

# YOUR GUIDE TO RIDING AND DRIVING ON ALBERTA'S ROADS

Rules, regulations and safety tips for all equestrians



Alberta  
Equestrian  
Federation.

Will you and your horse be heading to the open road this season? Maybe you'll be herding cattle or driving your new buggy to the neighbour's. Perhaps you'll be taking part in a charity event or just enjoying a ride down the road.

Whatever your purpose may be, are you prepared? Do you know how to safely share the road with other vehicles? The Alberta Equestrian Federation (AEF) has developed this booklet to inform equestrians about the rules and regulations for riding on Alberta's public roadways. The AEF has consulted with Constable Natasha French of the Calgary Police Service, who was a member of the Mounted Patrol and lifelong equestrian. Corporal David Heaslip, Livestock Investigator with the RCMP, also provided insights and safety information for cattle crossings, parades, and equestrian special events that take place on public roadways.

As you read through this brochure, you'll learn more about the role you play and your responsibility to keep yourself and others safe. We'll also provide you with information to help you prepare for a safe journey. This brochure provides a few do's and don'ts and recommended best practices for road safety, including:

- laws and regulations for riding on public roads,
- tips for recreational riders and drivers,
- responsibilities while on the road, and
- procedures for special-event rides.



From the comprehensive, yet introductory, information in this booklet, you'll also learn where to turn for your future road safety questions or concerns. You'll see how your local police service, RCMP and Alberta Transportation can assist you, as can the AEF.

As a member of the AEF, you receive personal liability insurance, which is included with your membership. You have the option to purchase additional coverage at very reasonable rates from the AEF and Capri Insurance, which specializes in equestrian-related insurance. Through the AEF, you have easy access to resources and knowledgeable

people who can help you with all of your equine needs.

Before you leave the yard, take a few minutes to learn the role you play on the road. We're all responsible for our own safety when we take our horses, ponies, donkeys, or mules beyond our gates. And, since we share Alberta's public roads with a wide variety of other equine enthusiasts, cyclists, and vehicles, we must take even more care when we leave our yards.

By reviewing the information in this booklet and sharing your knowledge with the larger equine community, you can help to ensure that you, your horse, and others have a safe journey and return home safely at the end of the day.

*Happy, safe, trails to you!*

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## Where should your recreation take you?

If you're a recreational rider or driver, your horse can provide a new type of freedom. Travelling at a more relaxed pace, viewing the scenery from a different perspective, enjoying time with family and friends—all of these elements can free you from your daily routine.

But, before you decide it's time to leave your yard and see where the road takes you, it's essential to realistically assess your situation.

Do you have the adequate skills to ride or drive on public roads? Does your horse have the training needed to handle a variety of different sights, sounds, and surfaces? If you have concerns about yourself or your horse, take the time to consult with a qualified coach or reputable trainer: find out where you might have problems and undertake some additional training before you head out on the open road. Helpful advice

and training sessions will keep you and your equine partner safe and ensure a pleasurable, confident outing.

When you decide that you and your horse are ready, take a minute to plan where you're going. The first step will be communication—have you told anyone that you're heading out on the trail? Will you be crossing or travelling down any public roadways? Are there any bridges or train tracks on your path?

Plan a route that's safe for your needs and, if you have any inexperienced horses, youth, or novice riders with you, be sure to adapt your path so that the least-experienced in your group can still have an enjoyable, stress-free time.

In the next sections, you'll read tips for riding on public roadways, and you'll also learn hand signals that can keep you, your horse, and other vehicles safe.



## Practice safety on public roads

Whenever you walk out of your house, step out of your barn, or leave your property, you'll likely be entering public roads or spaces that you share with others. You can't control the actions of other people, but when you go for a ride or drive, you can take a few simple precautions to keep you and your equine safe.

