



New York State  
Horse Council

*To create a strong unified voice for all interests towards the preservation of a future for horses in New York State.*

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# Meeting a Horse on the Trail



## What to Do?

*(Etiquette for Equestrians, Cyclists, and Hikers)*



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## What you should do when meeting a horse/rider:

- **Be alert for horses** - Be aware that they can be afraid of people. Understand that they are prey animals and can have instinctive reactions to quick movements. Always speak to the horse and rider when on the trail.
- **Yield to horse and rider when possible.**

**HIKER:** Step off the downhill side of the trail and stand still. By stepping to the downhill side, adequate room is yielded to the horse for passing. Be sure the horse has seen you before stepping aside, particularly if you step out of sight. When the horse approaches you, any sudden movement on your part may startle the horse if he is unaware of your presence. Also, do not attempt to pet horses without the riders permission. Always ask first. Some horses enjoy being petted, but not all.

**BICYCLIST:** At a safe location, bring bicycle to a halt and remain in position.

*Many horses are startled by the sight of backpackers, the large pack themselves, and the sight and quick action of bicycles. Therefore, upon stopping, remain still and speak softly to have a calming effect on the horse.*



- **If the rider stops the horse, talk with the rider. Promote a positive relationship between user groups by encouraging a friendly, courteous meeting.**

- **The rider may choose to move the horse on without stopping. This may not be due to a lack of courtesy, but rather due to a decision that the horse may be agitated and is best handled by urging him past you. However, in some cases the rider may decide that he can best handle the horse by having you move on and may request that. Expect the rider to advise you or ask what they'd like you to do.**

## What you should do when overtaking a horse/rider:

**HIKER:** If you are traveling at a faster pace, alert the rider to your presence by calling out that you wish to pass. The rider should pull the horse over. Step to the downhill side. If rider has horse under control, proceed on. If not, allow rider to move the horse.

**BICYCLIST:** A bicycle is generally quiet and unheard by the rider but may be heard by the horse. Signal by calling out to the rider that you are approaching - let them know you are there. Stop. If horse is not agitated by your presence, proceed on. Otherwise, allow rider to move horse to rear before proceeding.

**HORSE RIDER:** If you are traveling in a gait faster than a walk, bring your horse to a walk while passing. Riding at a gallop or fast trot often startles the horse being overtaken. While the unexpected can happen, desensitization to bicycles, baby strollers, hikers with trekking poles and other possible trail hazards one may encounter while on a shared trail is your responsibility. Prepare your horse at home as well as possible. Horses and carriages may appear on particular trails.

*Many horses are well conditioned to traffic, and your presence would be undisturbing. Some are not, in which case following this procedure will create a smoother, safer passing.*

