



SAFE TRAIL RIDING BOOKLET



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Horse Riding and Road Safety Summary

Introduction

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Introduction

At some stage most riders will need to ride on roads near or with traffic. No matter how good a rider you are in the arena or on a cross country course, you will always need to make sure your horses are safe while riding.

Usually, drivers will mostly think two things about horse riders on public roads:

1. You shouldn't be on the road (which is **not** correct) or;
2. You can completely control your horse at all times, and they don't need to be careful when driving past you.

There is more traffic on the roads & drivers haven't had much experience of the way horses behave amongst traffic on the road. Also the law states that riders must take responsibility for their actions on public roads.

To make our riding experience on roads a safe and enjoyable one, respect and consideration must be given to all other road users.

The aim of this booklet, along with the PCAV & the Nillumbik Horse Action Group is to promote responsible, considerate and safety conscious riding on the roads.

Hopefully it will also help promote the training of horses to be suitable for riding on roadways and roadside trails.

Our aim is to raise the rider's awareness of safety, encourage them to dress in clearly visible clothing and to play a part in improving both their and their horse's skill and experience on roads and trails.



1. Are you ready for the road?

Australian Road Rules say that the horse is considered a vehicle on the road and therefore they are allowed to be ridden or driven on the road. Whilst you and your horse have every right to be on the road, it is important for you to be highly visible and to obey the road rules.



Consideration, courtesy and common sense.

Good manners play an important part in riding on the road: Consideration and manners shown by horse riders to other road users helps build good relations between all road users. Riders, drivers and horse handlers should always acknowledge & thank careful drivers. This can be done through

Ω Smiling



Ω Nodding & waving



Ω Saying thank you



Novice or nervous horses

If your horse had had little experience & you think that it will be nervous of traffic, ride with calm and steady horses that are less likely to react.

Young Riders

Many children cannot judge how fast vehicles are going or how far away they are. Adults are responsible for deciding when their children may ride on the road on their own or in a group.

General Rules

All riders should wear an Australian Safety Standard approved safety helmet when riding on the road. Leave details where you are going to ride and when you think you will return, with a responsible person. Carry a hoof pick, mobile phone or card/money and some baling twine in case of emergencies. Check the weather forecasts.

Gear and Equipment

Never ride a horse on the road without a saddle or bridle. When leading a horse, either mounted or dismounted, the led horse should always wear a bridle or anti-rearing bit.

Always wear a correctly fitted Australian Safety Standard approved safety helmet and fasten it securely.

Be 'Sun-Smart' - consider the helmet additions now available to protect yourself from sun exposure.

Footwear

Horse riders should always wear boots or shoes with smooth soles and a small heel. Sandshoes, gum boots or runners are dangerous for riding and should never be worn.

Whips

Experienced riders may decide to carry a whip when riding on the road to act as back-up to the rider's leg aids. However, it depends on how confident the rider is and the training level of the horse before deciding whether to carry a whip.

2. Road Awareness

Road awareness

Use the “**lifesaver look**” - Look, check all is clear, look again

LOOK, LISTEN AND THINK AHEAD at all times

Look all around for traffic and listen. Traffic could come from any direction, so look along every road, and listen out, because you can often hear traffic before you can see it.

Be alert for possible hazards, particularly from behind. Look behind regularly to observe the changing road situation.



Bends and corners – be aware of traffic in front and from behind. Ride in single file around bends and corners.



Crests are especially dangerous, as the road cutting in the hill often does not have anywhere for riders to move off to the side. Stay to the left, as oncoming traffic coming over the crest will not be able to see you till the last minute.



3. Road positioning & signalling

Defensive riding includes being in a safe position on the road and using clear signals well in advance.

Ride on the left of the road with the flow of traffic. Ride straight and stop the horse from moving sideways or swinging its quarters into the traffic (by clear use of your leg aids, backed up by a schooling whip if needed). Reins must be at the correct length to control the horse.

KEEP BOTH HANDS ON THE REINS UNLESS YOU ARE SIGNALLING

Rider's signals

Before turning, look behind you to make sure it is safe and then give a clear arm signal.