Before you leave for your next outing, consider the following road and horse safety tips:

- Keep your tack in good repair
- Carry a hoof pick
- Carry a cell phone on you for emergency situations
- Have a halter and lead shank in your pack
- Ride or drive horses that are properly trained for your tasks
- Provide appropriate supervision and guidance for youth
- Ensure all child or youth riders and drivers wear helmets—adults are encouraged to wear helmets when they ride or drive
- Plan your route
- Be visible to other riders, drivers, and motorists
- Consider wearing reflective clothing or decals—this is essential after dark
- Be aware of limited visibility—this could be due to curves, hills, trees, or buildings
- Leave your dog at home—more animals on the road lead to increased distractions for you and others
- Maintain eye contact with drivers on the road—if you look at a driver of a vehicle, it's more likely that they will see you
- Use hand signals, which are mandatory actions to inform other vehicles of your intentions



## Pedestrian or vehicle?

### Your actions determine your obligations

When you're riding or driving your equine, you likely don't consider yourself a pedestrian. Perhaps not a vehicle, either. However, when you're on a public roadway, you are considered either a pedestrian or a vehicle by law. Your legal responsibilities will change depending on which one you are.

How do you know what to call yourself or what rules apply? *The Alberta Traffic Safety Act* provides the answers and, in general, if you're riding or driving you're considered a vehicle. Conversely, if you're leading your horse, whether under saddle, in harness, or in hand, you've become a pedestrian. *The Use of Highway & Rules of the Road Regulation*, Alta. Reg. 304/2002 has guidelines for both pedestrians and vehicles on public roads.

### Pedestrians

Under part three, section 90(2) of the regulation, it states that

"[i]f there is no sidewalk or path, a pedestrian who is proceeding along or on a highway shall at all times when reasonable and practicable to do so, proceed only on the left side of the roadway or the shoulder of the high

way facing traffic approaching from the opposite direction." Additionally, pedestrians should also be aware that, when they're not crossing at a designated crosswalk, they must yield to vehicles on the road.

### Vehicles

Part four of the regulation discusses "Animals on Highway," and it specifies the duties that will apply whether you're riding or driving your equine on public roadways. Section 105 states that

"...a person who is riding an animal or driving an animal drawn vehicle on a highway has all the rights and is subject to all the duties of a driver of a motor vehicle..."

Additionally, if you're riding on a public roadway, section 106 states that you should ride as close as practical to the right curb or edge of the road. You should also not ride beside other animals travelling in the same direction, and you should ride in single file, except when you're passing another animal or riding in an approved parade.

For complete details on *The Use of Highway & Rules of the Road Regulation*, visit the AEF website or on the Government of Alberta website.

**As a pedestrian, lead your horse on the left shoulder, facing traffic from the opposite direction. As a vehicle, ride or drive your horse on the right shoulder, going with the direction of traffic.**



## Hand signals that can save your life

Whenever you and your horse are riding or driving on a public road, you're considered a vehicle—a slow moving vehicle, granted, but a vehicle nonetheless. You're responsible for communicating your intentions to others, and you can do this by signalling, using the universal hand signals for cyclists and other vehicles that don't have signal lights.

All of your hand signals will be done with your left arm, as it's the one most visible to approaching vehicles. Keep this in mind if you, like many other riders, use your left hand on the reins: your hand signals must be done with your left arm, as other vehicles need to be able to see the signals and they will not be able to if you use your right arm. Be sure to make the signals big and obvious. But, before you do, you

must gather the reins in your right hand, then signal. It's also a good idea to shoulder-check to see if any vehicles are coming up behind you. Always be aware of who and what is on the road before you show your intention to stop or change directions.

The three main hand signals to be aware of are:

- 1) **LEFT TURN:** extend your left arm straight out, away from your body.
- 2) **RIGHT TURN:** extend your left arm away from your body, bend your elbow to 90° and extend your left hand into the air, palm facing forward.
- 3) **STOP:** extend your left arm away from your body, bend your elbow to 90° and extend your left hand down, palm facing backward.





**STOP**

**LEFT  
TURN**



**RIGHT  
TURN**





**STOP**

**LEFT  
TURN**



**RIGHT  
TURN**



**STOP**



**LEFT  
TURN**



**RIGHT  
TURN**

## Casual activity or special event?

Recreational riders or drivers and ranchers or farmers may take to the public roads for a variety of reasons. Trail rides, parades, fundraisers, and cattle drives are a few of the possibilities—and that's just for equestrian users on the roads. Since a vast number of people share the road for a multitude of reasons, Alberta Transportation has developed the *Special Events Guide* to help increase public safety on the roadways. You will find a copy of the guide and form on the AEF website.

