



# Back Country Horsemen of BC

## *Minimal Impact Strategies*

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The following Best Practices have been identified as strategies to support “leave no trace” and “gentle use” practices, desirable to minimize negative impact and support sustainable trail usage.

### PLAN AND PREPARE

- Know Before You Go! Do your homework on regulations pertaining to camping, campfires, grazing, bears, trails and terrain. Obtain and study maps and information on the area.
- Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.
- Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use by other trail users.
- Repackage food at home to minimize waste.
- Use a map, compass, or GPS to eliminate the use of marking paint or flagging.
- Check tack and gear, carry first aid kits, and be prepared for emergencies.
- Condition and train your horse for the challenges of the trail.

### MINIMIZE IMPACT ON THE TRAIL

- Ride in small groups to minimize trail damage & wildlife impact. Split larger parties into smaller groups when you can. A maximum of 6-8 riders will help reduce impact.
- Avoid cutting switchbacks and running up and down hills and embankments. This will help to prevent erosion and costly repairs.
- Avoid unnecessary bushwhacking and “ghost” trailing.
- Leave What You Find
  - Preserve the past: examine, but do not touch, cultural or historic structures and artifacts. Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them.
- Avoid introducing or transporting non-native grasses or hay species.
- Bridges or other land alterations should only be made with consideration of the environment and with permission of the landowner.

## STOCK MANAGEMENT

- Ensure your horse or mule is well prepared for backcountry challenges. Conditioning them beforehand can help prevent colic, lameness, and other illnesses.
- Have your stock accustomed to crossing bridges, logs, rocky areas and streams. These are common in backcountry travel.
- Be prepared to use a variety of containment methods including highline, hobbles, electric fences, or loose grazing. Pack supplemental feed, if needed.
- Develop a partnership with your horse. Teach your horse to look where he steps and take responsibility. Practice before you go!

## MINIMIZE HARM TO PLANTS AND WILDLIFE

- Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.
- Never feed wildlife. To do so damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.
- Control your dog at all times, or leave them at home.
- Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or winter.
- Properly store your food from bears and other wildlife.
- Avoid trampling fragile vegetation in and around your campsite.

## MANAGE WASTE

- If you pack it in – pack it out! This includes leftover food scraps and unburned items from your campfire, such as foil, plastic and glass and any toilet paper and hygiene products.
- Washing dishes, clothes, or yourself should be done at least 100 feet from any water source. Scatter dishwater.
- Scatter horse manure or deposit in pits if provided.
- Use “cat holes” that are 6-8 inches deep to dispose of human waste. Waste should be buried at least 100 feet from water and well away from camp.

## “GENTLE USE” OF CAMPSITES

- Select campsites on firm, dry ground. Use existing sites whenever possible.
- Camp on durable surfaces (established campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow).
- In popular areas, concentrate use on existing trails and campsites.
- In pristine areas, disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails.

- Keep campsites small. Focus activities in areas where vegetation is absent.
- Use a stove for cooking to be less reliant on fires. Where campfires are allowed, use only dead and down wood, if available. Use an existing fire ring, particularly in high use areas.
- Naturalize your site before leaving by spreading pine needles and twigs. Scatter manure and fill in any holes that may have been created by your stock.

## RESPECT FOR OTHER USERS

- Treat others with respect and common courtesy.
- Be of assistance when a need arises.
- Respect other trail users and protect the quality of their experience.
- Yield to other on the trail, it is best to step aside for those coming uphill.
- Take breaks and let you and your horse rest when tired.
- Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.



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