The Multi-Dimensional Value of Equine Greenways: Health, Environmental, and Economic Impacts of Trail Riding

Presented by

The Connecticut Horse Council

"Horsemen united in Leadership, Service, and Education



Presented at the CT Trails Symposium, October 2, 2026 by Diane Ciano President, CT Horse Council

The Connecticut Horse Council advocates for expanding multi-use greenway networks that include equestrian-friendly infrastructure.

Integrating horseback riding onto public trails supports the rider and the animal's well-being, stimulates local agritourism, and fosters volunteer-driven stewardship.

Aligning with the symposium's theme, this presentation examines the vital role equestrians play in trail utilization and advocacy.



State Representation

Department of Energy & Environmental Protection:
CT State Trails Plan - CT State Forest Plan
SCORP - State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

CONNECTICUT EQUINE ADVISORY COUNCIL

PLANNING FOR GREENWAYS

This session examines the foundational value of Connecticut's greenways through recreational, economic, and community lenses, while thoughtfully addressing the WHY in this unique, often overlooked needs of equestrians.

This country was first pioneered by man with horse through interconnecting trails and dirt roads. This travel by horse is firmly a part of our heritage. It has been increasingly difficult to carry on this tradition as travel ways become paved with materials that are hard on horses.

In today's world, riding is often limited to state land unless otherwise by permission, private lands.

- Trails are detrimental to the exercise of the horse, as many horses are limited to paddocks and arenas.
- Trails provide a place for horses to be in nature and the health and well being for the riders.
- ***Greenways often provide connections to other trail systems.***

In return, individuals and organized equestrian groups often volunteer for trail clearing and maintenance work, provide community services by having people encounter these majestic animals.

A trail planned for pavement can easily be ***intentionally*** designed to accommodate a natural trail surface along the side for all users that may want to walk a slower pace, while bicyclists travel fast on the pavement, allowing safe, shared access for cyclists, pedestrians, and riders.

As Connecticut expands its trail networks, ensuring equitable access for all non-motorized users remains an essential educational priority for local planners.

Please help your community save its traditional connections by supporting equine-friendly open spaces, greenways, and trails for this overlooked form of passive recreation .

***Physiological Benefits*:**

- **Cardiovascular Health**
- **Core and Muscle Strength**
- **Joint Mobility and Coordination**
- **Stress Hormone Reduction**
- **Burning calories**

***Community and Social Benefits*:**

- **Social Cohesion**
- **Teamwork and Trust**
- **Shared Stewardship**
- **Preserves rural heritage**
- **Shared access**
- **Multi-Use Trail Creation and Maintenance**
- **Keeps local stables vibrant**
- **Local Economic Growth**
  Tourism spending









Physiological Benefits:

The connection between horses and the human heart spans biology, energy, and emotional healing.

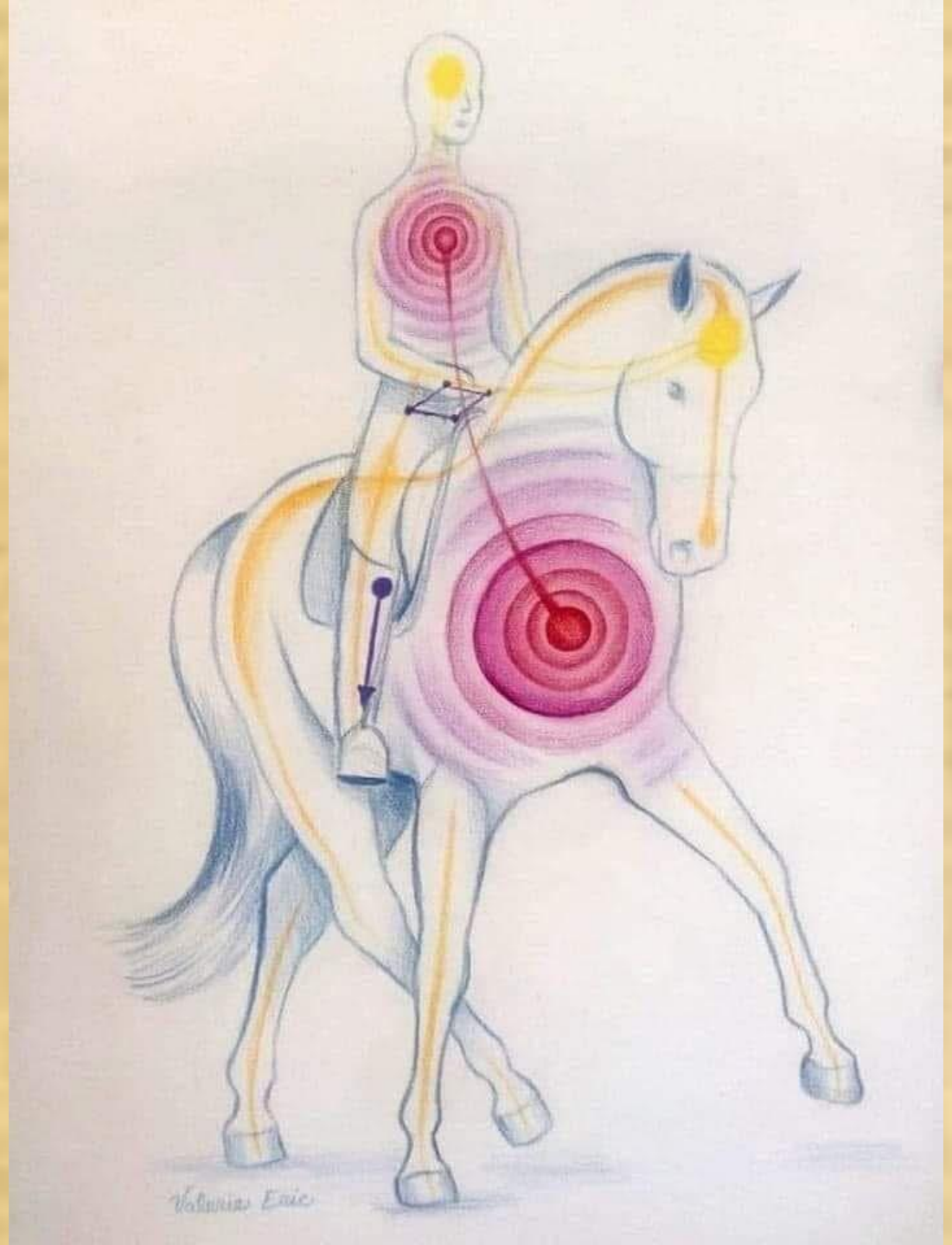
An equine heart weighs up to 10 pounds - five times larger than the human heart!

A horse' s heart produces a powerful electromagnetic field.

Horses help humans heal because they have massive heart energy fields - Their calm, steady heartbeats can actually sync with our own.

Studies in animal-assisted therapy show that humans near horses can experience slowed heart rates, reduced stress hormones, and synchronized heart rate variability.

Just being near a horse lowers our stress, drops our blood pressure, and boosts feelings of peace, joy, and confidence.



Horses help our hearts remember how to slow down.

https://www.instagram.com/reel/DaiMAZxRWRq/

When humans experience feelings such as appreciation, calm, or compassion, the heart enters a state called ***coherence*** - a harmonious rhythm that supports nervous system balance and well-being.

Horses naturally maintain this coherent state.

When humans interact with horses in calm, attentive ways, their heart rhythms can begin to synchronize with the horse's—a phenomenon sometimes referred to as *biological entrainment*.



