



## Mountain Manners

Finally, all the planning, preparations and travel are complete and now you're at the trailhead ready to head into the mountains for this year's "trip of a lifetime". Riders and horses are excited and anxious to get on the trail. It seems forever before everything is ready and the ramrod sings "Move out!" Once in motion, it doesn't take very long for the horses and their riders to settle into a comfortable walk on the trail into the backcountry. Soon each rider is lost in their own thoughts as the beauty of the pristine wilderness moves by at the relaxing rhythmic beat of horse's hooves. What could be better? A trip into beautiful backcountry is a fantastic experience.

Many times I've been in meetings and wished I was in the mountains, but...I've never been in the mountains and wished I was in a meeting!

Other people also enjoy this same experience but may travel differently than horsemen. With the limited amount of backcountry available, it is inevitable those who use it will come into more and more contact with each other. This contact need not cause conflict. To avoid regulation and restricted use, it is in the interest of all those who enjoy the backcountry to have good mountain manners. Courtesy and common sense will resolve any situation.

### Your string of horses on the trail

Avoid surprises while on the trail. Designate a rider to ride "point" about thirty yards ahead of the pack string. This rider will be alert to overtaking or meeting other groups. Obstacles will be evaluated and the rest of the group advised.

Few things are better than riding a good horse into new country!

The pack string comes next. Put a rider on "drag" behind the string to watch the packs, be alert to anything dropped on the trail and watch for other parties overtaking the pack string.

### Other pack strings

When two pack strings meet head on, usually the more maneuverable of the strings is the one which yields the

trail. When large pack strings meet along a steep, narrow grade, it is traditional for the string going uphill to have the trail right-of-way. The rules of reason and common sense should prevail.

### **Pedestrians**

Many horses are not familiar with the profile backpackers present. The point rider should explain this to the hikers and, since they are usually more maneuverable, politely ask them to step off the trail far enough to the downhill side to let the horses pass. Advising the hikers to speak to the passing stock will assure the horses there is no danger. Occasionally you'll meet hikers leading llamas and although many horses have not been introduced to llamas this may not be the best time or place. The most maneuverable party should yield the trail. Courtesy and common sense will resolve this situation.



### **Bicycles**

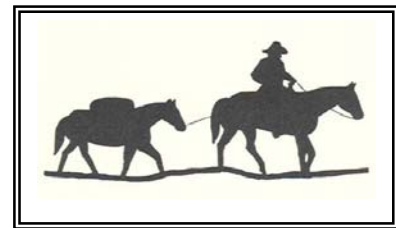
The speed and quietness of bicycles create the major hazards to an encounter. The point or drag riders should politely ask the bikers to stop, move to the side and talk to the horses as they pass. All riders should thank the bikers for their courtesy.

### **Vehicles**

ATVs, motorcycles, jeeps and trucks, while limited where they may travel, are none the less encountered off roads. The point or drag rider must advise the other riders of the oncoming traffic and make himself visible to the vehicle's driver. Most states require drivers to obey hand signals given by a mounted horseman – but don't count on it! It is best to get completely off the track and let them slowly pass.

### **Summary**

We must take care of the backcountry so future generations will be as fortunate as we to ride good horses through the same unspoiled country. Since others use this same country, we will all have to get along. No rules will ever replace courtesy and good manners.



Bridgerland Back Country Horsemen  
Steve Guymon, Education Chair