

# **INSTRUCTOR**

## **RECREATIONAL RIDING THEORY SECTION**

Recreational Riding, or trail riding, is one of the most widely enjoyed equestrian activities. It provides immense pleasure for minimal dollar investment. It is non-competitive and appeals to all ages.

This section is to introduce trail etiquette, safety and recommendations to make riding outside the confines of the arena enjoyable. It is recommended that you seek out the guidance of a Certified Coach, for help implementing this information.

### **EQUIPMENT**

- A sharp knife
- Either English or Western tack is appropriate
- Tack should be in good condition and repairs made, as necessary
- Good working equipment is more suitable than Silver show tack
- All equipment should fit both the rider and the horse properly
- Pad should be clean, thick and absorbent
- Halter and a cotton lead shank (not nylon or poly) should be carried, as well as a hoof pick

### **YOUR HORSE**

- Should be in good health and conditioned to the work asked of him
- Should be neatly groomed, bridle path clipped
- It is not recommended to clip out ear hair as this provides protection against insects and debris. If desired, the ear edges may be trimmed for appearances
- Excess hair on fetlocks should not be clipped as this enables the horse to shed water more effectively
- Proper hoof care is essential – regular trimming or shoeing will keep your horse sound and ready to travel

### **CONDITIONING**

- It is imperative that the horse is properly conditioned, before heading out.
- The level of condition needed would vary, depending on the length and intensity of the ride(s).
- His level of fitness should be done slowly, by stressing his wind and limb, a little at a time.
- Walking exercises should be done first, then trotting can be gradually introduced, always keeping the horse's health in mind.
- Hills are excellent to build muscles in hindquarters, and increase wind, but an unfit horse can tire easily, fitness should progress slowly. Fast work can affect his wind and damage his legs.
- Condition of legs, muscles and wind must be closely watched, before and after every ride, checking for soreness, swellings and heat. Distress must be taken seriously. Azoturia, back injuries, Laminitis, stone bruises, abscesses, sprains and related injuries can be related to improper conditioning. (refer to Stable Management In Canada for explanations)

- A horse that has reached good condition, does not take as long to recondition, as one that has never reached good fitness.

## **COOLING DOWN**

- Cooling off a horse mentally and physically will make him happy to go out again.
- Walk home the last mile so that he returns calm and cool. **NEVER RUN YOUR HORSE HOME!**
- Take off the saddle and bridle (with his halter on) and rub his neck to restore circulation. He will love a good curry comb brushing.
- Look for obvious wounds, cuts, scrapes, heat and swelling and bruises (pain) check for twisted or loose shoes.
- Proper grooming techniques before turning him out.
- Do not feed large quantities of feed, immediately following a hard ride this may cause colic.

## **WHAT TO TAKE**

What and how much to take varies greatly with the duration and location of your planned ride. Many of these are not necessary for rides for one or two hours, but are for reference. Here are some suggestions:

- Halter and lead shank for tying up during stops or rests
- Take repair kit, consisting of extra leather thongs, Chicago screws or rivets and a small leather strap. Most minor repairs can be done with these items and they are enough to get you home for proper repairs.
- Fly repellent for you and your horse (impregnated towellettes are very handy and easy to carry)
- A first aid pouch, for both you and your horse, including a roll of Vetwrap. Also pack bandages, aspirin, sanitary napkins, toilet tissue, sunscreen etc.
- Roll a blanket or extra jacket and secure safely to your saddle, in case of emergencies
- Cell Phone or VHF walkie talkies
- Water bottle and hoof pick, sharp knife in a case
- Extra plastic bags to carry home your garbage (leave no trace)
- Reflective tape on your clothing, splint boots, saddle pad and **WEAR YOUR HELMET!**

An extended ride takes planning and must not be attempted until you and your horse are fit and ready. More information regarding these is available in the Intermediate Rider course (and through a Western Coach 2)

## **TRAIL RIDING SAFETY AND GUIDELINES**

Because trail riding activities takes place outside the confines of the training ring, many unpredictable factors affect you and your horse. This situation requires the implementation of common sense, rider etiquette and safety guidelines. These guidelines apply whether you are riding alone (which is never recommended) in a small group or with a large number of others. Be a member of your Provincial Organization (OEF) and make sure you have liability insurance coverage.