Physiological Benefits: ***"Horses bring one to the "Present Moment"***

Horses mirror our emotions and state of being which allows for self-reflection and stress management

Engaging with horses allows one to practice ***mindfulness*** - a "practical way to rehearse being in the moment, where they can feel at ease, relax, and focus on the joy of communication with a sensitive and responsive animal, ***which is the only effective way to learn to communicate with the horses successfully"***



Horses Inspire Passion



***Physiological Benefits*: *Horses Keep Us Healthy*.**



There's no denying that working with horses requires physical effort and is a great way to exercise. Consider how the following activities provide exercise opportunities for those who handle and care for horses:

- Riding
- Catching / leading
- Mucking stalls
- Carrying feed / water
- Carrying hay bales
- Cranking trailer hitches
- Fence work
- Walking pastures
- Grooming
- Trimming / shoeing
- Carrying saddles / tack
- Climbing fences

Just think –

Every moment a person spends doing horse-related chores is a moment not spent idly in front of a screen.

And horses keep people mentally healthy as well as physically healthy. Animal Assisted Therapy helps individuals with emotional challenges improve their conditions through interactions with animals.

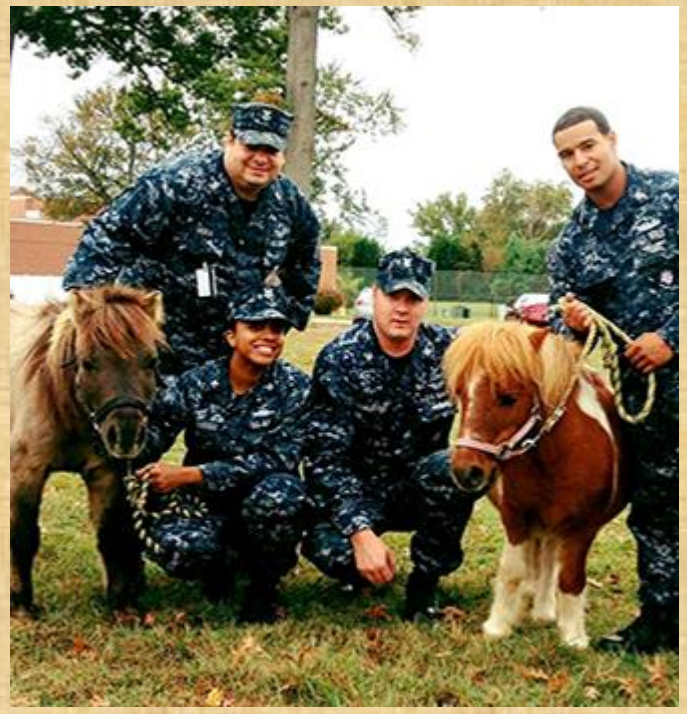
Individuals with a variety of challenges; interaction with horses have been shown to reduce violent impulses in teens and alleviate PTSD suffered by many including veterans.

***Community and Social Benefits*:**

Equine-assisted therapies are being used to help people The most striking examples of how we learn from horses occur in riding programs for mentally and emotionally challenged individuals. For instance, it is well-known amongst mental health professionals that horses help teach autistic children & adults crucial skills that may not come naturally, including reading other's emotions. Connecticut has several equine Therapy programs throughout our state.







Studies confirm that horse therapy also teach autistic kids how to do things in sequence, supporting habits such as bedtime preparations. In addition to being beneficial for children and adults with a wide range of physical, cognitive and behavioral needs, equine-assisted therapies have also been used to successfully help in the treatment of people with depression, dementia, PTSD, anxiety, and substance abuse issues. For people with physical disabilities, riding horses has been shown to improve balance, muscle tone, coordination, and motor control.



***Community and Social Benefits*:**

Equine-assisted therapies are being used to help people



Campers embrace possibilities and safely challenge perceived limitations. Among kindred spirits facing similar challenges, they escape isolation and find a community defined by acceptance. Round-the-clock care is provided on site by doctors and nurses wearing camp T-shirts, operating from an infirmary known as the "OK Corral".

PAUL NEWMAN'S "THE HOLE IN THE WALL GANG: CAMP IN ASHFORD, CT

Named after the outlaw gang in his classic film *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance* Kid, the campus is built like an Old West hideout.

The camp was created to give children facing cancer, sickle cell anemia, and other serious medical conditions a safe, barrier-free place to "raise a little hell" and simply enjoy being kids.

100% Free of Charge: True to Paul Newman's vision, no family ever receives a bill. All lodging, meals, activities, and expert medical therapies are covered entirely through donations.

Discreet Medical Infrastructure: The facility features an on-site, state-of-the-art infirmary designed to look like an Old West corral.

Year-Round Global Outreach: The camp's specialized staff operates a mobile **Hospital Outreach Program (HOP)** year-round. To more than 30 regional medical facilities and hospitals across the Northeast throughout the winter months.

***Community and Social Benefits*:**

***Horses Preserve our Heritage … Connecticut has a rich in history of how horses have been instrumental then and now*.**

When you ask a horseman or horsewoman why they're so drawn to horses, they're apt to shrug and respond with "it's in my DNA" . Such a profound statement is perhaps a little easier to understand when you consider that people have pursued relationships with horses since before 2500 BC.

Historically we have relied on horses to help us feed ourselves and our families, travel distances, pull heavy loads, fight in wars, police our communities, fight fires, deliver mail, practice medicine, minister to the sick, engage in agriculture, managing livestock, transport goods, and free ourselves from British tyranny. Horses are still an important form of transportation. As development consumes acre after acre of open space, people are turning at unprecedented rates to forests and parks to recreate and explore. Horses allow people to access natural areas they might not be able to reach on foot. This is especially important for trail lovers with disabilities.



And Horses Bring Families Together.

In rural America, horses remain an important family tradition and are often at the center of family gatherings. US Pony Clubs, 4-H, and other youth-oriented organizations bring families together through equestrian and teambuilding activities.

The same goes for junior horse shows and other competitions like barrel racing and eventing. These venues provide unique opportunities for families to team up and learn from their horses and each other. And, across the country, families ride trails and camp together with their horses. In families with horses, kids often take part in daily chores and learn how to take care of others. This kind of responsibility contributes to valuable life skills in the long run.

Community and Social Benefits:

Horses Preserve our Heritage … And Horses Bring Families Together













***Community and Social Benefits*:**

Horses Preserve our Heritage … Connecticut has a rich in history of how horses have been instrumental then and now.

A statute of Lafayette, a general in the American Revolutionary War is across from the state Capitol in **Hartford, CT**. Our capitol also depicts pictures of horses in battles and there are several monuments around our state that feature heroes mounted on horses.



A statute of General Israel Putnam's daring escape at Horseneck, (now part of Greenwich) from British dragoons, during the Revolutionary War. Putnam, surprised and outnumbered, famously rode his horse down a steep cliff, and the British, unable to follow, fired at him. Winter Camp **1778/1779.**

Putnam Memorial State Park in Redding, Connecticut



***Community and Social Benefits*:**

***Horses Preserve our Heritage … Connecticut has a rich in history of how horses have been instrumental then and now*.**

The Connecticut Horse Guards are living history

Today we continue a tradition

Connecticut has four colonial militia units, two Foot Guards and two Horse Guards, all member units of the Connecticut National Guard.

The First Company Governors Horse Guard, founded in 1778 and The Second Company Governors Horse Guard, chartered 1808 are strategically stationed in Avon and Newtown, respectively.

Historic cavalry units, Connecticut carries on the volunteerism of the earliest American Colonials ensuring the safety of their Governor.

Today, all four units are seen throughout the state representing the governor at parades, reviews and ceremonies including presidential inaugurals.

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Community and Social Benefits:

Horses Keep Open Spaces Open **:**

Preservation of Open Green Spaces Development barrier The space requirements for long-distance horse trails help protect large acreage from being turned into housing developments or commercial strip malls.

