



How to Ride Out a Storm

Learn how you and your horse can beat bad weather and ride out a storm.

By Christine Barakat

It may be sunny and clear when you head out on the trail, but storms can sneak up on you when you're far from the barn. Here's how to handle four sudden and serious changes in the weather.

Heavy Rain

Continue to ride toward home. Your horse is well equipped to cope with a downpour and will be able to see. You'll both get drenched, but moving will help you to stay warm. If your trip takes you across water, be very cautious about wading into a flooded, fast-moving creek or stream.

Lightning

Seek refuge in a barn or other sturdy shelter until the storm passes. If that's not an option, take cover in a dry area where you are not the tallest object in the vicinity. Consider, for instance, a grove of evergreen trees. If you're in an open field, keep moving until you're near something that's taller than you are. Whatever you do, stay away from water, which conducts lightning. If the storm so spooks your horse that he is likely to injure himself or you, let him go.

Strong Wind

Get out into open space, clear of trees and structures that could blow down and injure you. Your horse will turn his hindquarters toward the wind to protect himself from airborne dust and debris; follow his lead. If you dismount, let your horse orient himself, then stand in front of his chest so he acts as a windbreak.

Hail

Look for any type of shelter you can find to protect you and your horse from a painful pelting. If none can be found, and your horse is calm, position yourself under his neck. If, however, he's agitated to the point of being dangerous, let him find his own shelter while you hunker down on the side of a hill away from the wind and cover your head and neck with your arms.

This article originally appeared in the August 2006 issue of EQUUS magazine