

# Working with Packers and Packstock

## Trail Skills 306

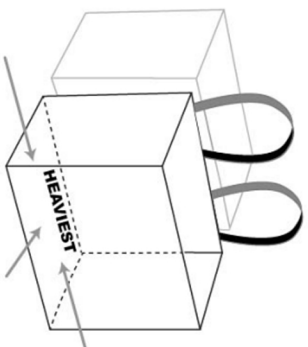
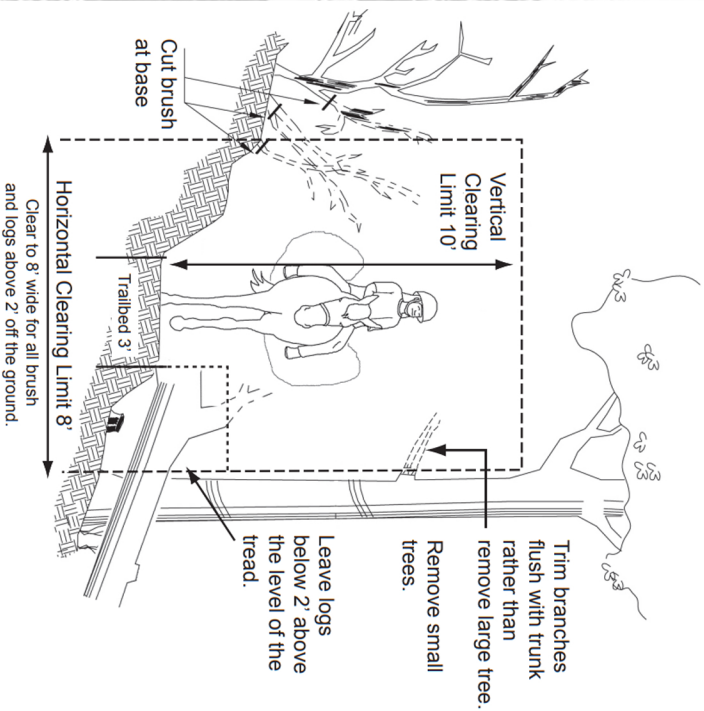


Image 5. Internal weight distribution inside panniers. (IMAGE BY SUE FORSMAN.)

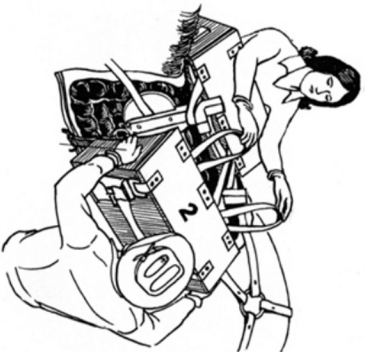
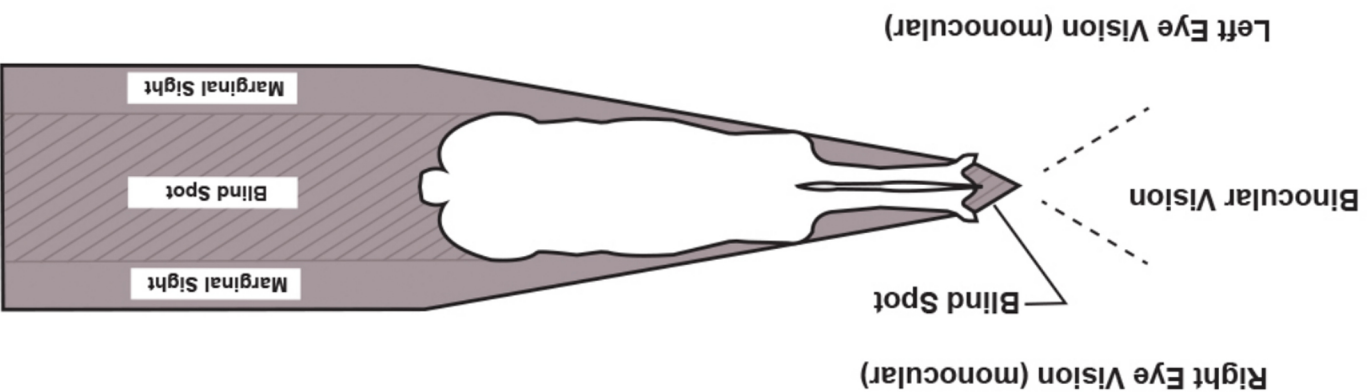


Figure 8. Teamwork is essential when loading packstock. (IMAGE FROM HORSEPACKING IN PICTURES, FRANCIS W. DAVIS.)

Figure 3. A horse's fields of vision. (IMAGE FROM EQUESTRIAN DESIGN GUIDEBOOK FOR TRAILS, TRAILHEADS, AND CAMPGROUNDS, USDA FOREST SERVICE.)