Did you know that land is being lost to development at the astonishing rate of 250 acres per hour? That's 4.2 acres per minute. That means an eventually end to beautiful open spaces, replaced by concrete, buildings, air pollution, traffic, and power lines.

Open land is needed to produce food, protect wildlife, and filter impurities from the air – yet we are allowing our land to be lost an accelerated rate for the sake of development.

Horse farms preserve open spaces. Around the country, and in Connecticut, horse farms are keeping spaces open while other rural operations, like dairy farms, are rapidly disappearing.

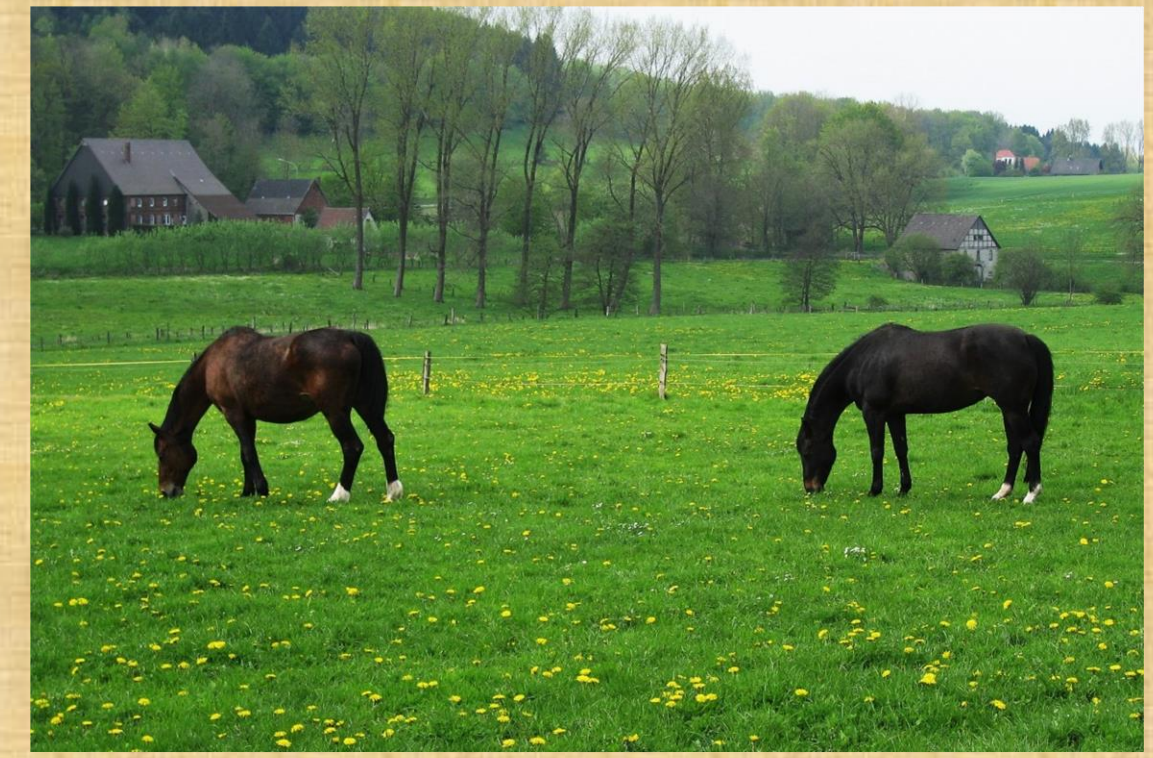


***Community and Social Benefits*:**

***Horses Provide Beautiful, Affordable Views*.**

Continuing on that last point, most people find horses and horse pastures to be pleasant sights, especially on misty mornings and at sunsets. When you live next to horse pastures it's sometimes easy to take for granted how much more inherently peaceful your daily views are than the views available to those residing next to commercial and modern housing developments.

Ask yourself this question – Would I rather live next to a cluster of houses and contend with concomitant traffic, or live next to undeveloped farmland with horses?



The thing about that is, so long as the land that surrounds you is being used for horses it will retain its rural character. However, if you evict the horses and allow that land to be developed, there'll be no going back – that rural landscape will be gone forever, replaced by buildings and concrete and traffic – all of which will cost you, the taxpayer, much more money for community services than will the undeveloped farmland

So, consider the horses around you to be the placeholders and buffers from unsightly – and costly – development.

***Economic Value*:** The American Horse Council (AHC) is the national association representing all segments of the horse industry in Washington, D.C., advocating on behalf of the millions of Americans who own, ride, breed, compete, work with, and enjoy horses. The AHC's 2023 Economic Impact Study of the U.S. Horse Industry found that the horse industry generated:

- **6.6 Million** Horses in US
- **$177 BILLION annually in total direct economic value**
- **Supports 2.2 Million total jobs**
- Contributes an additional **180,000 indirect jobs**
- **$2.5 Million** of land owned or leased for horse related purposes
- **2 Million** Industry Volunteers

The American Horse Council's 2023 Economic Impact Study of the U.S. Horse Industry found that approximately **10 percent of all U.S. households have participated in a trail ride.**

The recreational horse industry generates approximately **$14.5 billion in direct economic value**, supports nearly **300,000 direct jobs**, and contributes an additional **180,000 indirect jobs**

The AHC further reports the U.S. horse industry pays a total of $1.9 BILLION in taxes to federal, state, and local governments and directly produces $39 BILLION worth of goods and services each year. This impact on the US economy shows how much money industry suppliers and employees spend.

That's more that the motion picture and railroad transportation industries contribute to the US Gross Domestic Product. And it's only slightly smaller than what the apparel and other textile products industries contribute.

We can say that the horse industry spends more money than any other trail user group.

The federal, state and local governments should therefore recognize equestrians as stewardship partners and stakeholders in public-land management

***Economic Value*: Forever Farms** are equestrian facilities and farms, either privately-owned or operating as not for-profit businesses, that demonstrate a commitment to safeguarding the comfort and dignity of horses, donkeys and mules (collectively referred to as horses) throughout their lives for equine welfare. Horse rescues and sanctuaries in the United States contribute an estimated **$325 million in total economic impact**, supporting **4,681 jobs** and **adding $139 million in direct value to the economy**



Connecticut has over 25 Rescues, 50 boarding/Riding Lesson Farms/ Therapy

***Economic Value*: *Horses Create Jobs*. HORSE INDUSTRY BOOSTS OUR ECOMONY**

A thriving local horse culture supports agricultural businesses, veterinarians, feed stores, and equipment dealers, which strengthens the regional tax base to fund public services like schools and roads.

There are many fulfilling and well-paying careers to pursue for people who love horses. The average annual salary for full-time farriers is over $100k; trainers can earn between $70k – 170k per year; and as of January 2025, equine veterinarians in CT will earn approximated $157k per year. Here are just some of the equine related jobs and careers, and others that are supported by the horse industry:

Here are some jobs that exist solely because of horses:

- Farrier
- Equine Veterinarian
- Groom
- Trainer
- Handler
- Farm & Barn Manager
- Breeder
- Equine Physical Therapist
- Horse Facilities Manager
- Mounted Police Officer
- Saddle Maker and Fitter
- Equine Product Vendor



Here are some other products and services that horse owners regularly support:

- Trucks/heavy duty vehicles
- Horse and Utility Trailers
- Fuel
- Farm Equipment and Supplies
- Construction of Barns & farm buildings
- First Aid Supplies
- Pharmaceuticals
- Feed and Hay
- Restaurant and Hotels
- Insurance
- Medical and Legal Services

***Trail Maintenance & Land Advocacy Benefits*:**

The recreation and trail riding sector makes up a massive portion of the horse industry's volunteer network.

Out of the **2 Million** total volunteers in the U.S. horse industry, hundreds of thousands are dedicated specifically to trail advocacy, trail clearing, maintenance, education and public land preservation.

