

Horse Riding & Road Safety IN AUSTRALIA



A resource to support Pony Club
riders and coaches

Sponsored By:



About Horse SA



Horse SA is a not-for-profit industry development body, who looks at the “big picture” of what it takes to grow our industry. Key areas of work include road safety, trails & public land, facilities, horse health, horse keeping & the environment. Memberships are open to professional bodies, small businesses, clubs, community groups and individuals.

For more information visit www.horsesa.asn.au or Ph (618) 8294 2460

About Clubs SA



Clubs SA is the trading name for the Licenced Clubs Association of South Australia, which was founded in 1919. The Association's philosophy has changed little over the years. Its major platform over that time has been to promote changes to government legislation, so as to give clubs a more equitable position to become totally self sufficient in the long term and provide the necessary infrastructure to promote sport and community related enterprises with the industry.

The subsequent changes to legislation over the past 20 years could be attributed to the devotion of the Association to maintaining its original mandate.

Clubs SA has an overall policy, sound objectives to preserve, promote and advance the interests of member clubs.

The membership of Clubs SA consists of all sporting, ethnic, social and community Clubs in this state who all have a common interest bond, both within their club and with the Association. For more information visit www.clubssa.com.au or Ph 8376 2699

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Acknowledgements

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The British Horse Society for permission to reproduce diagrams & sketches

Horse Riding and Road Safety Summary

- 1. Know and obey the Australian Road Rules**
- 2. Ride on the left hand side of the road, with the flow of the traffic**
- 3. Use clear hand signals**
- 4. Wear fluroescent/reflective clothing**
- 5. Inexperienced horses should always be accompanied by experienced horse/rider combinations**
- 6. Wear an approved safety helmet and footwear safe for horse riding**
- 7. Ride with a positive attitude**
- 8. Use the 'Lifesaver look' - look, check, look again**
- 9. Be a courteous road user**

Introduction

Few riders can escape riding 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 be challenged with issues of safety for you and your horse while riding on the roads.

In most situations, drivers will mostly think two things about horse riders on public roads:

- you shouldn't be on the road (which is not correct) or ;
- you can completely control your horse at all times, and therefore do not need any special considerations as another road user

Traffic volumes are increasing and through lack of education and life experiences, most drivers do not understand the likely behaviour of horses they are passing on the road. In addition, by law riders must take responsibility for their actions on public roads.

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

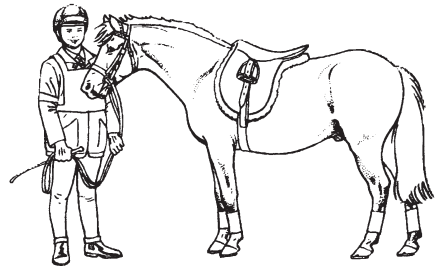
The aim of this booklet, in conjunction with the Australian Road Rules (including the Driver's Handbook), is to promote responsible, considerate and courteous riding on the roads by all riders. It will also promote, the training of horses to be on roadways and roadside trails.

It will raise the riders awareness of safety, and encourage them to dress in clearly visible clothing and to participate in any riding and road safety horse and/or rider training courses.

I Are you ready for the road?

Pursuant to the Australian Road Rules, the horse is considered a vehicle on the road and is therefore permitted to be ridden or driven on the road.

Whilst you and your horse have every right to be on the road it is in everybody's best interests for you to be highly visible and obey the road rules.



Wear something that will help you be seen.

Light-coloured, bright or (ideally) fluorescent/reflective items will help especially in poor visibility. Reflective material can be seen in headlights up to three times as far away as non-reflective materials (i.e. fluorescent). Carriages are required to have indicators

BE SEEN TO BE SAFE

ALWAYS USE FLUORESCENT/REFLECTIVE LEG-BANDS, TABARDS AND HAT COVERS.
LED HORSES SHOULD HAVE REFLECTIVE STRIPS ON RUGS AND LEG BANDS

How to Prepare

The Horse: Before you take a horse onto a road, make sure you can control it in a broad range of situations. The horse must be obedient to your aids. For safety, keep horses' hooves and shoes in good condition. Young, inexperienced or untrained horses are not suitable to ride on roadways.

