



ATHRA BUSH USERS' GUIDE

FOR TRAIL BIKE RIDERS, VEHICLE DRIVERS, PUSH BIKE RIDERS AND WALKERS
MEETING HORSE RIDERS IN THE BUSH:

Introduction

Through the Australian Trail Horse Riders Association's (ATHRA) ongoing education program, "Sharing The Bush", ATHRA is attempting to establish dialogue with other bush user groups to discuss common issues of concern. With ever increasing numbers of people turning to the bush for enjoyment and relaxation, comes the inevitability of more frequent contact between the different user groups, and the need for better understanding and cooperation between them.

Established in 1972, ATHRA is recognised as the premier body representing non commercial recreational trail horse riders in Australia. We are acutely aware of environmental issues and how they affect our access to horse riding trails, and therefore constantly strive to set an example to all horse riders and to foster awareness of the environmental impact that our activities have on our native flora and fauna.

One of our primary aims is to work for the establishment, legislation and preservation of horse riding trails, and to co-operate with other user groups and government departments in order to do so. We also aim to educate our members and horse riders generally, in the protection and conservation of Australia's natural and cultural environment.

In 1996 ATHRA adopted 13 Environmental Rules to help minimize the impact of horses on the environment and to promote safe and responsible trail horse riding. In 2003 these rules were introduced into our Code of Conduct which has evolved to keep pace with trends and scientific developments, and now boasts "Sixteen Environmental Rules" to be found at www.athra.com.au.

The ATHRA Code of Conduct encourages members to consider other user groups, to respect their rights to access, and where ever possible, to establish mutual cooperation when using trails.

It is hoped that this "Bush Users' Guide" will be mutually beneficial to horse riders and all other bush user groups. Official ATHRA contacts are listed on our website if organisations wish to discuss any issues.

Bush Users' Guide

1. Be aware that horse riders may be in any public forest and have the same rights of access as other user groups.
2. Some horses are afraid of trail bikes, push bikes, 4WDs and even walkers.
3. Motor bike, push bike and vehicle users should always approach horses with caution and assume they may react unpredictably and with potentially dangerous consequences.
4. First - slow down! Bike riders should give an audible warning if approaching a horse from behind as some horses may take fright, creating risk of injury for you, the rider and/or horse. Call out, slow down and/or stop as appropriate.
5. For safety look for any hand signals from the horse riders as they may need you to slow down or stop. A rider may experience difficulties because of their horse's reaction to your presence, particularly with a young or inexperienced horse. Young or inexperienced riders may have difficulties in unfamiliar circumstances.

6. In some cases it may be necessary to turn off your engine and stop. On occasions motorbike riders may need to remove their helmets so horses can recognise them as humans.
7. A horse is a flight animal and may be dangerous to the rider, and to you. If that horse is rearing, spinning, swinging around wildly, the rider dismounts or the horse gallops away, it is obviously out of control.
8. When stopped for horses to pass, endeavour to be pleasant and talk to the riders as we are all there to enjoy the environment.
9. A rider may ask how many vehicles/bikes are in the group, or how many are behind you, so they can decide on what action is appropriate for them.
10. In the event you have turned off your engine, do not restart it until the horses have passed. Give them plenty of space, 50 metres is a good guide for them to be away before you restart your engine. Please be mindful that revving engines may scare horses and create panic.
11. In the event that a horse rider is obviously in trouble, or is thrown from the horse, assist where you can. This may include using a mobile phone to obtain help or an ambulance.
12. Enjoy the trails and tracks, sharing them thoughtfully with all other bush users.

Horse Riders' Guide

1. Treat other trail users, property owners, residents and facilities with respect and consideration.
2. Remember that many people are not familiar with horses and may be nervous when approached. It is better to approach other bush users unmounted, and then only when invited. When going into an occupied camping area or car park always dismount.
3. Remember that other bush users may find it hard to see you, so when riding in the bush it is recommended you wear high visibility clothing.
4. Take the time to speak to other bush users to establish a relationship of co-operation when using trails. Take the opportunity to politely educate other bush users on how to feel comfortable passing a horse and sharing the tracks with horses.
5. If you hear a vehicle approaching put yourself in a position where you are clearly visible. If this is not possible find an area as far as possible off the track.
6. Remove all manure, old feed and your rubbish from parking areas and camping grounds.
7. Always assist other bush users in need of assistance. This may involve using a mobile phone or riding for help.
8. Remember when riding on the road you must obey the Australian Road Rules. Keep as far as possible to the left, comply with road signage and give hand signals when required. Drivers will appreciate you indicating your intentions.

Produced by the Australian Trail Horse Riders Association in the interest of safety. (www.athra.com.au)