These efforts provide a valuable public benefit and help land-management agencies maintain trails and recreational opportunities.

Organized riding groups volunteer for trail clearing. Because trail riders often volunteer through decentralized local clubs or public land partnerships, their nationwide efforts are best understood through the major organizations that track their hours.

The Connecticut Horse Council (CHC) partnered with **Dept. of Energy & Environmental Protection** (DEEP) in ***2003*** to create the **Volunteer Horse Patrol** (VHP) to ride and serve in ***State Parks & Forests***. CHC has since added municipal parks, private lands and land trusts. The establishment of this Patrol Unit came at a critical time, when drastic cuts on our State Budget caused layoffs, staff & supervisor reductions forcing the closure of many state parks & forests and reduction of services due to lack of State Funding.



A 14 Year data collection of who was on the trails and their activities, patrol & trail maintenance hours along with assistance given to other trail users, including information, education on trail etiquette, directions to lost persons and first aid.

Connecticut Horse Council
Volunteer Horse Patrol
2003-2016

Diane Ciano, CHC, VHP Chair
Stacey Stearns, Agriculture Program Specialist
Dr. Jenifer Nadeau, Equine Extension Specialist
University of Connecticut

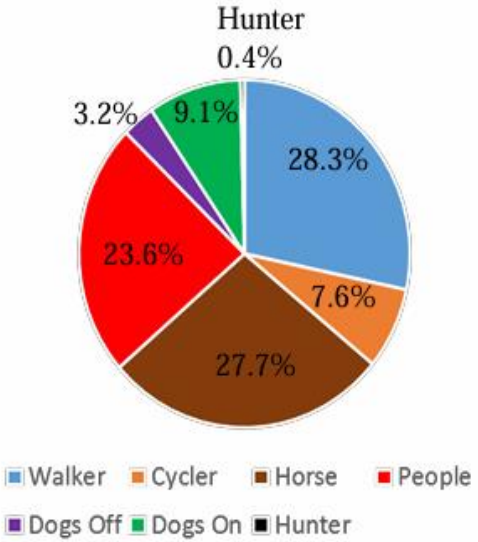
UCONN | COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, HEALTH AND NATURAL RESOURCES
EXTENSION & ANIMAL SCIENCE

Horses on Trails

- Collected data show a large number of horses utilize state, town, and private lands, and work to patrol and maintain trails
- 27.7% of trail users recorded were equestrians
- Over the 14-year period there were 33,357 horses out on the trail during the patrols and an average of 1.75 other horses per patrol
- 30% of the 8,279 trail users recorded by the VHP in 2016 were equestrians



Recorded Visitors without Motorbikes or ATVs 2003-2016



People are those noted doing other activities, including: fishing, swimmers, kayakers, picnickers, campers, bird watchers, photography, snow shoes, skiers, etc

*Collected data shows a large number of horses utilize state, town and private lands, and work to patrol and maintain trails **27.7%** of trail users recorded were equestrians, a percentage that was very close to walkers at **28.3%***

http://www.cthorsecouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CHC-VHP-Trail-User-Study.pdf

The CT Horse Council ‘s Volunteer Horse Patrol serves as ‘Goodwill Ambassadors’ for the equestrian community assisting with non-enforcement tasks such as; promoting trail etiquette and participating in municipal programs and special events. Volunteers maintain trails, patrol state parks, forests, municipal parks , open spaces and private lands, providing “eyes & ears” as to what is going on, helping lost people and providing first aid when necessary. Horse riders actively report trail hazards, washed-out paths, or illegal dumping to park rangers, keeping parks safer for all visitors.









***Volunteer Labor*:** Equestrian clubs frequently organize volunteer workdays to clear fallen trees, fix erosion, and repair bridges on public lands. ***Since 2003 the CHC Volunteer Horse Patrol has totaled 63,849 Hours with 32,779 Patrols Saving Connecticut Taxpayers $1,596,225.00*Volunteer**













Volunteer Community Service: No Child Left Inside: Equestrians volunteer around the state at DEEP & Other Events















Environmental:

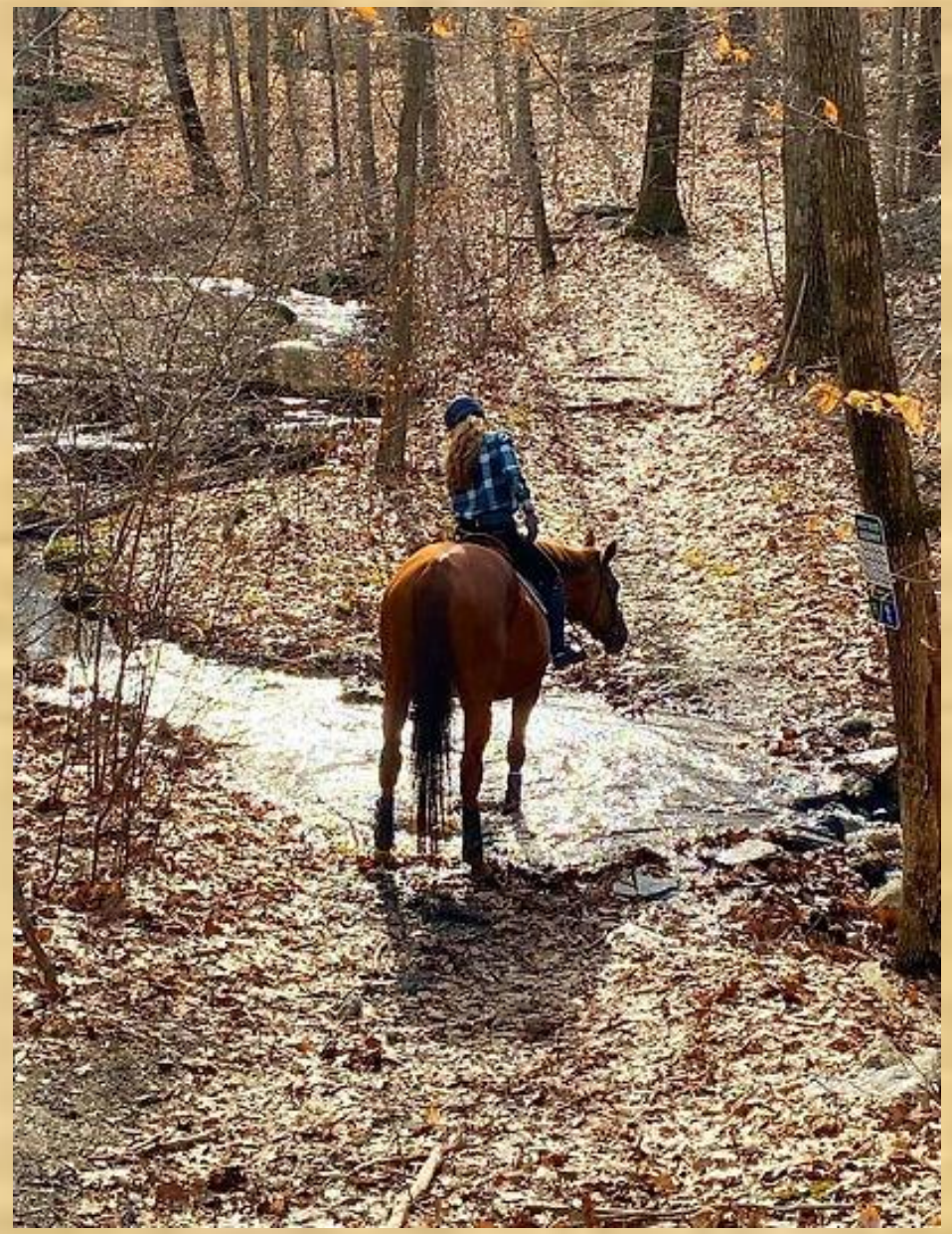
While proactive management controls erosion and invasive species, research demonstrates a gap between perceived and actual environmental impacts.

