

# Safety for Horses During Hunting Season

By [Heather Smith Thomas](#) | Sep 13, 2007 | Topics: [Safety](#)

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Horse owners often worry about safety of their animals during hunting seasons, especially if the horse's color might be mistaken for a deer or other large game animal. Fortunately, there are some simple steps you can take to help distinguish your horse as a domesticated animal, rather than a potential target.



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**Visibility is key for horses pastured during hunting season, particularly if the animal is similar in color to common large game.**

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## In Pasture

Fenced pastures are generally off limits to hunters without landowner permission, but it still helps to put signs along the fence stating it's private property. Check the hunting laws in your state--some state regulations require signage on the property to show no hunting is allowed. Painting every few posts fluorescent orange can also help to alert hunters.

If you feel your horses might still be at risk, take steps to protect them. If they are turned out only part time, avoid putting them out during times of poor visibility, such as dawn or dusk, or during foggy weather. If you have options, keep them in pens or pastures close to your house and barnyard during hunting seasons, rather than in an outlying field.

To make sure horses are easily identifiable as domestic animals, bright colored cloth or ribbon can be braided into manes and tails. If your horse wears a halter, make sure it's a bright color. Hunter-safe horse clothing is also available. [Protectavest](#), a Windham, Maine-based company that touts "If it can be shot at, we'll cover it in blaze orange," makes bright orange pasture "vests" for horses. The vests are basically the front half of a horse blanket. They also offer orange tail bags made of the same material. An orange horse collar that goes around the neck and fits under the throatlatch is safe for a horse at pasture, as the hook-and-loop closure tears loose if the collar becomes caught on something.

## **While Riding**

If you have a choice, avoid riding on public land during hunting season, especially in wooded or brushy areas.

The more bright color on your horse, the better. Some riders put a red or orange blanket over their regular saddle pad. Protectavest offers trail sheets to fit over the pad and under the saddle, covering the entire hind end of the horse like a quarter sheet. The company also makes orange dog vests, since many riders take their dogs along on rides.

When riding, always wear brightly colored clothing, such as bright blue, red, or orange--something that would never be mistaken for a wild animal. Avoid tans, browns, white, or light colors. A blaze-orange vest to put over your shirt or coat can be purchased at any sporting goods outlet. A bright orange helmet cover can also be used.

Another tip when riding through wooded or brushy country where visibility is poor: make sure a hunter can hear you even if he can't quite see what you are. Some riders tie small bells to their breast collar or other areas of tack so there is constant jingling as the horse moves. Singing and talking are good, but the bells give a constant signal that you and your horse are not a game animal.

By taking a few simple steps, you can make your horse's identity clear and reduce the risk of an accident.

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



### Heather Smith Thomas

Heather Smith Thomas ranches with her husband near Salmon, Idaho, raising cattle and a few horses. She has a B.A. in English and history from University of Puget Sound (1966). She has raised and trained horses for 50 years, and has been writing freelance articles and books nearly that long, publishing 20 books and more than 9,000 articles for horse and livestock publications. Some of her books include *Understanding Equine Hoof Care*, *The Horse Conformation*

*Handbook*, *Care and Management of Horses*, *Storey's Guide to Raising Horses* and *Storey's Guide to Training Horses*. Besides having her own blog, [www.heathersmiththomas.blogspot.com](http://www.heathersmiththomas.blogspot.com), she writes a biweekly blog at <http://insidestorey.blogspot.com> that comes out on Tuesdays.

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