

MOUNTAIN MANNERS

Back Country Horsemen of Montana



Who are Back Country Horsemen?

Back Country Horsemen (BCH) is an organization dedicated to protecting, preserving and improving the back country resource. BCH share a common interest- use of horses and mules for recreation on back country lands. BCH is dedicated to public service, providing horsemen with an opportunity to influence laws and attitudes that regulate the historical right to use pack and saddle stock on our public lands.

What is the purpose of this book?

The main purpose of this booklet is to educate people to reduce environmental impact on the resources, help create a positive impact on the resources, and help create a positive public awareness of the recreational horseman.

What do Back Country Horsemen do?

Back Country Horsemen offer volunteer time and equipment to government agencies for such tasks as clearing trails, building trails, building trailhead facilities, packing out trash, and other projects that will benefit both horsemen and non-horsemen.

What is the purpose of the Back Country Horsemen?

- To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's roadless back country.
- To assist the various government and private agencies in their maintenance and management of said resource.
- To educate people to wisely use horses in the backcountry so as to sustain the use of animals and the resource in a manner commensurate with our heritage.
- To encourage and solicit active participation by members and the general public in such activity.
- To foster and encourage the formation of additional BCHM chapters.
- To seek out opportunities to enhance existing areas of recreation for stock users.

Why keep public land and trails open for horse use?

The horse has earned a place in our western heritage. Its usefulness and devotion have been second to none. It is the charge of BCH to assure that horse use is preserved in its rightful place for future generations. This can be best accomplished by our individual efforts to promote wise horse use that results in minimum impact to the back country resource.

When was the Back Country Horsemen founded?

Back Country Horsemen was formed in January of 1973 with a three-fold PURPOSE: service to the back country, education of horsemen, and representation in land use planning and management.

These basic precepts have been the reason for our growth, strength, and effectiveness, and this growth has forced the formation of a state organization – Back Country Horsemen of Montana. The state organization is charged with the responsibility of furthering these same basic precepts on a statewide scale for the benefit of all affiliated chapters, horsemen, and the back country we love so well.

This book is published by the Back Country Horsemen of Montana. The concept for it originated within the Mission Valley Chapter of the Back Country Horsemen of Montana.

Cheryl Fraser of Helena did the original drawings. The cover drawings were done by Dave Owen of Kalispell, Montana, and a member of the Washington Back Country Horsemen. Sherri Hill did the highline sketches. All artwork is copyrighted by the artist.

This publication is the result of efforts by a great many people, all of whom donated their time and talents.

Interested in joining the Back Country Horsemen?

Please contact a chapter in your area; below is a list of the chapters in Montana.

You can also visit us on the internet at www.bchmt.org, then click on State Chapters to find a chapter in your area.

Beartooth BCH
P.O. Box 614
Absarokee, MT 59001

Gallatin Valley BCH
P.O. Box 3232
Bozeman, MT 59772

Missoula BCH
P.O. Box 2121
Missoula, MT 59806

Bitter Root BCH
P.O. Box 1083
Hamilton, MT 59480

Hi-Line BCH
P.O. Box 1379
Cut Bank, MT 59427

Selway-Pintler
Wilderness BCH
P.O. Box 88
Hamilton, MT 59840

Cabinet BCH
P.O. Box 949
Libby, MT 59923

Judith Basin BCH
P.O. Box 93
Lewistown, MT 59457

Three Rivers BCH
P.O. Box 251
Dillon, MT 59725

Charlie Russell BCH
P.O. Box 3563
Great Falls, MT 59403

Last Chance BCH
P.O. Box 4008
Helena, MT 59601

Upper Clark Fork BCH
P.O. Box 725
Deer Lodge, MT 59722

East Slope BCH
P.O. Box 126
Valier, MT 59486

Mile High BCH
P.O. Box 4344
Butte, MT 59702

Wild Horse Plains BCH
P.O. Box 640
Plains, MT 59859

Flathead BCH
P.O. Box 1192
Columbia Falls, MT
59912

Mission Valley BCH
P.O. Box 604
Ronan, MT 59864



J.J.

If you look closely you will see that Jeremiah Jay, better known as J.J., is in almost every picture. He's been watching back country users for a long time and has become a wise old bird. Listen closely and pay attention to what he has to say on the following pages.

Take only the amount of duffle needed.



Did you bring the kitchen sink? In all seriousness, ask yourself - is that item really necessary? But don't leave home without the things you really need. Remember your axe, shovel and bucket. A saw may be a good idea. Rain gear and a warm coat are a must even when the sun is shining. A first aid kit may be worth its weight in gold. Fly and insect repellent are a good idea for both humans and horses; also horse gear including a brush and maybe shoeing equipment. Make room for a rope to be used as a high line.

