



Road Safety..... Information

April 2011

HORSE RIDERS ADVICE AND INFORMATION

There are around three million horse riders in Great Britain, many of whom ride on the road. Although they prefer not to do so, riders often have no choice because they need to reach to bridleways and other off road facilities. Horse riders have a right to use the road, and both riders and motorists are responsible for each other's safety.

Horses are powerful animals that are easily frightened and can panic, especially near fast-moving traffic or at sudden loud noises. Accurate statistics for road accidents involving horses are not available, but the British Horse Society estimates that there are 3,000 such accidents each year, about half of which occur on minor roads.

Training

The British Horse Society provides road safety training for horse riders and operates a Riding & Road Safety Test, which over 4,000 riders take each year. RoSPA recommends that all riders should undertake road safety training, if possible before riding on the road, and take the BHS Test. Further details are available from [www.bhs.org.uk/Training and Qualifications/Riding and Road Safety.aspx](http://www.bhs.org.uk/Training_and_Qualifications/Riding_and_Road_Safety.aspx).

Horse riders are advised to read the Highway Code, especially rules 47 to 55 which provide advice on using horses on the road.

Supervision

Young, inexperienced riders should always be accompanied by adult, experienced riders when riding on or near the road.

Helmets

The Horses (Protective Headgear for Young Riders) Act 1990 requires children under 14 years old to wear protective helmets when riding a horse on the road. It is the responsibility of the parent, guardian, horse owner or person who has custody of the horse immediately before a child rides it, or an employer of a child, to ensure that the child is wearing an approved helmet when riding on the road. Children of the Sikh religion are exempted while they are wearing a turban.

The Horses (Protective Headgear for Young Riders) Regulations 1992 define approved helmets as ones which conform to one of the following: BS 6473:1984, BS 6473:1987, BS 4472: 1988 or BS 6863:1989 (for pedal cyclist helmets) or to a standard that provides an equivalent level of safety. However, BS 6473 and BS 4472 have been withdrawn and are no longer in use.



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RoSPA recommends that horse riders wear a helmet specifically designed for horse riding (rather than a pedal cycle helmet, for instance) and that meets one of these standards:

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| PAS 015: | Equestrian Helmets |
| ASTM F1163: | Standard Specification for Protective Headgear Used in Horse Sports and Horseback Riding |
| BS EN 1384: | Helmets for Equestrian Activities |
| SNELL E2001 | Helmet Standard for Use in Horseback Riding |

All horse rider helmets sold in the UK must also have a CE mark. If possible, in addition to the CE mark and one of the above standards, choose a helmet that also has a BSi kitemark, which provides an extra level of quality assurance.

The law only requires children to wear helmets when riding on the road. However, it is strongly recommended that all riders of horses, or other equine animals, on the road wear a helmet.

As with all helmets, it is important to ensure that they are the right size for the rider and are worn correctly. If possible, choose one from a reputable shop which has staff trained to help ensure the helmet fits the wearer.

Visibility

All riders should wear high visibility (fluorescent and reflective) garments when riding on the road. Fluorescent and reflective ankle bands and stirrup lights are particularly effective in attracting the attention of motorists. If possible, riders should use high visibility garments that conform to BS EN1150, a European Standard for high visibility garments for non-professional use. There is a standard for high visibility garments for professional use, BS EN471, which can also be used.

The Highway Code (Rule 51) advises riders that it is safer not to ride on the road at night or in poor visibility. Riders who must use the road in these conditions should ensure that the horse has reflective bands above the fetlock joints and carry a light, which shows white to the front and red to the rear. A relatively new standard for 'visibility accessories' has been introduced: EN 13356.

Other Protective Wear

Other accessories, such as body protectors, can also offer useful protection. Advice is available from the Safety Department of the British Horse Society.



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Riding on the Road

Before taking a horse onto the road, riders should ensure that they can control the horse, and that the saddle and other equipment fit well and is in good condition. Horses that are inexperienced in riding on the road, or are nervous of traffic, should be ridden by experienced riders and be accompanied by other, less nervous horses.

Riders should follow the Highway Code and obey all road signs, road markings and traffic lights. Riding two abreast can be useful, especially if one of the riders or horses is inexperienced, but riders should return to single file where the road narrows and when approaching bends.

Riders should not carry passengers, or anything which might affect their balance or become tangled in the reins. They should keep both hands on the reins, except when signaling, and both feet in the stirrups.

Where possible, riders should avoid busy, high speed roads and difficult junctions, such as roundabouts.

Riders should be courteous to other road users, and thank drivers who have slowed down for them.

Motorists

Motorists should understand the needs and vulnerability of riders and horses, and behave courteously towards them at all times. Horses are large, powerful animals and a collision with one poses considerable risk to the motor vehicle and its occupants, as well as to the horse and rider.

Drivers should be aware that riders are often children, and therefore, less experienced as both road users and horse riders. Horses themselves may be inexperienced and nervous of traffic.

Drivers should watch out for horses on the road, especially when approaching bends and on narrow rural roads. They should always slow down when seeing a horse and drive past slowly, giving them plenty of room and being ready to stop if necessary. Drivers should never sound their horn or rev their engine near horses.

Motorists should be aware that when turning right, riders will not move to the centre of the road, but stay on the left until they reach the point where they intend to turn. Drivers should also be aware that horse riders behave differently from other traffic at roundabouts. Riders will not normally signal on approach, but will stay on the left within the roundabout until they reach their exit, and then signal left. They may signal right when approaching and passing exits they do not intend to take.

Riders are seated higher than drivers and often, therefore, have a better view and may be able to see a hazard the driver cannot see. Drivers should look out for signals from horse riders and be ready to slow down or stop as indicated.



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Further Information

There is much useful information and advice for horse riders and motorists on two British Horse Society websites: www.bhs.org.uk and www.horseaccidents.org.uk/.