### **Environmental Awareness:**

- Do not smoke or drink while riding. A careless butted cigarette can easily ignite a fire. Dismount to smoke in a safe area and butt your cigarette completely, take butt with you.
- **DO NOT LITTER.** What you carry in, you carry out, leave no trace, but footprints.
- Keep your horse moving while he/she is dropping manure, as small lumps disappear more quickly.
- Some trails are only open at certain times of the year, check first with your Forestry Division or Parks branch. Find out before hand what, if any are the horse rules.
- Some areas do not allow dogs, use common sense judgment if considering bringing your dog along. It is suggested to NOT bring a dog, as they may spook other horses in ride, or chase game. If you must bring your dog, carry a leash, get permission first from other riders and land owners. Have him trained to obey you.
- We must ensure **AT ALL TIMES** that the respect of others is considered. Horse trails are being lost, we must ensure that the correct perception of equine trail users is maintained.
- Always ensure that horses WALK when going up steep inclines, especially short ones.
- No chewing of gum or hard candy while mounted.

### **Public Awareness:**

- Do not drink alcoholic beverages while mounted.
- Walk your horse in public areas.
- Have control of your horse at all times, avoid showing off.
- Present a neat appearance remembering that you represent all other equestrians when in the public eye.
- Respect private property, know where you are at all times. Tell others where and when you are going out.
- If you encounter other trail users, stop and allow them to pass by you. In a gentle way remind them of horse safety, never try to cause fear to pedestrians. If your horse becomes upset, dismount and calm him.
- Ride single file when others on the trail, always leave two horse lengths between horses.

### **Equine Awareness:**

- Place a red ribbon in your horses tail if he is a kicker, green if he is inexperienced.
- Leave two horse lengths between you and horse in front of you.
- Notify the rider ahead, if you wish to pass, and pass on the left side.
- If you notice a danger, call out to other riders to warn them.
- Never ride on ahead of your buddies, this may cause tension and anxiety. Never gallop past other horses on the trail. Remember to watch horse body language. Know when a horse is about to kick, or bite. Remember, that a trail ride consists of a herd of horses, know who the natural herd leader is.

- Focus and be aware, you do not want to be caught between a horse conflict, or have a pedestrian in the same situation. Horses standing still have different thoughts than one on the move.
- The leader should set an easy pace for all riders and horses, and be aware of what is going on behind him.
- Know your trails ahead of time, and plan your rides. Know when not to go out.
- Do not ride in thunderstorms, or extremely windy conditions. Not only is there a danger of trees falling, the horse cannot smell his natural predators and may become tense and agitated.
- It is highly recommended not to ride alone, tell someone where you are going, and how long you expect to be.
- Wear bright colored clothing, take a whistle, be aware of hunting areas; we like to see game on our rides, but this may also mean hunters.
- Riding in the dark is not recommended, plan your ride to end before dark. If you are caught out after dark carry a flashlight in the left hand, wear reflective clothing, and be aware of your horse's reaction to vehicle headlights. Ride on the right hand side of the road.
- Bridle with a brow band and throatlatch is recommended

Combine these guidelines with the 3 Cs (Courtesy, Consideration and Common Sense) and you will be a safe and cheerful rider.

## ROAD RIDING SAFETY

Riding on the roads is not a recommended practice, however, in some areas the roads provide the only space in which to ride, or provide the only access to other riding areas. If you must ride on the road, follow the following safety rules;

