The setting is right out of a grade "B" western movie. The campfire burns low and warm; the stars seem so bright and close that you can almost touch them. The moon peeks over the top of the ridge and casts a gentle glow on the campsite. Someone has brought a guitar and strums quietly, someone else sings and marshmallows have appeared to be slowly roasted to perfection. In the background a horse munches his hay and another nickers softly. You know it's your horse calling for attention and reluctantly you bid goodnight to friends and leave the campfire. Before settling in for the night, you top off your horse's water bucket and throw him another leaf of hay.

Morning rolls around all too soon, and you lay in bed savoring the feeling of being in between asleep and awake. The rider in the next campsite was up early and has already fed, and your horse is insisting that he also wants to eat .... now. You roll out of bed, dress and go out to greet and feed your four legged friend. As you clean up the night's droppings in your horse's area, you smell bacon and eggs cooking. Your neighbor in the next campsite (that early bird !) invites you over for breakfast and you gladly accept. Ride registration doesn't begin until 8 AM and its only 7, so there is plenty of time. As you sit with a cup of coffee or tea warming your hands, you know that life couldn't get better than this. But exactly how do you manage to get to this carefree state? I can hear some of my friends now. You do WHAT with your horse? Camp? You can't be serious?! How do you stable your horse for the night? Where do you sleep? How do you stay warm, eat, wash.....? Lets start out with some of the basics, first your horse, and then you.

### THE HAPPY EQUINE CAMPER

The **HAPPY EQUINE CAMPER** needs a few basic supplies. Hay, grain, & water for starters; **STABLING** can be accomplished in several ways

1. The **overhead picket** consists of a sturdy rope suspended over your horse's head and between two immovable objects. The immovable objects can be the top of your trailer & a tree, or between two trees. Slide a large O ring on the rope before you secure it & you can then tie a line to that so that your horse can have some room to walk, sort of like a dog run. Make sure the tie line is about a foot short of reaching the ground when you pull on it. A hay net can be tied to the trailer or tree and a water bucket can also be secured off the ground.

2. A **Portable electric fence** powered by a small battery charger, with plastic poles and poly wire make a great paddock for the horse that respects an electric fence. There is a wide variety of pole types, from simple straight poles that are hammered into the ground to those that are wider with slots for the wire or tape to pass through and foot pads that allow you to step them into the ground. They range in height from 3 feet to 6 feet. Wire or tape comes in various sizes also, from single strand poly with wire "threads" to carry the charge, to two inch wide tape. Several sizes of battery chargers are also available. You will need a ground pole also, and it helps to make sure that the ground is wet to enhance the charge, so throw a bucket of water on the ground first. Minimum size for a paddock is around 20 ft by 20 ft. This size will give your horse room to drop and roll without hitting the fence and will leave him enough room so that when he swings his tail, he doesn't take the fence down!
3. If you only haul one horse, you can investigate those plastic or metal pipe paddocks, but they do take up the extra stall in your trailer. These are expensive, but a good choice if your horse doesn’t respect an electric fence.

4. If your horse ties well, you can just tie him to the trailer for the night. Make sure that the end of his tie rope is at least a foot off the ground and secure the hay net well off the ground. Tie rings riveted to the side of your trailer will hold a bucket for water. This method is recommended only for one night. If you are camping for more than that, your horse will appreciate the freedom that the portable fence or overhead picket provides.

Grain - You know those little "4 lb" buckets your horse vitamins come in? They will hold a "feeding" for your horse, complete with supplements, that can be dumped in his bucket at feeding time. Bring one extra meal just in case you are delayed on the way home. If your trip is longer than a couple of days, grain can be contained in a plastic bin or trash can and set inside the dressing room of your trailer or the back of your pickup. Try using a rubber hog pan to feed your grain. They are nearly indestructible and your horse can’t hurt himself if he steps on it or rolls on it at night.

Hay - The general rule is - half a bale per day per horse. If I’m camping overnight with two horses, I’ll bring two bales. Using a hay net or bags that carry a couple of leaves of hay will cut down on waste. Just make sure it is tied securely and high enough so that your horse can’t paw at it and get caught. I usually go home with some, but it’s a comfort having the extra safety net. How do you haul it if you don’t have a pickup? The space on the front of your trailer between the hitch and the trailer body can carry two bales easily. You can also put the hay in large trash bags if you don’t have one of the convenient bale bags on the market today and carry it in the trailer dressing room.

Water - Most rides provide water, but it’s usually a job to get it from the hose or faucet to your horse. If you have a pickup or only one horse, look around for those blue plastic 55 gallon drums. Several 6 gallon containers that can be purchased at any department store would work. If it’s hot, you will need about 20 to 25 gallons per horse per day. Even if it is a day trip or a simple overnight, some horses will drink water better if it tastes like home so it sometimes works better if you bring your own. Hydration is very important in hot weather and making sure your horse is properly hydrated will solve many problems before they start.

Grooming accessories - Bring along a feed bucket, a water bucket and a wash bucket per horse. You will also need a sponge and brushes. A light sheet, and a heavier one are a wise addition along with something waterproof. Bring an extra halter and lead rope. Many horses will view the standard bucket as a convenient place to scratch their heads and in the process will dump all the water out. A clean manure bucket will carry sufficient water for the night and is very stable and almost spill proof! A clean and well groomed horse isn’t just for show.