### Are you holding a special event?

As an equine rider or driver, your first point of interest will be learning when the guide applies to your activities: what constitutes a special event? Essentially, a special event will be any scheduled activity held by a recognized organization including a charitable or sport organization, municipality, parade, or school division, to name a few. Examples of special events may include parades, charity rides, or cattle drives, and organizers of these activities are required to contact their district Alberta Transportation

office to obtain permission before they hold the events on provincial highways.

If you are holding a special event on a public road, contacting Alberta Transportation will be a big step, but don't overlook contacting other authorities or agencies as needed. For example, you may need to contact your local municipality, as well as RCMP or local police, and emergency services. Take the time to learn your responsibilities and to contact the appropriate organizations prior to your special event ride or drive.

To view the complete *Special Events Guide*, including information on liability, signage, and event-specific guidelines, you can download it from the AEF website or through [www.transportation.alberta.ca/Content/doc/Type233/Production/SPECIAL\\_EVENTS-revised-2007-INTERNET.pdf](http://www.transportation.alberta.ca/Content/doc/Type233/Production/SPECIAL_EVENTS-revised-2007-INTERNET.pdf).

To learn more about the activities involved with planning a special event, check out the *How to plan an equestrian event* manual that's available through the AEF.



## Special event examples

### Municipal parades & country fairs

Will you be organizing a parade or fair this season? These events are great ways for the public to get together to appreciate their communities. But, if your activities will mean road closures or traffic disruptions, it's essential that you contact Alberta Transportation, as well as your local RCMP or police detachment to get permission for the event.

When reviewing your special event application, the appropriate authorities will look at many different factors, including the:

- Event schedule
- Event location
- Animal involvement
- Road closure requirements
- Planned route

You'll also need to hold your event during daylight hours and ensure that you have adequate insurance to cover any injury or accident that may occur.

Once you've taken the appropriate planning steps to ensure public safety, let the fun begin! Your equines will make wonderful additions to these classic summertime activities.

### Livestock/trail drives and crossings

If you're a farmer or rancher in Alberta, moving livestock may seem much more like a regular chore than a special event. However, if these chores take you onto public roads, then you will require a special event permit from Alberta Transportation before you begin your activities.

There are two types of special event permits for livestock/trail drives and crossings; for most ranchers, the first option will be the most applicable.

- 1) The routine moving of livestock between pastures for grazing purposes. For this type of activity, a single permit may apply to multiple crossings for a period of five years. You would require a new permit after five years, or if any of the approved conditions change, such as crossing locations, traffic control requirements, etc.
- 2) The herding of livestock for promotional, fundraising, or heritage demonstration events. As these are one-time events, a new permit will be required for each activity.



When you apply for either of these special events permits, several factors will be considered in the approval process, including: event schedule, route, herd size, distance travelled, number of highway or railway crossings, and traffic control required. You should note that livestock crossings or drives will not be allowed on any freeways or four-lane highways.

### **Miscellaneous special events**

Sometimes you may have an equine activity that is more formal than a recreational ride, but not as large as the organized special events discussed in the previous sections. The Special Events Guide provides a potential list of these activities under section D2-16 “Miscellaneous Special Events.” Under this section, two equine-related activities may include:

- moving a number of horse-drawn wagons and/or horseback riders along a roadway, and
- having a single-person marathon for charity or other reasons – not fitting under the previous guidelines.

The approval conditions for these special events will include the event schedule, route, animal involvement, traffic disruptions, and other factors.

Safety of the participants and the public is paramount, and organizers are encouraged to plan a route that will not be on major freeways and will be on highways with a minimum shoulder width of two metres. Appropriate escorts, signage, and marshalling may also be required, and liability insurance will be the responsibility of the organizer.

When you start planning for any type of special event ride, you may be uncertain of your requirements and responsibilities. If this is the case, don't hesitate to ask. The AEF, Alberta Transportation, RCMP, or local police are able to provide advice or refer you to the appropriate contact for your inquiries.

The time spent planning road safety for you, your equines, and others in your group will pay off in dividends when you enjoy a safe, successful event.



