Code of conduct for horse riders and cyclists

The British Horse Society

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EQUESTRIANS AND CYCLISTS

This Code of Conduct provides guidelines to ensure equestrians and cyclists co-exist harmoniously and safely when in close proximity. There is room for everyone to enjoy riding out.

Equestrians and cyclists are vulnerable road users. We share similar risks when riding on the road. We both need access to more safe off-road riding.

Cyclists and horse riders have a statutory right to ride on byways, bridleways and roads. On bridleways, it is important that cyclists give way to horse riders (the Countryside Act 1968 gave cyclists the right to use bridleways, but stated that they must give way to horse riders and walkers).

There are some key points that we all need to take into consideration when we are riding, whether on horse or cycle:

- Take personal responsibility for our own actions
- Ride and cycle safely
- Care for our environment
- Take our litter home
- Keep our dogs under proper control
- Take extra care when organising an event

Luckily, conflict is rare. No-one wants to return home any worse than they left when care, consideration and courtesy cost so little.

A horse is a friend and companion to the person who cares for him – to them he is priceless. However, while a cycle may not be a living animal, it has still cost the owner a great deal of money to buy and maintain. Recognising the time, financial and emotional investment made by both

Useful information for cyclists

It is important to know that horses can be easily frightened and this should always be taken into consideration when passing them on the road. The speed at which cyclists can pass, the number of cyclists that are passing, sudden reflection from highly polished equipment or a plastic bag flapping in the hedge can all cause problems for some horses, especially those who are young or inexperienced.

Horse riders have access to only 22 percent of the public rights of way network and often have no choice but to ride out on the road in order to reach their nearest bridleway.

horse and cycle riders goes a long way to helping us all stay safe on the road.

British Cycling has agreed to ask their race organisers to notify BHS Approved Riding Schools and Livery Yards when they are organising an event in their vicinity. Cycling Time Trials also asked their organisers to notify BHS Approved Riding Schools and Livery Yards of their intention to run an event. If you are organising a cycling event, you will find full details of all BHS Approved Riding Schools and Livery Yards at bhs.org.uk.

Let other users know you're there

A horse is unlikely to see or hear you, especially if you are approaching quietly from behind. Calling out 'hello' for walkers or equestrians is welcome and important in alerting horses and riders that you are there. Try not to get too close before you call out or you will startle both horse and rider. If possible, ask the horse rider if it is safe to pass before attempting to go by and call again if they haven't heard you. If you decide to stand to the side of the path to allow

equestrians to pass you, it is a good idea to make sure that the horse can still see you as it approaches, that way it will not be frightened when it suddenly spots you at the side of the track or road.

If the horse you meet has been frightened by your presence, give the rider a chance to calm the horse and move out of your way before you move off again. Please don't be annoyed if a horse rider doesn't appear to acknowledge your kindness and consideration. They do appreciate your help but may be concentrating on controlling and calming their horse to avoid falling off.

Slow down

If you are taking part in a cycling event, your concern will be to get by as quickly as possible, but please pass slowly with consideration and let riders know you are coming through. A speeding cyclist coming out of the blue may startle some horses and a group of speeding cyclists is even more likely to do so – take great care and if it is obvious you need to stop, then please do so; it may save a serious incident. Please heed a rider or carriage driver's request to slow down or stop for the safety of all involved.

Equestrians may be attempting to get out of your way into a safe place in order to let you pass – help them to do so by adjusting your speed and keeping a safe distance from them.

Pass wide and on the right

Most horses are used to traffic passing them on the right so pass them as you would anyone else; don't cut inside, and allow plenty of room in case the horse is surprised or startled. Riders may need to ride two abreast for safety, particularly when escorting a young or inexperienced horse or rider – please give them a chance to sort themselves out before you go by.

Pass in small groups

Large groups of cyclists are very scary for horses. Passing in small groups of no more than four or five will really help. If you are in a large group, make your presence known so that equestrians can try and find somewhere safe

to stop, allowing you all to pass at the same time. Do give them time to get to a safe spot.

Be visible when riding on tracks or roads

Wearing fluorescent and reflective clothing helps other users see you earlier and gives them more time to plan where best to position themselves. Use effective lights when riding at night or in poor daylight conditions.

Keep your eyes and ears open

Hoof marks or fresh dung are good signs that there could be horses about.

Please don't forget to say 'thank you' when courtesy and consideration are shown to you – a smile, nod or brief wave is sufficient and means a great deal. Next time it may save a difficult situation when it could be you who needs consideration.

Remember the Highway Code Rule 214: advice given to motorists is equally applicable to all legal road users.

Look out for hoof marks

Useful information for horse riders and carriage drivers

Be prepared

Make sure your horse is fit and schooled to cope with all the situations you are likely to meet. Stay off any non-definitive routes that are specially provided and promoted for cross-country/downhill mountain biking. On these routes, cyclists can be moving at great speed.

Wear reflective and fluorescent clothing

Irrespective of the time of day, time of year or prevailing weather conditions, fluorescent and reflective (hi-viz) clothing should always be worn, on-road or off. This helps others to see you, and in the event of an incident where you may be separated from your horse, any search party will find you and your horse much more quickly.

- Keep your eyes and ears open. Tyre tracks are a good sign that there could be cyclists about. Keep your eyes and ears open and watch your horse's ears – he may often hear a cyclist before you do.
- Slow down if you meet other path users. Equestrians are used to the size of their horses and ponies, but that doesn't mean everyone else is. Be prepared to stop if required or requested. Try to move your horse off the path before it dungs. Otherwise, if it is safe to do so and you can remount quickly and easily, dismount and kick the dung off the path.

Give cyclists room

While cyclists are required to give way to walkers and horse riders on bridleways, see if you can move to the side of the track to allow them by without them dismounting. If they are hanging back, let them know it's safe to pass.

On the road

If you are riding on the road, be aware of any signs that might indicate a cycle race is taking place and heed warnings from any race marshal who might advise you of approaching cyclists. Remember that before you go

riding, you can ring the cycling organisations listed at the end of this leaflet or contact your local cycling club, whose details will be found on the websites given at the end of this leaflet. They should be able to tell you what is taking place on your local roads. You can also visit British Cycling and Cycling Time Trials to find out about their organised events near you.

Don't forget to say 'thank you' when courtesy and consideration are shown to you – a smile, nod or brief wave is sufficient, and means a great deal. Next time it may save a difficult situation when it could be you who needs consideration.

British Cycling has agreed to ask their race organisers to notify BHS Approved Riding Schools and Livery Yards when they are organising an event in the vicinity. However, they cannot notify individuals so it is important to check their website regularly.

Cycling Time Trials also ask their organisers to notify BHS Approved Riding Schools and Livery Yards of their intention to run an event, but contacting your local cycling club will be helpful, too.

Do remember there are a number of other organisations that arrange cycling events on the road and not all are governed either by British Cycling or Cycling Time Trials. It is a good idea to make contact with your local cycling club to find out what they are planning and where. Details of most cycling clubs can be found on either the British Cycling website, or Cycling Time Trials.

Remember the Highway Code Rule 214: advice given to motorists is equally applicable to all legal road users.

Useful website addresses –

www.bhs.org.uk

www.horseaccidents.org.uk

www.britishcycling.org.uk

www.cyclingtimetrials.org.uk

The British Horse Society
Abbey Park
Stareton
Kenilworth
Warwickshire CV8 2XZ
Call: 02476 840516
Fax: 02476 840501
www.bhs.org.uk
Email: enquiries@bhs.org.uk

© The British Horse Society 2012
Registered Charity Nos. 201504 and SC038516