

EQUESTRIAN TRAIL RIDERS' ACTION COMMITTEE

New Realities for the Urban Trail Rider

While Woodside and Portola Valley have a long history of equestrian use of public spaces, most residents today have very little experience with horses. With increasing urbanization of these areas, barns are being left empty or are being leveled to make room for bigger, newer homes. Urbanites are concerned about horse poop on their driveways, landscaped parking areas, and on open-space trails for both aesthetic and health reasons. Government agencies, whether open space managers or Town Councils, are receiving increasing complaints about unwanted horse poop on their property and in open spaces.

Here are some facts that can be used to educate the public about horses and their feces.

1. As herbivores, neither the presence of the horse nor its feces threaten wildlife. In contrast, carnivore (dogs, humans, mountain lions) feces have a higher fat content which delays its breakdown. This delayed breakdown may cause some wild animals to avoid areas where carnivore scent is deposited. This may lead to potential loss of these types of wildlife from that area.
2. While most mammals have numerous gut pathogens that may be harmful to humans (especially to the immune compromised, children or pregnant women), horses have very few when compared to dogs/cats and humans. See UC Davis 2014 article, http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/ceh/local_resources/pdfs/pubs-Summer2014-sec.pdf. The potential for our recreational horses to carry these pathogens is very low.
3. Horse feces should be considered 'black gold'. It is unfortunate that most horse poop is disposed in landfills because it is a valuable soil conditioner. When composted and mixed with dirt, it helps retain soil moisture and breaks down compaction of clay soils.

As stated above, regulatory and governmental agencies are under increasing pressure to "do something" about horse poop. Also while many of our public trails are historic equestrian trails, other more numerous users (bikers and hikers) are demanding access to these trails. And as we all know; it is a well established truth that the squeaky wheel gets the grease. So unless equestrians today start to 'rethink' current behaviors and TAKE ACTION to help preserve our access to trail riding in urban areas; as crazy as it sounds.... it may be that the outcome of future urban pressures will be either requiring diapers on horses, or worse, loss of equestrian access in urban areas entirely. Please consider and DO the following:

- *Dismount and kick manure off private paved driveways
- *While riding, try whenever possible to move your horse off the trail when it poops/urinates.
- *Pick up and remove poop and shavings at trailer parking sites
- *Control dust, odor and insects on your property; protect water resources
- *Attend and participate in public meetings about equestrian issues that arise
- *Join community service organizations like SMC Volunteer Horse Patrol and SMC Mounted Search and Rescue Unit to demonstrate the value of having horses in the community

A COALITION OF EQUESTRIAN ORGANIZATIONS :
DISABLED EQUESTRIANS - JBH CAMP AD HOC COMMITTEE - LOS ALTOS HOUNDS - LOS ALTOS HORSEMEN'S ASSOC. - LOS VIAJEROS RIDING CLUB - MOUNTED PATROL OF SMC - PORTOLA VALLEY TRAILS ASSOC. - SAN FRANCISCO HORSEMEN'S ASSOC. - SAN MATEO COUNTY HORSEMEN'S ASSOC. - THE SHACK RIDERS - WOODSIDE HORSE OWNERS ASSOC. - WOODSIDE TRAILS CLUB

EQUESTRIAN TRAIL RIDERS' ACTION COMMITTEE

*Volunteer for equestrian groups like WHOA, NCEFT or SMCHA etc., to provide a positive image for horses in urban areas

Our ability to continue to ride our horses in these increasingly urban communities depends on what we do and how we are perceived. If we fail, riding horses may become only an arena or park sport.

A COALITION OF EQUESTRIAN ORGANIZATIONS :

DISABLED EQUESTRIANS - JBH CAMP AD HOC COMMITTEE - LOS ALTOS HOUNDS - LOS ALTOS HORSEMEN'S ASSOC. - LOS VIAJEROS RIDING CLUB - MOUNTED PATROL OF SMC - PORTOLA VALLEY TRAILS ASSOC. - SAN FRANCISCO HORSEMEN'S ASSOC. - SAN MATEO COUNTY HORSEMEN'S ASSOC. - THE SHACK RIDERS - WOODSIDE HORSE OWNERS ASSOC. - WOODSIDE TRAILS CLUB