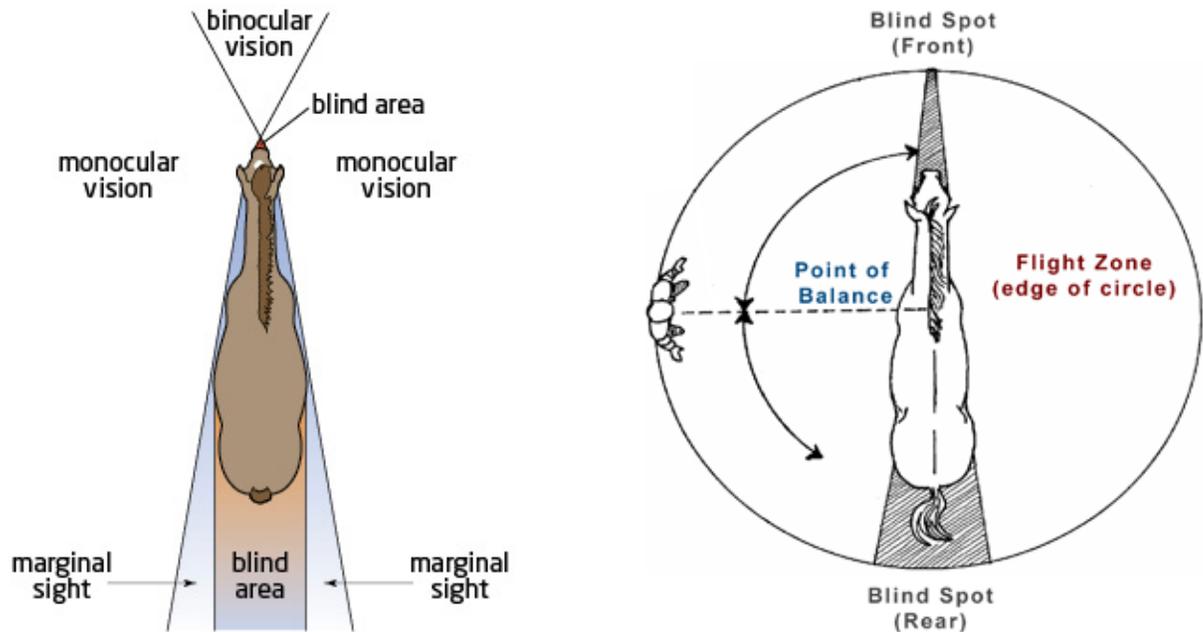


Understanding Flight Zone, Point of Balance and Field of Vision



Flight Zone:¹ This is the space surrounding a horse that, when penetrated, causes the horse to move to reestablish a comfortable distance. Low-stress handling is based on applying and releasing pressure on the edge of the flight zone ideally never penetrating the zone so aggressively that the horse becomes frightened and “takes flight”. You have entered a horse’s flight zone the moment your approach causes the horse to move away. As a horse becomes more fearful, its flight zone will increase.

Point of Balance:¹ The point of balance is located in the shoulder area of the horse. The handler should stand behind the point of balance at the shoulder to make the horse go forward and stand in front of the point of balance at the shoulder to make an animal back up.

Field of Vision:² When looking to the side, horses have monocular vision (each eye can operate independently). When looking forward, they have binocular vision (eyes operate in tandem). Horses take longer than humans to adjust to changes in light intensity and they have poor depth perception so may balk at shadows or puddles.

1 Grandin, T (2010) How to improve livestock handling and reduce stress. Pages 64-87 in *Improving Animal Welfare: A Practical Approach*. T. Grandin, ed. CAB International, Oxfordshire, UK.

2 Woods, J. (2010) Recommended handling guidelines and animal welfare assessment tool for horses. Horse Welfare Alliance of Canada.

Left image source: Developed by the Alberta Equine Welfare Group for the booklet “Humane Handling Guidelines for Horses – Standards for the Care of Unfit Animals” available for download under Resources at www.horsewelfare.ca

Right image source: J Woods (2010) Recommended handling guidelines and animal welfare assessment tool for horses. Horse Welfare Alliance of Canada.