

TRAIL SAFETY & FIRST AID MANUAL



We offer this information to educate riders about keeping themselves and their horse safe on the trail and to acquaint them with basic first aid that can be used on the trail. Our goal is to promote responsible and safety conscious riders who are better prepared to handle emergencies that occur on the trails. Horses, wildlife and trail riding terrain are inherently unpredictable and risky and following the suggestions contained in this manual does not guarantee safety.

TRAILS

It is ideal if trails are groomed and safe and appropriate to their use. That said, you will not have control over these issues when on national forest, BLM, state or county trails, so you should be aware that you may have to navigate any or all of these obstacles when trail riding.

Downed logs and branches, fallen trees, overhanging branches, footing that is muddy or slippery, holes, loose rock and sudden dips. Gates that must be opened wide enough to allow riders and horses to safely pass through and then closed securely after the last horse is through the gate. Water crossings that might have hidden mud, deep holes or hidden rocks and fast currents or bridges of various designs and constructions crossing water or gullies. The lead rider should notify those who follow of these conditions as they are encountered and try to assist any riders and horses that have difficulty with these obstacles.

You may share the trails with ATVs, backpackers, cyclists and other animals and wildlife, such as llamas, cattle, bears, coyotes, cougars and wolves. Horses may spook at the arrival of any of these, so warn the riders that follow when you encounter them.

Bees and ground wasps are common during the summer and may suddenly swarm, stinging horses and riders. Alert other riders, then quicken the pace to move on down the trail getting all riders past the bees. Do not panic and go off the trail. This stirs up the bees and confuses the horses behind you as well.

HORSES

Consider the temperament and experience of the horse you will be taking on the trail and your skill level in helping your horse safely and confidently learn to deal with obstacles encountered on trails.

Teach your horse to stand quietly while you groom, tack, mount and dismount. If your horse is moving around as you approach with the saddle, stop and wait for it to quiet down, then continue saddling. If it moves again, wait again. Cinch up your horse slowly, 3 or more times, moving the horse in between, checking the cinch before mounting. If you slow it down, most horses will stand quietly to be saddled. When you mount, make a habit of standing quietly for a couple of minutes so the horse does not become habituated to taking off as your foot goes into the stirrup. Do not dismount until your horse is standing quietly.

Horses are prey animals, programmed to avoid danger. Most will freeze when they encounter something new and potentially dangerous. If the horse suddenly stops with an elevated head and fixed eyes staring at the object, allow them to consider the obstacle until their head drops, they blink and lick and chew. At that point, they may become curious and approach the obstacle on their own. If you apply pressure to get the horse to cross an obstacle before it has determined that the obstacle is not dangerous, it is quite common for the horse to either fight (buck, spin, back up or rear) or flee (spin and bolt in the opposite direction). If a horse is frightened of an obstacle, the rider may follow another more confident horse and rider or dismount and lead the horse past the obstacle, remounting on the other side. Safety is more important than trying to force a horse past an obstacle. Those with more confident horses should patiently wait to assist a young unconfident horse as it learns confidence.

Horses are herd animals, programmed to follow a good leader. Ideally, trails should be led by horses who are confident on trails and whose rider knows the trail and its obstacles. If allowed to think about the obstacle, most horses will follow a confident horse over an obstacle if they are ridden by a confident rider.

EQUIPMENT & TACK

Equipment and tack should be properly maintained and must fit both the horse and rider. Here is a standard equipment list for each rider:

- Saddle, pad, halter, headstall and bit
- Lead Rope
- Leatherman and/or knife
- Wire cutter
- Rain slicker

Check tack before using to make sure that it is in good working condition, including leather, stitching, snaps, buckles, stirrups, bridle, reins, latigo and cinch. Do not use tack that is worn or frayed and might fail on the trail.

Check fit of the bridle, making sure that you can fit two fingers under the curb strap and that there is no more than one wrinkle above the bit. Check fit of the saddle on the horse, making sure it does not impinge the horse's shoulders, has at least two fingers of clearance above the spine and does not dig into the horse's loins.

