

Suggestions for Approaching a Horse Safely

- Speak to the horse in a normal tone of voice to identify yourself as a human.
- Make yourself visible.
- Keep calm and avoid sudden movements which could startle a horse.
- Allow the horse to be on the uphill side of you and the trail where it may feel safer.
- Be alert for instructions from the equestrian. Each horse is different and has its own personality. What spooks one horse may be “old hat” to another.

When Approaching a Horse

The most critical moment is when you approach the horse. When approaching from the front, stop and check with the rider. If necessary, step off the trail on the downhill side to allow the horse to pass. The equestrian will often have the best suggestion about how to pass the horse. When overtaking from behind, call out to the rider and the horse when you think they can hear you. Continue calling until you get a response.

Use caution when passing horses. Allow as much room as possible to avoid being kicked or spooking the horse. Proceed slowly and steadily while passing, continuing to talk to the rider. If an equestrian gives you the right of way, wait until the rider gives you the signal that it is safe for you to pass.

General Guidelines

- Downhill traffic yields to uphill traffic.
- Keep right, pass left.
- Stay on designated trails.
- Avoid muddy trails.
- Respect private property.
- Never ride alone. If you must do so, tell someone where you plan to go and when you think you will be back.
- Maintain a safe distance between riders.
- Leave gates as you find them.
- Carry out your trash and that of others.
- Volunteer for trail building and maintenance projects.
- Join a trail advocacy group. There is strength in numbers.
- Let the appropriate land manager know about any concerns you may have about the trail.
- Share your appreciation about good trail experiences as well.

Our goal is to help us all be good trail citizens together. It is in our mutual best interests to work together for successful multi use trails. Be aware of the needs of other users on the trails.

Be courteous, be safe, and have fun!



Sharing Trails Safely with Horses



Trails on public lands are among Wisconsin's greatest assets. Population growth and new technologies mean that trails historically used by hikers and equestrians now support diverse enthusiasts.

A positive trail experience requires cooperation, understanding and courtesy by all trail users. The principles outlined here are intended to help you make informed decisions on how to share the trails safely with horses.

Bicyclist

Bicyclists may not realize that bicycles are swift, silent and low to the ground in ways that resemble natural predators to a horse. Thus, they can trigger a flight response in a horse that may override even years of excellent training.

For safety reasons, bicyclists should yield to horses and foot traffic (hikers.)

When approaching horses from any direction, make verbal contact by speaking calmly. Pass only when a rider has told you it is safe.



Stop your bike and do not advance until you get a definite signal from the equestrian.

If the right of way is yielded to you, pass slowly and cautiously. Resume speed only when you have passed safely.

It is your responsibility to be in control. Do not let your brakes cause skidding, as the sudden noise and dust may frighten a horse

Hikers

Hikers can help calm a spooking horse by slowly removing your backpack, since the pack may disguise the fact that you are a person. Remain in sight of the horse, if you step off the trail out of sight, horses may see it as a predatory move and become apprehensive about passing you. When you encounter a horse, speak to the rider as soon as practical.

If you are hiking with children, horses can be both interesting and scary. Check with the equestrian before approaching a horse. Ask permission for your child to pet the horse; most equestrians will be happy to oblige.

Off-Highway Vehicles

Off-Highway Vehicle operators must be alert to slower traffic, and need to understand that the sound and vibrations of your vehicles can scare horses. It may be best to shut off your engine if horses are spooking, and let horses pass. Having the engine off also makes it easier to communicate with other trail users.

Because they travel at higher speed, OHV's may require greater stopping distance than others on the trail. Drivers should slow down around blind corners and anticipate the presence of other trail users.

While your engine is running, be especially alert visually to compensate for your limited hearing ability.

OHV operators may find that removing your helmet helps calm horses by showing the horse that you are just a human in there.

Equestrians

Equestrians need to let others know if special care is needed to pass your horse safely. Slow to a walk when approaching other trail users, including other equestrians. Start a conversation as soon as possible.

It may be advisable for you to find a place to get off the trail, facing oncoming traffic. Horses tend to feel safer on the high side of the trail. Although horses have the right of way, a horse leaving the trail briefly may have less impact on the terrain than another type of user doing so.

Take responsibility for your horse's training. Expose your horse to a variety of situations to desensitize it to potential threats before you encounter them on the trail.

Education is Everyone's Responsibility

Each user group needs to share responsibility for educating and monitoring its own members. Be aware of conditions. It is your responsibility as a trail user to know the rules of the trail and apply them with courtesy. Speak up when you see someone who does not know the rules. Regulations may vary among land management agencies. Check at the trailhead before heading out, or call the agency for clarification if you have any questions.

Wisconsin Horse Council

is a non-profit organization representing horsemen and women and the equine industry in Wisconsin. In representing the equine industry we promote the horse through leadership, education, and service, and take a proactive role in the growth of our industry.

- We own and produce one of the largest and most successful horse expos in the U.S. – the Midwest Horse Fair.
- Annually, we award scholarships, sponsorships, and trail grants at levels that provide significant financial help to students, equine charity events, clubs who are building and improving trails for recreational riding, etc.
- We conduct a 4-day school on designing and building sustainable trails for multi use.
- We take an active role in legislative matters affecting both the state and the national equine industry.

www.wisconsinhorsecouncil.org

