

Information sheet

Visitor Management

Code of conduct for recreational horse riding on designated multi-use trails in State forests, forest reserves and protected areas

The purpose of this code of conduct is to prescribe standards of conduct applying to recreational horse riding, whether privately or as part of an organised group, on State forests, forest reserves and protected areas (national parks and regional parks). Horse riding on these lands is regulated under the Nature Conservation Act 1992 and the Forestry Act 1959.

Overview

Horse riding may occur on some of Queensland's protected areas, where designated under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. Horse riding may also occur on areas of State forests and forest reserves under the *Forestry Act 1959*.

To address the potential impacts of horse riding on protected areas, State forests and forest reserves, this code prescribes standards of conduct that aim to eliminate or reduce impacts of the activity, such as:

- increasing soil erosion
- introducing trampling and grazing impacts
- introducing and spreading noxious and/or exotic plants
- damaging waterways and water quality
- damaging significant and environmentally sensitive areas
- disturbing and displacing of native plants and animals
- damaging cultural sites
- conflicting with other users.

This code will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it remains relevant to the management of these areas and that it reflects contemporary scientific knowledge.

What the code of conduct means

This code provides minimal-impact guidelines for recreational horse riding whether by independent users or participants in organised group or commercial activities, on Queensland's protected areas, State forests, forest reserves. To ensure the effective management of horse riding, this code will be supported by offence provisions.

This code does not apply to pulling a carriage with a horse, or to horse riding for stock mustering authorised under a stock mustering permit granted under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

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Where the code of conduct applies

This code applies to horse riding in Queensland's national parks, regional parks, State forests and forest reserves.

Standards of conduct for horse riders

The following provisions aim to minimise the impact horses have on an area. When riding in a designated national park, regional park, State forest or forest reserve horse riders must:

- ride only on formed management roads that are designated for horse riding. Do not take shortcuts or form new trails
- obey notices and signs erected by the chief executive of the Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing (NPSR)
- obtain a permit before conducting a group ride, if required
- obtain a permit before conducting organised riding events (such as competitive rides, special equestrian events or commercial activities), if required
- not allow horses to remain in a national park, regional park, State forest or forest reserve overnight other than in designated areas
- only allow horses to cross natural watercourses at designated crossing points on the trail, to protect watercourses in the area
- not allow horses to enter or remain in natural watercourses. Do not wash horses in natural watercourses and use designated watering points to water horses, where provided
- where no designated watering point is provided, horses must be watered using buckets (collapsible canvas buckets are the most practical)
- not mark trees or place any navigational marks or other signs in the area, unless authorised under a permit
- ensure horses are under control or securely tethered at all times. Horses must be controlled so that they do not place the rider or another person in danger, annoy other park users, or cause damage to the area
- remove all litter brought into the area by the rider.

Additional requirements

There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that some horse riding activities, additional to those described above, may impact on the environment. To further minimise their impact on sensitive areas, and for safety it is recommended horse riders:

- avoid riding during or immediately after wet weather conditions
- avoid spreading weeds. Horse riders should:
 - provide weed-free, good quality, processed feed to horses at least 48 hours prior to entering a forest reserve or protected area (e.g. clean chaff, pellets, cracked rolled or steamed grains, weed free lucerne).
 - feed horses with a nose bag while in a forest reserve or protected area and clean up any spills

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- ensure that horses' coats, hooves, equipment, towing vehicles and floats are clean and free of seeds before park visits.
- tether horses at hitching posts or resting areas only for short periods to minimise local impacts (erosion and compaction of soil or contamination of the site by accumulation of faeces and urine)
- minimise damage to vegetation. Do not allow horses to graze on any vegetation while in the area
- be considerate of other park users
- select trails that match the horse and rider's ability
- report damage or problems to your local Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) office. For contact details visit NPSR's website at www.npsr.qld.gov.au
- share these messages with other trail users.

Rider safety

In the interest of safety for all park users QPWS/NPSR recommends that horse riders:

- Wear an approved (e.g. AS3838:2006) helmet and protective clothing when traversing national parks, regional parks, State forests and forest reserves.
- If riding alone: notify friends, family or a ranger of their intentions to traverse the park (i.e. tell them where and when you are going and what time you plan to return).
- Always carry a first aid kit for rider and horse, a map, hat, sunscreen, clean drinking water and a mobile phone. Be aware that in remote areas with limited phone coverage the emergency mobile number for the ambulance service is 112.
- Be aware that horses are easily frightened by loud noises, sudden movement, other animals, vehicles (e.g. cars, four wheel drives, mountain bikes) and wasps and insects. Horses' behaviour is unpredictable when spooked. Talk or call out to oncoming horse riders. The majority of horse related injuries occur when horses are frightened. Avoid scaring horses when approaching from behind.
- Exercise caution and keep speed low (e.g. walk, trot) on multi-use trails and in high use areas of the park.
- Check track conditions, and weather warnings (high wind and heavy rain) before a ride.
- Check Park Alerts for track closures before a ride. Periodic restrictions to horse riding access may be necessary due to management issues such as weather events (weather events make horse travel unsafe or dangerous and has impacts on track surfaces and park facilities); erosion issues; road maintenance issues; pest or weed management issues; prescribed burns; scientific studies; conditions of environmental ecological stress or wild fires; and severe drought or flooding.
- Comply with any regulatory and safety signage.
- Monitor weather forecasts.

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Road safety

Queensland road rules apply to roads/tracks and trails within national parks, regional parks, State forests and forest reserves including rules relating to vehicles towing horse floats and trailers. Trailers and floats must be parked safely and conform with any signs or road markings and parked so as not to obstruct roads or trails and not damage any vegetation. State road rules also apply to alcohol consumption and horse riding, a rider must have a blood alcohol level less than 0.05% to comply with state law.

Permits and access to horse trails

Regulatory signage will be used to identify horse trails in Queensland's national parks, regional parks, State forests and forest reserves.

It is an offence under the Nature Conservation Act 1992 to ride a horse anywhere in a national park or regional park other than on designated tracks/trails. Similarly it is an offence under the Forestry Act 1959 to ride a horse anywhere in a State forest or forest reserve other than on designated tracks/trails.

Permits are required to traverse the QPWS horse trail networks for commercial activities and large organised events or rides. Local conditions, infrastructure available, site impacts, and sustainable visitor capacities will determine group sizes permitted on designated tracks without a permit. A group activity notification form can be lodged electronically and is available on the department's website.

Overnight camping with horses

Overnight camping with horses is permitted in some parks.

Horses are to be housed overnight in designated holding yards/areas where these are available.

Horses should not be tied to vegetation overnight.

References

Operational Policy – Visitor Management – Horse riding

Operational Policy – Visitor Management – Group activity permits and notification arrangements

Operational Policy – Visitor Management – Commercial activities in QPWS managed areas

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Disclaimer

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Approved By

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Signature

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Date

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