

# TRAIL RIDING

## ★★ GUIDE ★★

**HANDY REFERENCE GUIDE FOR ALL YOUR TRAIL ADVENTURES**



Photo credit: 108 Trails

**BROUGHT TO YOU BY:**



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# 10 THINGS A GOOD TRAIL HORSE SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO:

## 1. BE EASY TO CATCH

If you can't catch your horse at home what will happen if he/she gets loose while out on the trail?

## 2. STAND QUIETLY

Your horse will stand tied quietly for long periods of time. Pawing and fretting are hard on the environment and can be dangerous.

## 3. BEHAVE WHILE BEING TACKED UP

A good trail horse must have no bad habits when saddling or bridling such as moving around, biting, or throwing their heads. These habits are not only annoying but potentially dangerous.

## 4. TRAILER

Your horse must be able to load and unload easily when trailering. They must also be able to stand quietly in the trailer.

## 5. STAND STILL FOR MOUNTING

Your horse will stand still at a mounting block, stump, log or in a ditch. This lets the rider get settled before they give the signal to move off.

## 6. OBEY BASIC RIDING SIGNALS

Your horse has a good whoa, go, left and right turn, and backup. You must be able to control where your horse's feet are going and how quickly they are going there.

## 7. GET ALONG WITH OTHER HORSES

A good trail horse rides quietly and obediently in a group of horses.





Photo credit: Hugh Martell

## 8. CROSS OBSTACLES CALMLY

Your horse must be able to cross obstacles like water, bridges, and logs calmly. They also can deal with and accept surprises on the trail like the sudden appearance of wildlife, hikers, bikers, llamas or dogs.

## 9. CARRY EQUIPMENT

A good trail horse can carry equipment like water bottles, saddle bags and rain gear without a fuss.

## 10. BE IN SHAPE

A good trail horse has a fitness level that matches the difficulty of the trails you ride.

# JUST FOR FUN!

What is one of the most important traits of a good trail horse:

- a) Long back and neck for balance.
- b) Quiet, calm temperament.
- c) Black hooves.
- d) Short, steep shoulder.

Answer: b



# WHAT MAKES A GOOD TRAIL HORSE?

So what makes a good trail horse? For the most part the same attributes that make a good horse for any horse sport. This is what you should consider looking for in a good trail horse:

1. **Good Mind, Quiet Nature, Sensible Disposition** - Quiet horses will settle into new surroundings and eat and drink well. A horse with a good disposition will allow you to enjoy your ride, the camaraderie of others and the scenery around you.
2. **Good Feet** - Trail riding does not happen in a controlled environment like an arena. Footing can vary from sand to asphalt to bog, boulders or gravel. Feet need strong walls to hold shoes and be big enough to carry the weight of horse, rider, tack and gear. The sole should be concave and be tough. The last thing you want is to be walking home.

- 3. Good Conformation** - Looks are down low on the priority list. Trail riding is mostly slow work and it is pretty forgiving as far as conformation goes. A horse should look balanced and symmetrical from front to back and side to side. A short back is preferable to a long one and narrow horse preferable to a wide backed one. Wide backs generally have low withers (called mutton or sheep withered) and allow a saddle more chance of rolling either forwards or sideways. A narrow back is easier to sit than a wide one too! A well defined set of withers will help keep a saddle or pack saddle in place up and down the hills. Lots of bone (measured just below the knee around the cannon bone) and short cannons are indicators that the horse's legs will stand up to work.
- 4. Training** - How old is the horse? Do you want to go through the lengthy process of training, do you have the knowledge? Where has the horse been ridden? How often? If you are an inexperienced rider you would want to look for an older horse that has *"been there done that"*.



# 10

## THINGS A GOOD TRAIL RIDER SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO:

### 1. BASIC FIRST AID FOR HUMANS AND EQUINES

Get some basic first aid training so you can be prepared in the event of an emergency on the trail.

### 2. TIE KNOTS

You should have a basic knowledge of at least 4 knots: quick release, bowline, butterfly and half hitch.

### 3. TIE A HORSE

You must know how to tie a horse safely on the trail.

### 4. UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF HORSES

You must understand the basic flight nature of horses and how they react or could react in certain situations.

## 5. KNOW IF THEIR TACK FITS

You must have a good understanding and knowledge of what tack you need, what it does, and its placement and correct fit for you and your horse.

## 6. KNOW BASIC RIDING PRINCIPLES

Have a good understanding of basic riding aids such as go, whoa, turn left/right, and back up.

## 7. READ A MAP, COMPASS AND TRAIL SIGNS

You should be able to read and interpret trail signs, use a compass or GPS, and read and interpret a map.

## 8. KNOW THE 7 PRINCIPLES OF LEAVE NO TRACE

Know and practice the 7 principles of LNT/ Minimum Impact.

