

The law and management of public access rights vary widely between the four countries of the United Kingdom. Practical elements of the following advice apply in all countries but the legal requirements in Scotland and Northern Ireland may differ from those in England and Wales.

More advice is available on bhs.org.uk/accessadvice.

IMPORTANT This guidance is general and does not aim to cover every variation in circumstances. Where it is being relied upon, The Society recommends seeking advice specific to the site.

Enjoyment and Respect

Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work with courtesy, care and consideration for others and for the land. Know and comply with the Countryside Code (see page 3).

- Leave only hoofprints and guard against fire
- Wear Hi-Viz aids, even off-road, to help other users to see you and have more time to react. Consider hi-viz on your horse and carriage as well as you; it can help locate them more quickly in an incident
- Keep dogs under close control. This usually means on a short lead which is not possible from horseback so it may be best to leave dogs at home. Dogs in a carriage should be on a lead.
- Observe byelaws where displayed at the entrance to a site
- Take the BHS Ride Safe training if you ride on roads

Care for the land

- Keep to the bridleway or byway unless on land with designated open access for horses. If in doubt, check BHS Advice on Where to Ride and Carriage-drive bhs.org.uk/accessadvice
- Do not jump fences, hedges or walls — you may cause damage
- Horses' hooves can damage surfaces in wet conditions. Avoid routes where this happens if possible
- On commons or coasts which have open access on horseback, avoid areas with heritage or conservation value which may be fragile, especially in breeding season when your passage may, in particular, disturb birds which are ground-nesting or feed at the shoreline

Courtesy to other users

- Pass others at walk and slow down well before you reach them; they may be frightened of horses or uncertain how to act
- Give dog walkers time after seeing you to recall their dog and have it under control
- Be able to stop in the distance that you can see ahead
- Acknowledge courtesy shown by other users
- Adopt the 'Be Nice, Say Hi' and 'Share the Trail' ethos. Each encounter with another user is a chance to build cooperation — a smile and a short chat can work wonders
- Politely encourage cyclists to call out when approaching horses. Many cyclists are unsure what to do around horses and may think it best to pass as quickly and quietly as possible

Consideration for farmers

- Ride or drive slowly past all livestock
- Leave gates as you find them
- Keep to the public bridleway or byway, including through cultivated land
- Walk if faster paces may damage the ground

Be prepared

An incident can occur even on your shortest local ride or drive so always be prepared. Consider what you would need to deal with an emergency.

- Have a headcollar and rope in case you need to tie your horse
- Carry a fully charged mobile phone with your 'In Case of Emergency' (ICE) contact immediately accessible
- Consider tracking apps so a nominated friend or partner can know your location
- Consider smartphone apps such as What3Words so that you can quickly and easily give a location to emergency services
- On longer rides or in unfamiliar terrain, carry emergency food such as a high energy bar and drink

The Countryside Code

All equestrians are strongly recommended to know and comply with the Countryside Code, see:

- England [Gov.UK](https://www.gov.uk)
- Wales naturalresources.wales/days-out/the-countryside-codes/the-countryside-code
- Scotland outdooraccess-scotland.scot/
- Northern Ireland nidirect.gov.uk/articles/countryside-code
- Ireland leavenotraceireland.org

For more information for equestrians in each country, see BHS.org.uk

If this is a saved or printed copy, please check bhs.org.uk/accessadvice for the latest version (date top of page 2).