

Training/Clinic Level tips for Safety and Courtesy

By Jean Green



1. Camping with your horse:

- ◆ If you tie your horse to a stationary object, the rope should be tied to a point higher than the point of the horse's shoulder (above chest level) and the rope should be just long enough to allow the horse to barely reach the ground with its nose. This allows the horse to lie down. If you don't want to tie this long, it can be shorter, as long as your horse can reach feed and water, but never long enough for the horse to get a foot over it.
- ◆ If you use pens, tie a rope or wire around the gate to assure your horse doesn't escape.
- ◆ Generally, look for anyplace that the horse might get hung up, such as door latches, low hay bags, bucket bales, etc. and make sure they are covered or removed.
- ◆ Horses should have water available all night, so that they are fully hydrated at the start of the day's ride.

2. Suggested items to carry on trail:

- ◆ Sharp pocket knife
- ◆ Hoof pick
- ◆ Some way to tie horse on trail. Halter bridle, halter under bridle, lead rope.
- ◆ Sponge with string or scoop to cool horse at water crossings. Note: Do not dip sponge in horse drinking water tanks, use a scoop. Sponge only at creeks, ponds, water crossings, or designated buckets or tubs, etc.
- ◆ Drinking water for yourself, snacks/electrolytes for yourself and/or your horse. In hot weather, horse MAY need electrolytes on trail. Do not use indiscriminately. In spite of what you may have been told by some veterinarians, excessive amounts of electrolytes can be toxic to your horse.

3. Trail Safety:

- ◆ Stallions are to be identified with yellow ribbons tied to halter/bridle and in tail.
- ◆ Horses prone to kick need to be identified with red ribbon tied in tail.
- ◆ Do not follow immediately behind another horse. On flat narrow trail, keep at least one horse length between horses when following. If you can't clearly see the hocks of the horse in front of you, you're too close. Allow more distance at a trot or canter.
- ◆ On roads or two-track lanes when riding abreast maintain a reasonable space between horses. Crowding too closely assures, if one horse spooks or bolts all riders in the group are at risk. Give yourself a little cushion of safety space.
- ◆ When going up and down steep hills keep several horse lengths between horses. If the trail is particularly hazardous, wait until the front horse has cleared the trail before proceeding.
- ◆ When negotiating any kind of hazardous trail wait until the horse in front of you has cleared the hazardous section before proceeding.
- ◆ After clearing challenging places on trail, wait to see if the rider behind you made it OK. Horses crossing hazardous places on trail need to focus on the trail and not be worried about the horse in front leaving them behind.
- ◆ At obstacles, you may be asked to leave before the team behind you has completed the task. This is sometimes required as a demonstration of rider control and team work between horse and rider. HOWEVER, on trail, in a dangerous situation wait until the team behind you has cleared the danger.

4. Trail Courtesy:

- ◆ When passing other teams on trail, always make your presence and intent known to the rider you are passing. Do not gallop or charge up behind other teams. Slow down; make sure the rider in front has control, and then ask to pass, telling the rider on which side you intend to pass, right or left.
- ◆ After passing another team, move on down the trail far enough to not interfere with the passed team. Horses usually slow down once they are in front, so the horse that may have been rushing along behind another team, may suddenly slow down and hinder the progress of the passed team once in front.
- ◆ At water spots on trail, don't crowd other teams. Ask if it's ok to move up and water beside another horse. Do not ride off and leave another horse that is still drinking without asking the rider if it's ok to leave.
- ◆ At P&R&S checks be aware of the next horse being checked. Do not ride off until this horse has completed the P&R part of the check.

Taking the time to observe and follow these few simple rules of safety and courtesy will make both your ride and that of other teams the fun experience it is intended to be.