



HORSE COUNCIL
BRITISH COLUMBIA

ROAD SAFETY HANDBOOK

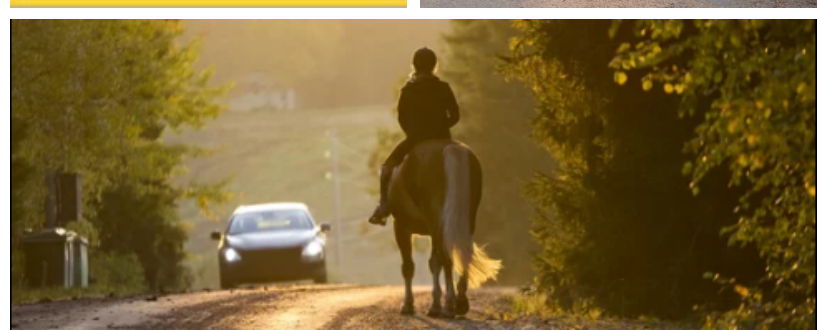




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ROAD SAFETY INTRODUCTION

Increasing development and traffic volume in rural areas have made road riding a necessity for some riders. For others, road riding is their only option to combat the repetitive nature of arena riding. Safety while sharing road space with cars, trucks, motorcycles and bicycles is a key concern. It is vital that riders seek proper training for themselves and their horses to help them cope with traffic and be safe on the road.

The average motorist may not be familiar with horses, inadvertently posing a danger to both rider and motorist alike. They may not know that it is imperative to pass horses slowly and give them a wide berth.

This handbook focuses on what you, the rider, can do to increase your safety while road riding, and includes tips for the motorist to learn how to exercise appropriate caution.





BC MOTOR VEHICLE ACT

in regards to equestrian traffic

Section of the Act	Details
<p>Part 3, Section 119, Paragraph (1)</p>	<p><i>"traffic" includes pedestrians, ridden or herded animals, and vehicles, cycles and other devices, either singly or together, while using a highway to travel"</i></p>
<p>Part 3, Section 120, Paragraph (1), Sub-paragraph (c)</p>	<p><i>"a person riding an animal or driving an animal driven vehicle on a highway has the rights and is subject to the duties of the driver of a vehicle under this Part"</i></p>
<p>Part 3, Section 182, Paragraphs (1 & 2)**</p> <p><small>**If you're hand-walking your horse, the relevant provision of the Motor Vehicle Act is section 182, which provides direction to pedestrians. The walking of the horse is incidental.</small></p>	<p><i>"If there is a sidewalk that is reasonably passable on either or both sides of a highway, a pedestrian must not walk on a roadway."</i></p> <p><i>"If there is no sidewalk, a pedestrian walking along or on a highway must walk only on the extreme left side of the roadway or the shoulder of the highway, facing traffic approaching from the opposite direction."</i></p>

**Motor Vehicle Act Regulations, Division 19 (Miscellaneous), Schedule 1
Highway Restrictions:**

19.07(1) Except as authorized by a permit issued by the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, and except for crossing a highway at an intersection, use of any highway named in Schedule 1 by the following is prohibited at all times:

- (a) vehicles drawn by animals;*
- (b) livestock, as defined in the Livestock Act*



ROAD OR SHOULDER?

Note that when riding on the shoulder of a roadway, a rider is signalling to motorists that they are yielding the road (i.e., when a motorist pulls their vehicle over to the right, it means that the other traffic may pass). However, if a rider is having difficulty or is unsure of their horse, as with an inexperienced horse, legally they may remain in the roadway indicating their possession of the right-of-way in the right-hand lane, thus encouraging vehicles to pass in the left-hand traffic lane when safe to do so. If riding on the shoulder, stay as far off the roadway as possible.





VULNERABLE ROAD USERS

In June of 2024, the provincial government updated the legislation to include vulnerable road users.

“Vulnerable road users include pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists, individuals on animals or in vehicles pulled by animals, and people who use electric wheelchairs, mobility scooters and electric kick scooters.”

