

General Trail Riding Rules

Pleasure trail riding, like all aspects of equine use, has rules and regulations pertaining to trail use and manners. How a person rides a trail can determine not only his own enjoyment but the safety of himself, his own horse and other trail users too.

1. Negative Coggins test within 12 months on all mounts.
2. Health certificate will be required should we ride out of state.
3. Everyone must sign the Shepherds Valley Horse Riders Release Form before riding.
4. One horse per rider.
5. The Trail Boss is the Boss. What he/she says, goes.
6. Never bring a green horse or a inexperienced horse that has not been exposed to trail riding or riding in a group of horses. This is not a training session for you and your horse. Please, do your training before the trail ride.
7. If you are a green rider, or you bring a green rider, be sure to tell the trail boss so decisions can be made for their safety. Example: A partner may need to be assigned to assure safety.
8. No rough riding in camp or on trails.
9. Each day before you head out, give your horse and tack a once over and while on the trail. Check the cinch, reins, breast collar, crupper, etc. Check your horse for any saddle sores, wounds or injuries that may have occurred and make sure his footwear is secure. Don't forget to check the cinch/girth periodically for loosening.
10. With the high demand for trails throughout the nation, some trails are dedicated for horse only use. Some trails, especially in highly populated areas, are "multi-use" trails that allow hikers or even bikes.
11. The right-of-way rule is that biker yields to hiker. And both biker and hiker yield to horsemen. Although this is considered a trail rule, common courtesy and common sense should prevail and apply on all trails and in all situations.
12. Uphill traffic has the right-of-way regardless if its hiker, biker or horsemen! Downhill traffic should yield by waiting at the top of the climb or at the first safe spot to stop. If you are just starting down a hill and see another trail user starting up, wait at the top of the hill or if you have gone a few feet down, turn around and retrace hoof prints to the top then rein around and wait for the uphill user. After all, you're going downhill and the uphill user has his momentum going uphill. Why make him stop? This is especially true if on narrow trails where the passing could be tight and a safety problem. Wait at the top where it's safe for you, your horse and the other user to pass each other. And on 10 or 12 or 16 foot wide trails, everyone can go down and uphill at the same time, passing safely by staying on the right side.
13. Today more and more hikers can be found on trails. A hiker can be anyone from a dedicated cross country backpacker to a Sunday walker out for a leisurely stroll. Individuals, families, groups and troops can be found walking on trails, so when meeting be polite. SMILE. Say hello.

14. Friendliness is the best avenue of acceptance on trails. The better the trail meeting or experience between other trails users and us horsemen the better chances for horsemen to be accepted on present and future trails. And we need all the chances and acceptance we can find to stay on trails!
15. Most other trail users are intimidated by the size of a horse. And they just don't know what to do or where to go! So say "Hi" and tell them what to do. If the hiker is on a hill trail, have him move to the downhill side of the trail and stand there. Continue carrying on the conversation with him as you ride by. On flat trails, have him move to the left side of the trail so you can stay on the right side and continue carrying on a conversation.
16. Never have a hiker or backpacker or biker or other horseman or anybody step behind a rock, a tree, a bush or out of sight. If the horse has seen him, he's looking for him! And with the sudden disappearance the horse can become more nervous and upset. To a horse, that disappearing whatsit could suddenly bounce out and eat 'em. Even if completely out of sight, a snapping twig or a rustling branch as a horse goes by can spook the animal. So keep the other trail user in open sight and TALK.
17. If someone wants to stop and pet the horse and the horse is agreeable, let them. Its good public relations. A lot of hikers may never have touched a horse before. And with groups of kids, they love talking to and petting a horse regardless of how dirty and sweaty the horse is!
18. With any trail user, always have them approach from the front. And if a horse is nervous have people stay back. So consider your own individual horse and how he reacts to other trail users.
19. Ride single file on a trail, one behind the other. Keep one horse length behind the horse in front of you. On wide firebreak or fire road trails, riders can ride side by side as long as they don't interfere with other users or get off the main trail. It's nice to ride beside a friend and point out sights along the route.
20. When going up or down hills, please increase your distance from the next horse by a minimum of 2 horse lengths.
21. No alcoholic beverages allowed.
22. No stallions allowed.
23. We reserve the right to ask you to not ride if your horse's action or you are a danger to others.
24. Riders must be somewhat self reliant and able to handle most situations in adverse conditions, however, help will be provided at any time.
25. All camps to be quiet by midnight (no loud music or noises).
26. Dogs allowed only in your campsite. **MUST BE ON LEASH!**
27. No ATV's, motorcycles, or bicycles allowed.
28. If your horse kicks, tie a red ribbon around its tail please.
29. Do not leave any trash on the trails. Please keep our trails clean.
30. No guns on the trail except by authorized, CHL licensed, pre-approved persons.
31. No whips allowed on the trail.

32. Wear head protection if you have it.
33. If you are having trouble with you, your horse or tack, please tell one of the leaders or trail boss... we'll help you or patiently wait. We're never in a hurry!
34. Stay together. Do not fall behind and do not get off the trail.
35. Bathroom breaks are taken periodically, however, should you need to stop, please feel free to tell a trail leader... again, we're more than happy to wait for you to ensure your safety.
36. Hydration for Horse and Rider: Each rider should carry a canteen and drink a minimum 4 to 6 quarts of water throughout the day depending on the temperature. When you feel thirsty it usually means that you are already dehydrated. Stay hydrated to prevent heat exhaustion or worse. When watering your horse, it's best to allow him to drink several small portions rather than one large one. During breaks and lunch stops, tie your horse in the shade if possible.
37. The speed on a trail ride is walking. Please do not lope up behind horses or try to pass horses at a lope unless you are led by the trail boss, and if you feel comfortable and confident to do so. Again, we want to ensure your safety.
38. If riding near livestock or wildlife please pass them quietly, and do your best not to disturb them. Livestock can become a sudden danger if they feel threatened.
39. Leave gates as you found them.
40. There will be riders and horses with varied degrees of training and experience. For safety and courtesy, don't let your horse crowd into other horses. Trotting or galloping up on, or past, other riders may upset other mounts – with disastrous results. Let it be known that you would like to pass, wait for a wide spot in the trail, and pass quietly.
41. When arriving in camp, let your horse stand 15-30 minutes to cool down with the cinch/girth loosened slightly. This will reduce the likelihood of developing "hot spots" which are caused by the sudden release of pressure when a rider dismounts and immediately unsaddles. After you have groomed your horse and he is cooled off, give him small amounts of water until he is satisfied. Feed him after he has watered.