

“ON THE TRAIL” BY
DR. MIKE GUERINI



Safety on the Trail

Be **AWARE** on the trail

Acquaint yourself with the trail and the area where you are riding

Watch the trail/weather for unsafe and changing conditions

Actively ride your horse, do not just be a passenger

Respect other riders/bikers/hikers on the trail

Enjoy the ride

Published by Michael Guerini, Ph.D.

Copyright 2011 Michael Guerini

General comments on this Guide

As I developed the 6 C's of horsemanship I made sure these ideas work for riding in the arena, on the trail and in competition. When we ride we want to be confident in our riding skills and our horse. How do we gain **confidence**---we practice, learn from others, go to clinics and we take small steps. If I wanted to ride on a 5-day trail ride I would first build up my confidence and my horse's confidence by taking a 1-day ride. In order for us to gain confidence we need to learn to **control** our horse and the space around our horse. To build confidence and establish control we need to practice with ---- **consistency**. As a rider it is our obligation to be consistent in our training and riding methods. When we are consistent and have a plan and follow our plan we build confidence in our horse and our abilities. To maintain control we need to keep our bodies and our horse's body ---- **collected**. We cannot expect control when our arms are waving all around and our horses are racing through open fields. Maintaining collection of our body, our speed and the horse's flexibility helps us to be confident and in control. As we teach our horse we need to remember to have ---- **compassion**. When I go out on a trail ride I want to enjoy time with my horse and I want to enjoy the scenery and most of all I want this to be full of ---- **calmness**. As we embark on the day and each time we go to the barn remember---our horse should be just as calm at the end of our ride as he was when he was standing in his stall.

Sincerely,

Dr. Mike

Dun Movin Ranch
Home of Dr. Mike's Horsemanship
www.dunmovinranch.com
Michael@dunmovinranch.com

Connect with Dun Movin Ranch on Facebook

Dun Movin Ranch (Gilroy California) is on Facebook. Join us (tell your horse owning friends to join) and receive information on special offers, upcoming clinics, new publications and monthly Horsemanship tips.

Services and Products

Dun Movin Ranch and Dr. Mike Horsemanship offer two electronic books for your reading and learning pleasure. My first book is "Ground Steps to Success" and features foundation building exercises that help you teach ground manners. My second book features riding exercises to help you develop a more responsive horse.

All products and services are available

on

www.dunmovinranch.com

Preparation of the Rider

Clothes

Wear layers and comfortable clothing. Never wear ill fitting clothing because it will be uncomfortable and make for a less pleasurable ride. Make sure you are carrying a jacket if the weather has a chance to get cool. Plan ahead and have a small rain parka handy if it might rain. Wear a helmet to protect yourself from the elements and for YOUR SAFETY.

Food

Bring snacks to munch on along the trail. If we get hungry we tend to want to hurry up and we lose patience and forget to remain calm and collected.

Water

Drink plenty of water to keep yourself hydrated. Never drink water from small streams or ponds. If you cannot pack enough water for your ride carry along some tablets that you can use to decontaminate the water.

Environmental protections

Wear sunscreen, lip balm and insect repellent if needed. Protect yourself by keeping the elements from hurting you.

Physical fitness

Have your body ready for the ride. If you are planning a 5-day trail ride, prepare yourself by taking small rides before your long ride. If you have a bad knee or bad ankle, wear a brace. **Stretch before you get into the saddle.** Loosen yourself up and it will make the ride more comfortable. Stretching exercises, leg lunges, yoga or anything that can help loosen your muscles and joints will help you for a long day in the saddle.

Alert friends and family as to when and where you are going to ride

This is very important and can save your life. If something happens to you on the ride the search and rescue teams or your family would have an easier time finding you and your horse if they know where you have gone riding. Go on a trail ride with other riders can also help you get assistance should something unfortunate happen.