## 9. GROUP RIDE

Ride in a group with courtesy, observing the BCHBC Guidelines for group riding safely.

## 10. KNOW WHAT GEAR YOU NEED

Know what gear to pack for a day ride or longer and how to outfit your horse.

# JUST FOR FUN!

Which of these is a sign that your saddle does not fit your horse?

- a) Patches of white hairs.
- b) No clearance between the gullet and withers.
- c) Dry spots on each side behind the shoulder blades.
- d) All of the Above.

answer: d



Photo Credit: Shirley Dziadyk From left to right: Juanita, Shirley, Barb, Melanie, Doreen



# HORSE TRIP CARE! A CHECKLIST:

Photo credit: Shirley Dziadyk

A checklist for the rider in the proper care of a horse before, during, and after a ride to help prevent problems. This checklist can apply to beginner riders and horses to more advanced riders and horses. It can also apply to anything from a day ride to a week long pack trip.

## BEFORE THE RIDE

1. Check your equipment for wear, tear and any safety issues. You can also have a knowledgeable horseperson check it for you. Make sure it fits properly to prevent hurting the horse.
2. Know your horse, his normal parameters for temperature, respiratory rate, pulse and recovery rates, peeing, pooping, eating, drinking. Check him before you leave home for these as well as lameness. Start off with a healthy horse.
3. Maintain regular hoof care, vaccination and deworming programs.
4. Minimize trailering stress for your horse(s) by driving carefully and having well maintained vehicles and trailers. Depending on your purpose, consider stopping every 3 to 4 hours for a rest and stretch. Offer food and water to the horse, but do not worry if he does not eat or drink while traveling.
5. Minimize feed changes, make changes slowly, a few days or more before the ride date.
6. Consider trail conditions and difficulty, fitness of both horse and rider, and weather before you leave. Ride to the level of the least able if in a group. Don't be afraid to turn back if things aren't going well or the weather turns against you or your group.

## DURING THE RIDE

1. Monitor horses and riders in the group to make sure nothing is wrong or about to go wrong.

2. This is not the time to try new things (ie. equipment). Stick to what you know works.
3. Stop at intervals to water and graze if possible. Take it easy when you can, especially on long uphill climbs.
4. Adjust your pace according to temperature, footing, steepness of trail and level of ability of horses and riders.

## AFTER THE RIDE

1. If necessary, keep your horse cool/warm depending on the climate.
2. Make sure your horse has plenty of food and water. Feed water before roughage and before concentrates if possible. **Remember** a hot horse should be watered and fed small amounts at a time till cool.
3. Freedom of movement is important after a hard ride so the horse doesn't stiffen up. If he can't be turned loose, go for walks at intervals.
4. Check your horse for injury and loose shoes.
5. Monitor the your horse at regular intervals to make sure he/she is doing alright. Check that halters, blankets, hobbles etc. are not creating rub spots.

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## MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR EMERGENCY GEAR\*



- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Water   | something for pain   |
| 2. Halter and lead left on horse, rain gear for you                  | 10. Hat and a whistle.   |
| 3. Matches and lighter   | 11. Piece of twine or string to fix things (zap straps are handy!)               |
| 4. Fire starter and or candle  | 12. Identification and medical info  |
| 5. Emergency blanket (replace annually)                              | 13. One day's worth of your medication (ie. insulin or bee sting kit, allergies) |
| 6. Chemical hand warmer (pack at least 2, they last 7-10 hours each) |  |
| 7. Multi tool or knife (sharp)                                       |  |
| 8. High-energy food  |  |
| 9. Some form of bandaging and  |  |

\* This gear is just a suggestion. Please use your own discretion when making up and packing an emergency kit and use what works for your purposes.



# SHARE THE TRAIL!

Photo credit: Shirley Dziadyk

The 3 C's of Trail Etiquette for Everyone to Follow Are:

**COMMON SENSE**  
**COMMUNICATION**  
**COURTESY**

Bikes/Motorized recreation vehicles yield to everyone  
Hikers yield to horses

Yielding the right of way will go a long way in ensuring everyone enjoys the trails safely



Watch a 4 minute *Share the Trail* video on Horse Council BC's website. You can find it **online at**:

**[WWW.HCBC.CA/TRAIL-RIDING-GUIDE.HTML](http://WWW.HCBC.CA/TRAIL-RIDING-GUIDE.HTML)** **9**



# TRAIL TIPS FOR GROUP RIDING

Riding Near and Far - one rule applies to both: “Plan, Prepare and Practice” at home before you go, be it a 1 hour or 1 month ride. This applies to everything from tack fitting, trailering, mounting and dismounting, leading, spacing, high lining to feeding. The worst time to try something new is out on the trail.