Fewer horses make less work, worry and impact!

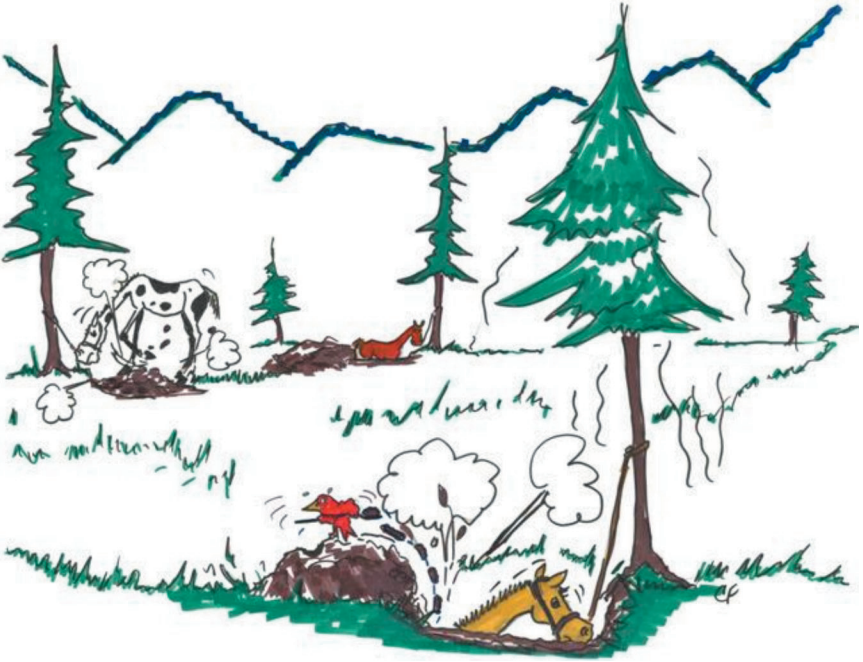
Locate camp away from trails.



Set your tent away from the trail, 200 feet from water if possible, and apart from other campers. Pick a site that will stand the traffic. The edge of the clearing along the trees may be best. Avoid wet spots. Use an existing fire ring. If you build a new one, tear it down when you leave.

This looks like Grand Central Station.

Do not tie stock to trees.



Probably nothing gives a horseman more bad marks than tying to trees. The scars are visible for years. Use hobbles on a pawing horse. Horses get lonely. Providing a horse with company will eliminate much cause for pawing. Train your horse at home to use hobbles and picket ropes and to be tied overnight. Fill holes when leaving camp.

*A rope high line is a good solution.
(There is a section showing how to use one
in the back of this book.)*

Keep stock and toilets away from water.



Tie stock away from water – 200 feet, if possible. Locate your toilet at least 200 feet from water, too. Use that shovel for disposal of human waste. If the camp is to be used for a number of days (like a hunting camp) dig a pit. Fill it in before you leave.

Think about those folks camping downstream.

Tie stock away from camp.



Get stock out of the immediate camp area. A grove of trees on dry, solid ground is ideal. If you are one of those people who can't bear to spend the night away from your horses, pitch your tent out in the woods with them, rather than bringing them into camp with you. Scatter manure when you leave.

Where you tie is as important as how you do it.

Keep a neat camp.



Pack out your own garbage plus that left by others. Check campsite and be sure nothing is left. Burn what you can, including all food scraps. Throwing cans in the fire for a few minutes will clean them up. Tie a pole between two trees for storing your gear and tack. When you leave take it down, plus any other poles you've found, and stack them out of sight.

Keep it neat and leave it cleaner than you found it.

Be neat - Don't litter.



That garbage probably came out of the saddlebag. There must be room to put it back in. Take pity on our bird and remember that this is his home that you are trashing.

*Be mindful of yourself and those with you
and those who will come after.*

Don't smoke on the trail.



During fire season stop in a safe place if you get a craving for the nicotine. There may be a hot time in the forest if you aren't careful with your fire. Douse your campfire with water and stir when leaving camp.

Only you can prevent wild fires.

Be polite when meeting others -
foot or horseback.



Even though the horsemen were using the trails long before it occurred to anyone that hiking could be fun, we must remember it belongs to hikers, too.

All people are created equal.

Give right of way when possible.