Left Turn Signal



Right Turn Signal

Before making any signal: look, listen and observe. You will need to notice any traffic and respond appropriately.

When it is safe to go, signal in the direction you wish to go. Give a last **'lifesaver look'** if the road is clear, turn. All signals must be clear and decisive – hold your signal for about 3 seconds (say, “one thousand and one, one thousand and two, one thousand and three”) to allow enough time for other road users to see what you are going to do.

NEVER signal with the whip in your hand. Put it in your opposite hand before making the signal.

Other useful signals

The following signals may be used in some situations. They are showing other road users what you are going to do:

- Waving of the arm up & down asking driver's to “slow down”.
- Placing your hand up asking driver's to stop.

The driver may not see, understand or follow your hand signal so always check before acting or moving off.

4. Victorian road rules

Positioning at intersections

ALWAYS check roads to the right and left as you are crossing.

At all intersections riders should keep to the left, near the kerb or grass edge. This will stop riders from being in the middle of traffic. If turning left, keep to the left and turn left.

If you have to wait, keep your horse calm & keep checking the traffic situation.

Always keep your horse under control. NEVER allow it to guess that you're going to move off.



5. Sharing the Trails

Horses are flight animals and if frightened can react sometimes by shying, rearing, kicking out or running from the 'killer bike' for example. It helps to slow down or even better, stop. Try calling out and say "hello" so that the horse understands that 'it' is just another human.

Many of the trails we share in Nillumbik are single track with blind corners and trees that can block the view of the trail ahead. Keep a look out for other trail users, especially bikes which can suddenly come up on a horse & rider from in front or from behind.

While we all enjoy the shared trails and rural roads/roadsides of Nillumbik, from time to time mountain bike riders and horse riders will meet at close quarters. To make those moments safe for both parties, here are a few tips to consider:

When coming across bike riders.

If you have seen a bike rider before they have seen you, please let them know you are on the trail/road by calling out "horse ahead".

Most local horse riders understand that Saturday and Sunday early morning are the popular times for mountain bike riders, so usually try not to use the trails at this time for everyone's sake. However, this is not always practical (especially in Summer), as we all like to ride before it gets too hot. So please be aware that no matter what the time of day, you may come across bike riders.

So that we don't damage the environment we ask horse riders not to leave the trails, so it is best to stop and allow the bike riders to pass you.

Most of the horse riders in this area are locals who have been riding these trails for a long time. If you notice someone looking lost or needing a hand, you should always stop and ask if they need help.

Bike riders really appreciate your cooperation and look forward to saying "hi" when we meet out on the trails. Some common sense, manners and a bit of humour on everyone's part will go a long way to making an enjoyable and safe experience for all.



Trail Riding Rules

General trail rules when using any trails, respect the rights of other trail users, the environment and the local groups that care for the trails.



Sharing

- Keep left and do not block the trail
- Cyclists: warn other people that you are coming and pass on the right at a walk
- Approach bike riders & walkers with care & let them you are there
- Move quietly near other animals
- Leave gates as you find them
- Look for local signs and rules

For your safety

- Be careful at road crossings; young and inexperienced riders should dismount
- Carry water and light snacks
- Consider the right clothing for the conditions
- Wear an approved helmet and ride in control
- When coming up behind bike riders or walkers, let them know you are there
- Maintain your equipment, and carry a phone in case of emergencies
- Let someone know before you go horse riding on the trails

6. Riding in pairs or groups

Riders should ride in pairs, with a minimum of 1.3m nose to tail between horses or in single file. Pairs of riders should not be more than 1.5m apart on a road.

Young and inexperienced horses should be on the inside of older, experienced horses and riders. That is, on the side away from traffic.

The pace set by the group leader should be one that everyone can safely be able to do. Good manners is very important when other road users have been delayed by the group.

Ride in single file as you need to.

In a formal trail riding* or Pony Club coaching activity, there must be a first aid trained person present, including when riding on roads.

*Australian Horse Industry Council Code of Practice “HorseSafe”



7. Hazards

Parked Cars

Keep to the left. Allow plenty of time to look behind you before reaching the parked car.

