

SAFETY IS FOR EVERYONE

Trail Safety and Etiquette with Horses and Trail Users

Michigan has various types of non-motorized trails so every trail user group can recreate safely. Please follow the specific trail designations for the safety of everyone:

- **Shared horse and hike trails** - Horse riders and their horses have the most risks, so please keep horse trails for horses and hikers only. **No bikes**
- **Shared bike and hike trails** - **No horses**
- **Multi-Use trails** - Open to everyone, provided safety and etiquette are followed.



Horses are prey animals. They have eyes on the sides of their heads so they can watch for predators. All meat eaters, including humans, are potential predators of horses. Horses have better hearing and quicker response time than humans. “A biker or hiker moving fast or quietly may appear to be a potential predator to a horse”, therefore causing natural “flight or fight” survival instincts.

When encounters on the trails happen:

1. **Stop** Please stop.
 - Stopping communicates to horse riders that you see them, are aware of trail etiquette and respect fellow trail users.
2. **Speak** Say “hello” in your normal voice.
 - Speaking helps identify you as a person and will calm the horses.
 - Ask the horse riders how they would like to pass. The horse riders have been assessing the situation (horses’ body language, other riders, terrain, etc.) and will have knowledge of how and when we should pass.
 - Typically, the horse riders will want to move past at a walk (which helps the horses as they have “flight” instincts and naturally prefer to move their feet), while the other trail users remain stopped.
3. **Stand Back** 10 feet or more.
 - Stand back with your whole group on the same side of the trail.
 - Please contain children and dogs.
 - If biking, please dismount and move to a safe distance away from the trail with your bike between you and the horses.

These actions will reassure the horses that you are not a threatening predator and help keep everyone safe. Thank you and happy trails.

A biker moving fast or quietly may appear to be a potential predator to a horse... What should I do?

When meeting a horse, dismount and move a safe distance off the trail. If more than one biker, move to the same side of the trail.

Speaking to the rider helps identify you as a person and will help calm a horse.

Bikes, fishing rods, backpacks, and dogs can spook even a seasoned horse when surprised.

TRAIL SAFETY IS BEST FOR EVERYONE

Stop!
Stand Back
Yield
Speak

Sponsored by the Rearing Fork Valley Horse Council and the Rearing Fork Mountain Bike Association