Many times, people make assertions about negative environmental impacts of horses that are based on hearsay versus scientific study.

Ultimately, **proactive design** for dedicated equestrian infrastructure protects public spaces, enhances community wellness, and generates measurable economic growth.

Habitat protection: Equestrian conservation groups heavily lobby to keep state, local, and national parks funded, which directly preserves local wildlife habitats and keeps air and water cleaner for nearby towns.

For example, The South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority (RWA) tested their reservoir in Bethany CT for 15 years and found no pollution from horses or hikers, so testing was discontinued. The Bethany Horsemen & Bethany Land Trust maintain the trails.



***Environmental*: Horse Manure Concerns on Trails**

Horse manure on natural dirt trails has a minimal and mostly short-term environmental impact because it consists of digested plant matter that breaks down rapidly.

Environmental Effects:

Toxicity: Unlike carnivore waste (such as dog or human feces), herbivore waste is not considered toxic or hazardous and ***does not*** carry common human pathogens or dangerous zoonotic parasites.

- **Decomposition:** Manure breaks down naturally within a couple of weeks with the help of sunlight, rain, and insects like dung beetles.
- **Nutrient cycling:** As it degrades, it enriches the local soil and provides a food source or minerals for wildlife, birds, and insects.

Nuisance and aesthetics: While not an ecological crisis, piles on high-traffic, paved, or multi-use paths are aesthetically unpleasant for hikers and cyclists.

Solutions for Social Accidents of Horses

Shared Paved or Rail Trails: : Equestrians are encouraged to ***dismount and kick or push it off the path*** into the grass or brush. Equestrians who may have disabilities with getting off and back on can train their horse to curb to the side of the trail.

Natural Dirt Trails: On an unimproved dirt path, the standard etiquette is to ***leave it***. It breaks down naturally within a few weeks and supports local bird and insect populations. To minimize the aesthetic impact on hikers, riders are encouraged to ***keep their horse moving*** so the manure scatters rather than forms a large pile.

Wildlife Habitat: …Horses are prey animal and leave the trace scent of an herbivore on the trail, whereas humans, dogs and cats are predators and as they walk, they leave the trace scent of omnivore on the trail that can impact wildlife. Horses are recognized by wildlife as prey animals, even when a person is sitting on their back. An approaching horse passing along a trail provides sound rhythms in the cadence of a four-footed hoofed prey animal to wildlife, which informs wildlife of a non-threatening presence…

Education

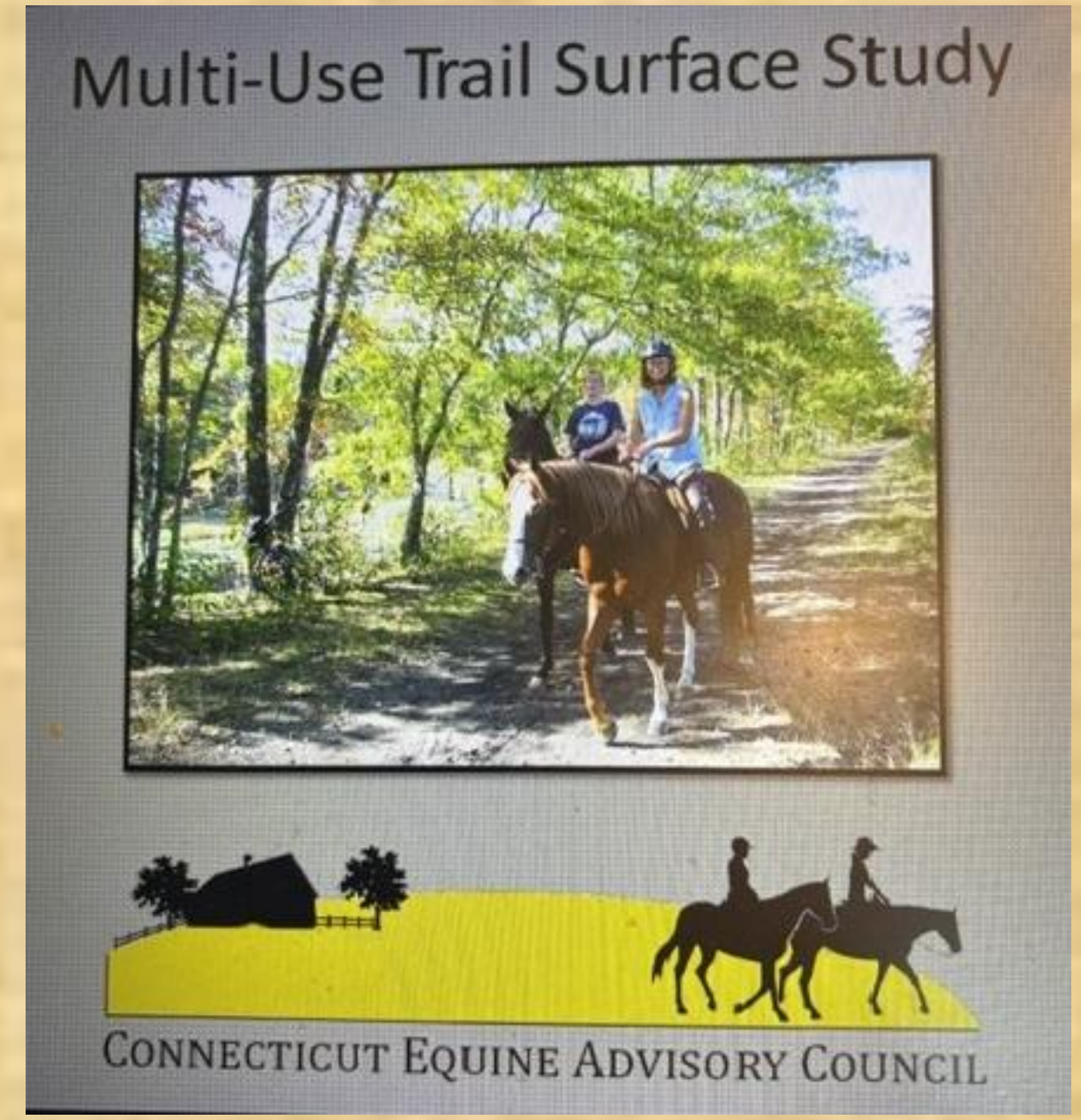
Surface Material

This **Multi-Use Trail Surface Study** was conducted by the Connecticut Equine Advisory Council (EAC)

Statewide research and interviews were completed in 2013 and the study document was completed in 2014. The goals of the study were to determine the following:

- **Project cost and general installation requirements for various surface materials**
- **Maintenance requirements for various surfaces**
- **Environmental impacts observed**
- **Suitability for multiple user groups**

The EAC encourages sharing this study with local town officials and trail development organizations. Members are also available to give presentations on the findings upon request by contacting DEEP Trails and Greenways Coordinator, Kimberly Bradley



Education: *The Needs of the Equestrian Community*

Surface Material: Providing a natural or stone dust surface is best for horses. Many people prefer this for jogging to help save the stress on their knees while others want to connect to the earth. Hard surfaces like pavement offer no shock absorption, which also applies to horses.

A trail planned for pavement can easily be ***intentionally*** designed to accommodate a natural trail surface along the side for all users that may want to walk a slower pace and for joggers, while bicyclists travel fast on the pavement, allowing safe, shared access for cyclists, pedestrians, and riders.

Bridges: Appropriate bridges and/or safe water crossings where possible that can be designed with minimal impact.