Riders should wear long pants and heeled boots. Helmets are recommended as well.

Good Riding Skills to Practice

- Posture - sit TALL in the saddle
- Maintain balance at all times
- Heels down, toes up.
- Loose reins except when using reins to signal a command.
- Legs and feel relaxed with slight pressure in stirrups unless signaling a command.
- Pressure / release:
 - LIGHT PRESSURE with reins to signal a command
 - IMMEDIATE RELEASE when the horse responds
- Come ALIVE with your feet. BUMP with feet or calves to change pace. (walk/trot/lope).
- Stay ALERT at all times and at ALL PACES.
- Keep a safe distance from the horse in front to allow for sudden change in pace or horse behavior.
- READ your horse's body language (ears, breathing, and body tension).

- Eliminate any thing that may cause your horse to spook or shy. (loose, floppy things)
- Lean body weight forward while going up a hill and back when going down.
- Never trot or lope going downhill.
- Reward your horse by "rubbing" on neck at every opportunity.
- Respect the horse: size, strength, and nature

RIDE MANAGEMENT

Each trail ride should have a designated trail boss in charge of the group of riders, particularly in event of an emergency.

The trail boss should provide instructions at the beginning of the ride and throughout the ride as needed.

Define the types of terrain to be encountered, including the pace (walk, trot or lope) that is appropriate, water and bridge crossings and elevation gain or loss.

Decide the maximum number of riders allowed on the ride and supervision required. The ratio of trail boss to riders may vary depending on the type of ride, pace and skill of the riders. The trail boss may delegate responsibility to another experienced rider for keeping an eye on less skilled riders. The trail boss should also delegate someone to ride drag on the ride, making sure that all riders come off the trail safely.

Instruct riders on appropriate spacing between horses (nose to tail, one horse length between horses, riding side by side, riding off trail) when appropriate.

Rides should only travel at the level of the weakest rider in the group. The group should wait for any rider who is having difficulty with an obstacle.

Before starting the ride, the trail boss should identify other riders in their mind who could assist them if an emergency should occur during the ride.

The use of cell phones should be avoided at the trail head and on the ride except for emergencies. If you must have your cell phone on, then turn OFF the ringer. They are a distraction to both horse and rider and may lead to an accident.

When leading a trail ride, the trail boss should strive for the following:

- Exhibit good horsemanship skills and assist those who ride with you on learning the same.
- Be a good example as to appropriate apparel (boots with heels and long pants).
- Handle horses well on the ground and in the saddle.
- Display concern for the well-being of the horse.
- Take control of the group, no matter what the skill level of the riders.
- Display good judgment in dealing with riders and horses in all situations.
- Try to anticipate potentially dangerous situations on the trail.
- Adapt emergency skills, as necessary, on the trail.

Emergency Exit Plan

Trail bosses should know the fastest and most effective route back to the trail head. Riders may not know of forest service roads that are more direct than trails.

Smart phones have GPS applications on which each trail can be mapped and shared. They also have GPS location trackers that may help find lost riders.

Communication devices may be of value where the terrain allows reception, but such reception can be unreliable and inconsistent in wilderness and mountainous settings.

Have a backup plan in case of equipment failure.

First Aid Kit

What goes into the kit? A well-packed first aid kit should have the following items:

- Emergency procedure
- Aspirin (or substitute)
- Antacid
- Antihistamine (Benadryl)
- Band-Aids (several sizes)
- Compress bandage
- Gauze pads 4 x 4
- Neosporin Ointment
- Roll of gauze
- Latex free gloves
- Anti-bacterial towelettes
- Scissors
- SAM splint (rolled aluminum alloy splint)
- Mylar blanket (space blanket)
- Tape 1" and 2"
- Triangular Bandage
- A pen, marker and paper to document any incident.

Check your first aid kit before leaving for each ride. Get in the habit of immediately replacing what you have used.

