



FACT SHEET

Department of Animal Science, University of Connecticut

Effective Horse Management - Horse Management Series

Camping with Your Horse

Jenifer Nadeau, M.S., Ph.D
Associate Professor, Equine Extension Specialist
Department of Animal Science

Camping is a fun pastime for a lot of people. Many people enjoy the great outdoors and there is nothing like spending time camping with your horse. Here are a few guidelines for camping with your horse.

There are numerous parks and private campgrounds that allow horses. Most will require a negative Coggins at minimum. If traveling out of state you must have a negative Coggins and a current health certificate/Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (usually within 30 days). Additionally, make sure your horse is up to date on all of its vaccinations including influenza and rhinopneumonitis, since it will most likely be exposed to other horses.

Do your homework before you choose the campground so that you select the one that will make your stay most enjoyable. It is much easier to do this now with our easy access to the internet. Most campgrounds list their amenities which can really help with knowing what you need to bring and what you can leave at home.

In Connecticut, both Pachaug and Natchaug State Parks have basic facilities for camping with your horse. The Connecticut Horse Council's Volunteer Horse Patrol (VHP) helps to maintain the trails. Here is a link to more information about the campground: <http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2716&q=325290> Here is how to contact the VHP: Diane Ciano, trails@cthorsecouncil.org.

Consider how you will keep your horse at night. Will you make a high line he is tied to, bring a portable corral or pen, or tie him to your trailer? A high line is a rope, tied around two trees approximately 6-8 feet from the ground) with the horse tied to the line in a stationary spot. This allows him to move around a pivot point and lie down to rest when he wants. Make sure to allow enough space between horses if high lining more than one. You could also picket your horse. You put a picket, or stake in the ground and string the rope to chest high with horses tied one on each side along the picket, so that they can only move in a half circle.

In some areas, certified weed free hay will be required or only use of feed produced in the area is permit. Other areas may have no grazing rules. Make sure you know the local regulations and abide by them.

When you go to the campground, it would be best to go with a friend or a group so that you are not alone when you ride. Injuries can occur and it is best to have a buddy especially when traveling unfamiliar terrain. Your horse may be more excitable than normal since it will be in a new environment.

Remember to download or pick up a trail map before you go. Most horses will be able to find their way back to the camp but it is better to make sure you don't get lost in the first place. If you do become lost, try to go back to the last place where you were on the correct path but if you are hopelessly lost, it is best just to stay put and if possible call or wait for help. Please stay on marked trails and avoid taking shortcuts.

Whenever camping or riding your horse, remember to leave no trace. The 7 leave no trace (LNT) principles include many of the things we have already discussed:

-  Plan ahead and prepare
-  Travel and camp on durable surfaces
-  Dispose of waste properly (pack it in pack it out) – this means picking up and bringing home the manure from around your campsite or putting it in a designated area for manure, trying to curb your horse or have it defecate off to the side and on heavily traveled trails, kicking it to the side
-  Leave what you find – do not pick flowers, take fossils, etc.
-  Minimize campfire impacts – like Smokey always said, only you can prevent forest fires, so make sure all fires are out before you leave your campsite for any length of time
-  Respect wildlife – most will avoid encounters with horses. If going out West, consider bringing along bear spray for areas with grizzlies
-  Be considerate of other visitors – not all will yield to horses, try to educate in a kind, gentle manner.

When riding or driving a horse, you do have priority, but you should observe caution because not all trail users will be aware of this. The more equestrians strive to apply common sense rules of courtesy and etiquette, the better the chances of a stress-free ride or drive. Some resources on etiquette are available at <https://cttrails.uconn.edu/> under Resources.

Hopefully this will give you some ideas about camping with your horse. Enjoy your time camping under the stars and remember the LNT principles. Thanks, and have fun with your horses!

The University of Connecticut supports all state and federal laws that promote equal opportunity and prohibit discrimination.

Sources:

1. Equisearch. 2017. Horse Camping. <https://www.equisearch.com/articles/horse-camping-18694> Accessed 6/11/20
2. UConn Extension Connecticut Trails Site. 2019. <https://cttrails.uconn.edu/> Accessed 6/11/20
3. Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. Horseback Riding/Camping. <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/State-Parks/Recreation-Information/Horseback-Riding---CT-State-Parks-and-Forests>

Reviewed by:

Dr. Debra Hagstrom, Horse Extension Specialist
University of Illinois