When passing these road users, drivers must keep a minimum of distance of:

- **1 metre** on highways with speeds of 50 km/h or less; and
- **1.5 metres** on highways with speeds of 51 km/h or more
- Drivers interacting with vulnerable road users who are in separated and protected cycling lanes and on sidewalks: **0.5 metres**

Motor Vehicle Act Regulations

Division 1, Section 1, Paragraph (1.03), Sub-paragraph (a, ii); (c)

“For the purposes of paragraph (c) of the definition of “vulnerable road user” in section 119 (1) of the Act, the following persons are prescribed:

(a) a person who is in or on any of the following devices:

(ii) an animal-driven vehicle;

(c) a person who is on an animal.”

Exercising safety around vulnerable road users isn't just a courtesy: it's the law.

The government of BC states the following penalties for negligence:

- Failing to take proper precautions with vulnerable road users - \$109 and 3 driver penalty points.
- Failing to maintain prescribed minimum passing distances - \$368 and 3 driver penalty points.

To a maximum fine of \$2,000 and 6 months of imprisonment.



VULNERABLE ROAD USERS

Motor Vehicle Act

Part 3, Section 119, Paragraph (1), Sub-paragraph (c)

*"vulnerable road user" means the following persons:
(c) a prescribed person."*

Equestrians are considered "prescribed persons" under the vulnerable road users definition and this refers to riders and drivers.

Part 3, section 157.1

1. *A driver of a motor vehicle must not cause or permit the motor vehicle to pass a person referred to in subsection (2) unless
 - a. the action can be taken safely, and
 - b. the following distance can be maintained between the vehicle and the person while the vehicle is passing the person:
 - i. subject to subparagraph (ii), a minimum distance of 1 m;
 - ii. if a prescribed minimum distance applies, the prescribed minimum distance.*
2. *Subsection (1) applies in relation to the following persons:
 - a. a pedestrian;
 - b. person who is operating or is on a cycle;
 - c. a prescribed person.*
3. *A driver who takes an action that would otherwise contravene section 151 (b), (f) or (g) or 155 (1) does not contravene the provision if
 - a. the action is taken while the driver is causing the vehicle to pass a person in compliance with this section, and
 - b. the driver has ascertained that the action can be taken safely and without affecting the travel of another vehicle.*



ICBC LEARN TO DRIVE SMART MANUAL



Horses

Horses may be ridden on most public roads.

see

Scan ahead — look for horses and riders.

think

Know the rules — horse riders and horse carriage operators have the same rights as motor vehicle operators and must obey the same rules.

Know the hazards — horses can be startled by sudden movement or noise. The rider may not be able to control the horse.

do

Space margins

Slow down — go slowly when approaching a horse and rider or horse and carriage. Allow plenty of following distance.

Allow space when passing — leave extra room when passing them.

Pass carefully — horses may be startled by sudden movement or noise. Avoid sounding your horn, and pass carefully and slowly.

Prepare to stop — if a rider is having trouble controlling their horse, stop. It's better to wait until the horse is back under the rider's control than to risk passing them.





FACT vs. FICTION



“Horses have the right-of-way over cars.”

FALSE

The law that stated such has long since been repealed. In B.C., anyone who uses a public road is considered a “road user”, so the days of ultimate right-of-way are gone!

“I have every bit as much right to be on that road as cars do!”

TRUE

Every road user has a specific set of responsibilities to ensure their own safety and that of other road users. Being able to properly control their horse is the principal responsibility of every rider.

“Horses cannot be controlled as well as cars can, so cars should be made to yield to horses.”

RESPONSIBILITY LIES WITH RIDER & MOTORIST

Riders have every bit as much responsibility to control their horses as drivers are required to control their vehicles. Good manners and manageability under saddle are imperative for any horse, but those lessons become critical whenever we expose our equine friends to greater risks such as those likely to be encountered on the road.



STEPS TO RIDING ON THE ROAD SAFELY



Guidelines for practicing safety while riding on the road can be summarized under three main pillars: ***BE SAFE, BE SEEN, BE AWARE.***

BE SAFE

by ensuring you have adequate experience, planning the safest route, and obeying all rules of the road.

