

Preparing Your Horse for Group Trail Rides

By Audrey Pavia

Before you start riding your horse regularly on the trails in a group setting, evaluate his personality and abilities. Ask yourself these questions:

- Does my horse like being in close proximity to other horses? If your horse pins his ears or threatens to kick when another horse comes too close, you need to be vigilant when trail riding with others. If your horse is a kicker, tie a red ribbon at the base of his tail to warn other riders to stay at least one horse's length behind you.
- Is my horse calm on the trail? If you have a horse that gets excited when you take him on trail alone, he may be more comfortable when riding in a group. He may also get even more excited having other horses around him, especially if some of those horses are nervous. If your horse does not have much experience riding with a group, be aware that he might be nervous and difficult to control. If you can, try to ride in small groups close to home first.
- Is my horse fit for trail riding? If you haven't been trail riding at all, or have only done short rides on occasion, consider getting your horse in better shape before you start riding with a group. Find out what kind of terrain the group rides on, and the length and pace of their rides. Gradually condition your horse to this type of riding so he is able to handle a group ride without stressing his body and mind.

Choosing the Right Trail Riding Partner

By Audrey Pavia

If you are looking for someone to trail ride with, don't be overeager and accept an invitation from just anyone. Make sure your prospective companion has the same idea as you when it comes to an enjoyable trail ride.

Ask your potential trail buddy the following questions to see if your answers match:

1. What is your horse like on trail? If you have a nervous, high-strung horse that you struggle to keep calm out on the trail, you probably don't want to ride with someone who also has a nervous horse. The two will feed off each other, making your experience stressful rather than relaxing.
2. How fast do you want to go? If you are the type who wants to stroll along on the trail relaxing and enjoying nature, or if you are worried about controlling your horse at speeds faster than a walk, make sure your riding buddy is OK with just walking. Some people like to ride fast on the trail. Be sure you both want the same thing.
3. How long do you like to ride? Some riders think 45 minutes on trail is more than enough, while others want to be out for hours. Agree on the amount of time you will spend on the trail before you set out.
4. Where do you want to ride? If you have access to trails with varied terrain, find out if your prospective trail buddy wants to ride in the hills, through water crossings or on suburban bridle paths. It also doesn't hurt to watch how your potential trail partner rides and handles her horse



around the barn. Take note as to whether she rides well, seems considerate of others and is concerned with horse and rider safety.

5. Don't trail ride alone--find a buddy

6. The American Competitive Trail Horse Association helps riders meet up with others in their area.

7. Edited Press Release

8. March 30, 2011

9.

10. ACTHA, the American Competitive Trail Horse Association has launched a program called Find A Buddy, found on the ACTHA website.

11. The FAB program was created for the trail rider who is interested in finding riding buddies in their area. It is a free, easy to use, social networking message system for the trail riding community and is available for ACTHA members and non-members.

12. Carrie Scrima, co-founder of ACTHA said, "Find a Buddy is a wonderful way to get to know other trail riders in your community. Trail riding is so much more fun when you have others who share your passion for horses and riding beautiful trails."

13. The "Find A Buddy" program is available only at ACTHA's website. To learn more or try it out, log on to www.actha.us or call (877)99-ACTHA for additional information.