Give a “**life-saver look**” behind before moving out around the car. Allow plenty of room.

Check on the inside of the car for sudden movement and/or noise from the car. For example, a dog may jump up at the window. **Be prepared!**



Dangerous/noisy/frightening hazards

These can include road drills, compressors, dogs behind fences, graders, rubbish trucks etc.

1. Stop enough distance away.
2. Try to catch the operator's attention.
3. Say “Thanks” if they turn off the equipment for you to pass.
4. If your horse will not go forward and you are with other riders, ask for a lead from another horse.
5. If you are by yourself, go another way if possible (or maybe dismount and lead)

Treat road works the same as a parked car and follow the steps above unless your horse doesn't want to pass.

Bridges

Bridges and underpasses that cross main roads and freeways are helpful to riders but can present problems. Headroom in underpasses can be low so dismount and lead through if necessary.

When going over bridges and through underpasses, wait for pedestrians to cross first. Take extra care as many bridges are not designed with horses in mind.

Be conscious of the height of railing on bridges – would it stop you from going over the edge in an accident?

Nature strips, footpaths & bike lanes

The Australian Road Rules allow horses to be ridden with care in either direction on a footpath. However, some Councils may have local laws which apply across the whole Council district, or on certain roads.

It is dangerous and silly to canter on nature strips. Remember to give way to any pedestrian using pedestrian crossings. Riders are allowed to use bike lanes but do so with care.

Dismounting, Leading and Remounting

Dismount only if you really need to. Your safest place is usually on the horse's back.

If you have to dismount, it should be done quickly & safely with the rider in control.

Emergency dismount: When preparing to do an emergency dismount, think about which side you will remount from; that stirrup should be crossed over first so that you don't tangle the stirrup leathers. Dismounting quickly from a horse needs to be practiced.



8. Riding when visibility is poor

Riding after dark, at dusk, frost, raining or dull weather are times when you can't see easily.

Try not to ride in these conditions where possible by forward planning.

If you have to ride or lead a horse on public roads at night, wear reflective clothing and make sure your horse has reflective bands on its legs above the fetlock joints. Use lights, which show white to the front and red to the rear if possible. The lights should be visible to a distance of 200 metres.

**IF NECESSARY BE READY TO MOVE OUT OF
THE WAY QUICKLY. BE ALERT.**

BEWARE!

9. Dangerous road conditions

Slippery conditions include:

- Ω Ice and snow
- Ω Worn, shiny patches on roads.
- Ω Plastic paint, as used for white lines and pedestrian crossings, is slippery.
- Ω Corners, do not trot around these.
- Ω Urban driveways, spoon drains and ramps.

Grit or dirt will provide a better footing.

Keep rein contact with the horse at all times.

If the horse slips and falls – do not panic. Keep calm and allow the horse to regain his footing in his own time. Consider kicking your feet free of the stirrups if the horse falls right down. Check the horse for injury. Move off the slippery surface before remounting.

Beginner horses and/or riders should not be taken out in poor road conditions.

If leading a horse on foot in slippery conditions allow the horse to go at his own pace. Concentrate on your own footing.

Special design anti-slip studs, nails, shoe pads and horseshoes or hoof boots can provide extra grip.

PLAN AHEAD!

Try not to ride in these conditions. Give your horse a day off, rather than getting into an accident.



10. Reporting an Accident

If you are riding or leading a horse that is involved in a collision or other injury/accident, you must:

1. Stop
2. Help
3. Give your name and address and if asked to, the driver of any other car involved, any injured person, or the owner of any damaged property.
4. Report the matter to a police officer if the accident ends in death or injury to anyone or damage to any vehicle or property. You must report to a police station near the place of the accident as soon as possible and within 24 hours.

Common Types of Crashes

Most crashes with horses involve:

- high speed roads - 70 kmh speed zones and above
- outer Melbourne suburbs or rural areas
- the car hitting the horse from behind or side-swiping a horse as the car overtakes
- the horse being spooked or bolting-, or
- the horse straying from a paddock or enclosure.