# Safety

Be mindful of what is going on around your work area. You may be able to prevent a mishap before it escalates. With animals, if something scares one, there is likely to be an instant chain reaction. If this happens it is usually best to step back out of the way of all the trail stock and wait it out.

Never pass in front and step over a **lead rope** of an equine when it is tied up. When approaching equine watch their ears, this indicates where their eye is focused. If they pin both their ears or bare their teeth – STOP. Do not go near. If they act like they want to bolt – STOP. Do not go near. Tail swishing, pulling back on lead rope are other indicators of something wrong. In other words, keep your distance if they are doing anything other than standing patiently.

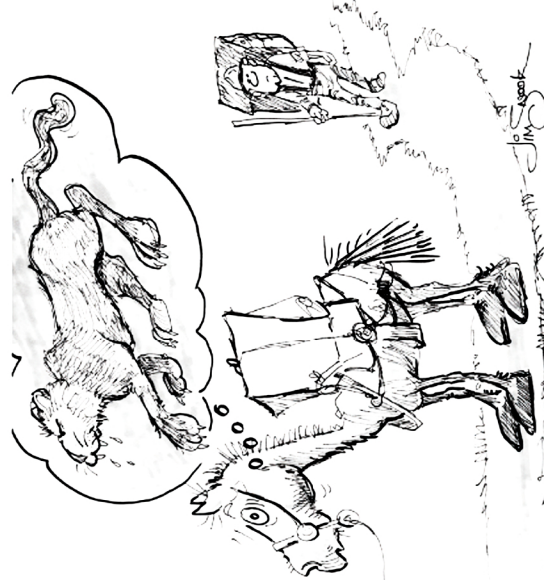


Figure 2. Horses are always on the lookout for predators. (IMAGE BY JIM SNOOK - PRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM THE BACKCOUNTRY HORSEMEN OF WASHINGTON.)

**Packstock:** (aka pack animals) animals carrying gear for trail users or workers, loaded with panniers, side boxes or gear lashed to a frame on the animal. Most common packstock are horses or mules, but can include llamas and even goats. The wide loads, especially when several animals are strung together along a trail, require the wide clearing limits specified for the PCT. Llamas and goats can also be trained to carry a load.

**Pack String:** a group of packstock tied together in strings of usually up to six animals, often led by a single mounted or walking person. Loaded with panniers, boxes or tools, such a pack string needs every inch of PCT clearing limits, especially on corners.

**Pack Saddle:** Designed just for packing loads.

**Saddle Pad:** Needed under the saddle for animal comfort.

**Pannier:** Containers that hang off the packsaddle; one on each side. Can be made of canvas, wood or plastic.

**Bear Boxes:** metal or thick plastic resin containers with bear-resistant closures, often designed as panniers for pack stock.

**Tail Up:** Tie the packstock head to tail.

**Manty:** Gear bundled and tied in a canvas tarp then tied on the side of a packsaddle.

**Top Pack:** Preferably soft gear tied in a bundle and tied on top of packsaddle and panniers.

**Lead Rope:** A rope, usually attached to a halter, used to lead an animal

**Bite/Bitter End:** Bite is middle of a rope. Bitter end is the untied tail end.

**Tool Can:** A deep narrow plastic trash can adapted for use hauling trail tools via pack stock.

**Highline:** Rope strung tight between trees.

Packstock are then tied to the highline instead of being tied to trees, thus avoiding damage to trees.

## Not So Easy for Packers

Ice chest or cooler larger than 48 quarts

Two coolers different sizes and weights

Big bulky plastic containers that do not fit inside pannier bags (and also do not have their own harness straps)

Straps or decker hooks missing from bear boxes or panniers (exception: straps or hooks not needed if packer plans to manly the boxes)

Lots of extra tools

Sharp ends of tools not covered

Cast iron cookware

Glass containers

Five gallon steel propane tank

Large, heavy, multi-burner stove

Large camp lanterns

Bulky, rigid water containers

## Easier for Packers

Ice chest or coolers 48 quarts or smaller often fit inside pannier bags or on platform carriers.

Coolers of the same size and weight

Rigid plastic lidded buckets or tubs that will fit inside pannier bags. Square buckets are more space-efficient than round ones.

Pannier boxes complete with straps to hang from **pack saddle** or decker hooks

Minimum number of trail tools for job

Covered tool blades; and, with trash can style tool carrier, reinforced container bottom

Lightweight cookware

Food carefully repackaged for transport

A pair of matching 2-gallon or 1-gallon tanks. Fiberglass tanks are lighter than steel.

Lightweight 2-burner camp stove

Small camp lantern

Collapsible water containers

Gravity bag style water filter



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