

Stable Discipline and Duties

(Drill Regulations for the North-West Mounted Police, 1889)

1. Great importance should be attached to a proper system of stable discipline being established and maintained, at all posts in the Mounted Police.

As in other mounted corps, it is upon such system that the health and condition of the horses, and therefore the efficiency of the corps depend. In this force it is necessary that men should never be suffered to retain the idea which they often possess when joining, that the stable duties are merely the duties of fatigue.

2. On service, on prairie trips, patrolling, and the many varied duties that a Mounted Policeman has to perform away from his post, it is utterly impossible to carry out the same routine that is observed in barracks; this, however, matters little, provided officers, or non-commissioned officers in charge of parties are watchful and careful of their horses and prevent any negligence as to their watering, feeding and grooming, and to see that spare horses, if any, are told off; to see that the numnahs and saddle blankets are kept clean and dry, and that saddlery and harness is free from dirt; bits and buckles kept in clean oil. To examine each horse thoroughly every evening, paying particular attention to their backs, and looking out for girth galls; also, to the state of their shoes. To sparing horses unnecessary work, dismounting men when halted for any length of time, etc., etc.

3. The following is the normal routine of stable duties:-

All officers off duty to attend mid-day stables

The orderly officer will attend all stables

The warning for stables to sound 15 minutes before stable hour.

On "stables" sounding, the men will fall in in fatigue dress by divisions, with their grooming articles, and answer their names, roll to be called by division (troop) orderly (sergeants), who will report to their sergeants-major, who reports to the orderly officer. If stables are some distance from the parade ground, the men are told off by sections and marched over. If they fall in near the stables the word will be given "Right turn-File in." During stable hours no man is to leave the stable or horse lines, without the permission of his sergeant-major or, during his absence, the senior non-commissioned officer of his division (troop) who may be in charge.

At morning stables all men are to help muck out and hay up before commencing to groom.

Officers are to go through the stables and see that the men are grooming properly, and that the non-commissioned officers in charge of stables are instructing the young constables who may be new to the work, as to the proper method of grooming their horses, and in seeing that the routine

for stable work is being carried out in a proper manner. Officers are also to examine the horses thoroughly to see that they have been properly groomed, and lose no opportunity of getting acquainted with the horse of their divisions, as well as the capabilities (in knowledge of grooming and dealing with horses) of their men.

To test the condition of a horse's coat, both as to cleanliness and health, it should be felt with the bare hand, and the mane and tail examined.

No officer, non-commissioned officer or man is allowed to smoke during stable hours, or in the stables or near the hay stacks, at any time during the day.

4. Horse lines in camp, and stables in barracks, are in charge of line orderlies or stablemen. These men come on duty to relieve the regular night stable piquet sentries, at the warning for morning stables. Their duties are to keep the lines and stable clean, to prevent horses from injuring themselves or each other; in camp, to take the nosebags off the horses when they have finished feeding.

The orderly officer will visit the horse lines or stables twice a day, and satisfy himself that stables are clean, and that stablemen are performing their duties.

5. When an officer enters a stable, the non-commissioned officer with him is to call the stable to "attention." If the officer is alone, this will be done by the first man who sees the officer. The men will stop grooming or work and stand smartly to "attention" in the exact part of the stall or horse-lines they may happen to be standing in, but must face the foot of their stalls or lines; horses turned around with head-collars off, men will take hold of the mane near the head with the hand that happens to be nearest the horse. The officer will give the word "Go on," when the men will resume work.

When the horses are fed the men will stand to "attention," on the near side of their horses, at the foot of the stalls and facing the centre of stables.

For Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner and Inspecting Superintendent, stable or lines will be called to "attention," and the word "Stand to your horses" is given, on which the men go to the head of their stalls on the near side of their horses, and facing the centre of the stables, or lines, taking hold of the jaw band of the stable halters with the left hand, and stand to "attention."

6. At watering hours, where the distance is not great, horses are to be quietly led to and from water; where the distance requires the horses to be ridden, a non-commissioned officer must always be detailed, and the pace to and from, a walk. No trotting or hurrying on any account, is to be allowed. Strict attention must be paid to the observances of this rule, or it will be constantly neglected. Full time is to be given horses for drinking. About 10 minutes before feed sounding, stablemen are to be sent for feeds, the serving out of feed to be in the hands of the veterinary staff.

The horses are not to be fed before the senior officer present at lines or stables orders "feed" to sound on the report being made to him that everything is ready.

The senior officer, on the report "all fed" being made to him, will order the "dismiss" to sound, before which no officer, non-commissioned officer or man, will leave the stables or horse lines.

