

Generally Accepted Trail Riding Safety and Etiquette Rules

For Rim Rock Riders Trail Program

The following rules of trail riding are based on research based on the following materials:

- Riding Central Oregon Horse Trails by Kim McCarrel
- The Horse Illustrated Guide to Trail Riding by Micaela Myers
- Trail Riding A Complete Guide from the Howell Equestrian Library by Audrey Pavia
- Taking up Riding as an Adult a Horse Wise Guide by Diana Delmar
- Trail Riding: Train, Prepare, Pack Up & Hit the Trail by Rhonda Hart Poe
- Guide to Oregon Equestrian Trails 2007 edition distributed to OET members

Many experienced trail riders consider most of these to be common sense. They do bear repeating for new riders and others who might not typically ride in a large group on a regular basis.

Equestrian Trail Etiquette for Group Riding

- Speak to others in a courteous and friendly manner when you meet them on the trail.
- Respect other trail users and know right of way rules: bikers and hikers yield to horses; downhill riders yield to uphill riders; smaller groups yield to larger groups to keep most foot prints on designated trail.
- Be on time and ready to ride at designated ride time.
- Sign liability forms before riding.
- All horses should be current on vaccinations for communicable diseases. Do not bring a horse that is injured, ill or suspected to be ill or contagious on a trail ride.
- Carry first aid items, map & compass/GPS, water & food, proper attire, survival items, tack repair kit, removal boots, whistle.
- Appoint a trail boss as ride leader; appoint drag rider as last. Alternate experienced riders with inexperienced riders throughout the line of horses.
- Be prepared to assist those needing help; stop and wait until others are safe and ready to start again.
- Leave gates as found. Riders should wait for gate closer to be ready to ride or remounted and ready to ride.
- If there are more than twelve riders (12) we will split the ride.
- No out of control horses or riders will be allowed. They will be asked to dismount and /or leave the ride.
- Wait until all riders are mounted and ready to ride before any horses move out.
- Maintain at least one horse length between horses. Kickers should have red ribbon on their tails.
- Horses should not sniff to be friendly. It has the potential to spread disease and some horses will take this as a challenge and strike out.
- Keep to a walk on trails, especially if other users may be present. No one should pass the ride leader or lag behind the drag rider in back, who will pace to allow the slowest horse to keep up, to preserve the horses' need to stay with the herd.
- Stay within sight of other riders and keep other riders in sight. Be sure to check for the riders in front and back of you to insure that they are still with the group, are safe and that their horses are calm and in control.
- If a rider needs to stop or dismount, call out your intentions and allow the group to stop and wait together.

- No smoking or alcoholic beverages on the trail during the ride. Pack out all trash even food scraps and pick up at least one or two items left behind by others and pack them out.
- No racing, bolting, scrapping or messing around as such behavior might jeopardize the safety of others. Stay with the group.
- Call out your intentions and use hand signals for stopping, dismounting, etc. and check to be sure other riders understand and have heard or observed the changes signaled. Review hand signals with the group before riding out.
- Low branches should be raised up as you ride but do not hang onto branches as they will fly into the face of the horse/rider behind you when you let go. Call out the branch or other obstacle to warn others to be aware of it...such as bridges, holes, unexpected obstacles or step-overs.
- When crossing a stream the lead rider should wait at a safe distance near the water before moving on. This allows each horse to drink or cross without worrying about being left behind. Many horses will not drink if another horse's feet are moving. Only put two feet into the water unless you are crossing the water as well.
- On steep portions of trails, horses should proceed single file at a WALK going up and down. The front rider should wait at a safe distance at the end of the steep portion.
- At lunches or rest stops where riders tie up, tie horses safely and comfortably respecting vegetation and trees and at a safe distance from other horses and riders, water and riparian areas.
- When passing anyone on a trail, stay at a walk.
- When a hiker or biker a llama or packing animal, or another group of riders is spotted, call out their presence to the rest of the group.
- When passing bikers or hikers on the trail request politely that they step to the LOW or downhill side of the trail and stay visible to horses and rides.
- Many bikers and hikers (and some other trail riders) are not knowledgeable about trail safety – be very polite and friendly when explaining things to them so they will have a favorable impression of trail riders and thus minimize complaints about trail use to authorities.
- When your horse is pooping, maintain movement at the same speed as other horses. This spreads the manure and prevents another horse down the line stopping in a potentially unsafe location and/or without warning.
- Watch for and avoid unsafe hazards such as hole, barbed wire, broken glass, railroad crossing spaces, unsafe footing, quicksand, deep mud, stubs on logs, etc. and call out to others.
- Clean up manure at trail head/parking areas. Scatter manure piles at stopping spots. Pick up left over hay and your trash and a few pieces of trash left by others.
- Follow posted signs for users allowed on trails, riparian, closed areas, breeding areas closed for season, cattle, etc.
- When changing position in the trail line, be sure to reach agreement with other riders when you pass forward or move further backward and do so at a walk consistent with the pace of other riders.
- Do not leave the group without discussing this first with the ride leader.
- If you arrive for a trail ride late and the group has departed, you will not be covered by RRR insurance as a result of not having signed the ride waiver for the day. It is safer to return home than to ride alone.

If you have any questions, please contact Linda Nolte, RRR Trail Chair at JuniperCrest@att.net

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