

SHARED TRAIL ETIQUETTE AWARENESS DAY

The High Mountain Riders Equestrian Group of Quincy hosted a Shared Trail Etiquette Awareness Day Sept. 1, 2009.

Speakers included:

Diane Uchtyl - High Mountain Riders Equestrian Group
Melissa Hood - High Mountain Riders Equestrian Group
Terry Howard – High Mountain Riders Equestrian Group
Mike Lazzarino - Sierra Access Coalition
Peggy Gustaffson - US Forest Service
Scott Lawson - representing hikers
Terry Daley – Plumas Sierra Bicycle Club
Bret Marty - Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship

Demonstrations:

Terry Howard equestrian along with helpers Diane Uchtyl on a quad, Jim Hood on a bike and Kyle Felker with a big backpack.

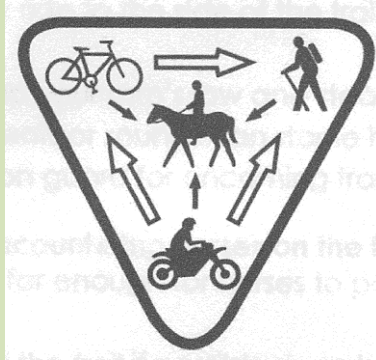
A variety of trail users attended the meeting to learn more about etiquette and how to safely share our forest trails. The group included OHV riders, mountain bike riders, hikers, and equestrians. Responsible trail enthusiasts, both motorized and non-motorized, have much in common. They have an appreciation for our public lands and want to enjoy what our public lands have to offer.

Many trails are open to and shared by equestrians, OHV riders, bicycle riders, runners, and hikers. Trail sharing can and does work when people respect each other and work cooperatively to keep each other safe.

While it is important for people to respect each other on the trail, it is important to remember that equestrians are dealing not only with other trail enthusiasts' personalities, they also are working with horses whose temperaments are as individual as our own. Horses' natural instincts can influence their behaviors and affect the way they react to circumstances encountered on the trail. For these reasons, it is important that equestrians know their horses well enough that they are confident that they will be able to control their horses when they encounter other trail enthusiasts.

Conversely, OHV riders, bicycle riders, runner, and hikers must understand equestrians for the safety of both the horse and rider. When young or inexperienced horses encounter new conditions on the trail like OHVs, bicycles, runners, and hikers, the flight response can end with disastrous results for the horse or rider. When equestrians and other responsible trail enthusiasts meet each other on the trail the encounters can be enjoyable social exchanges if the groups understand how to work together to keep the encounters safe.

Trail safety with horses means understanding horses and knowing what makes them feel safe. They are animals with acute hearing, smell and the ability to see motion. Unlike our vision, horses do not see a focused image with great depth perception. Instead, they rely on hearing a voice to identify someone approaching them as a non-threatening human.



General Guidelines for all users

- Respect all trail restrictions and use only trails open to your mode of transportation.
- Be considerate of others on the road or trail.
- When traveling on shared use trails, continually watch for other types of recreationists.
- Slow down when sight lines are poor.
- Keep speeds low around other recreationists.
- Keep noise and dust low.
- Downhill traffic yields to uphill traffic.
- Keep right, pass left.
- Stay on designated trails.
- Never ride alone.
- Maintain a safe distance between riders.
- Leave gates as you find them.
- Carry out your trash and some others' as well.
- Keep your ears open – no ear buds for an iPod or MP3. Listening to headphones or ear buds can make it difficult to hear and communicate with other recreationists.
- Keep pets under control.

Guidelines for equestrians on shared trails:

- Be sure you can control your horse and it has been exposed to other trail recreational uses before riding on shared use trails.
- Cooperate with local OHV and bicycle riders to expose your horse to vehicles in a gradual manner in a safe environment.
- Be alert and aware of the presence of other trail enthusiasts. If possible, pull to the side of the trail when you hear oncoming OHVs or bicycles.
- At trailheads or staging areas, park vehicles and secure stock in a manner that provides a safe distance between the horses and passing traffic.
- Be prepared to let other trail enthusiasts know what needs to be done to keep you, the horse, and other trail enthusiasts safe when you meet on the trail.
- Less experienced horses and riders should ride behind more “trail-wise” horses and riders.
- If you are “ponying” a horse, go slow and never take a loose horse on the trail.

- Keep pets under control.
- If possible, yield to uphill motorized traffic.

Guidelines for OHV riders when encountering horses on the trail:

- OHV operators need to understand that the noise and vibration of your vehicle can scare horses.
- Pull to the side of the trail far enough for horses to pass safely as soon as you see horses.
- Pull to the downhill side of the trail if possible since horses tend to perceive unknown threats on the uphill side as predators.
- Shut off your motor as soon as possible and remove your helmet and goggles. The horse will be more likely to recognize you as a human.
- Speak to the oncoming rider and horse in a friendly, relaxed tone.
- Horsemen may pull to the side of the trail a safe distance if they hear an OHV approaching but this does not necessarily mean it is safe for you to ride by. Stop and wait for instructions from the horseman.
- Ask the horsemen how he/she would like to proceed
 - The horseman will know his/her horse and how the horse reacts to other trail enthusiasts.
 - The horseman may ask you to stay put and ride past you.
 - The horseman may ride to the side of the trail and ask you to ride or push past them.
- If you ride by a horse, keep your rpm's low and steady and your sound as low as possible. Sudden movements or sounds can startle horses.
- Be alert – be aware and on guard for oncoming traffic.
- Ride within the limits of your skill and endurance.
- Know how to properly operate and control your vehicle.
- Maintain a safe following distance.
- Keep headlights on at all times so others can see you.
- Keep pets under control.

Guidelines for bicyclists when encountering horses on the trail:

- Bicyclists need to realize that bicycles are swift, silent, and low to the ground in ways that resemble natural predators to a horse, so they can trigger a flight response in some horses.
- Pull to the side of the trail far enough for horses to pass safely as soon as you see horses.
- Pull to the downhill side of the trail if possible since horses tend to perceive unknown threats on the uphill side as predators.
- Remove your helmet if it conceals part of your face. The horse will be more likely to recognize you as a human.
- Speak to the oncoming rider and horse in a friendly, relaxed tone.
- Horsemen may pull to the side of the trail a safe distance if they hear a bicycle approaching but this does not necessarily mean it is safe for you to ride by. Stop and wait for instructions from the horseman.
- Ask the horsemen how he/she would like to proceed
 - The horseman will know his/her horse and how the horse reacts to other trail enthusiasts.
 - The horseman may ask you to stay put and ride past you.

- The horseman may ride to the side of the trail and ask you to ride or push past them.
- If you ride by a horse, do so at a slow, steady pace and avoid making any sudden movements or sounds can startle horses.
- Be alert – be aware and on guard for oncoming traffic.
- Keep pets under control.

Guidelines for other non-motorized recreationists when encountering horses on the trail:

Hikers and trail runners should always stop and step to the side of the trail when they meet horses on the trail.

- Step to the downhill side of the trail if possible since horses tend to perceive unknown threats on the uphill side as predators.
- Speak to the oncoming rider and horse in a friendly, relaxed tone.
- Hikers can help calm a spooking horse by slowly removing your backpack, since the pack may disguise the fact that you are a person.
- If you are hiking with children, check with the equestrian before approaching a horse. Ask permission for your child to pat the horse. Most equestrians will be happy to oblige.
- Keep pets under control.

It is in our mutual best interests to work together for successful multiple use trails. Be aware of each others' needs on the trail.

Be courteous, be safe, and have fun!