The Rider: Before riding on the roads you should be a competent rider. Understanding of the current edition of the Australian Road Rules (Driver's Handbook) and its advice to all road users is essential. Riders should practice the skills required for riding on the road, before leaving the safety of an arena. Young, inexperienced or riders without good control of their horse in a broad range of training situations, should not be on roadways. The novice horse (the horse being trained to ride on the road) should always travel in the company of an experienced horse/rider combination. It is generally safer for the novice horse and/or rider to travel behind the more experienced combination, or on the side away from traffic.

Consideration and courtesy

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

- Smiling
- Nodding & waving
- Saying thank you

Novice or nervous horses

If you think that your horse will be nervous of traffic, ride with other, calm and steady horses. Avoid main roads and peak traffic times. Working your horse first in an arena will help with a "tune in" to the riders instructions. Accustom the horse to cars, cycles and motorbikes in a controlled situation first (off the roads). Plan to expose the horse to as many objects & situations that could alarm it before riding out onto public roads.

Young Riders

Many children cannot judge how fast vehicles are going or how far away they are. Parents and/or guardians are responsible for deciding at when their children may ride on the road on their own.

General Rules

All riders should wear a Pony Club approved safety helmet when riding on the road. Leave details of your intended route, and estimated time of 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.

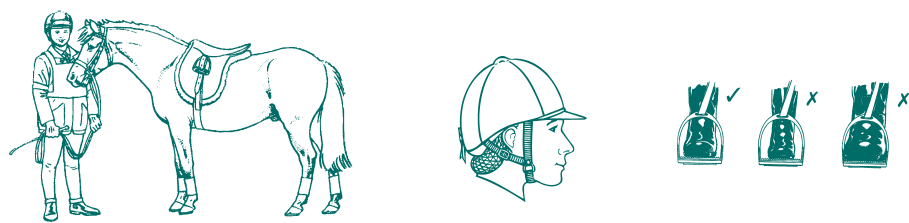
Ensure that all tack and equipment fits well and is in good condition.

Stitching and leather should be inspected regularly to ensure it is safe and sound. Well cared for gear adds to the comfort of the horse. Stirrup irons should be the correct size for the rider's foot. As a guide a minimum of 1cm clearance on either side at the ball of the foot when in the stirrup is recommended. Irons that are too large are just as dangerous as irons too small.

For English style saddles stirrup leathers must easily release from stirrup bars. Never ride with stirrup bars up.

Always wear a correctly fitted Pony Club 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 trainers are dangerous for riding and should not be worn.

When boots or shoes need repair, full length soles are advisable as half-soles can catch in the stirrup irons. The Australian Pony Club rules will require full soles.

Whip and spurs

Experienced riders may decide to carry a whip when riding on the road to act as back-up to the rider's right leg aid. However, consideration will need to be given to the level of confidence of the rider and the training level of the horse before carrying a whip.

Similarly, riders with controlled lower leg position may wish to wear spurs when riding on the roads. These should be short-shanked and properly positioned on the boots.

RIDERS CHECKLIST

- PROTECTIVE HELMET
- Highly visible clothing
- Riding boots
- Gear- in good condition
- Horse to have hooves, shoes or hoof boots in good condition

BE SEEN TO BE SAFE

2. Road Courtesy

Courtesy



Car approaches rider



Rider thanks driver for slowing

It is important to show courtesy and consideration to all other road users. Take particular care when passing pedestrians, who may be frightened of horses. A friendly greeting from the rider may reassure them. Always thank anyone who slows down or shows any consideration.

A smile and a 'thank you' are usually sufficient to acknowledge considerate drivers. A nod or a wave may also be suitable but remember that it is a risk to take the hand from the reins when thanking drivers, both hands on the reins spell better control.



Remember, thank other road users for showing consideration



Two vehicles approach rider from opposite directions



Car waits behind rider



Car overtakes rider. Rider thanks car driver.

3. 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, listen also because you can sometimes 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 particularly 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 well in advance.

On left-hand bends and turns, check over left shoulder for any cyclist or pedestrian on your near side.