Regardless of the rules, common sense should prevail. If you have an opportunity to get off the trail, do it. Remember you're out there to enjoy yourself and feel good. If you want a fight go to your favorite bar.

Be courteous of others.

Horses do not always have the right of way.



Most of us have had at least one horse that never learned that hikers are just people. Speak to them and try to get them to answer. Your horse will react better to a talker than he will to the strong silent type. Give the hikers plenty of time to get off the trail in a safe spot they are comfortable with. It might be you and your horse that end up over the bank. Very few horses are fond of motor bikes. Take your time and be careful. You might avoid one of those spectacular wrecks that make great stories, but aren't much fun at the time.

Don't crowd, don't push, think safety first.

Saddle horses should give way to pack stock.



Obviously one saddle horse is easier to control than a number of pack animals. Uphill strings have the right-of-way over downhill. On some heavily used trails incoming traffic has the right-of-way until noon and outgoing in the afternoon. Regardless of the law, observe the common sense rule.

Give way when possible.

When overtaken, let them by at first opportunity.



Good manners make good friends, no one has too many of either.

Be respectful of others.

Don't crowd the horse in front of you.



Many horses get nervous when crowded, and nervous horses may do strange things. It is a good way to get kicked and this can ruin your day and maybe your whole trip.

Keep your horse under control at a safe distance.

Stay on the trail -
Don't take shortcuts.



Horsemen are not the worst offenders for cutting switchbacks, but those that do leave a good sized furrow, which may turn into a gully next spring.

Stay on the trail.

Keep dogs under control.



Your dog is probably well behaved, but other people's can be a nuisance.

If you can't control it, leave it at home.

High Picket Line (High Line)

A preferred method of tying horses is with the use of a “high picket line.” This is a line stretched between two trees approximately seven feet above the ground. Lead ropes are tied along the high line. Horses seem more relaxed and content when tied to a high picket line than any other method. They seldom pull against the line because there is nothing solid to pull against.

Where the high line goes around the tree, the bark should be protected by padding, using a cinch or 2-inch wide nylon “tree saver” strap.

The high picket line prevents the horse from getting around the tree, damaging the bark or root system. As with other methods of restraining horses, the high picket line should be set away from the immediate camp area. The best place is away from the trail and back in the trees where the least ground cover will be disturbed.

The lead rope may be tied directly to the high picket line as shown in Figure A on the following page, or a loop knot, Figure B, can be tied at intervals along the high line. A ring or swivel can be placed on the line before the loop knot is tied. This is handy because the loop knot has a tendency to tighten on the lead rope making it difficult to untie.

The loop knot can always be loosened and moved to suit any spacing or situation. If the lead rope is tied directly to the high line as shown in Figure A on the following page, a half hitch thrown over the loop will keep it from working loose.

There are three things to be cautious about when using the high picket line:

1. There should be a swivel, or the lead rope will become twisted or unraveled as the horse moves around.
2. Tie the lead rope short enough so that horses will not become tangled in it.
3. Keep it tight. The double Dutchman knot shown in the drawing will do this.

The high picket line is to keep stock from damaging trees or their root systems. If the lead rope is allowed to slide along the high line, it defeats the purpose of this method.

1/2” hemp rope makes a good high line. Nylon is too stretchy. Multifilament rope is best. It will stretch more than hemp, but is stronger, lighter and will not soak up water. Many horsemen use their lash ropes for a high picket line.

Double Dutchman and Other Knots

Use this hitch for a high-line as tight as a fiddle string. Tied right, it's easy to untie, since it doesn't jam. Make the knots and loops in the numerical order indicated. Start with knot (1) 8 or 10 feet from the ring on your tree saver. Knot (3) should be close to the ring. If your rope is long or has a lot of stretch, you may need more distance between the loops.



Figure C

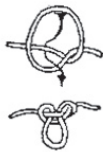
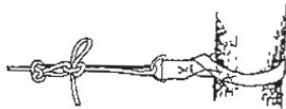


Figure B



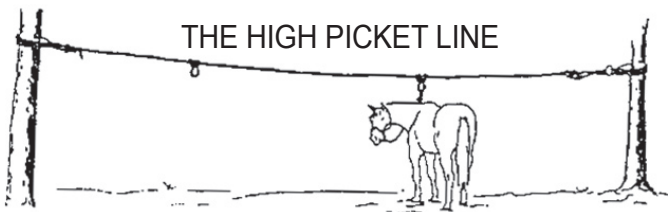
Figure A



Tie one end with a bowline knot.



Use a Dutchman on the other end to tighten the high line.





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