

RIDING A HORSE ON CLEEVE COMMON



Cleeve Common is a wonderful place to ride. It offers wide open grassland, good going all year round, numerous and varied tracks and, of course, magnificent views. You should however be aware that the Common is, first and foremost, a conservation area and its fragile habitats are protected by law as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Common is privately owned land that is managed and regulated by a Registered Charity, Cleeve Common Trust, which has authority under an Act of Parliament.

What right of access is there for horse riders on Cleeve Common?

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) gives the 'right to roam' anywhere on the Common, but only on foot. Any horse and rider may use the bridleways and restricted byways (but these are very limited - see Ordnance Survey maps). Elsewhere, there is no statutory access for horse riders on the Common. However provision was made under the 1890 Bylaws of the Common to license horse riding and this has been in force ever since.

To ride off the Rights of Way on the Common you must have a hacking licence. The Trustees are obliged to uphold the Bylaws in order to protect the Common for future generations.

Why do horse riders have to pay for a licence?

The purpose of licensing is to balance the various recreational uses of the Common with agriculture and conservation. We continue to charge a small annual fee for licences to horse riders for the following reasons:

- Compared to most other visitors, local horse riders use the Common more frequently, cover a much greater area and cause more damage to the grassland.

- We provide seven day a week Ranger cover. On a per person basis, horse riders are around a hundred times more likely to need Ranger assistance than walkers. The Trust incurs the cost of these callouts.
- There is direct expenditure in providing and maintaining bridle gates and repairing tracks eroded by horses.
- Overall, it is a small contribution towards effective grassland management. Without this, the Common would not have the open grassy spaces that make it so good for riding. Over time, it would degrade to rough grass tussocks, with gorse and hawthorn thickets.
- In levying a charge for access to ride on private land, we are aligned with widespread practice across the county – and at low cost compared with many other sites.

How does the Trust regulate other activities on the Common?

There is no provision in the Bylaws of the Common to enforce the licensing of other activities such as mountain biking or kite boarding. Instead, we engage with interest groups in a cooperative manner, producing a 'Code' for each of the main activities that take place on the Common. Within the Code we specify how other users should behave around horses. We receive funding from some groups who recognise the Trust's valuable work from which they benefit.

What else do I need to know?

You ride on the Common entirely at your own risk. The Trust does not accept liability for any injury or damage caused to any person, animal or property, including the rider and her/his horse or pony, whether the activity is authorised by licence or not. We recommend that you have your own public liability insurance.

Annual licences run from 1 March to 28 February; a half year licence (September to February) is also available at a reduced cost. A rider may use their licence tag on any horse, but the tag is not transferable to another person. You should also be aware that there are spot checks to ensure that all riders are licensed.

If you are transporting your horse to the Common, note that there is no entry for horse lorries or trailers to the Quarry Carp Park at the Golf club entrance. You can park and unload at the West Down entrance at the far south-eastern end of the Common, which is marked on the map sent to registered riders. We would advise not driving up to the Radio Masts entrance, where there is not enough room to park or turn around.

Horse Riders' Code

In applying for a licence, you are signing up to abide by the Cleeve Common Horse Riders' Code:

- **Display your hacking licence tag** whenever you ride on the Common, either on the nearside of the bridle or a nearside ring on the back of the saddle.
- **Avoid 'no-go zones':**
 - the Golf Course greens, tees and fairways.

- the Hill Fort above Nutterswood; this is a Scheduled Ancient Monument which we are legally obliged to protect.
- ecologically fragile area (see supporting map) where many of our rarest plants and animals live on the thin soils. Please ride slowly, in single file on the centre of firm, established tracks only.

- **Minimize the impact:** in wet conditions avoid fast work and keep to the middle of established tracks to reduce damage or erosion. Do not make new tracks. Do not ride through rough grassland.
- **Take care near livestock:** grazing sheep and cattle are essential to maintain the natural limestone grassland. Ride past slowly to avoid disturbance. **Always close gates** behind you to avoid livestock escaping (most are self-closing, but please check that they latch).
- **Respect other users of the Common:** ride with courtesy and consideration for other visitors. Pass at a walk or steady trot, do not canter in fog. Politely alert kite flyers as you approach.
- **Follow the rules:** licence holders must obey any signs or requests from Rangers.
- **Adders:** an attack on a horse is most unlikely, but to avoid, keep to the tracks. Adders are timid, protected, rare creatures; they only bite if threatened. Most incidents are in spring and summer.
- **Emergencies:** Call **999** or **112** first, then the Ranger: **07756 828 458**.

Please keep us informed if you see something untoward while out riding. If urgent (e.g. illegal motorbikes), call the Ranger number. For less urgent feedback, email, text or phone us: * info@cleevecommon.org.uk (07471 687877

We wish you safe and happy riding on the Common.

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