Avoid unnecessary or difficult hazards where you can. If trouble looks likely, if at all possible, make a detour to avoid it. Avoid upsetting your horse in traffic.

THE ROAD IS NO PLACE TO TEACH YOUR HORSE DISCIPLINE!

4. Road positioning & signalling

Defensive riding includes being safely positioned 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 prevent the horse from moving sideways or swinging his quarters into the traffic (by clear use of your leg aids, backed up by a schooling whip if appropriate). Reins must be at the correct length to control the horse.

KEEP BOTH HANDS ON THE REINS UNLESS YOU ARE SIGNALLING

Your position is important, especially at intersections, make sure you have full and clear visibility of traffic approaching from any direction. Use your **OBSERVATION** skills.

To look behind, turn from the waist, keeping both hands on the reins. **LOOK** for traffic. **OBSERVE** again before crossing the road.

5. Rider's signals

REMEMBER THE ROUTINE FOR ALL SIGNALS

Observe, Signal, Observe,
Move off when safe to do so - Don't dither – be decisive!

Before turning, look behind you to make sure it is safe and then give a clear arm signal. Before making any signal: look, listen and observe. You will need to notice any traffic and respond appropriately.

When it is safe to proceed, signal in the direction you wish to go. Give a last 'lifesaver look' If the road is clear, carry out the turning manoeuvre. All signals must be clear and decisive – hold your signal for approximately 3 seconds (say, "one thousand and one, one thousand and two, one thousand and three") to allow sufficient time for other road users to see understand your intentions.

NEVER signal with the whip in your hand. Transfer to the opposite hand before making the signal.

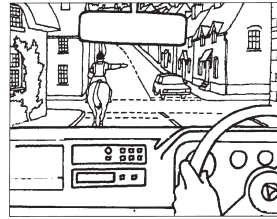
Giving a signal warns other road users of your intentions and is not a guarantee of safety. Other road users may not act responsibly or may not see you for any number of reasons, including sunglare. Ensure your path is safe and clear before moving of

Signals for left and right turns

For left and right turns, the arm should be fully extended from the shoulder, hand flat, palm facing the front with the fingers closed.



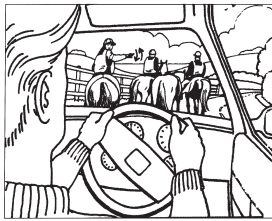
I intend to turn left



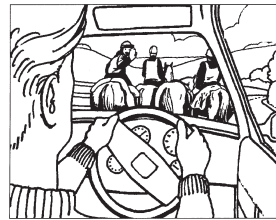
I intend to turn right

Other useful signals

The following signals may be used in certain circumstances. They are requests to other road users:



Driver please slow down



Driver please stop

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

6. Road rules

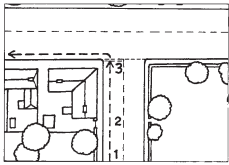
Positioning at intersections

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

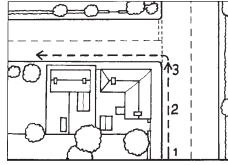
At all intersections riders should keep to the left, near the kerb or verge. This will avoid riders being sandwiched by other traffic. If turning left, keep to the left and turn left.

If you have to wait, reassure your horse. Keep assessing the traffic situation.

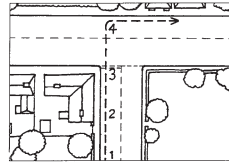
Always keep your horse under control. NEVER allow him to anticipate the move-off.