Parking: Often parking areas do not plan for horse trailers. Ideally a pull in and out linear lot where parking can be on both sides is accommodating.

Concerns of the Equestrian Community

Surface Material: In some cases, around our state sharp gravel rocks are put down which is unfavorable for the human foot, hooves of horses and bicycles. While this may be necessary, in some cases, there should always be a natural top dressing to create a smooth surface for walking, biking and horseback riding.

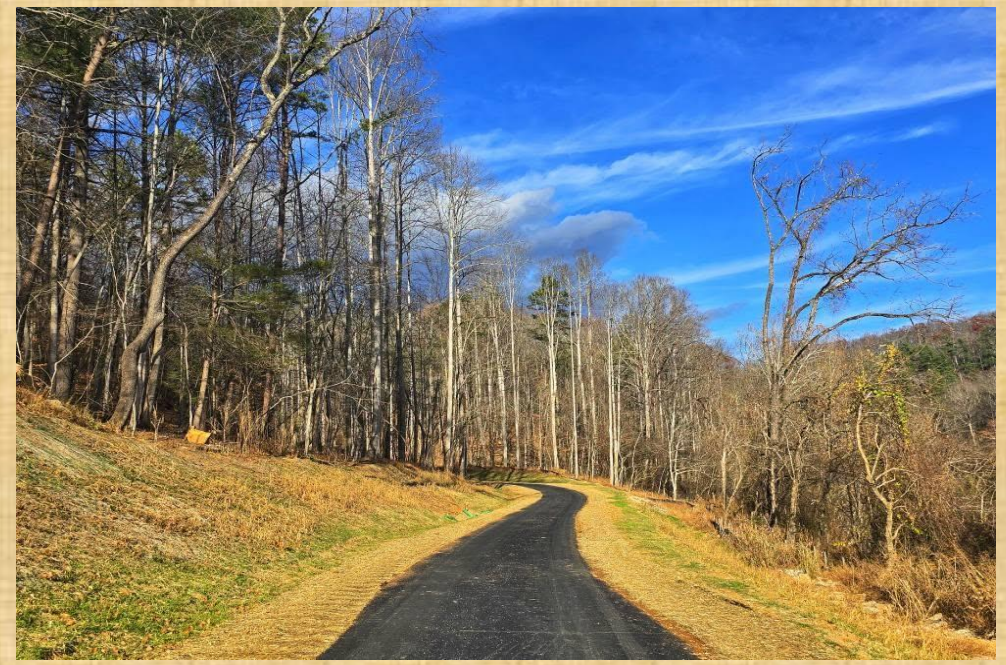
Access: Planning for horse trailer parking when space is available - The best, safest and easiest for a truck & trailer is **linear.** A parking area can have marked vehicle parking on one side of the parking area. For a truck and a 2-horse trailer parked in a straight, linear lane the absolute minimum requirement is a space 42 feet long and 10 feet wide, To park comfortably and access the trailer safely, you should ideally aim for a footprint of 50 feet long by 12 feet wide.

Bridges: Many bridges are continually being built that are not safe for horses. In many cases they are built over the safest part of a water crossing for horses. They are often made without the appropriate wood or proper framework and horses have been injured going over them because there is no safe way to cross over the water.





A trail planned for pavement can easily be ***intentionally*** designed to accommodate a natural trail surface along the side





A 4-6’ natural surface on one side *(or both if available)* will provide for walkers, joggers. horses that prefer the option over pavement

Education: Trail Etiquette

Education and signage are an important key to good stewardship and safety for all. This can be done with signs, programs and getting a group of local people and organizations involved in helping with assimilating information to make Greenways user friendly and safe.

Joggers and bicyclists unknowingly come up quiet and quickly approaching horses from behind at fast speeds, passing too closely, and cutting in front of horses.

The recent introduction of e-bikes has created user conflicts and safety concerns for some traditional trail users.

These type of actions startle horses and have created serious accidents.













Education: Trail Etiquette

EQUINE LAND CONSERVATION RESOURCE

Please Remember
The Trails Safe Passing Plan
Stop! Speak and Stand Back

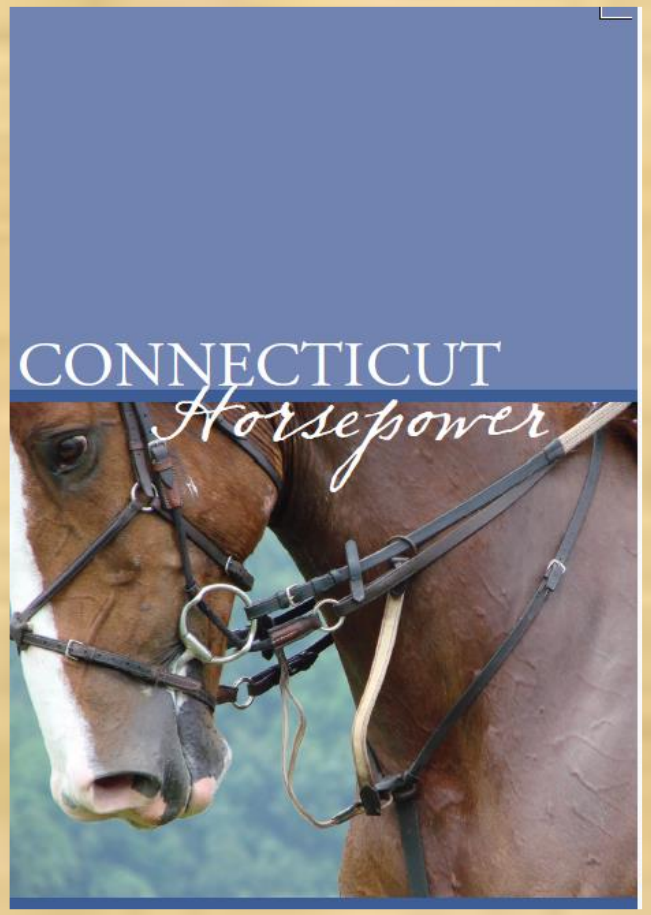


STOP:
Horses are prey animals and naturally can be afraid of unfamiliar people and objects.
People with horses should pass at a walk while other trail users remain STOPPED, until passed.
When approaching horses from behind, please STOP! SPEAK to announce your location and pass slowly when the people with horses are prepared.
STOPPING allows TIME for everyone to prepare for safe trail passing.