## For more information

To learn more about equine road safety, please contact the following organizations and review these informative documents:

- 1) Alberta Equestrian Federation. [www.albertaequestrian.com](http://www.albertaequestrian.com). 1-877-463-6233.
- 2) Royal Canadian Mounted Police - Livestock Investigators. [www.rcmp-grc.ca](http://www.rcmp-grc.ca). Contact your local detachment.
- 3) *Special Events Guide*, July 2007. Alberta Transportation. [www.transportation.alberta.ca/Content/docType233/Production/SPECIAL\\_EVENTS-revised-2007-INTERNET.pdf](http://www.transportation.alberta.ca/Content/docType233/Production/SPECIAL_EVENTS-revised-2007-INTERNET.pdf)
- 4) *Use of Highway & Rules of the Road Regulation, Alta. Reg. 304/2002*.
- 5) *How to Plan an Equestrian Event*. Alberta Equestrian Federation. [www.albertaequestrian.com](http://www.albertaequestrian.com), under Educational Resources. 1-877-463-6233.
- 6) *Every Ride, Every Time* (DVD on wearing helmets). Available through the Alberta Equestrian Federation, including online store at [www.albertaequestrian.com](http://www.albertaequestrian.com).
- 7) *SaddleUp Safely: Horseback Riding Safety*. Alberta Equestrian Federation. [www.albertaequestrian.com](http://www.albertaequestrian.com), under Educational Resources. 1-877-463-6233.

*Alberta Traffic Safety Act.*

[http://www.qp.alberta.ca/574.cfm?page=2002\\_304.cfm&leg\\_type=Regs&isbn-cln=0779738624](http://www.qp.alberta.ca/574.cfm?page=2002_304.cfm&leg_type=Regs&isbn-cln=0779738624).



## Participants



**Cst Natasha French and Strider, a Quarter Horse**



**Cpl Dave Heaslip and Duchess, a Quarter Horse**



**Cpl Chris Reister and Gideon, a Quarter Horse**



**Judith Orr-Bertelsen and her Mini**



**Jessica Snow and Baldy, a Quarter Horse**



**Susan Wall and Fancy, a grade Quarter Horse**

*Caveat: The material provided in this manual is intended for introductory educational purposes only; for complete details on any of the documents listed, refer to the applicable agency or organization. The AEF has made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information contained therein, but assumes no liability in cases of error or changing conditions. Any business relations or other activities undertaken as a result of the information contained in this manual, or arising therefrom, is the responsibilities of the parties involved and not the AEF.*

## Thank you

*to the following organizations and individuals*

Alberta Motor Association

Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation

Calgary Police Service

Capri Insurance

RCMP, Livestock Division

Spruce Meadows

Wild Pink Yonder Charitable Society

Cst Natasha French  
Maureen Gersmisch

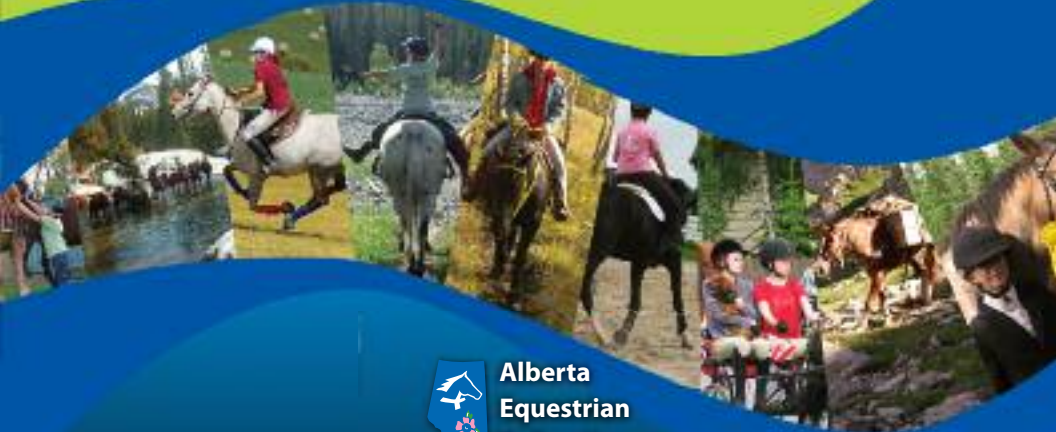
Cpl David Heaslip  
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Wendy Kemble  
Verne Kemble  
Shelley Newman  
Judith Orr-Bertelsen  
Jessica Paul

Cpl Chris Reister  
Monika Smith  
Becky Snow  
Susan Wall  
Katy Whitt

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