TRAIL RIDING SAFETY REMINDERS

THUNDERSTORMS

Lightning is capricious and unpredictable. The danger can come upon you quickly. There is no defense against a "first strike." In most cases thunder is a very good advanced warning of lightning. If you hear thunder, the associated lightning is within 6-8 miles so get defensive immediately. See lightning but do not hear thunder? The threat is farther away than your hearing range.

Safety means AVOID the high ground & AVOID metallic objects & AVOID solitary trees & AVOID water. SEEK cluster of small trees or bushes & SEEK lower elevations & SEEK safety inside a vehicle & separate from others to reduce multiple injuries. Wait a minimum of 30 minutes before resuming outdoor activities after the last observed thunder or lightning.

Lightning victims' survival rate is 90%+. People struck by lightning do not retain an electrical charge so start CPR immediately. Keep the victim warm. Treat burns.

HYPOTHERMIA

Hypothermia is the lowering of the body's core temperature to a level that impairs normal muscle and brain activities. It is a serious and sometimes fatal condition.

Hypothermia is generally brought on by exposure to cold. The windy, often wet conditions of high elevations can produce hypothermia at temperatures as warm as 50° F (10° C).

Preparation is the best prevention for hypothermia. Carry adequate equipment for rapid weather changes. Always include rain gear, extra clothing for layering, a hat and gloves.

Watch for these signs of hypothermia in yourself and others in your party:

- Drowsiness
- Loss of judgment or coordination
- Reduced dexterity
- Slurred speech
- Uncontrolled shivering

If these signs appear, begin immediate treatment. Eliminate exposure to cold and wet conditions, move out of the wind, add layers of warm, dry clothing and begin to rewarm the individual by administering warm, non-alcoholic liquids.

SUNBURN

Ultraviolet radiation is more intense at high elevation. It is much easier to get severely sunburned at high elevation than at sea level.

Protect skin with long sleeves and pants, a hat and frequent applications of sunblock. Protect the eyes with sunglasses. Keep a watchful eye on infants and children as even slight redness can indicate potential sunburn.

DEHYDRATION

The low humidity and high winds common at high elevations can cause the body to dehydrate.

Dehydration can increase the risk of fatigue, hypothermia and altitude sickness. Drinking plenty of water is the best protection against dehydration. Take precautions against "hidden dangers" like giardia when obtaining water from streams.

GIARDIASIS

Giardiasis is a debilitating intestinal disorder caused by drinking contaminated water. Symptoms, including diarrhea, gas, appetite loss, bloating and cramps, may not develop for several weeks. Do not assume that stream and lake waters are safe to drink. Boiling is the best purification method. Bring water to full rolling boil for 5 minutes. Water filters are also a good choice if effective against giardia (pore size less than 1/2 micron). Chemical disinfectants are not as reliable, but can be used in an emergency.

ALTITUDE SICKNESS

At 9,000 feet oxygen levels are about half that at sea level. Less available oxygen affects everyone differently. In some individuals, the effects are slight, perhaps unnoticeable, while in others the changes bring on the more severe reactions of mountain sickness. Many horses and people are affected by even less elevations, especially when going from near sea level to over 5,000 feet.

Symptoms of altitude sickness:

- Headache
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Fatigue
- Nasal congestion
- Rapid heartbeat
- Diarrhea
- Insomnia

If symptoms persist or worsen, go to a lower elevation as soon as possible and seek medical attention. The best protection against altitude sickness is gradual acclimatization to higher elevation. Minimize risks by limiting strenuous activity the first few days. Rest, eat lightly, avoid alcohol, minimize caffeine and increase fluid intake, particularly water.