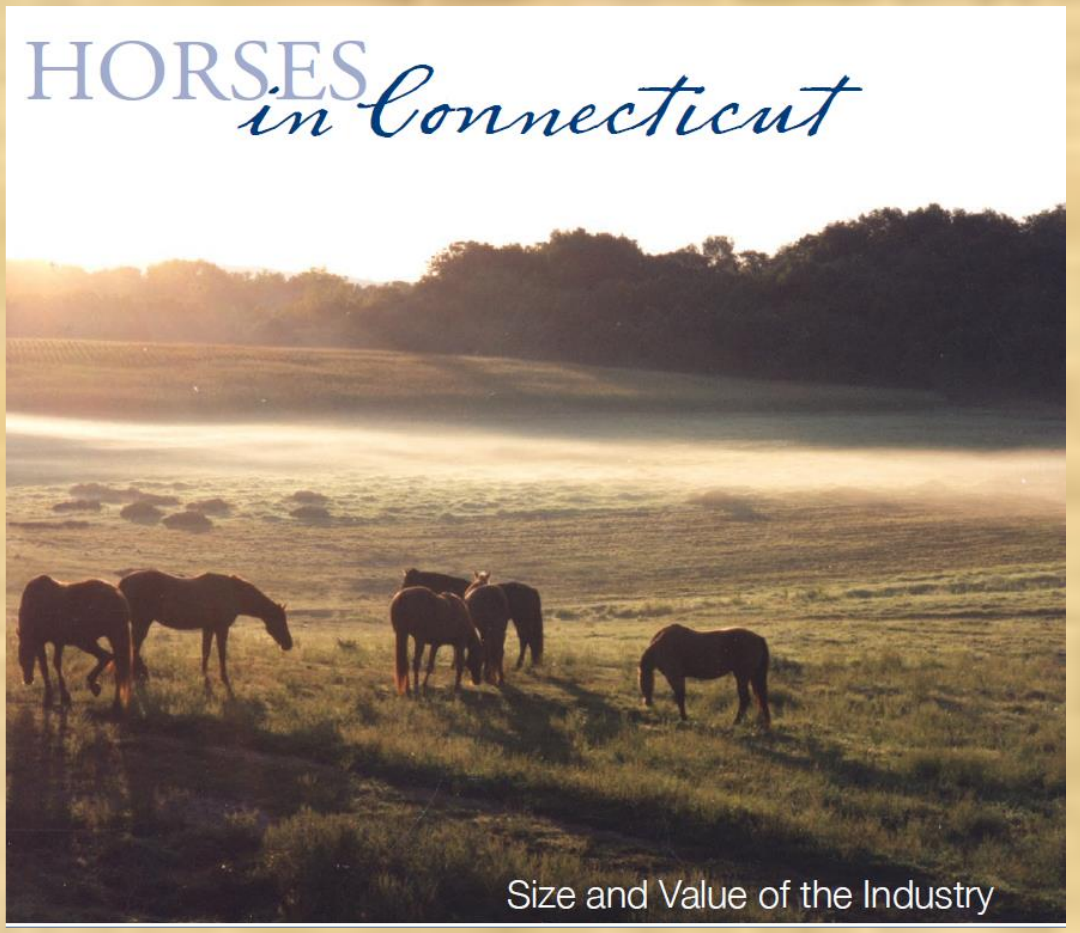
SPEAK:
Please ANNOUNCE your presence.
Please SAY "Hi" when we pass by.
Speaking helps horses identify you as a person and will help keep them calm.

STAND BACK:
Please STAND BACK with your whole group on the same side of the trail.
Please contain children and dogs.
Please do not hide or stand behind a tree, as these actions may cause horses to fear you are a predator planning an attack.

Education: University of Connecticut



Connecticut Horse Power
https://animalscience.media.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/3396/2022/10/HorsePowerBrochure.pdf



Horses in Connecticut:
https://animalscience.media.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/3396/2022/10/HorsesInCT.pdf

Education:

***DID YOU KNOW*.**

Prey Animals by nature and evolutionary history

Flight /Fight Response: Their first instinct when facing danger or a perceived threat is to bolt and run away or kick out to the threat. It's important to touch and talk to your horse when walking around these areas so that the horse knows where you are.

Eye placement: Their eyes are on the sides of their head to give them a wide field of vision to spot danger, which also creates blind spots directly in front and behind them.

Herd Animals: They live in groups to stay safe and protect each other from threats

Herbivores: They eat grass and plants instead of hunting other animals



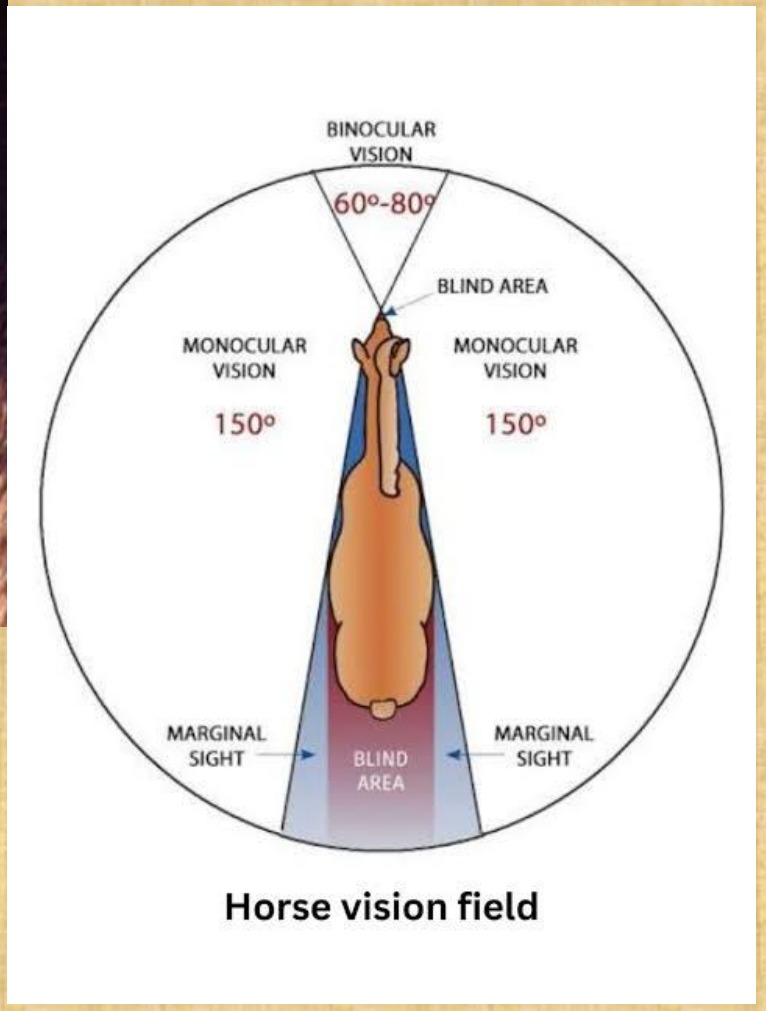
Education: *DID YOU KNOW*?



- Horses have the largest eyes of any **land mammal.**
- **Size:** Each horse eye is about 2 in diameter, roughly the size of a large apple or tennis ball.
- **Comparison:** Their eyes are about eight times larger than human eyes and even bigger than the eyes of much larger land animals, like elephants and giraffes

Eye placement: Their eyes are on the sides of their head to give them a wide **350-degree field of view** wide field of vision to spot danger.

However, they have two primary blind spots where they cannot see anything at all:
Directly 4 feet directly in front of them - from their forehead, straight down their nose. If you hold an apple under a horse's nose, they cannot see it; they use their whiskers and sense of smell to find it.
Directly behind: A massive blind spot extends **straight behind their tail** and stays as wide as their body.



Horse vision field

If you approach a horse from directly behind, you are completely invisible to them until you step to the side.