BE SEEN

by investing in high visibility/reflective equipment for yourself and your horse.

BE AWARE

of associated risks like equine flight instincts, unfamiliar stimuli, and other road users.



STEPS TO RIDING ON THE ROAD SAFELY

BE SAFE

Before venturing out, ask yourself “**am I ready?**” Are you a competent rider, confident and capable of controlling your horse if there’s a problem on the road?

Is your horse reliable and road ready? Has your horse been desensitized to the noise and movement of traffic? If not, invest in your horse’s training: find the time, trainer, or clinic to help prepare you both for road readiness. Knowing how to control a horse is critical to safety. Don’t take a young inexperienced horse out without an experienced horse/rider.

Select the safest route possible. Some roads can be dangerous to ride on due to shoulder width, blind corners, traffic speed, or amount of traffic. Make sure to choose the route with the least amount of these challenges.

If riding in a group, let the most experienced person lead, ride single file and obey all traffic signs and signals. Remember, your horse is legally considered a vehicle. Ride on the right hand side of the road (with traffic) and yield to pedestrians.

When crossing a roadway, select a safe spot to cross. Halt your horse and LOOK both ways twice! If possible choose an area to cross where approaching cars are easily seen and heard. Dismount and lead your horse if you are unsure of your safety.



STEPS TO RIDING ON THE ROAD SAFELY

BE SEEN

Highly visible clothing for the rider is a **MUST** when road riding. This includes wearing bright colours and a reflective vest.

For your horse, reflective leg wraps, brow bands, breast collars, quarter-sheets will increase visibility

A flashing LED safety light attached to your saddle or clothing will also attract a driver's attention.





STEPS TO RIDING ON THE ROAD SAFELY

BE AWARE



Be aware of road surfaces. Asphalt roads can be slippery especially when wet. Gravel roads with large stones can cause pain for tender footed horses, making them anxious or unwilling to go forward. Riding on differing road surfaces may require special considerations for shoeing so discuss options with your farrier. Watch for broken glass along the road, culvert pipes and ditches that may be hidden by tall grass, or soft shoulder areas that may be unsafe for a horse to walk on. Unfamiliar objects like shiny aluminum cans or blowing plastic bags can frighten a horse enough to cause it to shy into the road.

Watch for animals along the route: barking dogs that may suddenly dart out, cows, pigs, llamas or other farms animals that your horse isn't accustomed to. Even another horse behind a fence, especially one that is running, can excite your horse.

A nervous or fresh horse may be more difficult to handle away from familiar surroundings. Keep light rein contact at all times: you will be ready to respond to emergencies, and your horse will gain confidence from your guidance



STEPS TO RIDING ON THE ROAD SAFELY

BE AWARE

It's important to be aware that people can be unpredictable; Uneducated motorists may pass too closely, so riders have to be prepared for those drivers who truly don't know any better.



Cyclists may frighten a horse due to unfamiliarity, bicycles approach silently and the riders are often hunched over the handlebars. If you are aware of a cyclist approaching, say a friendly hello, calmly let them know your horse may be nervous. Hearing your voice may also help ease your horse's fear.



It is always safest to walk past a dog, leashed or otherwise. If a loose dog approaches your best strategy is to turn your horse to face them and firmly tell the dog "No" or "go home." Keep your tone calm but assertive.



RIDING TIPS

A nervous or fresh horse may be more difficult to handle away from familiar surroundings.

Keep light rein contact at all times: you will be ready to respond and your horse will gain confidence from your guidance.

If you are tense, your nervousness may be transmitted to your horse: relax, stay calm, take deep slow breaths for you and your horse's benefit. When a vehicle is approaching, if you can get off the road into a driveway or farther onto the shoulder, do so.

Learn to recognize your horse's tension. Before a spook, often a horse's ears will prick sharply forward, its head will go up, and its neck will tense. It may snort or blow, it may hesitate, start to veer away, or try to turn around. **Remember take control of your horse before it spooks.**

If you feel unsafe in the saddle, dismount and hand walk your horse. Most experienced riders will agree you are usually safer mounted than on the ground. If you're on the ground, a frightened horse might jump right into you, or get away from you.

