



Safety Recommendations

Approved by the Board of Directors August 8, 2019

Because mounted fox chasing involves a significant risk of injury, we owe it to ourselves to have our minds fully engaged at all times when hunting. Personal responsibility is a must for all riders. Complacency increases the risk of injury to horses and riders. If we become complacent and rely on our horse to make safety decisions, our risk of injury increases.

1. Unmounted safety

- A. Be aware when leading or riding a horse near vehicles. Your horse may be more likely to spook especially in the presence of hounds. For example, a hound may jump out from under a truck and scare your horse.
- B. If possible, do not tie your horse on the driveway/road side of the trailer.
- C. Close your trailer doors and gates when moving off. This will prevent unwanted visitors, such as hounds, from entering your trailer and protect your equipment.
- D. Do a safety check of your horse and equipment before mounting. This includes tightening your girth and checking for cracking in your reins and stirrup leathers.

2. General riding safety

- A. Safety gear
 - i. Helmets
 - a. Must have a chin strap. ASTM certified is the preference.
 - b. Helmets should be replaced every five years or after a fall involving a head impact.
 - ii. Safety vests are encouraged.
 - a. Impact vests or air vests are acceptable.
- B. Be aware of any horse that might kick.
 - i. If your horse may kick, tie a red ribbon in his tail as a warning to other riders. Put him at the end of the line.
- C. Be aware of green horses and green riders

- i. If you are riding a green horse, tie a green ribbon in his tail as a warning to other riders.
- D. Keep a safe distance between your horse and the one in front of you. Remember that the faster you are going, the longer it takes to stop.
 - i. At a walk, keep one horse's length between you and the horse ahead of you.
 - ii. At the trot, keep two horse's lengths between you and the horse ahead of you.
 - iii. At the canter, keep three horse's lengths between you and the horse ahead of you.
- E. Jumping
 - i. Let the horse in front of you clear the fence before you approach.
 - ii. If your horse refuses a fence, circle back and go to the end of the line. Do not continue trying to jump, because this will hold the field up.
- F. Close all gates behind you. The first rider can open the gate and lead the group through. A rider must wait for the last rider to close the gate and remount, if necessary.
- G. If you lose control in an open area, do your best to remain calm.
 - i. Guide your horse in a circle, trying to make the circles smaller and smaller to slow the horse.
 - ii. Do NOT use the horse in front of you as a bumper.
 - iii. Remember to pull and release on the reins rather than simply pulling.

3. Hunting rules and etiquette

- A. Listen to your field master. The field master has the final word.
- B. Be aware of the riders around you. Safety concerns must be reported to the field master.
- C. Follow your field master. Do **NOT** create your own path.
 - i. Do **NOT** cross plowed or planted fields; ride around the edge.
 - ii. Do **NOT** cut corners around fields.
 - iii. Do **NOT** assume you may ride through a field if you see a staff member riding across a field. They may have different permission or knowledge than you do.
- D. Stay in your field. Do not straggle. This will prevent horses in the middle and end of the group from having to go faster to catch up.
- E. Changing fields
 - i. It is always acceptable to move to a slower field if your horse is being unruly or you are having difficulty keeping up.
 - ii. It is not preferable to move up to a faster field when your horse has been unruly or had difficulty keeping up.
 - iii. **It is preferred to change fields when both groups are stopped at a check**
 - iv. Notify your current field master before changing fields or retiring for the day.
 - v. Report to your new field master when you join their field.
- F. If you know you have to leave early, let your field master know ahead of time.
- G. If you are halted and staff is approaching field, turn and face your horse's head face toward the passing horses (not their hind end).

- H. If the field reverses course, turn and face your horse's head toward the passing horses (not their hind end)
- I. Don't stop at the top or bottom of a hill. Be mindful of those behind you. Allow them room to complete their ascent or descent.
- J. Guests and new members should be introduced at opening remarks.
 - i. New members may be provided a mentor according to their experience and ability level. The mentor should be a member of the club with "colors."
 - ii. Guests must ride with their sponsoring member unless given permission from the field master.
- K. Juniors
 - i. Must have a designated chaperone riding with them.
 - ii. Must have emergency contact information with them while they are in the field.

4. Safety information

- A. Emergency contact information should be kept in your trailer and on your person (in a pocket).
 - i. Masters, secretary and huntsman should also have a copy of emergency contact information
- B. Field masters should carry their cell phone and radio. Know how to use both and how to find GPS coordinates if there is cell reception.
- C. Recommended horse first aid kit
 - Petroleum jelly and digital thermometer
 - Rubbing Alcohol
 - Antiseptic Scrub
 - Topical Antibacterial
 - 4" sterile wound dressing
 - 1 roll of gauze
 - 2 flexible stretch adhesive bandages
 - 1lb roll of 12" absorbent practical cotton
 - Bandage scissors
 - 1 roll adhesive tape
 - 4 leg bandages and padding
- D. What to do in case of an accident in the field
 - i. Advise Masters
 - ii. Activate chain of command. The most experienced person should give directions until first responders arrive.
 - iii. Ask one of the members who are first aid trained to respond to the scene.
 - iv. Call 911. **If there is a suspected head/spinal injury, emphasize that to dispatcher.**
 - a. Advise it is a horse-related injury and once on property to turn off sirens.
 - v. **Calm and reassure** the injured person. Do not move them unless it is more dangerous for them to stay put (e.g. face down in the water)

- vi. Take horses away to a safe place. Put them on trailers if possible.
- vii. Post sentries at each turn of the way to the injured to guide the ambulance. If possible, have two mounted sentries or one on foot.
- viii. If a horse is injured or trapped, call and request large animal rescue.
 - a. Call a vet to get horse sedated.
 - b. Remember most first responders will have no idea how dangerous horses can be.
- E. If a person has a fall and a concussion is suspected:
 - i. Ask them what happened. If they cannot recall, assume concussion.
 - ii. Observe the person for at least 15 minutes.
 - iii. Watch for nausea, dizziness, repetitive questions, and headaches.

For more information about general equestrian safety recommendations, please refer to the United States Pony Club's *Safety Handbook*. For more information about foxhunting norms and etiquette, please refer to *Riding to Hounds in America: An Introduction for Fox Hunters* by William P. Wadsworth and/or the MFHA's *Introduction to Foxhunting* (4th Edition) by Lt. Col. Dennis J. Foster.