

# Horse riding and access to the outdoors

## Hoofing it: advice from the experts

Viv Dostine, President of the New Zealand Horse Network says horse riders are aware of the need to be courteous, and considerate of others enjoying the outdoors, landholders and their property. They know that some people are frightened of horses, and the actions and attitudes of horse riders reflect on every other horse rider. By setting a good example, they can raise the profile of horse riding.

## For horse riders

Viv published the Bridleways Code. The code is a New Zealand guide for horse riding on beaches, forests and farmland. "These guidelines are a good checklist for horse riders and land managers to understand and respect each others' interests," says Viv.

- Leave farm gates as you find them (unless there are specific instructions)
- Ride slowly through any stock paddocks, so that stock is not disturbed
- If paddocks are muddy, keep to a walk to ensure that the ground isn't torn up
- Be courteous to other park users. Always remember that some people are frightened of horses, and most are ignorant about their fears or behaviours
- Stick to trails or tracks unless you are sure paddock riding is permitted
- Clean up where practical, for example, in busy loading and unloading areas.

## For landowners and managers

Horse manure is only grass and studies show that manure on trails cannot be shown to be responsible for weed spread. Horses' hooves are no more likely to spread weeds than walkers boots, cyclists wheels or vehicles.

*“I love nothing better than to be trotting along a verdant river valley or galloping along a vast stretch of beach. Me and my horse and the outdoors, this simplicity is what makes horse riding so exhilarating a sport.”*

**- Viv Dostine**

Most riders will generally make every effort to ensure manure does not litter public areas. While manure around parking areas should be removed by the horse owner. There is no practical way to scoop up or remove manure while riding or leading a horse along a trail.

Horse riding and stock are compatible; horses were used on farms before mechanised farm machinery, and their quiet presence is tolerated well by most stock.

If you are granting access to riders, a spacious parking area suitable for large trucks or vehicles with trailers is needed.

A water source is always appreciated, but horse riders are self-sufficient lot who can bring everything they need with them.

If you are worried about damage to paddocks in wet weather, ask riders to only ride on farm tracks or formed trails when it is wet.

Most riders won't want to be bogged, or risk highly slippery slopes for their own, and their horse's safety.

Horse riders can be useful in compacting new trails, and keeping open tracks in remote areas. They can get to places very few other visitors do.

Native flora is generally safe. Horse riders usually actively discourage their horses from browsing while being ridden, and are cautious about letting horses eat anything that they do not recognise (nobody likes vet bills that can be prevented).

