

WE ALSO SUGGEST THAT YOU DO NOT RIDE YOUR HORSE OVER ANY BRIDGES IN THE MASSABESIC FOREST WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE BRIDGE ON THE MAIN ROAD.

ATVs, mountain bikers, and hikers also use the trails in the Massabesic Forest. Most are polite and will yield to horses, but there are a few out there who don't know that horses always have the right of way. BE PREPARED TO MEET OTHER USERS AND KNOW YOUR HORSE.

Trail Riding 101

For those of you who are new to trail riding, here are a few tips from Judy St.Onge:

- Ride with a buddy when possible.
- Cell phone reception is "sketchy" in some parts of the Massabesic.
- ATV and mountain bike riders tend to look at the trail directly in front of them - chances are you will see or hear them long before they notice you, so move off the trail if you can. (Yes, they ARE supposed to yield to horses, but if they don't see you in time, you could end up in a wreck.)
- Bicycles don't make much noise coming up behind you (on the trail or on the road) and cause more horses to spook than motorized vehicles! Keep an eye out for them and turn your horse to look at them if you don't think he hears one coming.
- Remember you are an ambassador for the entire horse community while on shared trails. Other trail users may not be familiar with horses and their reactions. Use any opportunity to politely educate them. (Like asking cyclists to call out and make their presence known when approaching a horse from behind!)
- If riding in a group or if overtaken by faster trail users, move to the right and allow them to pass.
- If you want to pass a slower trail user (horse or otherwise) first announce your intention to pass and give them a chance to move to the side of the trail to allow you to pass safely.
- If riding with inexperienced riders or horses, ALWAYS ride considerately. In a group, stay at a pace that is comfortable for the least experienced horse or rider.
- Never try to lead your horse over a ditch or water. I've seen more people get knocked down trying to do this than I can count. Stay mounted and give your horse plenty of time to relax and look things over. If it is a narrow ditch or brook, be prepared for him to jump across!
- Practice obstacles at home before trailering away for a trail ride.
- Oh, and don't clean out your trailer in the parking lot! There is a designated area for dumping manure.

Here are a few things that I have found handy to have on the trail - even on a short ride. I can fit most of this stuff in a fanny pack, which I keep packed and ready to go in my tack box:

- Halter and lead rope - the halter can be worn under the bridle and the lead tied to the saddle. On an english saddle I snap a mountain climbers clip on the D-ring and loop my lead through that.
- Bug Spray - people spray also works on horses in a pinch.
- Hoof Pick
- Duct Tape - wrapped around a dowel to save space. Use it to hold a loose shoe on or to tape up a hoof that has lost a shoe.

- Water in a squirt bottle can double as a wound wash or eye wash.
- Band-aids - for you.
- Vetrap - for you or your horse.
- A small tube of Vaseline is good for chapped lips, but it's better for saddle sores.
- Leather Shoelace - handy for bridle repairs.
- Leatherman Tool - trust me, you'll feel like you can handle any emergency with one of these on your belt! (Cheap dept. store models also work fine)
- Cell Phone - I put mine in a case that clips to my belt and also has a loop that I run my belt through for good measure. (Always carry your cell phone on your person - it won't do you any good if it's galloping towards home with your horse!)
- Luggage Tag - attached to your saddle with your name, address, cell phone #, home #, your best horse friend's #, etc. If you've ever been thrown and had your horse take off for parts unknown, you'll know why this is a really good idea.
- Helmet - (on your head, not in your fanny pack). Not only are helmets great for protecting your head in a fall, they also shade your eyes and keep your head from being whacked by low-hanging branches. Also, since they are strapped on, they can't get knocked off. (This is pretty important for short people with tall horses.)
- Aspirin - especially for those of you who ignore the helmet suggestion. (Also good for after the ride!)