There are quarter of a million people who regularly go horse riding and carriage driving in Scotland’s outdoors. The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 provides a right of responsible access to a wide variety of land for all non-motorised uses including equestrian users. For horse riders this includes paths and tracks, beaches and coastline, most urban parks, farmland and woodlands and a variety of managed open spaces. Horses can also continue to use all public roads except motorways, including streets in residential areas.

Riders, land owners and the public must behave responsibly and respect each other’s point of view. The main principles of responsible behaviour are outlined in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (see back page), which requires people to act with courtesy, consideration and awareness.

It is inevitable that horse riders, land owners and managers and all other members of the public will meet each other. This leaflet aims to provide basic information for everyone about responsibilities in relation to equestrian access.

RIDING RESPONSIBLY

- Check that access rights apply to the land on which you want to ride or if it is a bridle Public Right of Way. If in doubt about this contact Fife Council Access team (see back page for details).
- Take care of your own safety, that of your horse as well as the safety of other people.
- Avoid churning up paths, especially those used by pedestrians. If there is no alternative try to keep hoofprints to one side of the path only.
- Take care not to disrupt on-going land management operations or livestock grazing. If you have any doubts do not hesitate to ask the land manager for information or advice.
- Do not ride in or round fields with vegetables growing for human consumption such as lettuce or carrots and do not take any route that results in damage to growing crops.
- During the nesting season be extra careful in areas of rough grass or round the edges of fields where ground nesting birds could be sitting on eggs or have young.
- Be very careful when passing close to other users. Horses can feel large and intimidating to people on the ground. Be extra careful if you are on a multi-use path. Keep in walk while passing other users or if you are likely to unexpectedly meet other users round corners.
- Do not ride on closely cut grass or amenity lawns in parks.
- Follow any local advice, guidance or signage.
- If you have a dog with you it must be under control.
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HORSE FOULING

Unlike dog faeces, horse dung does not carry disease. It is not a threat to human health. There are no laws against horse fouling in public places and no legal requirement for the riders to clear up. However, fresh dung or large quantities of dung on a path, especially on a multi-use path, can be unpleasant. It can even completely block access for some other users, e.g. people in wheelchairs or with pushchairs, and it can be a tripping hazard for visually impaired people.

Guidance for riders:
• If you are aware that your horse has dunged outside someone’s driveway, in a car park or on a very busy path, it is courteous to dismount and kick the dung to the side or to return as soon as possible to move it.
• If you are aware your horse is going to foul, push him over to the side of the path before he starts.
• If you have a dog with you, you must clear up if it fouls in a public place covered by the Dog Fouling Act.

Guidance for other path users:
• Be aware that a horse can dung without the rider even knowing it is happening.
• It is often not safe or possible for a horse rider to dismount and clear up behind their horse immediately so please respect this.
• Horse dung is good for biodiversity, totally biodegradable and good for the compost bin.

HORSES ON ROADS

Horses have a legal right to use public roads, and often have no option but to do so. This is particularly true for carriage drivers.
• Riders, carriage drivers, those leading a horse and the horses should wear fluorescent gear to be more visible to motor vehicle drivers.
• Acknowledge courteous driving with a nod, a smile or a wave.

Vehicle drivers should:
• Slow down when passing horses (recommended speed less than 15mph).
• Give plenty of room when passing.
• Look out for hand signals from the rider both indicating where they are going and also asking the driver for co-operation if they are having difficulty with their horse.

LAND MANAGERS AND EQUESTRIAN USE

The Land Reform Act places a duty on land managers to respect access rights when managing land and to respect other users of the outdoors while carrying out their day-to-day business. This applies equally to farmland, forests, or urban parks, wherever access rights apply. Likewise the Act places a duty on riders to act responsibly while they take access to your land.

Where horses cause problems or do damage this is often due to genuine misunderstanding. Land managers should consider using information signage to keep access takers informed. Please be helpful and constructive in passing on information or advising access takers of safe and practical alternative routes.

If it is responsible for them to do so, horse riders can use stubble fields, grass fields, hill land, unsown fields and field margins. Knowing when it is responsible to ride or not can be complicated and further information sheets are available for stubble fields and grass margins (contact Fife Council Access Team). In every instance if the rider is unsure they should ask the land manager, who should not withhold permission in most instances.

RIDING IN BUILT UP AREAS

Riders have a right to be on roads and streets in urban areas and mutual tolerance and understanding is required.

As towns and villages expand, many paths which used to be in the countryside are encompassed into the built up areas and even become residential streets and paths, leaving riders no option but to use them.

Riders should:
• Be aware that you are higher up on a horse and can cause disturbance by seeing over fences and hedges.
• Large groups of horses can disrupt other events in the community so please share information and be prepared to follow local guidance.
• If your horse fouls the road outside a residential driveway or school or near shops and centres try to dismount and kick the dung out of the way, or return as soon as possible to do so.