

## ***Lakewood Riding Club*** ***Trail Etiquette***

In doubt about whether your horse can be ridden safely on the trail?

If he won't do the following at home, stay there (and keep training until he does!).

- He obeys “whoa” whether you're on the ground or in the saddle. (Your safety depends on his reliable brakes).
- He'll stand tied, without pulling back, (You never know when you might need to tie up on even the shortest ride, and horse camping is hell with a halter puller.
- He's controllable in the presence of other horses. (**See Equine Factoids**).
- He'll cross water and other obstacles without a fight. (If he balks, you'll be stuck, and if he dumps you, you could get hurt.)
- He'll load willingly into a trailer. (You don't want to be stuck with a bad loader out at some remote trailhead, or when trying to get a hurt horse off the trail and home.)

### **Trail Manners:**

- Wait to set out until the last rider is mounted. (Prevents panic in the horse left behind.)
- Stay at the pace set by the trail master or the lead horse. (Prevents stampedes and runaways.)
- Tie a **red** ribbon in the tail of a horse known to kick. (Reminds other riders not to crowd it.)
- Tie a **green** ribbon in the tail of an inexperienced horse. (Warns other riders that horse could spook or balk.)
- When riding single file, stay at least a horse length behind the horse in front of you. (Minimum safe distance from kicking.)
- If you must pass, state “request trail on right (or left)”. (Gives riders you'll pass a chance to prepare.
- If you must stop, state “pulling up”, also warn riders behind you by raising one arm.

(Prevents being left behind, helps avert rear end collisions.)

- Don't stop when going uphill, or on a very narrow trail. (Prevents following horses from losing momentum.)
- Proceed at a walk unless ALL riders agree to change gait.
- Walking, trotting and slow cantering are proper etiquette on horse trails. No match racing! (Prevents a stampede.)
- Leave your dog at home. Prevents a host of hassles.)

### **Urban Safety Guidelines:**

- Stay on designated horse trails and in designated open riding areas. Some natural grass areas are closed to open riding for the safety of yourself, your horse, and other park users. Stepping on and breaking through sprinkler control boxes (in many cases four feet deep) could cause a fall and/or a broken leg.
- When a group of 4 or more riders need to cross a busy street or highway, it is best to cross in unison. Travel single file near the edge of the pavement and cross, turning all at once, when the lead rider gives the “Okay” signal as traffic clears in both directions.
- Slow down when approaching from the front or rear. The universal signal of the “rider's hand out, palm down” is to let others know that your cooperation is being requested for safety's sake.
- On streets, ride a predictable straight path facing traffic, Four feet from parked cars. When riding on a street remember **“Wheels go with wheels, and Feet go with Feet”**.
- Horses are “Feet” and bicycles are “Wheels” . Avoid weaving in and out of parked cars.
- On most public trails, hikers and bikers yield to horses.

## Equine Factoids Your Horse Would Like You To Know:

- His vision doesn't work the same way yours does. It's monocular (each eye sees a different image), not binocular like ours and it magnifies objects - - such as rocks and tree stumps - - by 50%. What's innocent to you can be a spook-booger to him.
- He's a herd animal, programmed to flee from perceived dangers - so he'll probably be hyper vigilant out on the trail.
- Every herd - including that formed by a group of trail horses - has a hierarchy, determined by dominance testing. Letting your horse go nose to nose with a strange horse invites a fight. It can also transmit illness.
- He'd rather stay with the herd than be left behind, even when exhausted. It's up to you to know when he's reached his physical limits.
- His instincts tell him to avoid any kind of unsure footing. If you're not sure it can hold him up, don't expect him to test it willingly.
- He can suffer colic, tying-up syndrome, or heat stress while on the trail. Be sure you know the symptoms, and how to give on-trail first aid.
- After 30 minutes of rest, his respiration rate should be 10 to 20 breaths per minute. If it's higher, he may be in trouble.
- His normal at-rest heart rate is between 28 and 40 beats per minute. Be concerned if it's elevated after a 30 minute rest.
- His temperature's normal if it's between 99 to 100.5 degrees Fahrenheit (101 degrees on a hot, muggy day) If it's higher, something's wrong.

## Parading Safety:

- The object is to present a good impression to the public of good horsemanship as a safe and desirable recreation.
- A rider must be confident and capable of handling their horse under stressful conditions.
- This requires a working knowledge of your horse, and just how much he can handle. If your horse becomes too stressed in a parade, it is prudent to dismount and lead him. It may require taking him out of the group and back to the trailer.
- Must be able to commit to the time involved for parade clinic, and practices. This is necessary so that your horse will feel at ease among a familiar group of horses.
- Must have safe and reliable transportation.
- Must present themselves and their horse as a well-groomed and well-mannered team.
- *This should be an enjoyable time for all. Nothing puts a damper on a parade like an injury to a rider, spectator or horse.*