But if you are **too nervous to ride properly**, it may be safer to hand walk your horse until you reach a point where you feel safe to remount. Whenever safe, lead your horse so it is on your side farthest away from traffic.

This at least allows you to push your horse's hind- or forequarters out of the way should it start to spin.





RIDING TIPS

**KEEP CALM
AND
RIDE ON**

If you encounter a situation where your horse becomes frightened and difficult to control, try to remember the following:

- **Stay calm:** Panicking, yelling, or running will only serve to elevate your horse's anxiety; Take a deep breath and let it out slowly so your horse can feel you relax.
- **A horse's natural instinct when frightened is to flee.** It will help to relieve its anxiety if you let it move its feet, either by turning it in small circles if there is room, or asking it to move its hindquarters over one way and then another, back up, or step forward when safe. Training your horse to step over with its hind feet (disengaging the hindquarters) on cue is crucial to trail and road safety – being able to disengage the hindquarters of your horse is like knowing how to take your car out of drive.
- **Let your horse check out the threat on their own time** if it is safe to do so: If your horse is frightened of something that is in reality non-threatening, like a mailbox or a culvert, the first choice is to allow your horse to see that what is scaring it poses no real threat. Turn to face it and let your horse step forward and investigate on its own time, gently but firmly urging it forward.
- **Never run from a dangerous situation:** running releases adrenalin which in turn causes your horse to become even more excited; turn and face what is frightening your horse, or move away as calmly and slowly as possible.



YOUR SAFETY

If you encounter a motorist who poses a danger to horse & rider:

It's tough to think about license plate numbers and descriptions in the moment, so too few people report those near misses and dangerous situations to the police. If you find drivers to be careless in the area you ride, consider wearing a camera and filing a report to authorities if needed.



If you carry a cell phone, keep it in your pocket, not on your saddle.

Make sure you have **identification**, a **hoof pick**, and a **pocketknife** with you.

Tell someone where you will be riding and when you expect to return, and whenever possible, **ride with a buddy.**



HAND SIGNALS

Informing Other Road Users

BC regulations consider a horse as a vehicle.

As a rider, you must therefore follow the basic laws of the road, including yielding, stopping at stop signs, and signaling for turns and stops. Hand signals are a means of informing other road users of intent to turn right, left, or stop.

Motorists with left hand drive vehicles are required to use their left arms to signal.

However, cyclists and equestrians may extend either arm straight from their shoulder and point in the direction of their turn i.e. point right with right arm outstretched to turn right, and point left with left arm outstretched to turn left.



