Horses and Road Safety – Rider Tips

Motorists, cyclists, horse riders and pedestrians all have the right to use Queensland's roads. This right comes with a responsibility to operate in a safe and courteous manner and within the law.

Whilst scores of riders would prefer not to use the road, there invariably are times when it cannot be avoided. As the population increases and access to forest trails and safe public riding areas is reduced, more riders are being forced to use roads. Unfortunately many riders and motorists alike are unaware of the potential dangers associated with this type of activity.

The consequences of ANYONE'S mistake can be horrific, EVERYONE is at risk!

Rider Preparation
Firstly the rider must determine whether they are capable of controlling a horse on the road. It is imperative that the rider is honest. It is difficult for an inexperienced rider to see the dangers and also understand their own skill limitations.

Young or inexperienced riders should not be on the roads!

Secondly determine if the horse is suitable to be taken onto roads.

Re-consider your options if the horse is likely to be un-controllable!

Once the decision is made to ride a horse on the road, the rider must ensure they are aware of the road rules and that they have the correct equipment.

NEVER ride a horse on the road without the minimum tack of a saddle and bridle!

This equipment is your steering, brakes and seat belt and as such should be in good condition, well maintained and correctly fitted.

The minimum personal protective equipment required is helmet, smooth soled boots and clothing which aids visibility. Such as light and bright clothing, or even better, hi-vis apparel and horse equipment such as leg wraps and breast plates.

Sharing the Road
It is important to realize when sharing the road that other road users' operating conditions may be very different and everyone's actions can affect the ability of other road users to operate safely.

share the road or risk sharing the consequences
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Be alert to the minimum braking distances, size of turning circles and other operating limitations of various types of vehicles.

One of the best strategies riders can use is to be courteous and friendly. Being aggressive or rude will be remembered and build resentment towards horses using the road. Also remember that some pedestrians can be afraid of horses, so pass wide and slow.

A smile and a thank-you are cheap and easy!

Defensive Riding
Defensive riding includes being safely positioned on the road and using clear signals well in advance.

See our fact sheet on hand signals.

REMEMBER: Drivers may not see, understand or follow hand signals.

Where possible keep off the road and road shoulder by riding on the verges. If you do need to ride on the road itself, ride on the left side, with the flow of traffic.

Always listen for approaching traffic and constantly visually scan the surrounds, noting what is coming from all directions which may potentially upset the horse. Not only large, loud and fast approaching traffic, but obstacles and other animals can unsettle even the quietest of horses.

frightened horses make BAD decisions
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It is best to assume that all approaching motorists are unaware of the potential dangers and to act accordingly.

Be alert to the dangers, but remember a nervous rider can upset their horse, so if you find yourself in a sticky situation, RIDE CONFIDENTLY!

Riding in Pairs or Groups
Never ride more than two abreast on the road and always have the most experienced rider on the least experienced horse.

Position the most experienced horse on the traffic side to assist to settle any nervousness the inexperienced horse may have in new situations.

Cross intersections in groups rather than one at a time so as to increase your visibility and cause least disruption to the flow of traffic.

For Further ROAD SAFETY Information
Visit the Queensland Horse Council website at the address below.

Queensland Horse Council Inc.
Website: www.qldhorsecouncil.com
Email: president@qldhorsecouncil.com

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Page1 of 1
May 2010