BACKCOUNTRY HORSEMEN OF CALIFORNIA

A COMMON SENSE GUIDE FOR A

SAFE AND ENJOYABLE TRAIL RIDE

Safety is Priority

STAGING AREA

- Be on time and park considerately. Latecomers hold up everyone else.
- Tack up, bring halter with lead rope, water, lunch, jacket, or whatever else you need.
- Clean up manure, hay or litter in staging or camping area.
- Use ribbons to denote special situations: **red ribbon** if your stock tends to kick, **green ribbon** to signify a novice stock or rider, and a **blue ribbon** should be used to denote a stallion.

WHILE ON A TRAIL

- Trail boss is the boss. If you are riding in any way which the trail boss feels poses a danger to other riders, you will be asked to modify your behavior or leave the ride.
- Stay behind the trail leader (usually but not always the trail boss) and in front of the designated drag rider. If you are having problems call out for a stop.
- The use of a helmet is a personal safety choice of the rider.
- When mounting to ride, keep your horse still until everyone is mounted.
- You must have permission from the trail boss before bringing a dog or a stallion.
- Most Group rides are walk only, an exception would be bees, etc… but as needed, rides will be divided into the 'Slow Group' which walks only and the 'Fast Group' which includes gaited and endurance type horses. Ride in the group that fits your horse's type and conditioning.
- Please don't crowd the horse in front of you. Try to leave a horse length of open space between horses, even at stops. Be sure to ask riders in front and back of you about their animal's comfort level.
- Call back trail obstacles and/or low branches to riders behind you.
- Leave gates as you find them. When a rider dismounts to open a gate, at least a portion of the other riders wait until he/she has remounted before leaving.
- Crossing water, the first horses are allowed to drink, then move up the trail, stop! Allow more horses to drink. The group does not leave until all have watered.
- In difficult or steep terrain, allow more space and keep moving. If you need to stop for any reason, wait until the trail leader finds a suitable place where all can safely stop.
- Be courteous and friendly to other trail users. While passing - safety for all parties is the priority. Greet other users to initiate a conversation so the animals can identify a non-threatening situation. If possible, a hiker should step to the downhill side. This provides a safer passing for both hiker and stock.
- Stay on the trail; obey agency rules; respect private property.
- When riding along a road, ride with the traffic. When crossing roads, cross abreast rather than single file, post riders in front and post riders behind the group to alert traffic.
- Riding side by side is permissible when passing in the same or opposite direction, if the trail is wide enough, and all trail rules are observed.
- No smoking allowed on trails.

TIPS FOR BREAKS OR LUNCH STOPS

- Water your stock during breaks or stops. Be cautious as to the amount of water given because some animals that are overheated can ty-up. Animals, while working, need as much as they will drink.
- Smoking is allowed during breaks in a safe area.
- Tie your horse safely. Loosen the cinch slightly during a long break. Do a safety check before remounting.
- When tying your horse, be sure there is ample room for other users to pass safely by your stock. Be sure you are not blocking the trail.
- If there is no garbage can, pack your trash out.
- Alcohol use can make riding dangerous, use discretion.
- The drag rider needs to remove trail flagging at the end of ride.

The content of this material has been approved by the
Backcountry Horsemen of California 1/10/2008
www.bchcalifornia.org rev 8/20/2026