

What You Should Do When Meeting a Horse/Rider:

1. Be alert for horses.
2. Yield to horse/rider when possible. **HIKER:** Step off the downhill side of the trail and stand still. By stepping to the downhill site, adequate room is yielded to the horse for passing. Be sure the horse has seen you before stepping aside, particularly if you step out of sight. When the horse approaches you, any sudden movement on your part will probably spook the horse if he is unaware of your existence. Also, do not attempt to pet horses. **ATVer:** Move to the side at a wide, safe location. Shut down engine. **BICYCLIST:** At a safe location, bring bicycle to a halt and remain in position.

Many horses are spooked by the sight of backpackers; the large pack themselves, the noise and sight of ATVers, and the sight and quick action of bicycles. Therefore, upon stopping, remain still and speak softly to have a calming effect on the horse.

3. If the rider stops the horse, converse with rider. Promote a positive relationship between user groups by encouraging a friendly, courteous meeting.
4. The rider may choose to move the horse on without stopping. This may not be due to lack of courtesy, but rather due to a decision that the horse may be agitated and is best handled by urging him on past you. However, in some cases the rider may decide that he can best handle his horse by having you move on and request you do so. This is more apt to occur with a hiker or bicyclist than with an ATVer because of the noise created by the ATVer. Expect the rider to advise you.

What You Should Do When Overtaking a Horse/Rider

1. **HIKER:** If you are traveling at a faster pace, alert the rider to your presence by calling out that you wish to pass. The rider should pull the horse over. Step to downhill side. If rider has horse under control, proceed on; if not, allow rider to move horse to rear. **ATVer:** Your engine noise may adequately alert the horse/rider to your presence. However, if it does not, use a horn or other device to signal the rider. Once recognized, stop and shut down your engine. Allow rider to move horse to a safe distance in the rear. **BICYCLIST:** A bicycle is generally quiet and is not heard by horse/rider. Signal by horn, bell or calling out that you are approaching. Stop. If horse is not agitated by your presence, proceed on. Otherwise, allow rider to move horse to rear before proceeding. **HORSERIDER:** If you are traveling in a gait faster than a walk, bring your horse to a walk while passing. Riding up at a gallop or fast trot often spooks the horse being overtaken.

Many horses are well conditioned to traffic, and your presence would be undisturbing. Some are not, in which case following this protocol will create a smoother, safer passing

Helpful Knowledge About Horses

1. A horse is a wandering, grazing animal that does not hunt other animals. However, in his natural habitat, he is hunted by other predatory animals. His defense against threats is speed. With only a 50-yard head start, no predator in the world can catch him. He is the fastest living animal at any distance over a quarter of a mile. Some cats (cheetah and some antelopes) can

attain higher speeds than the horse for short distances. For 100 years or so they may even go twice as fast as the fastest horse. But they cannot maintain that speed.

To be sure that the horse has a margin of safety, nature has endowed him with a fantastic warning system. His sensory receptors alert him to approaching danger and prepare him for instant action to escape. Horses do not have much reasoning power. They do not have the ability to question or think about a situation. A horse's alarm system operates through use of his eyes, nose, sense of smell and instinct. This sensory system depends first on sight and hearing and to a lesser extent on the sense of smell.

Most experts believe horses cannot distinguish between colors and do not have a good depth perception. A horse has the ability to use both binocular and monocular vision. However, a horse has a much better field of vision than a human -- a 340-degree range.

Without color or depth perception, the horse has some trouble differentiating detail. He sees lighter and darker shapes. A hiker with a backpack may look like a huge animal. In this flat, colorless panorama, motion sets off the alarm system. A horse's main weapon in getting to security is flight. However, if he is cornered with the option of flight removed, a horse will resort to kicking with his hind feet where he can ward off danger with bone-crushing kicks.

Keep in mind that horse's difference in color, depth perception, and vision affect how he views his world. Generally, his reactions to his environment are based upon instinct due to his alarm system, which has ONE PURPOSE -- to alert him to danger and move him to security.

2. A horse that reacts when meeting a hiker, biker, or ATVer by attempting to run simply sees you as a threat and is responding by instinct. A horse that "cuts up" when he sees you may be attempting to flee but is under restraint by the rider. A skilled rider will bring the horse under control. Understand that it is natural for a horse to view you as dangerous when he does not see you well. Keep in mind that soft talk will help to reassure the horse that you are no threat.
3. Always keep in mind that a horse is easily spooked by strange sites and sounds. Do not attempt to pet horses. Although most horses are docile, this might be one of those occasions your actions would spook him, and he might attempt to kick you.
4. Recognize that different skill levels exist among horse riders. Those less skilled may not be adept at handling a badly spooked horse.
5. Regardless of rules and etiquette, COMMON SENSE SHOULD PREVAIL. Always think safety.

Meeting a Horse On The Trail

TEAMWORK

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What To Do

Blue Ridge Trail Riders, Inc., an equestrian club
423-693-4308

Protocol for Horse Riders, ATVers, Bicyclists,
and Hikers

Harvey Broome Group of the Tennessee
Chapter of The Sierra Club, a conservation and
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Appalachian Mountain Bike Club, a mountain
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Respect is a Trail
Courtesy.