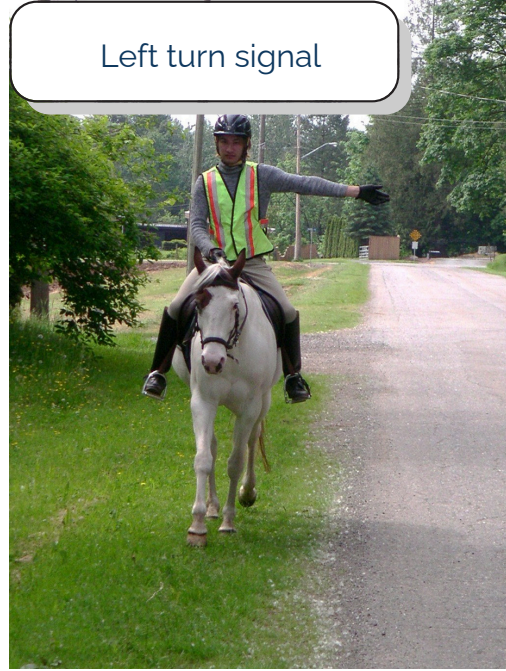


HAND SIGNALS

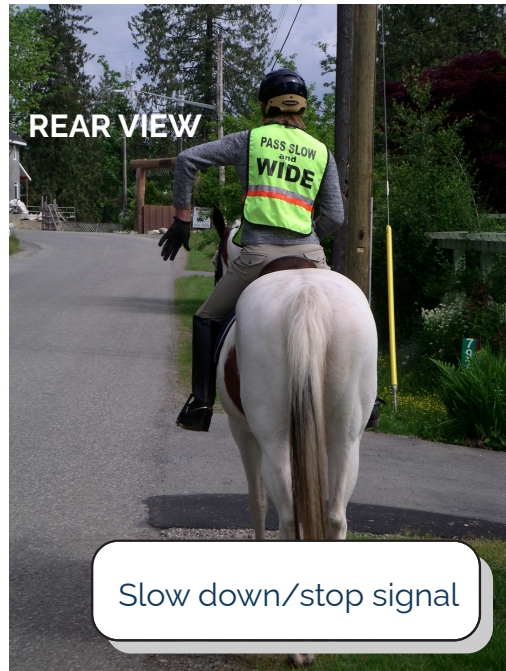
Right turn signal



Left turn signal



Slow down/stop signal



Slow down/stop signal



HAND SIGNALS

Additional hand signals often used

A **friendly wave** is a courtesy gesture that generally is and should be extended to motorists when they pass safely, exercising caution; if your hands are not free then a friendly smile or nod is the least a motorist should expect. When motorists are displaying apparent dangerous behaviour and not exercising caution, stay calm, it is safer for you and your horse.

Slow down: This signal is that of an open hand (palm out), arm extended, gesturing with a slow pumping action. This signal is often used to advise motorists that they need to slow down when approaching and attempting to pass the horse/rider.

Caution: Don't overuse the slow down signal. If a motorist is already slowing down, a thank you wave is the best way to encourage and reward their courtesy. Use the slow down signal only if someone is approaching too fast, or if a horse is acting up.

Stop: Arm straight out, open palm extended as if you were pressing against a wall; this gesture is very obvious and is sure to get the attention of the motorist quickly.





TIPS FOR THE RIDE

Crossing the Road Safely

Approach the road single file with the most experienced rider/horse in the lead.

Stop.....before crossing the road, get your horse's focus and full attention before asking it to cross. Be aware of everything going on around you. Wait for a long break in traffic, or for the traffic to be stopped before you cross. If you are riding in a group, wait until everyone is ready and then cross as a unit.

Look..... both directions. For oncoming traffic. Check in front to what's ahead and behind for any potential hazards. Look at the road surface to assess its footing. Mailboxes, flags, or garbage tossed into the ditch could startle your horse. Evaluate what you see to determine if this is a good location for you to cross.

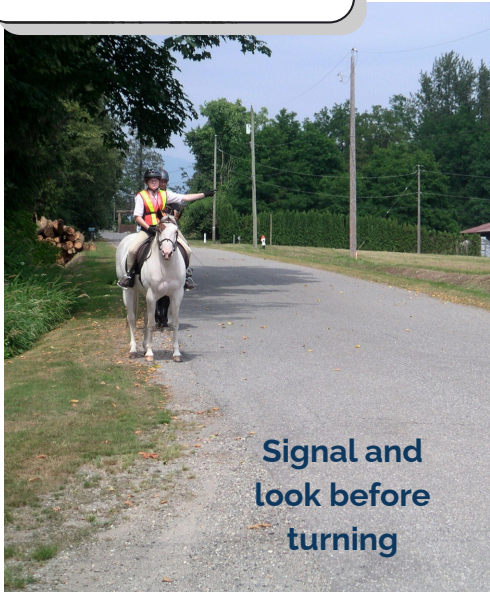
Listen.....for approaching cars. Engine sounds give you clues as to what type of vehicles are approaching and the speeds they are travelling. Pay attention to where your horse is listening; they use their ears to focus on sounds and may hear something before you do. Don't ride in poor light, especially without reflective gear.