Preparation of the Horse

Pre-ride maintenance

Hoof care

Have your horse's feet in good shape before you head out on the trail. Some horses need shoes for trail riding while others are fine with barefeet. Consult with your farrier and/or veterinarian if you have any questions.

Vaccinations

West Nile Virus vaccine is a must as is the combination shot for tetanus, flu and encephalitis (Western, Eastern, Venezuelan). Consult with your veterinarian and establish a proper vaccination strategy that works for you and your horse.

Health certificates

If you are traveling out of state have a current health certificate (good for 30 days) and Coggins (good for 180 days) for your horse. Your veterinarian can help you get everything order. Always travel with a copy of your horse's registration papers.

Training and fitness for your horse

In the next section we will discuss foundation-training exercises that will help you improve your confidence as a rider. These exercises also help your horse to be prepared for anything you may want to teach your horse. Some of the exercises are great for helping navigate the trail and for getting past obstacles. Use these exercises to achieve fitness and preparation for longer rides.

Equipment/Tack

Before each ride you should always inspect your tack and make sure there are no broken stitches, broken buckles or anything wrong with your tack that might compromise the safety for your horse or yourself. This is something we should always do before riding at home OR on the trail.

I highly recommend using leg protection on all four legs of your horse whenever you ride your horse, especially on the trail. At a minimum the front legs should have protection.

Water and Feed

Make sure your horse has plenty of opportunities to drink. Learn from other riders where water is available for your horse. If you are staging from a campsite, know the rules regarding hay for your horse. You may be required to purchase hay that is certified weed free.

Caring for the land and the trail

Private land access and riding

Make sure you ask for and receive permission before riding on or parking on private property. It is a great policy to ask for permission each year.

Carry in/carry out

Please think about how you are going to remove your trash during your trail ride. Never bury your trash. Burning your trash can be very dangerous. Use the rule that if you pack it in---you must pack it out.

Be a good steward of the land

We have such wonderful areas to ride and so that we can ride in these special places in the future we need to have a low impact on the trails and the surrounding land. If you request permission to ride on someone else's property always remember it is a privilege and not a right. Do not tear up the trail or leave trash or even wander off the trail. If gates are closed, close them after you pass through. If gates are open, leave them open.

Don't let your horses eat along the trail

There are two major reasons to not let your horses graze while you are on a trail ride. Along the trail there might be poisonous weeds that you do not know about or cannot identify. This could cause your horse to become ill and we want to keep you and your horse safe. Another reason is that many trails that are not in National parks are alongside farmer crops. That farmer depends on his crops so that he can feed his family and the nation and every little bit counts during the harvest.

Safety on the Trail

Be **AWARE** on the trail

Acquaint yourself with the trail and the area where you are riding.

Watch the trail/weather for unsafe and changing conditions.

Actively ride your horse, do not be just a passenger.

Respect other riders/bikers/hikers/campers on the trail.

Enjoy the ride.

Exercises for better preparing you and the horse for trail riding

On the ground and in the saddle:

I recommend you work with your horse using my Ground Steps to Success (available at www.dunmovinranch.com) to help you prepare your horse and yourself for going out on the trail.

Another activity that will help you when you are out on the trail and in new surroundings---

Walking with respect. It has been said by many horsemen and women --- we ride the horse we lead. What does this mean exactly? Well if our horse does not respect us on the ground, crowds us, and pushes us ...we can expect the same behavior while we are riding in the saddle. So what can we do to gain the respect of our horse?

Four exercises that will help you gain respect.

- a) **Round pen work.** Practice inside and outside turns with your horse, ask for speed control, watch him and keep him out of your space. Establish respect by getting his attention to your requests and his respect in a safe environment.

- b) **Go forward cue.** Teach your horse to go forward whenever you ask. Simply point your left hand forward, ask your horse to walk forward and tap on his hindquarters if he needs encouragement. Do not stop until your horse goes forward. Make sure you are standing behind the withers as you tap on the rear end to drive the horse forward. Repeat everything from the right side of your horse.

