

Horse Safety Australia : Commercial Trail Riding (short rides)

1 Staff qualifications and ratios

- i. Trail rides should be run by **qualified** staff (either through Horse Safety Australia (previously AHSE) or another recognised body which provides **specific** trail riding qualifications. This shouldn't just be a general instructor or coaching qualification, as these do not address the specific needs of trail riding –especially when tourists are the clients).
- ii. The overall ratio should be a minimum of 1 qualified staff member for every 6 participants...and according to Horse Safety Australia standards **with a minimum of 2 staff** on **any** ride. (The Australian Horse Industry Council Code says 1:6 with no minimum of 2 for small numbers, but we don't think this is good enough for the normal trail riding clients, as the majority of these are beginners. 1:6 may be ok when dealing with experienced riders who also have first aid qualifications, but not for the normal tourists!)

2 Venue

There should be **separation of public and horses** at all times when staff are not involved.

3. Planning

This should include permits for access to trails as required, and knowledge of current weather forecasts and trail conditions.

4. Horses and equipment

Trail riding operations must have **suitable and safe horses** (including safe horses for staff) and **appropriate and properly fitted equipment** (stock saddles are most commonly used - with two points of attachment, or a double wrapped latigo)

5. Waivers/disclaimers and medical information

Paperwork should include notification about the risks of riding. Ensure that minors have parental or a legal guardian's permission. Obtain relevant medical (including allergic) history of clients. Adults should sign waivers which meet the relevant legislation in each state.

Check for hydration of clients, toilet needs and sunscreen as required.

6. Helmets

Clients and staff should be fitted with **ASNZ 3838** standard helmets (or American standard, not European*) correctly fitted by staff **Horse Safety Australia does not endorse EN helmets....see the letter from Australian Standards about the EN certification process at the end of this document*

7. Footwear:

Either riding boots should be provided, or if clients are using their own footwear, Toestoppers++, or an equivalent safety stirrups should be used which prevents dragging in a fall (e.g. Classic or Escape Breakaway++ stirrups) *++recommended by Horse Safety Australia*

8. Clothes

Clothing should include sleeved shirts and long pants

9. Saddle bags

These should be available for carrying client's loose items (medicines, puffers, cameras - if appropriate, drink bottles etc.)

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10. Safe mounting area

There should be a **secure area with non slip footing for mounting up** (enclosed with appropriate fencing). Riders should be assisted to mount, their equipment checked and fitted, and their abilities assessed before they depart. Riders should demonstrate control of their horses, as a minimum, the ability to start, stop and turn their horses.

11. Young or nervous riders

Children under 10 years old, without extensive experience, and nervous riders not in control of their horses should be placed on a lead rein with a qualified staff member. This staff member cannot then be included in the normal ratios for supervision of the ride.

12. Emergencies

There should be **good access and egress** to horse area and trails **for emergencies** and these should be known by the trail guides. A responsible person at home base should know the trails used and estimated time frames to ensure appropriate responses to emergencies.

13. Trail terrain

The trail should be safe and suitable to suit the standard, experience and fitness of the riders and horses (consider overhanging branches, away from significant hazards including main roads, no very steep ascents or descents for beginner riders). Trails regularly maintained.

14. Risk Management

Risk Management must be in place for the program, and emergency procedures determined for foreseeable problems. Staff must be trained in these.

15. First aid qualifications

At least one staff member on every ride should be trained in first aid. First aid equipment for both horse and rider should be taken on trail rides

16. Communication

Mobile phones, UHF, satellite phones or some effective communication device must be available for emergencies and carried on trail rides

17. Language, and communication with riders

Staff must have an effective means of communication with their riders whether through normal verbal commands, signs or interpreters. They should be sure that their riders understand their commands prior to departure.

18. Contingency plans

There should be contingency arrangements for foreseeable weather changes (e.g. taking rain wear, considering different routes)

19. Roads

If public roads are used, road rules must be obeyed: keep left, no more than 2 riders side by side at any time.

20. Environmental Impact

Trails should be designed to consider and minimize environmental impact

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Good practices for beginner trail rides.....

(N.B. These are general principles, and require risk management related decisions in their application, taking into account the differing needs for each group of riders, the terrain, the weather, the experience of the staff, etc. They should be read in conjunction with the previous general information.)

Introduction, rules & demonstration

It is good to begin with an introduction to horses and horse riding for the whole group. This should include basic rules of behaviour around horses, (no running, yelling, throwing things) and a demonstration of how to approach and mount a horse, sit in the saddle, hold the reins and where the feet fit in the stirrups. The demonstration should include how to start, stop and turn a horse, and then how to dismount and hold a horse (and lead it, if this is likely to be required on the ride).

Tack check

Staff must tack check the horses before mounting riders...particularly check the firmness of the girth, if the horse has been standing and waiting.

Procedure for mounting

It is imperative that riders are not put in danger when mounting, or when waiting for others. They are at risk if they are amongst loose horses, whether on foot or mounted waiting to start the trail ride. Horses can be tied around the outside of the area in the order they will set off on the ride. In this way they are not in position to fight with other horses, and all riders can be observed by staff at all times. Starting from the back end of the line, staff can untie the horses and mount the riders, placing them back next to the outside of the area still in line. Staff can then keep watch over mounted riders while helping the next clients. The front horses (still tied and un-mounted) are blocking the riders from moving off during this mounting process .

Assist with mounting

Beginner riders must be assisted to mount (with the staff member holding the horse for them). Mounting blocks are a good aid for the sake of the horse, rider, staff's back and equipment. Purpose built mounting blocks should be used, NOT milk crates! Stirrup size and length should be adjusted prior to leaving the rider on their own. Riders should NEVER be mounted on a horse that is tethered!