TIPS FOR THE RIDE

Crossing Explained Step by Step

STEP 1



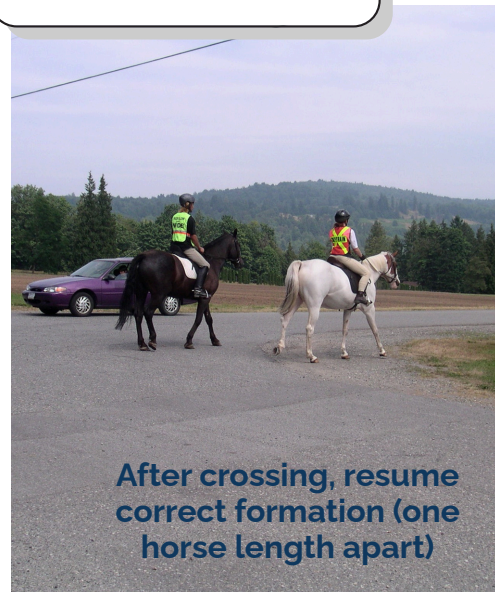
STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4





TIPS FOR THE RIDE

More tips for the rider

Training – All riders need to ensure that their horse has been exposed to a variety of obstacles and sounds, has good manners, and is easily controlled under saddle before venturing out.

Supervision – Young, inexperienced riders should always be accompanied by adult, experienced riders when riding on or near the road.

Helmets – Whether you ride in an English or a Western saddle, a protective helmet that fits properly should be worn when riding horses on the road. It is the responsibility of the parent, guardian or horse owner to ensure that a child is wearing an approved, snug fitting helmet. There are many styles and sizes available for children and adults alike.



Be Conspicuous – Don't ride on the road in poor visibility conditions or at nightfall if you can help it. All riders should wear some form of high visibility garments when riding on the road; if there is potential to be caught out after dark, ensure that you have packed an appropriate light.

Footwear – Ensure that you wear appropriate footwear: a boot or shoe with a pronounced heel that will not slip easily through the stirrup to help prevent a foot being hung up in the stirrup (with the potential for being dragged by a frightened horse). Stirrups should be approximately 1" wider than the boot or shoe to allow the foot to slide out of the stirrup quickly and easily in an emergency, but not so wide that the foot can slip through and become caught.



SAFETY: A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Riders, motorists, pedestrians and cyclists have a responsibility to understand each other's needs and obey the law. Pass along this information to any non-riders who are interested in knowing how to share the road safely with horses.

For Motorists

Motor Vehicle Act definition for equestrian traffic:

**Part 3, section 119,
paragraph (1): "traffic"**

includes pedestrians,
ridden or herded animals,
vehicles, cycles and other
"conveyances, either singly
or together, while using a
highway to travel"

**Part 3, section 120,
paragraph (1), sub-**

paragraph (c): "a person
riding an animal or driving
an animal on a highway ***has
the rights and is subject to
the duties of the driver of a
vehicle...***"



Horses are large, powerful animals that often weigh over 1000 pounds - so a collision with one poses considerable risk to the motor vehicle and its occupants, as well as to the horse and rider.

This vehicle hit a horse.
Photo courtesy car-accidents.com



SAFETY: A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY



Please Exercise Caution!

When passing a horse and rider on the road, please exercise more caution than you would when passing a pedestrian or cyclist. Due to a horse's unpredictable nature, they must be given additional distance and attention when passing. Collisions between a horse and car often result in major damage to the car and can result in injury and death to the driver as well as the rider and the horse. Follow these seven steps to help keep everyone safe.

1. **Drivers should watch out for horses on the road**, especially on rural roads or in equestrian communities where there is signage like in the photo above.
2. **Slow down when approaching a horse** and drive past slowly. **Pass wide** using the left traffic lane, or part of it, to ensure a wide enough berth.
3. **Be prepared to stop quickly if necessary.** Be aware that riders are often children, and therefore less experienced. Horses themselves may be inexperienced and nervous of traffic.
4. Loud or sudden noises can frighten horses and their riders: **Don't yell, honk or blast music**, and please do not throw things out your window at them.
5. **Sometimes riders must ride two abreast** because the horse nearest the shoulder is nervous on the road and needs the security of a steadier horse, or the rider may be a child or novice who needs escorting.
6. **Never brake or accelerate suddenly**, both of which cause noise and may throw up gravel. If driving a noisy vehicle, a motorcycle or pulling a trailer, please exercise extra caution.
7. If the horse appears particularly nervous, **stop and wait** for the rider to either enter a driveway or wave you by. It is better to wait until the horse is back under the rider's control than to risk a potential accident.