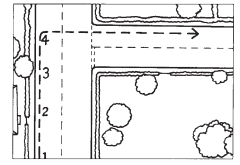
left - minor to major



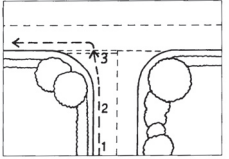
left - major to minor



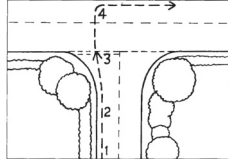
Right - minor to major



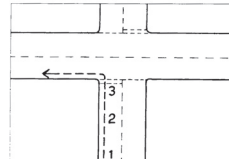
Right - major to minor



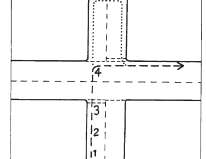
left turn at flared Intersection



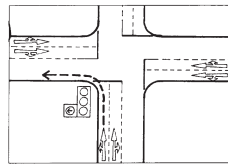
Right turn at flared Intersection



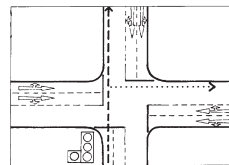
Left turn from minor road



Right turn from minor road



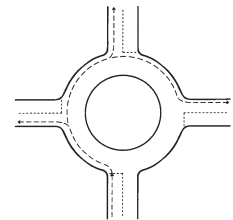
Turning left at traffic lights



Straight across or turning right at traffic lights

Roundabouts

Avoid roundabouts wherever possible. If you use them, keep to the left and watch out for vehicles crossing your path to leave or join the roundabout. Signal right when riding across exits to show you are not leaving. Signal left just before you leave the roundabout.



How to tackle a roundabout

7. Hazards

Stationary vehicles

Keep to the left. Allow plenty of time to look behind you before reaching the stationary vehicle. Check for oncoming traffic. Be prepared to hold back for approaching traffic. If safe, signal right, retake the reins before passing stationary vehicles.

Give a "life-saver" look behind before moving out around vehicle. Allow sufficient clearance.

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

Where practical, give such vehicles verbal warning of your presence.

If the road is not clear, wait behind the vehicle at a sufficient distance to avoid a sharp turn when able to proceed. If you wait too far back from the stationary vehicle, you will encourage other vehicles to squeeze in between you and the stationary vehicle.

Dangerous/noisy/frightening hazards

These include road drills, compressors, dogs behind fences, graders etc

1. Halt a sufficient distance away.
2. Try to catch the operator's attention.
3. Acknowledge any consideration shown.
4. If your horse will not go forward and you are in company, ask for a lead from another horse.
5. If you are by yourself, take an alternative route if possible (or consider dismounting and leading)

Treat road works as a stationary vehicle and follow above procedure unless horse shows resistance to passing.



Dangerous: Rider has used his left rein as horse begins to shy, directing horse closer to unfamiliar object



Safe: Rider has used right leg (supported by right rein) to bend horse away from unfamiliar object.



Dangerous: Rider has allowed horse to see truck with his left eye.



Safe: Rider has used right leg (supported by right rein) to make sure horse sees truck with his right eye.

Railway Bridges

1. Observe the traffic situation
2. Listen for oncoming trains
3. Halt in good time if necessary
4. Never ride over or under a bridge if a train is approaching

Bridges and underpasses

Bridges and underpasses provided to cross main roads and freeways are helpful to riders but can present hazards. Headroom in underpasses can be low. Dismount and lead through if necessary. When negotiating bridges and underpasses wait for pedestrians to cross first. Take extra care as many bridges are not designed with horses in mind.

Nature strips, footpaths & bike lanes

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

It is hazardous and foolish to canter on nature strips. Remember to give way to any pedestrian using pedestrian crossings. Riders are permitted to use bike lanes with care.

Dismounting, Leading and Remounting

Dismount only if it is essential to do so. Your safest place is usually on the horse's back. If dismounting is unavoidable, it should be done quickly, safely and efficiently, with the rider in control.

It is customary to dismount on the left side. There are circumstances when dismounting and/or remounting on the right side is helpful but this will require practice. The horse should be 'pointing' in the direction of the traffic flow.

Emergency dismount: When preparing to do an emergency dismount, consider which side you intend to remount from; that stirrup should be crossed over first to avoid tangled stirrup leathers when setting up for a remount. Dismounting quickly from a horse needs to be practiced.

Leading horses when dismounted

Gloves should always be worn when leading a horse on the road.

The led horse must always wear a bridle. Lead on the left side of the road, positioning yourself on the right hand side (off side) shoulder of the horse.
(ie. The leader should be positioned at the horse's shoulder, between the horse and the traffic)

When leading a horse wearing a running martingale, it should be securely tied up and free. A whip should be held in the right-hand to help control the horse's quarters.

