



# Back Country Horsemen of BC

## *Best Practices: Ride Etiquette*

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The following Best Practices have been identified as helpful to ensure a safe and welcoming ride for trail rides sanctioned by BCHBC Chapters. Ride etiquette guidelines are used to improve safety while at the same time, protect our trails and our “right to ride”.

### **Ride Host (So you want to host a ride.....)**

1. Your Chapter should send a list of planned rides and events to the Provincial Secretary at the beginning of the year. If rides are added during the year, the Chapter Chair should notify the Provincial Secretary so the ride can be added to your event list. Notifying the BCHBC Provincial Secretary ensures that BCHBC’s insurance is in place for your ride.
2. The Host identifies the ride route, sets the ride maximum, issues the ride invitation, and explains the degree of difficulty, type of terrain and obstacles expected, location of trail head and parking; and what riders need to bring for their horse (examples: water, a tie rope) and for themselves (example: lunch).
3. Normally stallions or dogs are not allowed on sanctioned rides. Any exceptions should be decided by the Host Chapter well in advance of the ride and communicated to all members prior to the ride, so they know what to expect. At no time are loose horses to be allowed on sanctioned rides.
4. The Host provides contact information so they can respond to inquiries prior to the ride date. A deadline date is useful for RSVP’s.
5. The Host or Membership Coordinator ensures that all Back Country Horsemen members that will be riding are also up-to-date with a current Horse Council membership. Again, this ensures that appropriate insurance is in place for your Chapter.
6. The Host sorts ride-out groups as necessary with regard to size and speed of pace. Groups of 10 or less are recommended for trail safety and minimal trail impact.
7. The Host may assign a “Ride Master” for each group going out. Each Ride Master should be familiar with the route as well as BCHBC best practices.
8. The Host organizes parking and, if possible, will have a watering place at the trail head.

### **Ride Master (Leading the pack)!**

9. The Ride Master is in charge of the ride at all times.
10. The Ride Master may assign a Drag Rider to ride behind the group and assist riders in the back. Depending on the size of the group, Flank riders may also be assigned at the discretion of the Ride Master.
11. The Ride Master reviews the Pre-Ride Checklist with participants before setting out, encouraging safety, “treading lightly”, and protection of the trail.

12. The Ride Master will limit the number of riders if, in their judgment, there are too many riders for the trail conditions or safety of the group.
13. The Ride Master ensures there is a first aid kit available and packed with each group. Each rider should know who has the kit should someone need help. It is recommended that each rider carry a personal first aid kit as well.
14. The Ride Master leads the ride, setting a pace suitable to the terrain and the participants, keeping safety first.
15. The Ride Master checks with participants and the Drag Rider from time to time to assure that the group is staying together, that the pace is suitable to all, and initiates ride changes as required.
16. The Ride Master may reassign positions within the group as they think best in the interest of safety.
17. The Ride Master may ask members to leave the ride if they or their animals are disruptive or unsafe to themselves or others.

### **Ride Participant (Yes, you too have responsibilities)**

18. Pre-register with your host. Get information as to location, facilities, trail conditions, etc. Allow enough time to tack and be ready to ride out at the time specified.
19. All BCHBC members that are riding must have current Horse Council membership or a recognized alternate (the Alberta Horse Federation or Canadian Icelandic Horse Federation). This is important to ensure your chapter has appropriate insurance coverage.
20. Your Ride Host will indicate if the ride allows for a guest. Inviting a guest lets you introduce them to BCHBC and see if they are interested in joining. Guests are expected to become members if they wish to continue riding or attending events and should not continue to depend on their host's membership.
21. If bringing a guest, you are responsible for ensuring your guest is familiar with trail etiquette and conduct themselves accordingly.
22. Know your horse and your capabilities. Consider the distance of the ride and fitness of your horse. Tell your Ride Master if your horse is struggling for any reason.
23. Normally stallions or dogs are not allowed on sanctioned rides. Any exceptions should be decided by the Host Chapter well in advance of the ride and communicated to all members prior to the ride, so they know what to expect. At no time are loose horses to be allowed on sanctioned rides.
24. No alcohol on the trail. Best to leave alcohol for celebrating back at camp.
25. Always stay behind your Ride Master unless invited to move ahead.
26. Space yourself. A good rule is to keep at least one horse's length between you and the horse in front of you by viewing the feet of the horse ahead of you through your horse's ears!
27. Just as important is to keep up with the herd by not lagging too far behind. If you need to drop back or leave the ride, tell your Ride Master.
28. On approaching a steep hill, maintain a good flat walk. Please do not trot or run up hills as this creates erosion and excites horses. Before stopping on a steep trail, make sure all horses are in a safe location.

29. Avoid widening the trail and “bush crashing” that may spook other horses and can damage sensitive areas.
30. Horses do not like to be left behind. Please wait for the rider and horse behind you after completing an obstacle so the horse behind does not feel rushed.
31. Doffing or donning a jacket is best done on the ground. Your horse may tolerate this while you are mounted but other horses may react very unpredictably. Think safety!
32. At water crossings, cross single file. Allow time for your horse to drink. Wait for the horse behind you, who may not drink if afraid he might be left behind.
33. If a rider dismounts, all riders should wait until he/she remounts before moving off.
34. During the ride, you may feel your horse will do better further up or farther back in the group. When passing, always get permission of the rider you wish to pass. When being passed, keep your horse’s head towards (and hindquarters away from) the passing horse.
35. Many horses prefer to be in front or avoid being in back, but please realize that not everyone can be in the position they want each time. Let others have a turn!
36. Tie a red ribbon in your horse’s tail if your horse kicks or strikes and keep their front or hind end away from others. A green ribbon indicates a young or inexperienced horse; pink indicates a mare in heat. If Stallions are allowed on the ride, they should be wearing a Blue ribbon. Horses may behave differently when around new, unknown horses, so expect the unexpected.
37. Carry a personal first aid kit and any necessary medication. If you have a need for any specific first aid medication, such as an epi-pen for an allergic reaction, then bring it.
38. Watch and consider the impact you and your horse have on others. Riders and/or horses that are disruptive or are deemed unsafe by the Ride Master will be asked to leave the ride group.

**Have fun and stay safe. Happy Trails!**