Room, P.O. Box 3313, Laramie, WY, 82071

Project Outline:

The following is an outline of basic equipment, knowledge and skills needed for successful packing.



1. Selection of the Pack

Animal - This is very important, since your pack animal is a critical part of any packing. A good pack animal should be stout and rugged and have sound feet and legs. Prominent withers is also desirable to help keep a saddle and pack from slipping off to the side. Your pack animal should also have a gentle disposition and be healthy. Some people use horses while others use mules or burros.

2. **Care of the Pack Animal** - Pack animals should be well cared for and should be groomed, fed, shod and handled properly.

3. **Pack Equipment**-Good and proper equipment is essential. This should include the following:



- a. Pack saddle-several styles are available (fitted to animal)
- b. Good, clean saddle pad(s)
- c. A stout halter with a 10-12 foot long halter rope
- d. A pack cover, or manty (manta/mantee-Spanish for horse blanket); This cover of canvas can vary in size from 7 X 8 ft. or 8 X 8 ft., depending on intended uses. If you manty everything, you will need at least two per horse.
- e. For slinging the manty packs, you will need a pair of sling ropes (half-inch by 25-30 feet each).
- f. A 30 to 35 foot length of three-eighths inch rope to tie a manty over a bale, bedroll, tent or whatever. Number of manty ropes (eye-spliced on one end and back-spliced on the other)



should equal the number of manties you have.

g. **Panniers** (pronounced "panyards"), in good repair (may be soft-sided or solid-sided); Panniers are the pack boxes used on pack saddles. They can be made of canvas, rawhide, wood or other materials. Hobbles and/or picket ropes and highlines with tree savers - this depends on training of pack and riding stock.



- i. A lash cinch, with a 45 foot lash rope (half-inch diameter) - Carry a spare.

4. **Loading and Packing** - A very important factor is how much weight your pack horse can carry. A horse/mule can carry up to 20 percent of his body weight (including the weight of the saddle).

5. **Balancing the Load** - Weight and balance of the load is very important to avoid sores on your pack animal. It also determines how well your pack rides. You should have a portable scale that can weigh loads up to 100 pounds.

6. **On the Trail to New Experiences** - Proper handling of horses on the trail is very important. On the trail your horse should receive priority treatment. If you pack with a string of horses, tie them together but never tie a pack horse to your saddle. Instead, dally the rope around your saddle horn a turn and lead your pack animals. Be alert and cautious since you never know when a "rodeo" may start!

7. **Safety**- Always make safety a priority in every situation!



Other things you'll need to know:

In order to achieve the art of packing and have a successful pack trip, you will need to have additional knowledge about:

- Camping equipment needed
- Type and amount of horse feed
- Other horse equipment and supplies needed
- Cooking equipment
- Food and menus
- First aid supplies for humans and horses
- Personal gear
- Ropes, knots and splices-You will need to know types of ropes, uses and knots for preparing gear.
- Hitches-There are many different hitches that can be used in packing You need to know several of these, for what type of pack (load) they are used an how they are tied.
- Trip itinerary-Details about the trip: time, route, destination, topography, maps, etc.

This project will assist 4-H members in developing decision-making skills and in developing an inquiring mind. Members will need to seek out references and the assistance of people who have expertise in packing.

Members will have to determine what type of equipment they want to use and how to use it. These are just a few the many decisions they will need to make in this project.

Assessment List for Packing

Level 1

- 1. The member can describe three conformation traits of a good pack horse.
- 2. The member can describe proper care of a pack animal.
- 3. The member can name two styles of pack saddles.
- 4. The member can explain why a clean saddle pad is essential.
- 5. The member can describe a proper halter and rope for leading a pack horse.

Possible Fair Exhibits

The following are examples that could be developed for fair exhibit(s):

- Pair of panniers-made by exhibitor
- Pack saddle tree, Decker or Sawbuck-made by exhibitor
- Complete pack saddle, Decker or Sawbuck-made by exhibitor
- Notebook on pack trip-start to finish
- Poster(s) or display of knots, splices, hitches, equipment needs, menus and food needed, trip itinerary
- Poster and/or display about safety

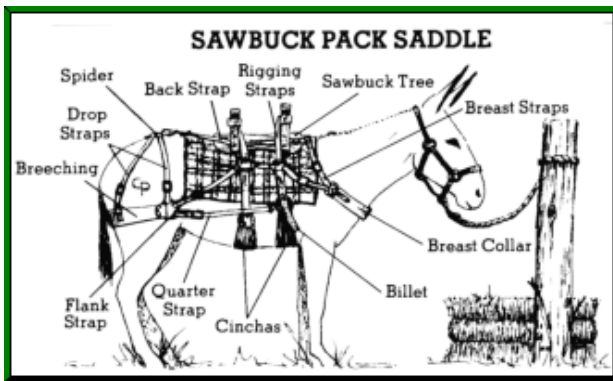
4-H members may develop demonstrations and speeches related to packing. Members may also share knowledge and experiences with others in the area or leadership.

Additional References:

- Back, Joe, *Horses, Hitches and Rocky Trails*, Chicago, The swallow Press, Inc., 1959
- Davis, Francis W., *Horse Packing in Pictures*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975
- Miller, Robert W., *Guide for Using Horses in Mountain Country*, Bozeman, MT, Montana Wilderness Association, 1974
- Hoverson, Bob, *Mule Packing-Decker Style* [DVD], Inghram, Roger (Videographer), Stoneydale Press Publishing Co., Stevensville, MT, 2006



- 6. The member can demonstrate proper grooming of the animal prior to saddling.
- 7. The member can identify the type of pack saddle (Decker or Sawbuck).
- 8. The member can name and identify the parts of a pack saddle.
- 9. The member has read an article or book or viewed a video about packing.



- 26. The member can tie the following hitches: Basket hitch and Barrel hitch
- 27. The member will design a display for an exhibit.

Level 4

- 28. The member can explain proper use of hobbles and/or picket ropes.
- 29. The member can explain proper highlining equipment and use.
- 30. The member must demonstrate proper hobbling and/or picketing of his or her horse and highlining.
- 31. The member can explain basic equine first aid. (Ex. Bute, Banamine, Vetrap)
- 32. The member must plan a pack trip for two people and four horses for four days, including all equipment, feed, menus, food and travel itinerary.
- 33. The member will give a demonstration about packing.
- 34. The member will carry out an overnight pack trip.

Level 5

- 36. The member will carry out a pack trip of two to five days.
- 37. The member will plan a pack trip of over four days, including transportation and all costs associated with number 32.
- 38. The member will teach a club or group how to pack.

Level 2

- 10. The member can select a halter and lead rope appropriate for packing.
- 11. The member can describe what a lash cinch is and how it is used.
- 12. The member can select a proper manty for a given use.
- 13. The member can explain the use of the manty.
- 14. The member can explain the use of manty ropes.
- 15. The member can select and explain the use of sling ropes.
- 16. The member can describe two types of panniers and how they are used.
- 17. The member can explain three important safety factors in leading pack stock.

Level 3

- 18. The member can explain the importance of weighing the packs.
- 19. The member can explain the importance of balancing the load.
- 20. The member can list the most important factors in packing horses.
- 21. The member can properly manty a load. (Suggested demonstration load: straw or hay bale or sack of grain)
- 22. The member can demonstrate balancing of pack weights.
- 23. The member can properly sling the mantied loads on the pack horse.
- 24. The member can properly balance pannier weights.
- 25. The member can properly load the panniers on the horse.

