

What to Know . . .

Bikes & HORSES on the Road



Safety on trails is the responsibility of everyone using them, and common courtesy applies. No one owns the road. As an equestrian who has encountered many bicycles while out riding, I find cyclists and mountain bikers appreciative of any guidance and education concerning horses and what they should do (or not do). They do not want to frighten your horse or see you dumped anymore than you do. Yes, there will always be a few bad apples . . . but in an effort to educate both the cyclist and the horse-person, some basic guidelines should be followed.

First and foremost, familiarize your horse with bikes and take the time to teach them that bicycles are just another obstacle they may encounter while riding out; no different than when you taught your horse to be road savvy with cars. Get them used to bikes at home. Like any good training, start small, and slowly build up. Desensitizing your horse could a few days, weeks, or for some horses - never.

Secondly, cyclist are out riding for the same enjoyment we are. Be kind! If a cyclist does frighten your horse, reprimanding them is not going to win friends or respect. It is not their intent to terrorize your horse.

Cyclist who are not familiar with horses may not understand their reactive mindset when they sense fear. Even mounts who are solid citizens can be easily spooked on any given day. While riding out, cyclists should be cognizant that around any corner on winding trails or roads, there could be a horse, hiker, dog, child or wildlife. This is especially important when cycling down hills. Please keep in mind the reference is “shared” trails and roads. Horses should stay off the single track trails built exclusively for mountain bikers, and cyclist should not assume that equestrian trails are a free for all. When in doubt, ask permission. It could be someone’s private property.



Horses have the right away, period.

Why? The analogy is simple - akin to boating safety. A motor boat yields to a sailboat, which yields to a kayak or canoe, which yields to a rowboat or dinghy, which yields to a swimmer. The vessel that is typically the largest, and has the most power and control must give the right away to smaller wind or muscle powered vessels.

Which brings us to the horse. Though the most powerful and fastest in our Trail Courtesy sign above, a horse is the least predictable and possibly most dangerous in a bad situation both to it's rider, the cyclist, and potentially itself not to mention the consequences of a loose terrified horse galloping through the woods or roads into oncoming traffic - another potential accident waiting to happen.

Whichever saddle you ride in, remember the following acronyms:

CYLISTS ~ think **BIKE**

B - Brake

I - Introduce Yourself and Accept Instruction From the Equestrian

K - Kindness; Keep Wide & Slow When Passing or Wait if Asked

E - Engage and Exit

EQUESTRIANS ~ think **HORSE**

H - Halt; or Move to a Slow Walk

O - Organize Your Mount

R - Respond; Relay Helpful Information & Instructions to Bikers

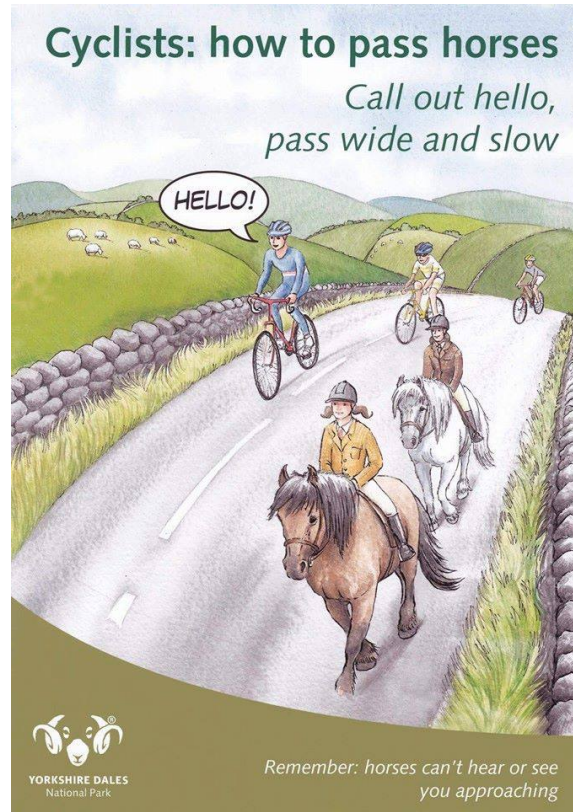
S - Share and Smile; No One Owns the Road

E - Engage and Exit



Bicyclists should always yield to Equestrians regardless of the direction. Horses are powerful animals with a mind of their own. They can spook easily if startled causing potential danger to both themselves, their rider, and the passing cyclist. Never “sneak” up on a horse. Let them know you are coming if possible.

- When approaching, announce yourself. In a calm voice, call out a friendly “hello”. Be prepared to stop. Ask if it is OK to pass - slowly.
- Listen and follow directions from rider. Please don't be offended if asked to stop or get off your bike.
- Do not use a bell or horn. Sudden or loud sounds and blinking lights may frighten horses.
- Keep your movements slow and steady while around horses.
- Be aware that some horses may be comfortable around bicyclists and some may not.
- Equestrians, be appreciative of Cyclists efforts.
- We both have the right to share and enjoy the trails!



By following simple guidelines, proper preparation, awareness of surroundings, and always common courtesy, our trails and roads can be shared safely and amicably by both types or riders.

By Robin Simpson for the