Education - ***Safety***

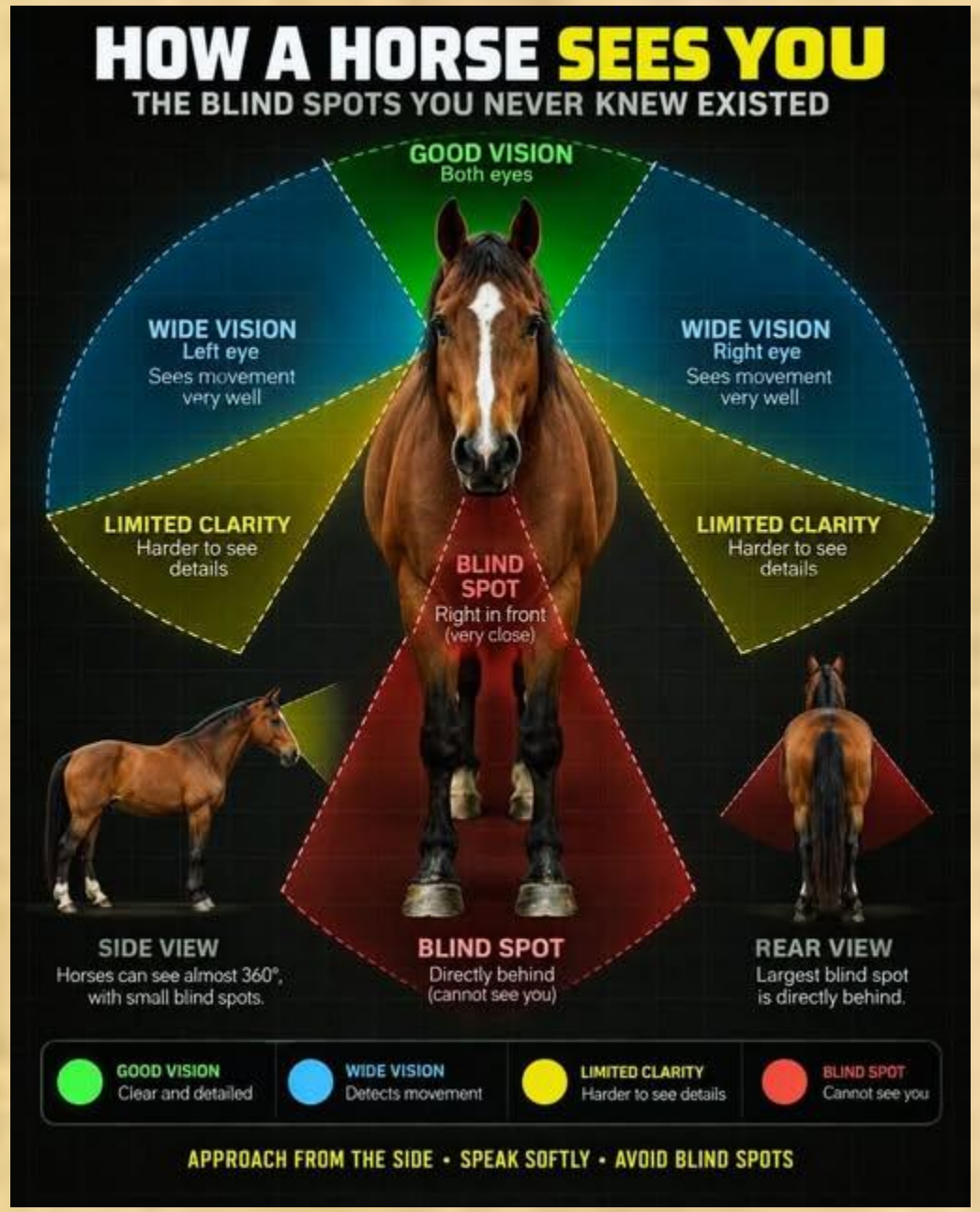
Horses, being prey animals react to sounds, fast movements.

A horse doesn't see the world in quite the same way we do

Because their eyes are positioned on the sides of their heads, they can see almost 360 degrees around themselves. This is a huge advantage for an animal that has evolved to detect danger, movement and potential threats from almost any direction.

As the graphic shows, there are areas where a horse's vision is less clear, particularly close to its face and directly behind it.

The most obvious blind spot is immediately behind the horse. This is one of the reasons why approaching a horse from directly behind can be dangerous — the horse may not know you are there until you suddenly enter its field of vision.



Education: *Safety*:

Horses can react unpredictably to someone coming up from behind them, rapid movement, unfamiliar vehicles, machinery and engine noise. Always STOP & SPEAK. Communicate with horse owners. Ask permission to approach. A horse that is scared or feels the need to defend itself will react because he feels endangered. Serious and sometimes fatal accidents have happened.













Education



Horses Are Good Teachers.



Horses Are Good Teachers

When working with horses, children and adults learn a plethora of skills in many different areas, including:

- ❑ **Respect for animals.**
- ❑ **Safety protocols.**
- ❑ **Behavioral psychology.**
- ❑ **Communication.**
- ❑ **Health care.**
- ❑ **Hygiene.**
- ❑ **Nutrition and diet.**
- ❑ **Composting.**
- ❑ **Physical balance.**
- ❑ **Leadership.**



- ❑ **Soil & water quality.**
- ❑ **Reproduction & genetics.**
- ❑ **Land management.**
- ❑ **Rigging & knot tying.**
- ❑ **Grooming techniques.**
- ❑ **Animal husbandry.**
- ❑ **Equipment maintenance.**
- ❑ **Compassion.**
- ❑ **Negotiation skills.**
- ❑ **Materials science.**

Horse Shows and Youth Events: A massive volume of short-term volunteer hours keeps community horse shows, Fairs, breed competitions, and youth programs (such as 4-H and Pony Club) functioning efficiently.

***In Conclusion: Horses Inspire Passion*.**

There is something about horses that brings out passion in people, even those who don't own horses.



2026 is the **Year of the Fire Horse** - a rare, intense year in the Chinese zodiac that combines the independent Horse sign with the powerful Fire element, occurring once every 60 years.
The Year symbolizes unstoppable energy, passion, rapid change, and bold independence.

Combining the horse's natural speed and freedom with the fire element, it marks a high-intensity period of innovation, ambition, and major cultural or personal breakthroughs

It is a fast-paced, high-energy period defined by:

- **Bold Transformations**
- **Dynamic Speed**
- **High Visibility**
- **Intense Drive For Personal Freedom**

We trust that our passion for horses in this presentation will demonstrate how natural surface trails can be seamlessly integrated alongside paved paths, creating a more inclusive, sustainable, and multi-use greenway system for our entire community.

In Conclusion:

- **Horses are a part of our Heritage.** This country was first traversed by man and horse through interconnecting trails and dirt roads.

- ***Greenways provide travel and exercise for both rider and horse***
  …and they often provide connections to other trail systems

- **Integrating horses into greenways provides proven, nature-based mental and physical health benefits for visitors.**
  - **Measurable Stress Relief:** Studies show that proximity to horses physically calms humans by lowering blood pressure, reducing stress hormones, and slowing heart rates.
  - **Enhanced Well-Being:** Being around horses boosts public feelings of peace, joy, and confidence
  - **Community Connection:** Multi-use trails that include equestrian space offer unique, therapeutic interactions with nature that standard paved paths cannot replicate. By designing trails that welcome horses, planners can create unique ***"therapeutic corridors"*** that actively improve the mental and physical health of the community.

- **Horseback riding on public trails benefits non-riders** by keeping natural spaces open, funding trail maintenance, and boosting local businesses. When equestrians advocate for trail access, the entire community gains better outdoor spaces and economic growth.

- **Horse-friendly trails add value to a community** by keeping natural spaces open, providing trail maintenance, and boosting local businesses. When equestrians advocate for trail access, the entire community gains better outdoor spaces and economic growth

- **The economic value of including horses on greenways can be summarized through:**
  - **increased tourism spending**
  - **higher residential property values**
  - **substantial regional equine infrastructure investments**

Education: Education and signage are an important key to good stewardship and safety for all. This can be done with signs, programs and getting a group of local people and organizations that utilize the trails involved in helping create outdoor educational events and activities at the trail heads -an informal "Friends of "_____" Day to make the trail user friendly and safe.

Passive User Separation: Dividing traffic by surface type naturally minimizes speed differentials and high-impact interactions, lowering safety liabilities and trail user conflicts.

Access - Surface Material – Linear Parking – Bridges/water crossings
A trail planned for pavement can easily be ***intentionally*** designed to accommodate a natural trail surface along the side for all users that may want to walk a slower pace and for joggers, while bicyclists travel fast on the pavement, allowing safe, shared access for cyclists, pedestrians, and riders.

Please help your community save its traditional connections by supporting equine-friendly open spaces, greenways and trails. We are all in this together!

Thank you for your consideration.



Happy Trails









