

Road Safety Rules for Horse Riders

Information Brochure
on Road Safety Rules for Horse Riders
on Québec Roads



Québec 



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Part 1

Traffic Rules for Horse Riders



Compliance with the Highway Safety Code

Horse riders must comply with the traffic rules and signs set out in the *Highway Safety Code*. Specifically, riders:

- ◆ must not travel on a limited access road (particularly autoroutes), including access or exit lanes;
- ◆ must not travel on a public road where the road sign on the right indicates that it is prohibited for riders to travel on all or part of the highway;
- ◆ must travel in the direction of traffic;
- ◆ must not use sidewalks or bicycle paths;
- ◆ must yield the right of way to pedestrians and cyclists, specifically when turning at an intersection or entering private property;
- ◆ must make way for emergency vehicles whose flashing lights or sirens are in operation, by reducing speed, keeping as far to the right as possible and, if necessary, bringing the horse to a standstill;



Travel in the direction of traffic



- ◆ must yield the right of way to a bus that wants to re-enter the lane in which it was moving before it stopped;
- ◆ must not drink alcohol when riding a horse or operating a horse-drawn vehicle;
- ◆ must not ride using headphones or earphones;
- ◆ must not use a cell phone when riding.

Recommendations for all horse riders

- ◆ Be at least 16 years of age and be qualified to ride a horse alone on roads. If not, be accompanied by a qualified person at all times during trips.
- ◆ Travel on safe roads:
 - wide shoulder;
 - little traffic;
 - posted speed limit of 50 km/h or less.
- ◆ Avoid travelling during rush hour.
- ◆ Avoid national roads which include, among others, major interregional and extra-provincial highways such as routes 117, 132, 138, 155 or 175 (generally, roads with 3 figures that begin with 1 are national roads).
- ◆ Avoid roads where the speed limit is 80 km/h and over.
- ◆ Avoid riding at night.
- ◆ Be visible and particularly vigilant on curves.
- ◆ Clearly indicate your intention to turn, stop or slow down, to be properly seen by other road users.
- ◆ A rider or a coach driver who rides a horse or operates a horse-drawn vehicle should be courteous, if a line forms behind, and yield to other vehicles by pulling on to the shoulder.

Particular aspects of horse behaviour

- ◆ Ensure that the horse has been desensitized to movement and road noise.
- ◆ Look out for pedestrians and cyclists, who are often silent and may surprise the horse.
- ◆ Look out for animals that are not on a leash and may frighten the horse.
- ◆ Anticipate problems that may frighten the horse. Be able to control the horse at all times. Among other things, coach drivers must be able to move the horse forward if it starts to back up.
 - If required, in the event that the horse is frightened or does not move forward, it is suggested that you dismount to guide it to the shoulder or off the road.
- ◆ Horses on roads should be equipped with a bit at all times (riding with a halter or other bitless bridle is dangerous on roads).
- ◆ Be mindful of the surfaces on which the horse walks, to prevent injury.
- ◆ For shod horses, asphalt roads are slippery; therefore, it is better to ride on unsurfaced roads (for example, gravel roads), which offer better traction.



Look out for pedestrians and cyclists, who are often silent and may surprise the horse.

For coach drivers

- ◆ Coach drivers must travel entirely on the road.
- ◆ Horse-drawn vehicles must be equipped with a slow-moving vehicle sign (orange triangle).
- ◆ If it is absolutely necessary to travel at night, the coach must be equipped with at least one white headlight in front and a red light behind.
- ◆ Drivers who operate a coach for more than four people must be accompanied by an assistant.
- ◆ If there are problems with a horse, coach drivers must wait until the horse is controlled before signaling to road users behind that they can overtake safely.
- ◆ Ensure that anything put in the horse-drawn vehicle or attached to it cannot fall on the road.

For riders

- ◆ Wear a protective helmet on roads or when approaching a road.
- ◆ Never allow more than one person on the horse during trips.
- ◆ Ride on the right side of the road or on the shoulder, in the direction of traffic. It is better to ride on the shoulder than on the road.
- ◆ In case of problems with a horse:
 - it is better to ride on the road to avoid getting caught between the road where vehicles usually drive and the ditch. The rider will then have more space to regain control of the mount;
 - when the horse is controlled, the rider must signal to road users behind that they can overtake safely. Road users (except for cyclists) may then overtake the horse using the left lane while ensuring that they may do so safely, without further frightening the horse. As for cyclists, they may do so to the right.

- ◆ Riders must wear a reflective armband or vest at all times, to warn that they are on the move and to be more visible.
- ◆ If it is absolutely necessary to travel at night, the horses must be equipped with appropriate reflective tape (at shin height) to be visible.
- ◆ Riders must also wear a white light at the front of their helmets and a red light at the back, so that motorists and other road users approaching from a road perpendicular to the road used by the horse can see it. Indeed, from that angle, the car's headlights cannot light up the rider, and cannot, therefore, light up the reflective tape on the horse or the rider.
- ◆ Ride in single file (one horse behind the other) with seven horses at the most. If the group comprises more than seven horses, divide it into groups separated by approximately 100 m.
- ◆ Keep a safe distance of 2 m between horses so as to always see the tail of the horse in front.