7. Division (troop) officers will satisfy themselves that division (troop) sergeants-major have told off all their spare horses, and that they have been watered, fed and properly groomed, also, that veterinary sergeants have made their daily examination of each horses shoes; and that sick horses have been properly attended to, and horses requiring shoeing sent to the forge.

Before turning out from stables everything is to be left properly arranged and in order.

Barrows emptied, hay corrals racked up, bedding squared up, and all litter around stables properly cleaned up and stablemen posted.

8. Horses seriously ill or severely cut or wounded in any way, are to be taken to sick stables, or in camp, to sick horse lines, where they will be under the special charge of veterinary surgeons or veterinary staff sergeants, men being detailed to look after these horses from the divisions (troops) from which they belong.

9. Horses coming in from patrols, drills, prairie trips, marches, etc., should be brought in as cool as possible; if horses are sweating badly they should be led around for a few minutes to allow them to cool off.

The horses when filed into stables or lines, will be stripped, and men set to dry their backs at once; where this is impossible saddles should be left on for 15 minutes or so, particular care being taken that girths have been let out a little, and that men on taking off their saddles set to work at their horses backs at once, if still wet. In wet weather particular care must also be taken in the drying of horses heels.

10. A party marching into barracks or camp near the dinner or supper hours, if horses are properly cool, will be filed into stables, unsaddled and backs dried; then led to water, brought back to stables and fed; the men will then be allowed to go to their meals; three quarters of an hour will be allowed them; "stables" will then be sounded, men will fall in, in fatigue dress, and be marched to stables in the usual manner. "Officers call" will sound at the same time as "stables." All officers who arrived with the party will attend stables. After horses are sufficiently groomed, officers will leave stables.

11. In barracks horses' heads must be brought about in their stalls, at morning and mid-day stables, their heads and fore quarters thoroughly groomed and inspected by the non-commissioned officer in charge of the stable; when passed, halters will be put on, horses will be turned about and tied up; men will then groom their hind quarters.

At evening stable hour after grooming, the horses should be well wisped, care being taken to see that wisps are properly made and kept damp.

11. How to Make a Wisp.—A wisp is a pad of hay or straw made by twisting the material into a rope and doubling it into convenient sized pads as described below.

To make a wisp, soft hay or straw should be twisted into conveniently sized rope about eight to ten feet long. Two loops are then formed at one end, one being very slightly longer than the other. Each of these loops in turn is then twisted beneath the remainder of the rope until the end is reached, when it is passed through the extremity of each loop and tucked under one of the twists.

A really good wisp should be no wider than can be conveniently grasped by the hand; about a foot long and two or three inches thick. Some little practice is necessary to make one really well, and great care must be taken to see that hay or straw is not wasted in making it. Material for the purpose is given by the N.C.O. The wisp should be damped before using. (See diagram.)

A Wisp.

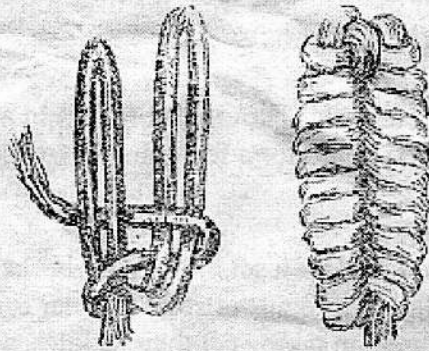


FIG. (a)

FIG. (b)

Commencement, showing two loops formed from one end of rope, and method of twisting the other around them.

Completed.

Manner of Grooming Horses

1. Carefully pick out feet; commence with near fore, off fore, near hind, and off hind. Then wash out, commencing as above. All four feet to be picked and washed out from the near side. Sweep out the stalls.

2. Heads brought about, halters taken off, nostrils and eyes sponged, heads, neck and forequarters groomed, manes and foretops brushed out, commencing on heads, finishing with manes. On no account are horses to be groomed behind the shoulders when turned about; halters to be sponged inside and out, before replacing on horse.

3. Turn about, tie up, groom near side, commencing behind the shoulder, finishing on near hind leg; groom off side, commencing same as near, finishing on off hind leg; brush out tail; dock to be sponged out; curry comb not to be used on mane or tail.

4. Finish off with damp wisp and rubbing cloth. Brush to be held in left hand grooming on near side, right hand grooming on off side.

Mud sweat marks and dung to be cleaned off with curry comb and dandruff brush. Body brush to be used for all other dry purposes.

Particular care should be taken in drying heels and brushing out tails.

During winter months sponging out must be dispensed with.