- A person riding an animal on a highway or road, has all of the duties of a Motorized Vehicle. (check Provincial Legislation and Municipal bylaws)
- The horse and rider must ride with the traffic on the right hand side of the road. Riders must form single file one behind the other, well off to the side, leaving two horse lengths between. **RACING OF ANY KIND, WHILE ON HIGHWAYS, IS PROHIBITED UNDER MOTOR VEHICLE LAWS.**
- **ABSOLUTELY, NEVER RIDE ON RAILLINES, OR RAILWAY RIGHT OF WAYS. THIS IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS!!**
- When riding near or in water, tie downs must be disconnected in the event the horse falls into the water.
- Use the same hand signals as a motorist or bicycle for turns or stops.
- Have an experienced, quiet horse lead the group and another bring up the rear.
- Obey all traffic signals, police and signs.
- Have your horse under control at all times - expect the unexpected, but do not be tense or nervous.
- There is laws governing how many animals may cross over a bridge at one time, and these are always to be at a walk.
- Pass only on the left and only when is clear and safe to do so.
- Be aware of road conditions at all times.
- Cross the road only when the way is clear *all* the horses in the group, avoid being separated.

- When crossing the road, do so quickly and quietly across to the opposite side of the road.
- Inform a responsible person of the planned course, and expected time of return. Avoid crowded streets and especially children, curious pedestrians can get hurt if a horse gets excited.
- Do not ride your horse on sidewalks or lawns, respect private property.
- When riding in the winter, snow can easily ball up in your horse's hoof, riding on the road makes this extremely dangerous. Ice nails or pads can stop this from happening, Talk to your farrier if you plan to ride out in the winter.
- Avoid riding on the ice.
- Watch riding in the ditches, there may be hidden dangers, wire, holes, broken bottles, are easily covered by long grasses.
- If one person in the group dismounts, for any reason, the remainder of riders must stay motionless until the rider mounts again, and regains his/her stirrups.
- The leading rider must always be aware of where and how the riders following are progressing.

## **CHOOSING A TRAIL HORSE**

Trail horses come in unlimited shapes, sizes, breeds, and quality. However, all good trail horses have certain common traits. Many less-than "perfect" horses are seen performing well on the trail.

### **Conformation:**

- Should have good conformation, avoid any extreme faults.
- Special attention should be paid to the legs and feet, they should be solid and balanced.
- Interferences should also be avoided.
- Your horse should be a of a suitable size for you and your gear.

### **Disposition:**

- This is an important consideration in a trail horse.
- He should be steady, level headed and amiable towards other horses.
- He should be patient and willing.
- He should not be too competitive, and wanting to race the other horses.

### **Gaits:**

- He should be surefooted.
- He should have true gaits - a good steady ground covering walk, an honest and comfortable jog and a controllable lope.

### **Training:**

- He should be well broken to ride - walk, jog, lope, stop and back-up - neck rein. Advanced training such as sliding stops or spins etc. are nice but not necessary for a trail horse.
- He should know how to side pass, turn on fore and turn on haunch, to be able to safely open and close gates.

- He should load and unload easily and safely, into and out of a trailer.
- He should stand tied without incident.
- He should be willing to cross natural obstacles such as water, logs, etc.
- He should be quiet in traffic and with a group of horses.
- He should stand quietly when a rider is mounting, and while coats are donned and removed while rider is mounted.
- Green riders and green horses **DO NOT MIX**.
- Unsuitable, un-broke animals cause accidents, seek professional help if unsure of horses level of training.

## **THE RECREATIONAL RIDER'S CODE OF ETHICS**

- 1) Respect the rules and requirements of the host.
- 2) Respect nature and the environment.
- 3) Always deposit your waste material in a proper manner.
- 4) Never drink liquor or beer when mounted or in front of public.
- 5) Ride only on the routes identified for the trail.
- 6) Always respect private property.
- 7) Always close gates and never cut fences.
- 8) When riding in public places, proceed only at a walk.
- 9) Never bring dogs, cats or other pets on trail rides.
- 10) Never cut trees.
- 11) Have control of your horse on the trail and at resting areas.
- 12) Never abuse your horse; your horse's comfort comes before your own.
- 13). Follow the gait and pace of the leader.
- 14) Try to help riders in trouble or riders with less experience than you.
- 15) Avoid showing off.
- 16) Never forget to thank your host after the trail ride.

**LEAVE NOTHING BEHIND YOU BUT FOOTPRINTS**