TRAIL RIDING SURVIVAL ESSENTIALS

- Water
- Rain gear
- Knife
- Matches / fire starter
- Sunglasses
- Sunblock
- Map
- Compass
- Whistle
- First aid kit
- Flashlight
- Extra food

WHAT TO WEAR OR CARRY

- Long sleeved shirt
- Long pants
- Boots
- Extra socks
- Stocking cap
- Rain gear
- Windbreaker
- Snack food (high energy)

WHAT NOT TO DO

- Do not drink untested or untreated water
- Do not get off the trails
- Do not hike / ride alone
- Do not push beyond limits of capability

WHAT TO DO IF YOU BECOME LOST OR CONFUSED

- Stop, sit down/ tie up your horse and rest
- Do not panic
- Stay on an established trail
- Wait to be found
- Do not throw anything away. You may need it later
- Stay in a nearby open space during the day and watch for aircraft
- Make noise or blow your whistle often
- Make a basic camp with a primitive shelter before night
- Make a small, smoky fire

BACKCOUNTRY SAFETY

The wilderness offers the risk and challenge of primitive America. To meet the challenge, consider these safety tips:

- Have a prepared route, carry maps, a compass GPS and cell phone.
- Tell someone of your plans.
- Stay within the limits of you and your horse's ability.
- Wear adequate clothing (layering) and sturdy footwear
- Be prepared for sudden changes in weather. Lightning and thunderstorms are common in the afternoons. Move out of high rocky areas and away from tall single trees during storms.
- Carry water or treat water before drinking. The parasite Giardia is present and can cause illness.
- Carry first aid supplies, sunglasses and sunscreen. Hazards from the sun are increased at mountain elevations.

FACILITY USED FOR SHOWS OR GYMKHANAS

When using a horse facility for a show or gymkhana, consider the following to create a more responsible environment for horse and rider:

- Fences should be well maintained. Rails or wire should be secure. Gates should open and close correctly on horseback. All riders should be told that they are to pass through the gate at a walk and wait for the last horse and rider to close the gate before leaving.
- Hitching rails should be secure, able to handle a horse pulling back and situated so observers will be clear of conflict. They should be spacious enough for your activities. Grooming and tacking areas should be kept free of debris such as coats, hay, buckets and mounting blocks.
- There should be designated areas for mounting and dismounting with accessible mounting blocks.
- Stalls and paddocks should be kept neat, clean and safe for the horse.
- Rules, regulations, restrictions and laws should be clearly posted.
- Arenas should be the appropriate size for the activities offered and should be in good repair.
- Spectator viewing areas should be designated.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

You witness or come upon an equestrian accident. The rider appears seriously hurt and the horse is loose. What if you take the wrong trail and become disoriented? Do you know what to do? What can you do to make the situation better and not any worse?

OBSERVE AND ASSESS THE SITUATION

Upon recognizing that a probable emergency or situation has occurred, you need to take charge and initiate an appropriate sequence of actions. Once you establish your authority, it is imperative to stay calm, keep others calm and not allow others to sway you from your role. If there are medical personnel on your ride (who are doctors or nurses) then allow them to assist in the medical assessment, treatment, while you direct the situation. Remember that the riders are looking to you to resolve the situation and keep them safe and if you do not remain in charge, the situation will worsen.

Observe the situation and make a thorough initial assessment before approaching the emergency or taking any definitive action. Yours and others' safety is imperative. Simply put, one person may already be harmed but no others need be.

In an emergency: If you did not actually witness the accident, take initial account as to what probably has happened, how many persons and / or horses are involved, and determine if the problem is still occurring, **DO NOT** approach the victim unless it is reasonably safe to do so. This assessment could include asking witnesses what happened.

If you are disoriented and not sure where you are: The first approach is to backtrack, following your tracks back to the way you came from. If you are unable to do so, in a calm and collected manner call and explain the situation. State your last known location and describe your current location. If you are unable to make contact with someone due to the terrain, and are unable to

backtrack, make your way to a highpoint and again attempt contact. As a last resort, mark where you are in a way recognizable to those that may look for you and navigate your way home using the map in the first aid kit.

Upon a medical emergency, follow the procedures below:

Contact 911 and let them know you have a rider down or an emergency has occurred and your location. This will allow them to dispatch to the area while you finish assessing the situation. Describe the situation (rider fell, horse down, etc.) and begin answering any questions they may have. They may need more specific information after you have further assessed the situation.