Leading when mounted

If you are leading a horse when mounted, ride on the left-hand side of the road with the led horse

on your left side, away from the traffic.

When a horse is led from another, the led horse should wear a bridle with the reins passed through the bit to the right side. If the led horse is wearing a running martingale, it should be securely tied up and free of the reins. If leading a mounted horse use a lead rope leaving the reins in the hands of the rider.



8. Riding in pairs or groups

Ideally 'groups' of riders should not exceed eight.

Riders should proceed 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.

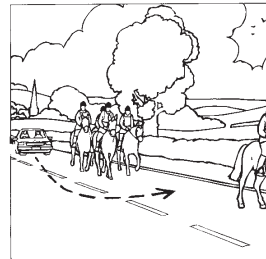
With large groups of riders, e.g. a trail ride, groups should be divided, leaving a minimum of 30m between groups. Before the group sets out, the procedure for moving into single file from double file and back to single file should be established and fully understood by all group members. This can be practiced as an arena or oval drill exercise first before going on to the road.

It is also a good idea to practice how the group will cross over a road. Whereby all riders cross the road at the same time, no "trickle effect".

A method of communication should be established in case of difficulties; the plan of the ride and the expected time of return should be given to a responsible adult at the home base before the ride leaves.

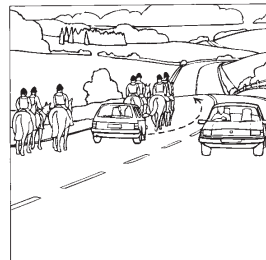
Obstruction of other road users should be avoided. Alert riding, with a positive attitude, and an awareness of the needs of others should be practised to assist in preventing rash overtaking by other road users. Fluorescent and reflective tabards are an important aid for riders.

The leaders taking groups of riders and horses onto the road should be experienced riders on steady horses, mature and safety conscious of a minimum age of eighteen years and with full understanding of the applicable legal and insurance responsibilities. The lead and last riders need to be wearing fluorescent / reflective safety clothing.



The last rider should be a 'shepherd' on a suitable horse.

Arm signals and traffic assessments should be carried out by the leader and shepherd respectively. They should be in full control of the group, and have a pre-agreed method of communication with each other.



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 all members can safely and comfortably maintain. Courtesy is imperative when other road users have been delayed by the group.

Take single file as circumstances dictate.

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"

9. Defensive Riding

ALWAYS EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED!

Horses are unpredictable and need to be given room. Riders should endeavour to influence other road users, not just inform them of their proposed actions. Establishing eye contact with other road users and using hand signals may help with this.

Remember that all riders are vulnerable, although legitimate road users.

On occasions it may be necessary, sensible and safe to take up the amount of road normally used by a motor vehicle. Vehicles should take care when overtaking.

For example:

- a) When you need to take up a more visible position on the road, rather than riding too close to the edge. Vehicles should then slow down to overtake.
- b) Where conditions dictate, two or more riders may be safer riding in pairs.

Except when safety dictates, care should be taken not to obstruct traffic unduly.

If riding in pairs, when safe or if necessary, either pull onto the side of the road or move into single file to allow traffic to overtake.

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

10. Riding when visibility is poor

Riding after dark, at dusk or in inclement or dull weather are times when visibility is poor.

Riding in these conditions should be avoided 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. The lights should be visible to a distance of 200 metres.

Lights should be fitted to the right stirrup showing white to the front and red to the rear (check cycling gear outlets & good saddleries)

Did you know? It is important to understand the difference between fluorescent and reflective material.

Fluorescent material show up in daylight but have no special qualities at night. Reflective materials return (reflect) a light source either in daylight or darkness. Reflective bands at the fetlock joints are effective and inexpensive.

When leading a horse on foot, the person leading should wear reflective clothing and carry a light in his/her traffic side hand.



Large riding groups

When riding in a group, the leading and shepherding off-side riders should wear lights showing white to the front, red to the rear and wear reflective clothing.

Where practicable, light-coloured horses should be placed on the traffic side.