PROCEDURE TO FOLLOW WHEN CROSSING A ROAD

(to change direction or to enter an access on the other side of the road)

Step 1

- ◆ All riders in the group stop in line along the road to be crossed.
- ◆ The person in charge must ensure that there is enough time and that the conditions are favourable for a safe crossing.
- ◆ Once the person in charge has the attention of all riders, he or she gives the signal to cross (a hand signal).

Step 2

- ◆ All riders make a 90 degree turn to cross the street perpendicularly.

Step 3

- ◆ The group then crosses the street side by side, at the same time, in a single line.

Step 4

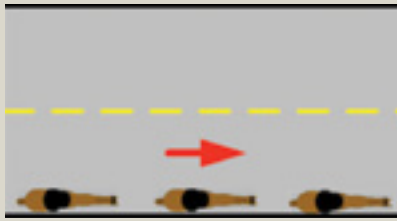
- ◆ On the other side of the street, the riders make a 90 degree turn to go back in file in the direction of traffic.

Tips:

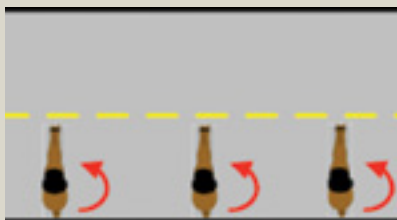
- ◆ Avoid crossing roads in file, one after the other, as this can take too much time. The group of riders may be separated by the sudden appearance of a car and some horses can be badly affected by this separation.
- ◆ If required, in places where visibility is reduced, separate the group into sub-groups beforehand, and cross side by side.
- ◆ Do not hesitate to go a little further to ensure better visibility when crossing.



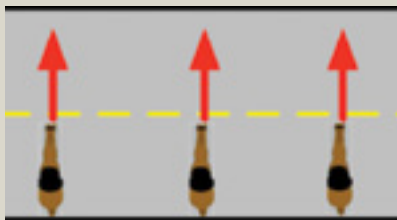
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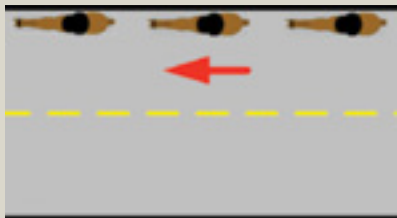
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- ◆ The persons in charge of traffic must be properly identified.
- ◆ Only cross when this can be done safely.
- ◆ Avoid crossing on a curve, when exiting a curve, when approaching the crest and at the crest of a grade.

PROCEDURE TO FOLLOW AT INTERSECTIONS TO MAKE A LEFT TURN

(right turns and crossing are implicit)

The same instructions and tips given for crossing a road apply when crossing an intersection.

Step 1

- ◆ Turn right safely in file; look left for approaching vehicles.

Step 2

- ◆ Move away from the intersection so that the last horse in file is 50 metres from it.

Step 3

- ◆ Do steps 1 to 4 of the procedure for crossing a road (see illustration on page 8).

Step 4

- ◆ The file approaches the intersection.

Step 5

- ◆ The person in charge gives the signal to each rider (one by one) to cross. The riders wait a little further on (50 metres) for the person in charge to return. This is to ensure safe crossing for all riders.

Step 6

- ◆ The left turn is now complete, and the riders continue on their way in file in the direction of traffic.

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Part 2

Before Leaving (Checks and Compulsory Equipment)

For all horse riders

- ◆ Horses on roads should be equipped with a bit at all times (riding with a halter or other bitless bridle is dangerous on roads).
- ◆ Make sure the riding or harnessing equipment is sturdy and well adjusted before leaving.
- ◆ The horse must be in good physical and psychological condition for the trip (hoofs, food, hydration, health and attitude).
- ◆ It is recommended that you travel along the route by car or otherwise before doing it on horseback or in a horse-drawn vehicle.
- ◆ Keep backup equipment and important telephone numbers on you in case of emergency.

For coach drivers

- ◆ Operators of horse-drawn vehicles must ensure that their vehicle is safe and in good driving condition.
- ◆ Horse-drawn vehicles must be equipped with a slow-moving vehicle sign (orange triangle).
- ◆ If it is absolutely necessary to travel at night, the coach must be equipped with at least one white headlight in front and a red light behind.
- ◆ Coach drivers must have the required equipment to move the horse forward if it starts to back up.
- ◆ Never overload the horse-drawn vehicle (according to its capacity and that of the horse to stop it).