SECURE THE SCENE:

Once you are focused on the victim, you will be unable to concentrate on a loose horse or other hazards. Have all riders dismount and if you are unable to do so, assign someone competent to secure or keep away any loose animals. If the accident has occurred on or next to a roadway, assign someone to warn approaching traffic. Maintaining safety for the victim, rescuers and other riders on the ride is imperative.

If the scene cannot be secured, take only actions that can be reasonably considered as safe and have someone responsible for focusing on safety while you concentrate on the victim.

GET ASSISTANCE

You can't do everything yourself, and most serious emergencies get more complicated before they are resolved. Designate roles and stick with them. By assigning duties or roles to remaining riders, you significantly reduce their fears and simply give them something to concentrate on, relieving you from further conflict.

Once it is safe to approach the victim, try to assess further, the seriousness of the injuries. USE CERTIFIED FIRST AID /FIRST

RESPONDER PROCEDURES. DO NOT MOVE THE VICTIM until you are sure it is safe to do so. Convey your findings to emergency responders immediately and whenever the situation changes.

WHEN CALLING 911

The person calling Emergency Dispatch for help should be prepared to answer the following questions. If you are not with the victim, you may need to explain this to the dispatcher and indicate that someone else is treating the victim.

1. WHAT HAPPENED? Try to be specific. "A rider down" doesn't tell the emergency dispatcher much. A fall, being thrown, and running into a tree, for example, can result in significantly different injuries, which may prompt different medical responses.
2. WHAT IS THE VICTIM'S CHIEF COMPLAINT? Falling off a horse is not a complaint. The pain or injury that results is.
 - ✓ Actual complaint ("He's complaining of a lot of lower back pain")
 - ✓ Apparent chief problem ("He's broken his leg", or maybe simply "he's unconscious")
3. IS THE VICTIM AWAKE (CONSCIOUS)? ("He is", "he is not", "he wasn't but is now", etc.)
4. HOW IS THE VICTIM BREATHING? ("OK", "he's having difficulty", "He's having a great deal of difficulty", and "he's not breathing at all.")
5. IS THE VICTIM BLEEDING? CAN YOU CONTROL IT? ("Yes", "No", "I could but now it has gotten worse.")
6. WHAT IS THE VICTIM'S APPROXIMATE AGE? ("Mid 20s", "early 50s", "young child", etc.)
7. WHAT IS THE VICTIM'S LOCATION? Be specific, and if you can, send someone out to the main roadway to flag down the emergency crew; indicate that you can do so.

The dispatcher may give you some pre-arrival instructions. Try to remember or write these instructions down. Someone else in the dispatch center will be sending help, so take the time you need to get this information down correctly and then take it to the rescuer that is helping the victim.

If you have more than one victim, be sure to indicate this.

If you are aware of any significant hazards (Steep, muddy, or rocky terrain; horses loose or other factors which might require a specialized response) indicate these.

Do not hang up first.

Do not move any victim unless absolutely necessary for safety. If you have to move a victim, use proper safety precautions (described below):

PROVIDE CORRECT INITIAL CARE FOR THE VICTIM:

A. Check victim for "A-B-C-D".

Check the victim for "A-B-C-D". After any fall or impact injury, this has to be done with care there is a reasonable possibility of spinal injury and the spinal cord could be severed through mishandling the victim. **NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO, DO YOUR BEST TO MAINTAIN THE SPINAL ALIGNMENT YOU FIND THROUGH THE NECK AND LOWER BACK!**

1. **A IS FOR AIRWAY.** Make sure the airway is open and unimpaired.
 - ✓ If the victim is unconscious, use the chin-lift method to clear the tongue from the airway (if a problem)
 - ✓ If the victim is unconscious on his / her back and blood or other fluids are filling the mouth, get help and carefully roll the victim onto his / her side while maintaining spinal alignment.
2. **B IS FOR BREATHING.** Make sure the victim is breathing. Artificial respiration may be required if the victim has stopped breathing but the airway is clear.
3. **C IS FOR CIRCULATION.** Make sure the victim has a pulse and is not profusely bleeding. Lack of a pulse may require initiating CPR. Bleeding can be controlled by direct pressure and /or elevation of affected limbs (If elevation can be performed without affecting spinal alignment).

