

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 of them but the law in Scotland and Northern Ireland may differ from in England and Wales.

Riders and drivers of horses are referred to generically as equestrians.

More advice is available on [www.bhs.org.uk/accessadvice](http://www.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 strongly recommends seeking its advice specific to the site.

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## Enjoyment and respect

Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work. Act with courtesy, care and consideration for others and for the land. Know and comply with The Countryside Code.

- 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. Try wearing both yellow and orange as either can be more visible depending on terrain.

- Leave dogs at home. Dogs should be on the track or path and close to their humans. This means on a short lead, which is not possible from horseback, unless exceptionally well-trained. You may think your dog would never harm, but the person or animal they are disturbing does not know and that includes wildlife, for which your dog is a threat, as well as other people's dogs or horses which may not be friendly. Dogs in a carriage should be on a lead as in a car.
- Observe bylaws 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, or on a permitted route for horses. If in doubt, check BHS Advice on Places to ride and drive [www.bhs.org.uk/accessadvice](http://www.bhs.org.uk/accessadvice).
- Do not jump fences, hedges or walls — you may cause damage and risk livestock escaping.
- Leave gates as you find them. If open, this may be so animals have access to water. If a gate is difficult to open or close, persevere until it is secure, but [report it](#) to the county council as an obstruction (gates should be easy to use).<sup>1</sup>
- 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 disturb vulnerable birds which are ground-nesting or feed at the shoreline.

## Courtesy to other users

- Be able to stop in the distance that you can see ahead.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.bhs.org.uk/accessadvice](http://www.bhs.org.uk/accessadvice) 'What to do about blocked and difficult to use bridleways and byways'

- 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. Stop well back if necessary; their dog may be afraid of horses, or could react adversely.
- 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 friendly comment 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.
- Carry a hoofpick, penknife or multi-tool and baler twine (for emergency repairs to tack, a fence or gate) and first aid kit.<sup>2</sup> These can fit into a compact pack on the saddle dees.

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<sup>2</sup> Basic First Aid Kit: sterile swabs, scissors, 10cm wide elasticated bandage or cohesive bandage ('VetWrap'), disinfectant or antiseptic solution

- Consider tracking apps so someone can know your location.
- Consider smartphone apps such as What3Words so that you can quickly and easily give a location to emergency services or a friend.
- On longer rides or in unfamiliar terrain, consider where your horse may be able to drink, especially in hot weather, and ensure you have water and emergency food for yourself.

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

For more information for equestrians in each country, see respective pages of [www.bhs.org.uk](https://www.bhs.org.uk).

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