



Riding on the Road

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Safety may be thought of as an umbrella over 4-H horse club activities. Like an umbrella, correctly applied safety practices form a guard and shield us as we ride and become involved with club activities.

If you must ride on the road, following the rules presented here will help make it a safe and enjoyable experience.

Safety starts with a dependable horse

Be sure you can trust your horse. A nervous horse is far more difficult to handle away from familiar surroundings. Your horse sees scenery differently than you do. Horses are colorblind, and see only varying amounts of reflected light in a drab mosaic landscape. They may "spook," or show fear, at strange objects.

Train your horse at home to confront new and strange objects quietly. If your horse does become frightened, remain calm, speak to it quietly, steady it, and give it time to overcome its fear.



Wear approved headgear and boots, ride with the traffic, and ride single file.

Dress appropriately

Long pants, boots, and protective headgear are a must. Medical studies show that the most common riding related injuries are to the head. Head injuries can be prevented or made less severe by wearing protective headgear. Protective hats are available for both Western and English riders. Use only ASTM F1163-88 approved

Riding Attire

Headgear

- Approved helmet with safety harness and chin strap
- Approved Western safety hat with hard shell and chin strap

Boots

- High English boots
- Western boots

headgear with SEI certification and labeling.

Boots with proper heels help keep your feet from slipping through

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the stirrups, and provide protection from foot injuries. Your horse may weigh over 1,000 pounds—if it steps on your unprotected foot, you will feel it!

Check your horse's tack

The bridle should be complete; never ride on the road with just a halter. Check bridles—especially the reins and curb straps—for strength. Be sure the saddle fits properly. The stirrups should be the correct size for the rider's feet. *Never ride bareback.*

Never ride alone

Ride in single file, staying at least a full horse's length behind the horse in front to avoid

the possibility of being kicked. Place quiet horses in front and at the rear of the ride. Always ride at a walk only, watching for soft shoulders, holes, and debris.

Ride defensively

A person riding a horse on the road has to follow the same rules as the driver of a motorized vehicle. Read the rules and regulations for drivers in the state drivers' manual (available from the Department of Motor Vehicles).

Ride with the traffic, on the right-hand side of the road. Use the correct hand signals for turning or stopping (same as for bicyclists). If your horse becomes frightened while a car is approaching, raise your hand to

alert the driver of the car. Beware of others! Avoid riding in areas where riding may be prohibited.

Be predictable

Yield where needed. Obey all traffic signs and lights, and obey the police. Be alert and courteous; always acknowledge drivers who slow down while passing you. Dismount and lead your horse if traffic becomes too heavy.

Do not litter or smoke.

Be visible

Wear bright-colored clothing any motorist will be able to see. Avoid riding at night; drivers can't see as well, and headlights may make your horse nervous.

For further reading

In the *Get Under the Safety Umbrella* series:

Equestrian Helmets: What Do I Need to Know? 4-H 13001. No charge.

Trailer Your Horse, 4-H 13003. No charge.

Horse safety is everyone's business. By following these safety rules, you will enjoy your 4-H horse project for many years. Don't take chances—take precautions!



Extension's 4-H Youth Development program assists young people, their families, and adult volunteers to become productive and self-directing by developing their practical skills and knowledge. Professionals and volunteers together provide educational projects and activities in animal science, home economics, engineering, natural science, horticulture, and expressive arts.

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