4. **D IS FOR DELICATE.** Central nervous system (primarily the spine). Mishandling the neck and lower back areas after an impact injury can cause significant problems, including permanent, partial and total paralysis, or in some cases even death.

Provide basic first aid as necessary while avoiding any unnecessary movement of the neck and lower back. Designate someone to sit behind the patient and support the neck and head with both hands.

MAINTAIN CONTINUITY WITH THE VICTIM

The first person with the victim should stay with him / her until relieved by someone of greater competence unless the dynamics of the scene require otherwise. This provides continuity of observations that can be conveyed to rescuers, as well as provides reassurance to the victim.

PREPARE FOR ARRIVAL OF EMS PERSONNEL

(Designate someone or multiple persons to perform the following duties)

1. Unlock appropriate gates, if necessary.
2. Plan a practical location for EMS equipment to park near the emergency.
3. Have someone meet rescue and ambulance personnel at the main roadway and guide them to where it is safe to park and bring them in to the victim.
4. Plan on the effect that EMS equipment, personnel and equipment may have on any horses that are around and take mitigating steps. (This is particularly important when emergency crews arrive in ambulances, fire engines and when helicopters are involved.)
5. Turn victim(s) over to EMS personnel in a "professional" and brief manner.
 - ✓ Briefly describe what happened (including whether witnessed or unwitnessed).

- ✓ Briefly describe victim findings.
- ✓ Briefly describe care given and other relevant actions.
- ✓ Advise as to any scene security problems that still exist.

PRACTICE EMERGENCY SCENARIOS

No one knows how one will act in an emergency. However if you practice handling potential accident situations, you will know what to do, allowing you to respond more quickly and stay in control. Stage the scenarios at a clinic or during trail clearing rides.

There are several RIGHT ways to handle emergencies and injuries and first aid techniques change over time. Prudence, control and common sense will take you a long way.

SCENARIO IDEAS

1. A small ride with trail boss and 3 riders. One rider needs a mounting block to get on or off and is a very nervous beginner rider. The ride is coming back and within 5 minutes out from the trail head, a storm rolls in. The nervous rider wants to put on her slicker. The trail boss helps her put on the slicker without dismounting. The wind picks up, the slicker blows, horse spooks, nervous rider comes off, that horse bumps into another one and a second rider comes off. Two riders are down with rib and lower back pains and a third rider is under control and calm.
2. You are on an all-day ride with six riders in a wooded area. The wind picks up and the horses are on edge. Suddenly you hear a cracking sound and see a tree is coming down. The horses spook and move in every direction. Two riders come off. One is shook up and appears to have gotten the wind knocked out of him. Another rider hits their head pretty hard on the ground. Is conscious but out of it. Horses are dancing around and riders are rattled.
3. You are on a kids ride crossing a meadow, approaching a fence with a gate you must pass through. As you approach the fence you notice a golden eagle perched on the fence. You are turning to stop the ride about to address the situation that the eagle is present and the eagle takes off toward the ride. The horses instantly spook at the flapping wings. The first horse bolts forward through the gate

and takes off at a lope. One little girl begins screaming and the horse steps to the side and is extremely nervous. You have another experienced rider with you on this ride but his horse has reacted to the eagle and starts crow hopping!

4. You are returning home with a family of 4, all accomplished riders. Because they are confident and capable at the lope, you are loping through a clearing. The least capable rider is the mother so she is riding directly behind you. Her cowboy hat comes off and flies back and spooks her son's horse near the back of the line. As the horse shies the 13 year old boy comes off and hits his head against the ground as he tumbles. Everyone comes to a stop, there is a loose horse, a hurt and crying boy on the ground and a panicked and guilt ridden mother. What do you do?

5. Two hours out from the trail head, a horse stumbles and throws the rider forward. She stays on but her head collided with the horse's rising neck as the horse recovered from the stumble. She has no complaints of pain but her nose is bleeding profusely. What do you do?