How Horse Riders Can Keep Safe

- whenever possible ride on off-road trails or tracks - stay away from fast-moving traffic as much as you can
- if possible, stay away from high-speed traffic - especially where there is not much space beside the road
- ride your horse near traffic only if you are confident that it will not be spooked. Remember, large or noisy vehicles can often spook horses
- be aware of fast-moving vehicles on rural roads especially near the tops of hills or curves
- ALWAYS wear your helmet when riding
- if you must ride near traffic, make sure you wear bright, light-coloured clothing (reflective material is best) and especially try not to ride at dusk/night.
- many crashes involve the horse straying on to the road - check fencing around enclosures often and make sure gates stay shut

How You Can Minimise Risk?

On 1 December 1999, the Victorian State Government implemented a new set of road rules.

There are three changes that affect horse riders.

1. Horse riders under the age of 18 riding on a highway **MUST** wear a helmet

Obviously, for safety it is best to wear an Australian Safety Standard approved safety helmet at all times, but it is now law to wear a helmet if you are riding on a highway and you are under 18 years of age.



2. If you are riding two across with another rider, you must not ride more than 1.5 metres apart.



3. Horses will be allowed on footpaths and nature strips, unless especially not allowed. Horse riders are safest well away from moving traffic.



11. WEEDS

Prevent Cinnamon Fungus in our Reserves by PICK BRUSH SPRAY

There is a very nasty weed called Cinnamon Fungus (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*) which is tiny and lives in the soil. It attacks and destroys plant roots causing plants to die. Patches of dead or dying plants can mean that this silent killer is around. Grass trees especially can be infected. It is spread through infected plants and the movement of infected soil and gravel from one place to another place. This soil or gravel can be carried on the wheels of cars, or on people's shoes as well as horses hooves.

Kinglake National Park

Cinnamon Fungus has been introduced to Kinglake National Park by infected soil on vehicles. It is on our doorstep and you can help stop it from infesting more of our reserves with a few simple actions.

- Ω Avoid riding in wetter months
- Ω Before riding pick out the hooves.
- Ω In your car, back pack or saddle bag have a hoof pick, hard bristle brush and spray bottle of anti-fungal solution.
- Ω At the end of your ride and BEFORE leaving the park make sure you:
 - Ω Pick out the hooves, again.
 - Ω Brush out any excess soil
 - Ω Spray with the anti-fungal solution

These simple actions will make sure you do not bring home more than a wonderful experience in the bush



12. Nillumbik Trails

Rider code of conduct for our local trails

1. Ride only on marked shared trails and stay on the trail as otherwise you may damage the environment you have come to enjoy.
2. Leave no trace. Take all rubbish home – yours or anything else you find.
3. Share this code with other trail users and encourage others to be responsible carers of the trails.
4. Cross rivers or creeks at marked crossing points.
5. Notify the council or NHAG of trail problems or damage.
6. Obey all signs and any temporary notices of trail diversions or closures.
7. Clean all equipment of soil and vegetation before heading out on the trail. Clean out your horses hooves.
8. Let others know you are on the track. Say “Hi,” a new friend may be only a greeting away.
9. Respect the rights of other trail users. You will meet some walkers and bike riders who are unfamiliar with horses and unsure about passing them on the track. Make sure you either walk quietly past other users on the trail, or stay still while they pass you.
10. Try not to ride in the reserves during or immediately after wet weather.
11. Learn about weeds, and help land managers in quickly spotting & getting rid of new outbreaks of problem weeds.
12. Come along to a working bee in the reserves to play your part in looking after and improving this natural community open space.

Nillumbik clubs must do a working bee on one of the local trails and also to go to a reserves working bee to help maintain some of the local trails.

Theory:

- Q1. What should you always ride in?
- Q2. What is the lifesaver look?
- Q3. Which side of the road do you ride on?
- Q4. What do you do if you see a bike rider coming towards you & they haven't seen you?
- Q5. What do you do if you find a shut gate?
- Q6. If trail riding with a group how do you ride?
- Q7. Name 3 dangerous road conditions
- Q8. What must you do if your horse is involved in an accident?
- Q9. What is the name of the weed growing in the Kinglake National Park?
- Q10.