Riders demonstrate control

Riders must demonstrate their ability to start, stop and turn a horse prior to departure on a trail ride. This is most efficiently achieved by working with the whole group, moving the line around the area prior to departure...with all working on stopping, starting and turning at the same time. Alternately, if time is not a constraint, staff may choose to work with each rider during the mounting process, but they need to be aware that this involves people sitting on horseback, waiting, for a much longer time.

Girth check

A girth check in the first 15 minutes after mounting is advisable, as these could have loosened, putting the rider at risk.

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Travel single file

Beginner riders (tourists, children etc.) normally travel in single file. If moving in this way, the horses learn to follow behind each other and the riders require less involvement in controlling them. The front rider can then block the group in an emergency. If travelling in a group (side by side) the horses can start to race each other and vie for the lead. In this situation, a staff member cannot effectively block (control) the riders or horses.

Position of staff members

There must be a staff member at the front of the group to lead, set the pace and block in an emergency, and another at the back to check on the progress of the group, and assist with any problems which arise. The back rider may travel at the side of the group if there is room to do so safely (i.e. not a narrow track) as from this position they can see what is going on much better. Additional staff members (required by the ratios set at a minimum of 1 horse staff to 6 clients) may ride at the side towards the middle of the group (or in line, if the track is narrow).

The front rider should never leave the group to deal with a situation, or the problem may escalate with no one blocking the rest of the riders from moving off.

Staff must fix problems along the way

Trail riding staff should watch for and fix problems along the way. These may include:

- unsettled horses which might cause difficulties (too close to another, looking like kicking, unhappy with the rider's behaviour or their tack)
- loose girths (risking saddles slipping)
- rider problems: feet jammed in stirrups, misbehaving (catching branches as they pass, dropping or waving reins around, abusing horses), nervousness and fear.

Staff instruct skills as required

Staff may need to instruct basic riding skills along the way, to ensure the riders are safe and in control of their mounts.

Tourist information

Trail rides are an opportunity to talk about the environment, the local features and the fauna and flora in the area.

Returning to the venue

Horses must always walk the last portion of the ride home. Riders should be in a safe position to dismount (away from the possibility of a kick from other horses). A simple way to ensure this is to have riders ride stay in line when home, ride on the left rein around the outside of the yard, and stop in line along the fence for their dismount. They should dismount to the inside of the area, away from the fence. Staff may feel they need to assist riders to dismount by holding each horse and ensuring the dismount is controlled.

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The problem with EN certified helmets:



7 September 2006

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Certification of Equestrian Helmets – Are they all the same?

SAI Global Limited is a market leader in providing independent assessment and certification services. The most widely recognisable symbol of excellence and independent assurance, the 'Five Ticks' Standards Marks are licensed to companies and products that have met the rigorous requirements of management systems or product standards.

One such product is equestrian helmets. Each year in Australia, an average of 20 people die from head injuries sustained from horse riding incidents. To avoid injury and death, wearing an equestrian helmet that meets the Australian Standard helps to prevent or lessen the severity of head injuries incurred from a fall or hoof blow.

The Australian Standard AS/NZS 3838 '*Helmets for horse riding and horse-related activities*' specifies requirements for construction, testing, marking, use and care of helmets. Only a helmet which has been certified to AS/NZS 3838 and displays the 'Five Ticks' StandardsMark assures you that it has undergone the rigours of independent testing (through a third party, impartial registered test laboratory) and an assessment of the manufacturing site to ensure that it can withstand forces known to be likely to cause severe head injuries

Not all equestrian helmet standards require the thorough ongoing batch testing and factory assessment that AS/NZS 3838 calls for. Yet, riders may be easily misguided if they see some other mark or manufacturer's claim. Compliance to standard EN 1384 '*Helmets for equestrian activities*' can be at times found on helmet.

While the testing regime of AS/NZS 3838 and EN 1384 is generally similar (the AS/NZS is a little more stringent than it's European equivalent), the real difference, at present, lies with the certification regime currently in place.

Under the European system, an equestrian helmet is considered a '*medium risk product*' and the certification mark (CE Mark) can be applied on the basis of a single successful test on a sample product, with only the manufacturer responsible for any ongoing conformance. No independent third party verifies the ongoing compliance or the manufacturers testing regime.

Under the Australian system, certification by SAI Global is quite different. Not only does the model have to be shown to fully comply via independent testing, but also technically trained auditors examine the manufacturing process to ensure that relevant controls are in place, visit the manufacturer regularly. The value of the 'Five Ticks' certification is the compliance rigour of the Australian Standards that requires far more than a one-off pass result.

SAI Global believes these differences are so significant that riders should take them into account when purchasing and wearing helmets.

The following table summarises the differences between AS/NZS 3838 and EN 1384.

	AS/NZS 3838	EN 1384
Type of Certification	StandardsMark	CE Mark
Manufacturing site visited	Yes (2 day audit)	No
Use of independent test laboratory	Yes	No
Quality system requirements	Yes (audited regularly)	No

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Traceability of helmets to raw materials	Yes	No
Each batch independently tested	Yes	No
Mandatory follow-up of complaints	Yes	No
Ongoing certification administered	Yes (through SAI Global)	None

The ongoing batch testing is one area, which sets the Australian testing and standardisation requirements apart from those in other countries, because it is proactive and it seeks to prevent or reduce the possibility of product failure. The alternative, reactive response, typically occurs only once a product has failed in the field. This can lead to a series of damage control measures, including product recall.

Yours sincerely



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