HORSE NORMALS AND FIRST AID

Normals for adult horses:

- Heart Rate: 38-48 beats per minute
- Respiratory Rate: 10-20 breaths per minute
- Temperature: 98-101.5 degrees (usually one degree higher in afternoons than in mornings)

FIRST AID PROCEDURES FOR COMMON CONDITIONS

FOR COLIC: Walk the horse until veterinary help arrives. If you have Banamine or other medications, do not administer them unless directed by your veterinarian.

FOR CUTS AND LACERATIONS: To control bleeding and to protect the wound, apply a clean well-padded support bandage if the wound is on a leg. In cases of severe bleeding, pressure bandages are best. Do not apply any medications or antiseptics until your

veterinarian determines whether or not the laceration can be sutured. They can injure exposed tissue and delay healing.

FOR FEVER: Fevers are usually a sign of infection. Fevers above 105 degrees can be life threatening. Bathing in cold water can be an effective way to lower body temperature, as well as alcohol baths and cold water enemas.

FOR CHOKE: Choke is a term for a bolus of feed obstructing the esophagus that causes saliva and feed particles to be coughed out of the mouth and nostrils. Most cases resolve on their own within 20-30 minutes. Encourage the horse to lower its head to allow the saliva and feed to flow from the mouth and nose. Massage of the neck over the jugular groove may help. Call your veterinarian if the problem does not resolve within 30 minutes. Withhold all feed for at least 12 hours.

FOR LAMENESS: Sudden, non-weight bearing lameness is an emergency that requires veterinary attention. Keep the horse calm and quiet until help arrives. If the horse must be moved or trailered, a well-padded splint should be applied to the affected limb.

FOR SNAKEBITE: If your horse has been bitten, keep the horse quiet and call your vet immediately. If you are riding, get off your horse and walk slowly back to the trailer or stable. It will take time for swelling to develop, so use this time to transport your horse to a place where they can be treated. The most serious problem is usually restriction of the airway from severe swelling when the horse has been bitten on the nose or face. Many riders carry short, 6 to 8 inch pieces of small diameter hose to insert into the horse's nostrils to keep the airways open if they are riding in remote country. Do not cut or use compression on the snakebite, as this will only accelerate the poison! Rattlesnake bites are treated with medication to limit inflammation, antibiotics and supportive care, and careful maintenance of the horse's airway. The use of antivenom is limited by its high cost and the fact that it is usually not needed. Remember, with proper care rattlesnake bites are rarely fatal.

TRAIL RIDING ETIQUETTE

- All riders assume responsibility for themselves and their horses, especially under Oregon Equine Inherent Risk laws.
- The trail boss is in charge of the ride. He/she will lead the ride, determine breaks, and give assistance when requested. The drag rider will assist the trail boss by being the last rider at all times. Both have the authority to make decisions on the ride. Both will also carry basic horse/human first aid kits, but if you have a known allergic reaction to bees, are diabetic, etc., you must carry your own medical supplies.
- Riders and guests **MUST** be familiar with the Club rules and trail etiquette guidelines. Riders not following the rules and guidelines and causing problems for other riders may be asked to not ride with the Club. **REMEMBER:** The safety of all riders and their horses is the most important thing on a trail ride.
- Be sure you and your horse are in adequate physical condition for the trail ride. Use the trail levels and definitions below to help you decide which ride(s) is the best for you and your horse. Be honest with yourself regarding your physical condition and the physical condition of your horse. Diseased or ill horses should not be brought to trail rides.
- If you are new to trail riding, let the trail boss or drag rider know **BEFORE** the ride begins.
- Riders **MUST** check in with the trail boss at breakfast or before starting the ride. Members with guests must also sign the guest liability waiver.
- If not already planned, the trail boss will be asking for a volunteer drag rider before the ride begins. Please consider volunteering on occasion.
- Check your equipment to be sure it is safe and good repair **BEFORE** the ride.
- Shod horses or boots are strongly recommended for all trail rides.
- Riders should take a halter and tie rope along on the ride.
- Arrive early and be ready to leave at the designated departure time. It is strongly recommended that you call the trail boss at least the night before the trail ride so the trail boss will have an

idea of how many riders will be attending the ride, and if there is a last-minute change, you can be notified.