- c) **Granny walk.** Walk in a slow controlled forward motion. This makes your horse focus on what you are asking. When you and your horse walk slower it gives you both time to think before you act.

- d) **Go on a long walk with your horse.** Walk with your horse and when he crowds you, stop him and ask him to back up a step. If he walks ahead of you, stop him and make him back up. If he pushes his shoulder into you, make him disengage his hip or move his shoulders over so that his energy is used for something constructive. Do not accept bad behavior. I have listed many tools above that you can use to gain respect of your horse on the ground.

Practice Stopping

One-rein emergency stop. Place hand on the rein and pull gently but firmly towards your knee. Make sure that you are not squeezing with your legs. Exhale and say WHOOOOOOAAAAAAAAA. Practice this from both sides. A hand can be placed on the saddle for stability. If your horse moves his hips over that is entirely okay and will be very helpful in slowing forward motion. Do not release the rein until your horse comes to a complete stop. Please practice this at a standstill, at the walk and at the trot.

PRACTICE PRACTICE PRACTICE

As we all work to build a relationship with our horses we need to practice. If I work with my horse every day I keep that trust established and I keep his mind focused on me as his leader. We do not always have hours to spend each day but every time we go into his stall/pen it is an opportunity for us to remind the horse that we work together as a team. 5 minutes of work each day can alleviate problems down the road.

De-Spooking

Many of us have heard horse experts, friends, and family members tell us about the horses natural response to a fearful situation referred to as the “fight or flight response”. When most horses are confronted with an uncomfortable situation they most often choose to distance themselves from this object (that is the flight response). Some horses run away, others snort at the object and slowly move away, some face the object and flare nostrils while others jump all directions and seemingly loose all brain function. We as riders and owners most certainly do not enjoy these situations and our own fears and survival mechanisms rise up to protect us. Each of us is on a journey to be safe when riding. Some people look to develop that “bomb-proof” horse. What exactly defines a “bomb-proof” horse is still a topic of discussion. For some people they want a horse that will never move a muscle when confronted with something new. Others want a horse that will simply become more alert but not immediately go into a flight mode.

Safety practices when you are working with your horse in a spooky situation.

1. Wear a helmet.
2. Other riders **MUST** pay attention and step away to provide the spooky horse with 10-20 feet of clear space (NO RUBBERNECKING)
3. Stop and think a moment about how to handle the training your horse will need to help them be de-spooked (do not react with your emotions).
4. TAKE PLENTY OF TIME.
5. Do not be afraid to get off and be on the ground rather than in the saddle.
6. Remember to breathe as you work your horse and after you have made an accomplishment. Let your horse think every so often rather than force them to continue to react.

After the Ride

Clean your tack and clothing

Check yourself and your horse for insects

Clean your horse and check him for bruises or scrapes (medicate as needed)

Make notes on what you will work on to improve for you and your horse as you prepare for the next trail ride

Description of Books by Michael Guerini

Dr. MIKE'S HORSEMANSHIP GROUND STEPS TO SUCCESS --- ELECTRONIC VERSION

This electronic book includes: 1) Preparation for Ground work and Riding 2) Understanding your Horse's body language 3) Pre-signal and preparatory commands, and 4) Ground Steps to Success (walk, whoa, disengage hips, back, go forward cue and other movements).

Dr. MIKE'S HORSEMANSHIP RESPONSIVE RIDING --- ELECTRONIC VERSION

In this book Dr. Mike provides numerous training exercises so that riders will gain a better feel of the horse. Each exercise is well described and shares with you the benefit of performing the exercise. The book includes multiple warm-up exercises (ex. riding with straightness, trotting on the oval, etc.) for getting better directional control and the proper use of your legs when riding. Advanced exercises (ex. Staircase leg yields, 10-10-10 exercise, etc) are included for enhanced responsiveness. The basics of dressage and proper biomechanics are presented to help you improve your body language and pre-signal communications with your horse.

All products and services are available
on
www.dunmovinranch.com