

Alberta Trail Riding Association
HORSE SENSE

"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."

Aldo Leopold, 1949

Our goal is to increase awareness of the impact of equestrians and their horses on the environment. By taking responsibility for your impact, you ensure that these areas will be available in the future. The Forest Service uses restriction as their primary tool to protect and preserve the wilderness. A lack of ethical use of the environment will inevitably result in denied access to the backcountry altogether.

What can you do?

- **Educate** yourself about local restrictions and rules for the area and avoid any unnecessary disturbance of wildlife and their habitat.
- **Choose** an established camp at least 60 m (200~~?~~) away from water and trails. Camp where vegetation is sparse. Place tents in "hardened" areas.
- **Remove** topsoil and all combustibles within 1 m (3~~?~~) of your fire.
- **Assure** that fires are well attended and carefully extinguished.
- **Dig** a latrine 15-20 cm. (6-8") deep and layer soil back into hole after each use.
- **Feed** pellets and cubes to avoid introducing unwanted vegetation. Feed salt from a container to avoid ground leaching. Hobble, picket or bell graze stock, being careful not to overgraze the area.
- **Learn** how to properly highline your stock. Use a tree saver strap or cinch to protect trees. Choose a spot away from camp that can sustain the horses moving about. **DO NOT** tie horses overnight directly to trees; Never drive nails into or deface any living trees.
- **Scatter** manure to hasten its decomposition or remove to a designated collection spot.
- **When** using staging areas, clean up after your stock and do not empty your trailer in the area.
- **Spray** your animals with insect repellent so that they can rest comfortably through the night and avoid having restless hooves damage the area.
- **Prevent** stream bank erosion by choosing a rocky area to water stock.
- **Stay** on the trails. Short cutting switchbacks and destroying vegetation causes erosion. When in wide open areas, without established trails, spread out.
- **Garbage** should be packed out rather than buried. Refrain from smoking while traveling along trails.
- **Other** users have a right to be there also. Share it with others with a smile and a "Hello."

By minimizing the impact left by us and our horses, we take responsibility for what we are so fortunate to have. By sharing this knowledge with others who may or may not realize their impact, we take that responsibility one step further.

Trail Etiquette

- When riding with a group be saddled and ready on time.
- Respect private property and the rights of other trail users.
- Realize the capabilities of you and your horse and ride accordingly.
- Have control of your horse at all times.
- Avoid showing off.

- Proceed at a walk in heavily congested areas and warn other riders before passing.
- Extend help to riders in trouble or with less experience.

ARE YOU READY?

For the safety and enjoyment of riders and horses, participants in the upcoming trail rides to the mountains must be able to say "Yes" to the following questions.

1. Does your horse have the ability, temperament and maturity to negotiate a variety of obstacles such as steep hills, water crossings, rooted/rocky trails, boggy conditions etc.?
2. Do you, as the rider, have the confidence that you can control you horse to negotiate the obstacles noted in above?
3. Does your horse have adequate training and conditioning for rides of 5 - 6 hours in duration?
4. Are you, as the rider, conditioned to sustain yourself for rides of 5 - 6 hours in duration?
5. Has your horse been trained to highline, hobble or tethering?
6. Is your horse accustomed to the use of saddle bags and rain slickers?
7. Has your horse been exposed to trail rides consisting of larger groups of horses (6 - 8) and if, yes, was its behaviour positive (no kicking, ear planting, etc.)? If negative behaviour was displayed, are you confident that you can cope and deal with the situation?
8. Is your horse accustomed to a busy campground setting with tents, tarps, traffic, campfires, etc. in his/her close vicinity?

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