



## **RULES FOR RIDING ON THE TRAILS FOR HIKERS, BIKERS, AND RIDERS**

The regulations for multi-use trails on public lands are standard in Connecticut: mountain bikers yield to hikers, and cyclists and hikers both yield to horseback riders. This right-of-way rule acknowledges that horses have special needs and may react unpredictably. Riders need to direct each encounter.

1. Stay alert for others.
2. Make voice contact. As soon as you are aware of someone else on the trail, slow to a walk and call out "hello." Call "hello" out to mountain bikers the minute you hear bikers ahead or behind you.
3. Make eye contact. You want to make sure the other trail user sees you, so you know she or he will see simple hand signals you use.
4. Take responsibility. As the trail user with the right of way, you're responsible for directing the situation to keep it as safe as possible for everyone. Make voice contact, then eye contact, and then use the universal "stop" signal. If your horse is used to bicycles, stay on the trail to reinforce your request. Once the group halts, ask that they all move to the same side of the trail while you pass.
5. Be alert to your horse's body language. If you are feeling that your horse may spook, ask the person or persons to say a few words. If the trail is too narrow for you and the hiker or cyclist(s) to pass safely, show the other person where you want him or her to leave the trail and wait while you go by.
6. Educate non-horse trail users. Explain to cyclists that they'll spook your horse if they whiz past. That is why you're requesting that they stop and wait.

**DOGS** - Riders, leave your dogs at home. Unleashed dogs are prohibited on State and private open space in Pomfret. As the trail user with the right-of-way, you're the one who has to assess whether the hostile dog straining at the end of a leash just ahead is really under control, whatever the owner says. If you're concerned that the dog could lunge frighteningly at your horse as you pass, don't hesitate to ask the owner to take the dog off the trail at a spot you indicate.

When you spot a loose dog ranging some distance from its owner, try to get the person's attention immediately so you increase his chance of putting the dog back on a leash. You don't want to end up with an excited dog circling you and barking and the owner screaming at the dog to stop.

Hold up your hand and explain to the owner that you're going to trot slowly past him while he stands in the spot you'll indicate. Most dogs won't continue the chase past 50 yards or so. Keep your horse on the aids, remain calm, and chances are he will too. Remember that if your horse kicks out at an aggressive, uncontrolled dog and connects, you're not at fault.