- Animals may kick when crowded. If your animal kicks, tie a colored ribbon to its tail to warn others. (The trail boss should have colored flagging).
- Know your riding limitations and the limitations of your horse. Don't put yourself and others in danger.
- Identify the problem and ASK FOR HELP. It is very important to communicate with the trail boss, drag rider, or closest rider if you are having a problem.
- If no one volunteered to be drag rider, riders need to keep up with the main group. If you become separated from the main group, you will be responsible for yourself and getting back to the staging area.
- If riders want to move out at a faster pace, please ask the trail boss, and on approval, go out ahead of the group after notifying the trail boss. You will be responsible for yourself and getting back to the staging area.
- BE AWARE OF THE RIDERS AROUND YOU. You should always keep another rider in view. Riders also need to be aware of their surroundings and/or landmarks in case you need to turn back. Keep your distance when riding. Rule of thumb is you should always be able to see the back feet of the horse in front of you.
- When approaching or leaving other riders, do so in a slow and controlled manner. NEVER trot/canter up behind or away from other riders.
- Always be alert and observant of hazards such as a wire, bad holes, bees, etc. Signal riders behind you of hazards. If bees are encountered, move down the trail quickly while maintaining control of your mount.
- Walk down into gullies or inclines at a safe distance; NEVER lunge or gallop into or out of them. This could cause a serious accident by unnerving other horses. Pass only on sections of trail that are safe. Give riders behind you time to cross creeks or other obstacles before riding on.
- Do not leave the group without notifying the trail boss, drag rider, or ask the closest rider to pass on to the trail boss/drag rider that you are leaving the ride.

- During short stops, tie your animal safely and securely to a solid object that will not break or pull off if the animal pulls back. Be certain to tie rope so it cannot slip down where your animal can get a foot over it. Keep distance between animals when tying. Be aware of pawing and cribbing. Repair ground damage and spread manure after stops on the trail.
- Do not leave trash on the trail or at the staging area. All riders should clean up the manure around their trailer at the staging area.
- The trail boss, drag rider, or person designated by the trail boss/drag rider will remain until all riders are accounted for at the trail head. This person will also wait for horses to be loaded up and riders are ready to head home. **BE COURTEOUS TO THIS PERSON – DON'T MAKE HIM/HER WAIT FOR YOU UNNECESSARILY!** If you are having a problem, let this person know.

Trail Levels and Definitions

L1 = Easy. Mostly flat, a couple of easy bridges and/or water crossings. Primarily old roads that are wide, good footing, no side hills. Recommended for beginner riders and controllable horses in fair condition having some trail experience.

L2 = Moderate. Varied terrain, but no steep hills or side hilling. Trails and roads. Few bridges and/or water crossing but easy to negotiate. Some rocky areas. Recommended for beginner/intermediate riders and controllable horses in good condition with some trail experience.

L3 = Somewhat Difficult. Varied terrain, including steep sections. Some side hilling, but on wider trail. Rocky trails, more water crossings, some more difficult. Recommended for intermediate riders and horses in good condition with some experience in all types of trail obstacles.

L4 = Difficult. Mostly steep, up and down and side hilling. Water crossings may be more difficult (steeper approaches, deeper and

faster water). More difficult bridges (narrow, step-ups, no rails, etc.). Trails are narrower and rocky. Recommended for advanced riders and horses with substantial experience on all types of trails and conditions.

L5 = Very Difficult. Steep, narrow, side hills, rocky, footing issues, tight switchbacks, difficult water crossings. Recommended for advanced riders and horses in very good condition with lots of trail time.

REMEMBER: Trails may be a combination of ratings, starting easy and then having a difficult area. Trails may have a different rating depending on the time of year as well. Wet conditions, erosion, or high water run-off in the creeks can make an easy trail more difficult.