SAFETY: A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Please slow down.

Horses have the right to use public roads, and it is reckless driving to operate a motor vehicle without due caution and regard for the safety of others.

- Obey the speed limit
- Pay attention to the horse and slow down while it's still well ahead of you

Motorists should understand the needs and vulnerability of riders and horses and behave courteously towards them at all times. By learning how to share the road, riders and motorists can work together to prevent tragedies.



For Motorcyclists	For Cyclists and Pedestrians	For Dog Owners
<p>Slow down and pass wide! Please don't rev your engines.</p>	<p>Speak up! Give verbal warning when approaching a horse and be prepared to stop if a rider asks. For your safety and theirs, please pass single file and to the outside. Never pass between two horses.</p>	<p>A horse may perceive a loose or running dog as a predator or a threat. If the horse spooks or bolts, it can injure itself or its rider. In addition, a horse can seriously injure or kill a dog with a lightning fast kick or strike. For your dog's sake, as well as your own protection, if you see a horse approaching, please ensure that your dog is on a leash.</p>



LIABILITY

If you cause an accident you can be liable, so take all the right precautions;

- Respect the laws
- Obey signage,
- Ensure that you and your horse are highly visible.
- Prepare yourself and your horse with proper training

Get insurance.

Horse Council BC offers third-party liability insurance as part of their membership; this covers members in cases where a lawsuit is brought against an individual for damages that may be caused by a horse that they are in ownership or use of. Acera Insurance is the official insurance provider of Horse Council BC. All HCBC members automatically receive the following coverage:

\$5,000,000 of excess PERSONAL LIABILITY insurance that WILL protect YOU, THE MEMBER if YOU, THE MEMBER are SUED by a third party because a horse that YOU, THE MEMBER own, lease or use causes PROPERTY DAMAGE OR BODILY INJURY TO A THIRD PARTY.

A few examples of situations where YOU, THE MEMBER, HAVE COVERAGE:

- Example 1. The horse kicks or bites someone causing bodily injury
- Example 2. The horse kicks a car or escapes on to a neighbor's land causing property damage
- Example 3. "Someone else" is holding your horse and the horse causes property damage or bodily injury to a third party.

The policy is IN FORCE 24 hours a day, seven days a week, anywhere in the world. So if you board your horse elsewhere, keep your horse at home or go for a ride down the road or on the trail – YOU, THE MEMBER are covered.

To learn more, visit the link below:

<https://hcbc.ca/membership/membership-benefits/automatic-insurance/>

Don't leave yourself unprotected!

PRE-RIDE CHECKLISTS

Are your road-ready?

RIDE

- Time & safe meeting place arranged
- Safe route planned
- Insurance carried by all riders
- Emergency Contact (who knows where we are and when we'll be back)
- Review hand signals & rules of the road
- Are riders all road ready?
- Are horses all road ready?
- If green riders or horses, is there an experienced adult on the ride?
- Check horses' feet for loose shoes, stones, or possible lameness

EQUIPMENT

Tack check:

- Bridle/headstall in good repair and well fastened
- Reins in good repair and well fastened
- Saddle in good repair
- Girth or cinch: in good repair & properly tightened
(check before mounting & again during ride)
- Halter & lead rope, if required
- Stirrups of correct size: approx. 1" larger than boot or shoe
- Crop or whip, only if both horse & rider are trained in its use

Clothing check:

- Helmet, proper fit and securely fastened
- Light colored clothing for visibility
- Boots or shoes with good heel that fit well in stirrups
- Reflective vest or armbands, especially if a chance of being out in dark
- Gloves
- Spurs, only if both horse & rider are trained in their use
- Hoof pick
- Pocket knife
- Flashlight, if a chance of being out in the dark
- Field first aid kit
- Cell phone
- Identification & emergency contact information
- Water
- Insect repellent

Copies available at <https://.hcbc.ca>



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