

Trail Riding Rules

Courtesy and Safety should be the first considerations of any group trail ride. With these in mind, each of us can help prevent accidents and “close calls” that would spoil an otherwise delightful outing.

1. Check your tow vehicle, trailer and hitch for any mechanical or electrical malfunctions before loading your horse.
2. Check your horse for any signs of lameness, illness or loose shoes before departing from your barn.
3. Inspect all tack for signs of wear and tear before setting out on the ride.
4. Allow yourself time to tack up and be ready to ride at the scheduled time. This way, you won't inadvertently delay the rest of the group or overlook proper setup of your horse's tack.
5. Young or anxious horses (and less experienced riders) will benefit from a quiet start on the trail ride, away from frightening obstacles. Sometimes riding near older or more settled horses will have a calming effect.
6. Keep at least one horse length space between horses. Stallions may need to stay even further back, especially behind mares.
7. Horses that are problem kickers should stay at the rear of the ride or wear a red tail ribbon to warn other riders. If you are riding behind an animal that has a red tail ribbon, take care not to crowd the horse and rider.
8. If you wish to pass another horse, politely indicate your intentions to the other rider then pass quietly, allowing enough distance between horses for safety.
9. Never race or play on horseback—it may frighten or disturb other horses and alarm other riders. Remember, you share the trails with other riders who may be less confident.
10. Stop and check periodically to make sure everyone is still with the group. Slower riders should tell the others if they plan to separate from the main group.
11. If someone needs to pass the group on a narrow trail, all riders should pull as far off the trail as possible and turn to face the trail to prevent their horse from kicking out at the person passing.
12. Avoid wearing large spurs. A foot can easily catch on something causing you to accidentally “spur” your horse.
13. Don't ride through fields which are cultivated or have crops and avoid riding in lawns and yards. Horseback riders are soon unwelcome when they do not respect other people's property.
14. **DO NOT LITTER!** The only things that should be left behind on our Trail Rides are our tracks.
15. When coming to any obstacle or a jump be aware of the position of other horses. Make sure there is plenty of room where you intend to “land.” Collisions are most likely to occur at these points.
16. When going down a very steep hill, allow extra distance in front in case the horse ahead of you should stumble or fall.
17. Never stop your horse while going up a steep hill—encourage him to keep moving forward. Horses use their momentum to climb and stopping may cause problems for you and those riding behind you.
18. Do not hold tree branches aside as you pass them. Either duck around them or let them brush by your arm or shoulder. Allow them to sway back naturally to their original position so that you do not inadvertently cause a “lash back” effect for the rider behind you.
19. Riders at the front of the ride should move away from obstacles (rivers, downhill slopes, roads and, especially, low-hanging branches) at a steady, quiet pace until all have safely passed that obstacle. Horses behind may rush or panic if they feel the “herd” is running off without them.—