

# Things to know with horses on trails



Photo by KATHE HAYES/San Juan Mountains Association

Bill Vicary rides Red in October 2009 in Chicago Basin. San Juan Public Lands are filled with trails for equestrians. Users are asked to use low-impact camping and horse-tethering methods.

---

By Celia Boyd

## San Juan Mountains Association

Summer is a great time to get out and ride horses on public lands, especially in the high country that is inaccessible the rest of the year because of snow.

Where do I want to ride? Where can I camp? Where and how do I tie my stock? The San Juan National Forest and Bureau of Land Management lands are full of trails for equestrian use.

Cross-country travel is allowed for horsemen and hikers. However, in sensitive areas, staying on the trail always is encouraged. Also, please avoid wet, muddy trails to minimize damage from horse traffic. Remember to share the trails with other users, as many trails are multi-use.

Although horses have the right of way, being aware of other users on the trail always is a good idea. Motorized travel rules changed recently on San Juan Public Lands. Check with a local office for current trail/road conditions or visit [www.fs.fed.us/r2/sanjuan](http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/sanjuan).

You may take horses into designated wilderness areas, but remember to use low-impact camping and horse-tethering methods. Do not tie horses to trees for long periods; instead, use hobbles or high lines. Help protect the land by using a high line, temporary fence, hobble or picket to restrain your stock, and always use tree-saver straps. Move your high line from day to day to lessen the impact of the stock. Tie stock at least 200 feet from any source of water.

The spread of noxious weeds is a serious problem, and we need the help of livestock owners to prevent this. Only certified weed-free forage products or pelletized feeds are allowed. Contact the local ranger station for a list of certified weed-free hay suppliers in your area. If you cannot purchase certified hay, you may use pelletized feeds.

For details about forage restrictions in the Rocky Mountain Region, visit [www.fs.fed.us/r2/news/weed\\_free\\_order/index.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/news/weed_free_order/index.shtml).

When setting up a camp on public lands, proper planning will lessen your impacts on the natural world. Use a previously impacted area that is at least 100 feet from lakes, ponds, streams and trails. Never leave a campfire unattended, and keep vehicles within 300 feet of forest system roads.

Remember to try to leave no trace. If you "pack it in," make sure you "pack it out." You should burn only trash that will be completely consumed. Foil, cans and glass do not burn and must be packed out. Do not bury those items.

Always make sure a friend or family member knows your itinerary for the backcountry. Know before you go - being prepared is one of the first Leave No Trace principles. Bring proper gear and clothing; you never know if you may have to spend the night in the woods, away from camp. Also, always keep your hands and feet dry and warm. Carry a good map, GPS (and a cell phone), extra food, clothing and first aid.

Be aware that certain trails and trailheads may not be well-suited to horse use or trailer parking. Also, remember that horses are not allowed in developed campgrounds unless the campgrounds are established specifically for equestrian use.

Some campgrounds that are available for those with horses in the San Juan National Forest include: Lower Hermosa, Burro Bridge, Transfer, Target Tree and Palisades Horse Camp. For more information about these campgrounds, visit [www.fs.fed.us/r2/sanjuan/recreation](http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/sanjuan/recreation) and look on the right-hand side for horse-friendly campgrounds in each ranger district.

Enjoy your time enjoying San Juan lands with your horse friends, and please visit or call one of your San Juan Public Lands offices with any questions.

Celia Boyd is a visitor information specialist with the San Juan Mountains Association.