11. Dangerous road conditions

Slippery conditions include:

- Ice and snow
- Worn, shiny patches on roads.
- Plastic paint, as used for white lines and zebra crossings, is slippery.
- Corners, do not trot around these.
- 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, 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.

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

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 additional grip.

Fog and Mist

If caught in fog or mist – take the same precautions as when riding at dusk or dark.

PLAN AHEAD!

All these conditions should be avoided wherever possible. Give your horse a day off, rather than becoming another accident statistic.

12. Notes for Carriage Drivers

Excerpts from the Australian Road Rules (ARR) note that for Carriage Drivers

“A person must not ride an animal-drawn vehicle at night, in hazardous weather conditions causing reduced visibility unless the vehicle is fitted with and displays lights”. Refer to the ARR for specifications.

13. Reporting an Accident

If you are riding or leading a horse that is involved in a collision or other casualty, you have legal obligations to:

1. stop
2. render any possible assistance
3. give your name and address and if requested to,
 - the operator of any other vehicle involved
 - any injured person
 - the owner of any damaged property.
4. report the matter to a police officer if the accident results in death or injury to any person 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.

Minor incidents can be recorded through www.horsesa.asn.au on the Road Incident Report Form. This helps Horse SA's work to improve road safety for horse riders.

14. Links

Horse SA www.horsesa.asn.au

Visit the online store for riding and road safety equipment

Pony Club Association of SA Inc www.ponyclub.asn.au

Horse Safety Australia www.ahse.info

British Horse Society www.bhs.org
Road safety section and bookstore

Victoria Roads www.vicroads.vic.gov.au
Search for horses and road safety

QUEENSLAND Workplace Health and Safety
www.dir.qld.gov.au/workplace/subjects/horseriding/safety/

Transport SA
www.transport.sa.gov.au/rss/content/safer_people/road_users/horses.htm

APPENDIX I

Sample Skills Check list for Riders & Drivers

Gear, Vehicle & Equipment

- o Riding boots, which are in good condition
- o The helmet must be of current Safety Standard approved for horse riding and correctly fitted
- o All tack or harness should be in good repair (ie stitching not rotting or frayed in places such as stirrup leathers, girth straps etc) and well fitted
- o Vehicles should be fitted with lighting requirements as per ARR

Rider/Driver Road Safety Gear

- o The rider/driver must be wearing a fluorescent/reflective vest
- o A whip may be used to reinforce leg/voice aids if required
- o If wearing gloves, these should be bright-coloured
- o Carry a mobile phone, string, folding hoof pick & whistle.

Pony or Horse

- o It is recommended that the pony or horse have at least one piece of fluorescent/reflective gear on - ideally leg wraps

Riding & Driving Skills - what you must be able to do

1. Mount from the near and off-sides using a mounting block if necessary
2. Demonstrate correct use of rein in conjunction with whip (if appropriate) in order to maintain straightness of horse (right rein, right leg reinforced with whip on quarters)
3. Demonstrate awareness of other road users by looking behind, to left and to the right
4. Understand and demonstrate the correct positioning of horse and rider on the road
5. Demonstrate the use of holding reins and whip in one hand whilst using the other to signal.
6. Correct positioning of hand when signalling
7. Concise, unhurried signalling prepared in time for manoeuvre
8. Demonstrate how to thank a fellow road user
9. Ride confidently past a number of road hazards eg road works and flags
10. Ride or drive past a stationary vehicle
11. Emergency dismount, leading past a hazard, remounting

What you need to know

- o Difference between fluorescent and reflective materials
- o What side of the road to ride on
- o Road Positioning, including turning at intersections
- o Understand that a horse is considered a “vehicle” on the road and must obey the Australian Road Rules
- o Road signs and what they mean: Stop, Giveaway, Traffic Light colours
- o Use of the nature verge in emergency situations only
- o How to ride as a pair on the road
- o How to ride as a group on the road
- o How to decide when to ride defensively
- o How to ride defensively
- o List at least 3 ways to show courtesy to other road users
- o What to look for when passing a stationary vehicle (potential hazards)
- o What precautions to take when taking a young horse out on the road
- o Dangerous road conditions - list at least 3
- o What to do in the event of an accident



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