Illustration: Marthe Boisjoly

For riders

- ◆ Wear a protective helmet on roads or when approaching a road.
- ◆ Avoid children's saddles that are installed behind adult saddles.
- ◆ If it is absolutely necessary to travel at night, riders must wear a reflective vest and horses must be equipped with appropriate reflective tape (at the ankle) to be visible.



Part 3

Traffic Rules for Other Road Users

Rules and Recommendations

- ◆ Be courteous at all times to riders and coach drivers.
- ◆ Slow down to 40 km/h when approaching and overtaking a horse or a horse-drawn vehicle.
- ◆ Before overtaking a horse or a horse-drawn vehicle, ensure that you can do so safely and that there is sufficient visibility.
- ◆ It is prohibited to overtake a horse or a horse-drawn vehicle by using the lane reserved for oncoming traffic:
 - when approaching the crest and at the crest of a grade or on a curve when the vehicle driver cannot see oncoming vehicles at a sufficient distance;
 - when approaching and at an intersection, a level crossing, a tunnel or a duly indicated crosswalk;
 - if the lane reserved for oncoming traffic is not free over a sufficient distance to overtake safely and re-enter the right lane;
 - if prohibited by signage.
- ◆ When overtaking, travel a lateral distance of at least 2 m from the horse or horse-drawn vehicle. Never accelerate suddenly when approaching a horse.
- ◆ Avoid sounding the horn, shouting, braking suddenly, using the engine brake: this may frighten horses.

- ◆ When approaching riders or coach drivers who seem to be having difficulty controlling their horses (for example, if a horse shows certain signs such as being agitated, kicking, jumping, stopping suddenly, etc.)
 - keep a safe distance;
 - put on your hazard lights if you are in a situation that is likely to block normal traffic flow;
 - avoid overtaking: wait for the signal from the rider or coach driver before making any move to overtake;
 - overtake safely, without further frightening the horse;
 - in extreme situations, pull off to the shoulder at a safe enough distance from the rider or coach driver.
- ◆ It is prohibited to throw objects at horses, as this may frighten them.
- ◆ Take necessary measures so that load straps do not frighten the horses or other animals.
- ◆ Never approach a horse suddenly and always ask permission before petting it.

Part 4

Glossary

Rider: person who mounts a horse.

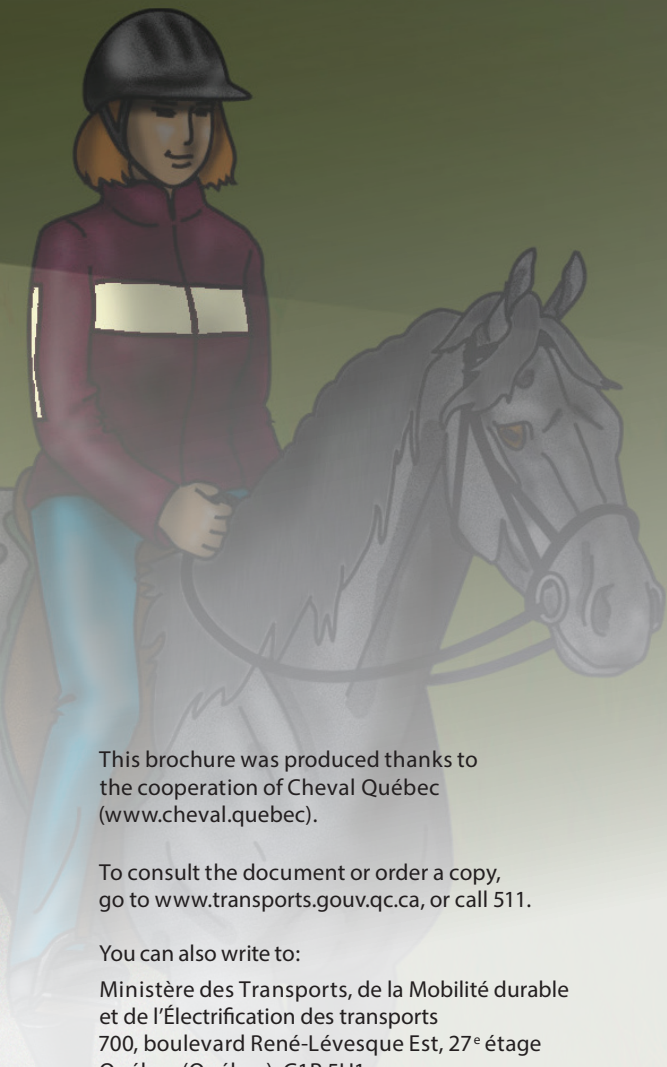
Horse rider: refers to the coach driver and the rider.

Horse-drawn vehicle: vehicle that uses horses for traction.

Coach driver: person who drives a harness.

Person in charge: person in charge of traffic in a group of riders.

Slow-moving vehicle sign (orange triangle): means that you may overtake even on a solid double line.



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