## BEFORE

- Always leave a flight plan at home so someone will know where to look for you if you don't return around the appointed time.
- Choose who you are going to ride with. Make sure everyone is comfortable following the guidelines for safe group riding.
- Match the difficulty of the trail with the experience of the least experienced rider in your group.
- Know the rules of the trails you are going to ride.
- Assemble what you will need to take with you.
- If you are a novice starting to ride out, buddy up with a mentor, someone with experience. Join a group like the Backcountry Horsemen Society of British Columbia that offers a Trail Rider's Education Program.
- Always ride with a halter and lead rope on your horse. This is for quick tie up if there is an emergency and is more convenient if you have to get off and lead through a tricky spot.

## DURING

- Have all your items in saddle bags and take them off at every rest stop and lunch break so that if your horse gets loose and leaves you have your survival and emergency gear.
- Keep some survival stuff on your person rather than saddle bags. Light weight vests with lots of pockets work great so you can carry things like waterproof matches/lighter and fire starter like pitch wood or a candle, map, compass, medication, cell phone and ID.
- Unless you are at a planned stop like lunch or a safe rest area, keep moving. The most dangerous times are when the trail ride is stopped and the horses get restless.
- Encountering wildlife? The best defense is avoidance. For more information on encountering wildlife visit [www.hcbc.ca](http://www.hcbc.ca) and the Recreation and Trails Resource pages.
- Never change where you are going or no one will know where to look for you if something happens.
- The most experienced horses and riders should cross waterways first and last. Choose a safe crossing if it is not already marked. A safe crossing should have a gradual sloped entrance, good footing, be wide and shallow. If the current is swift begin crossing a little ways upstream from where you wish to come out. Face your horse a little upstream. If you cross water that is any more than 2 feet deep, remove tie downs, martingales or draw reins. Move slowly and make sure to let the horse have his head to balance.

- If at any time your safety is threatened by precarious footing or a precarious horse, dismount. Dismount on the uphill side and lead from the uphill side. Make sure there is room so that if your horse leaps forward or rushes over an obstacle, it doesn't land on you or knock you over. Remount on the uphill side as well.
- Be pleasant, courteous and helpful when passing other trail users. Practice the "three C's", Communication, Courtesy and Common Sense.
- When passing other horses always do so at a walk. Turn your horse's head ever so slightly towards the horse you are passing. This keeps the hindquarters away. A red ribbon in a horse's tail means it is a kicker. A green ribbon means it is a young and untrained horse.
- Water for you is most important.
  - If you can't carry enough bring along some water treatment form: a filter, tablets or liquid to purify. You can make an easy, inexpensive sports drink for hot sweaty days by mixing equal parts of natural fruit juice with water and adding a pinch or two of salt.
  - For snacks remember: high fat foods = more calories from less food = less bulk and weight to carry. Take granola bars, dried fruit, choc bars or trail mix.
- If you let your horses on hobbles to graze at lunch or after arriving at camp, always keep one or two horses picketed or tied and rotate them. That way if the hobbled horses leave you won't be on foot to find them. Even hobbled horses can travel a long way in a hurry.

## AFTER

- Reflect, Retain, Revise. Think about how the ride went, keep on using what worked and improve on what didn't.



## JUST FOR FUN!

Which of these is an important Trail Courtesy Rule:

- never trespass or ride on private Land without permission.
- Leave all gates just as you found them and avoid livestock.
- be polite and friendly to hikers, bikers, farmers and any other people you meet.
- all of the above

answer: d

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## USES FOR A BANDANA!

The bandana is part of the official cowboy uniform because it has so many uses. The typical bandana is 22" X 22".

1. Clothing accessory made from silk to cotton
2. Scarf or head covering
3. Sweat band by rolling and tying around the head
4. Ribbon to tie back a girl's hair
5. A measuring tool
6. Cloth to wipe sweat from one's face, neck and hat
7. Mask or disguise to hide one's face
8. Blindfold to lead a spooked animal or horse
9. Covering to protect one's face from dust, storms or blizzards
10. Handkerchief to blow your nose
11. Handkerchief to dry someone's tears
12. Sling for an injured arm
13. Protect your neck from the sun
14. Ear muff to keep your ears from freezing
15. Used with a stick for a tourniquet
16. Bandage or poultice for humans or animals
17. Tie around your hat to keep it from blowing off
18. Tie for a splint
19. Pouch to hold money, food, gold dust or any treasure you may find on the trail
20. Flag to signal for help
21. Knapsack for clothes
22. Short rope to hang items from your saddle, jeans or belt
23. Washcloth for body, dishes or sponging off a hot horse
24. Towel to dry with
25. Strainer for muddy water or coffee
26. Dust or polish rag for boots, tack or silver buckles!
27. Covering to keep bugs off food
28. Muzzle for dogs or horses that bite
29. Hot pad to handle hot handles on cooking utensils (ie. coffee pot, fry pan)
30. Napkin to keep food off your clothes
31. Fly swatter
32. And finally... a gag to keep someone from talking (just kidding!)



# THE 7 PRINCIPLES OF “LEAVE NO TRACE”

Photo credit: Shirley Dziadyk

The seven principles of “Leave No Trace” Ethics have been adapted for use by equestrians while riding and camping on public lands. Here are some strategies that will help you plan your visit so you can minimize your impact upon the environment and keep public lands accessible to riders in years to come. Very simple, very effective!

## 1. Plan Ahead and Prepare

## 2. Concentrate Use in Resistant Areas

## 3. Pack It In, Pack It Out

## 4. Properly Dispose of What You Can't Pack Out

Human Waste

Horse Waste

Waste Water

## 5. Use Fire Responsibly

## 6. Leave What You Find

## 7. Be Considerate of Others

For full descriptions of the 7 Principles contact your local chapter of the Back Country Horsemen of BC [www.bchorsemen.org](http://www.bchorsemen.org) or [www.leavenotrace.ca](http://www.leavenotrace.ca)



Photo credit: Shirley Dziadyk



# WILDLIFE AWARENESS

Have you ever wondered what you would do if you encountered a bear, cougar, snake or other potentially dangerous wildlife species. Do you have the mental tools to keep you safe from harm? All wild animals are unpredictable and can be dangerous; being responsible and prepared is your best defense against a bear or cougar attack.

## BEAR

- Stay calm and keep the animal in view.
- Back away slowly if you can.
- Never run from a bear.
- Aggressive bear behavior includes: jaw snapping, head lowering, ear flattening, woofing sounds and growling. A bear may act defensively if it is startled or if it is protecting cubs, its territory, or food. Wave your arms, talk in low tones and back slowly away.
- If a bear attacks - always fight back. (this pertains to black bears and young grizzlies) Jump up and down, wave your arms and yell. Try to look as large as possible. NEVER PLAY DEAD - it makes you easier prey! Remember that black bears and grizzlies can climb trees, so stay on the ground.

## COUGAR

- Never approach a cougar, but keep it in view.
- Always leave room for a cougar to escape easily.
- Don't turn your back on a cougar; face

the cougar and slowly back away.

- Don't run or play dead; try to back away slowly (running may trigger an attack).
- Stay calm; talk to the cougar in a strong, firm voice.
- Make yourself appear as large as possible by holding your arms or an object above your head.

## RATTLE SNAKE

- Wear long loose pants that cover your legs and boots that cover your ankles.
- Always be aware of where you put your hands and feet. Do not reach into piles of rocks, under logs, or into shrubs where snakes may be resting.
- Walk/ride with a partner - This is a good practice when frequenting any wilderness area.

## WASPS

- Nests can be found on both front and back country trails; most usually they are just off the side of the trail near a stump or log.
- If a nest is spotted, first and foremost, the riders should continue moving forward well out of the nest zone and then halt; riders should stay out of the danger area to avoid angering the wasps.
- If attacked, the rider should encourage their horse to move quickly forward out of the nest area and dismount when it is safe or possible to do so.

# HORSE COUNCIL BRITISH COLUMBIA



## About Horse Council BC

Horse Council BC is a non-profit organization, governed by an independent Board of Directors, committed to representing the interests of our members and the equine industry. As one of the most successful multi-breed, multi-discipline provincial equine organizations in Canada we represent the equine community in BC by collaborating with individuals, businesses and industry professionals to strengthen communication, education, safety and horse welfare.

## Who can join?

Anyone with an interest in horses, individuals, families, businesses and clubs are all eligible to be part of Horse Council BC.

## Benefits of an individual or family membership are:

- \$5,000,000 Liability Insurance
- \$30,000 Accidental Death & Dismemberment Insurance
- Transportation Insurance for Non-Owned Horses
- Discounts to different retailer products and services including discounted subscription rates to 6 Canadian equine magazines
- HCBC provides access to programs designed for recreational and competitive riders and drivers
- HCBC provides access to scholarships for youth, towards education and athlete development
- Subscription to BC's Equine Lifestyle Magazine
- Access to HCBC's Lending Library

27336 Fraser Hwy Aldergrove, BC V4W 3N5 **Office Hours:** Mon-Fri 8:30 - 4:30  
**Phone:** 604-856-4304 **Toll Free:** 1-800-345-8055 **Fax:** 604-856-4302  
[www.hcbc.ca](http://www.hcbc.ca)

Horse Council BC gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development.



Whether you are new to trail riding or are a seasoned pro, Back Country Horsemen of BC (BCHBC) offers a friendly atmosphere for those interested in trail riding and packing. The organization focuses on safety for horses and riders, environmental stewardship, trail building and maintenance, ... and fun!

[www.bchorsemen.org](http://www.bchorsemen.org)



Photo credits: Shirley Dziadyk