Emergency Medical Supplies - Your vet can be of help here with some suggestions. Your vet might suggest that you carry a couple doses of bute or banamine. You are primarily looking for emergency supplies. You could be treating minor scraps and bangs or be providing support care until the vet arrives. Pack some sheet cotton, vetrap, hydrogen peroxide, furacin ointment and/or blukote. Don’t forget the liniment. Specially prepared kits can be purchased commercially, but you can certainly make up one of your own with your favorite supplies. Rides will often have a vet on call or will have the name of a reliable vet handy, so don’t be afraid to ask.
The HAPPY HUMAN CAMPER probably needs a little more in the way of support.

**Stabling and Grooming** - Campers, tents, sleeping bag in the bed of the pickup or the floor of the trailer... these options all work well. (warning! Cots with no mats are COLD on cold days!) You will need at least a flashlight or two (and extra batteries) for nighttime. Bring along a set of clothes for each day that you will be riding, a set for “after riding” and then two extra sets (one for warm weather, and one for cold weather). Preparing for the weather when you are camping can be an exercise in futility, and you should be prepared for rain, sunshine, cold and heat and any combination thereof all on one day. Additional supplies include: a small camp stove, dish pan (for dishes and a wash basin for you) & folding lawn chairs. Water heated on your camp stove will provide you with a morning wash. Don’t forget suntan lotion, bandaids, aspirin, etc. If you are allergic to bee stings, etc., make sure that your neighbor is aware of it and that you carry a medical alert tag.

All you need for a great weekend is a little thought, and some ingenuity. Don’t worry if you forget something, someone else in camp is bound to have it!! A sun shower is handy tool for heating water for a bath. A black bag, it is set out in the sun while you are out riding and it will heat up during the day. They come equipped with a hose and shower head and once hung up, provide a refreshing shower. If taking your “bath” outside, don’t forget a bathing suit, but you also can use the back of your trailer for some privacy or use one of the commercial tent enclosures made especially for showering.

**Grain, Hay & Water** - Plan some simple meals that are already partially cooked or rely on canned soups, etc. Many types of camp stoves are available that operate on propane or gas. Bring drinking water either in a cooler or some of the gallon jugs you see at grocery stores. (Frozen water in jugs serves as a giant ice cube in your cooler and later as drinking water). Keep your cooler inside the trailer and cover with a blanket to insulate it. Most rides that have camping will only provide the “normal trail ride meals” which usually include coffee & donut in the am, snack on the trail and a meal after the ride. You will be expected to provide your own supper at night and breakfast in the morning. Campers also tend to be very gregarious and will band together in groups for meals and this can be a lot of fun with everyone adding something different to the meal.

There is a wide selection of camping supplies available on the market, but start small and build from there. Only bring what you are comfortable carrying and setting up. Don’t weigh yourself down with too much. If it takes 2 or 3 hours to set up, it will take that much to knock it all down and that will defeat the purpose of taking a vacation!
By B Nohe, Competitive & Pleasure Trail Rider

Drinking adequate fluids is essential for top sports performance. Fluids transport nutrients to and from the working muscles, dissipate heat, and eliminate waste products. Most riders understand the necessity for their horses to obtain adequate fluids but neglect this aspect of their sports diet which results in dehydration and a decrease in their overall performance. Dehydration is a danger to both the rider and the horse, at trail rides and at shows or even at home while in training.

The commonest cause of dehydration is failure to drink. The deprivation of water is far more serious than the deprivation of food. Initial signs of dehydration include dryness of lips or mucosa, loss of elasticity of the skin, weakness, tiredness, thirst, rise in temperature and decreased urination. As dehydration becomes more severe, fainting, vomiting, cramps and irregular heartbeats are exhibited and eventually shock and death can result.

The treatment of any form of dehydration depends not only on restoring the depleted water but also on the re-establishment of normal levels of body electrolytes. Before you even realize you’re dehydrated, your performance level has decreased. To maintain optimal hydration, riders should follow these guidelines:

1. Prevent dehydration during training by drinking adequate fluids on a daily basis - lots of water and juice.

2. Before an event, drink extra water, juice, and other fluids to be sure the body is well hydrated.

An awning adds to “liveability”. Notice the red tie down, a must for windy days.
DEALING WITH DEHYDRATION – CONTINUED

Riders should drink 2 to 3 glasses of fluid up to 2 hours before the start. Since the kidneys require about 90 minutes to process fluids, this allows time to empty the bladder prior to the event. Five or ten minutes before the start time (right before you mount up) riders should drink another 1 or 2 cups of water or sports drink.

3. During hard exercise (and in hot weather), riders should drink as much as they comfortably can, ideally 8 to 10 ounces every 20 minutes. Because they may be sweating off three times this amount, they may still have a water deficit. Riders should start drinking early in the event, before they are thirsty, to prevent dehydration. All trail riders should carry a water bottle, especially in hot weather or on long loops.

4. After exercise, riders should drink enough fluids to quench their thirst, plus more. The thirst mechanism inadequately indicates whether the body is optimally hydrated; monitoring urination is safer. If several hours pass before the rider has urinated, he or she is still dehydrated.

For the recreational rider (1 hour or less), water is always an appropriate fluid replaced before, during, and after exercise. For more serious riders (more than an hour and in hot weather), a sports drink or diluted juice that contains 60 to 100 calories per 8 ounces is best during exercise because it will help to maintain normal blood glucose levels. The best recovery fluids include juices, because juice replaces not only fluids but also carbohydrates and electrolytes. Commercial fluid replacers are generally weak sources of carbohydrates and hence are better suited for consumption during the event. **REMEMBER TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF AS WELL AS YOU TAKE CARE OF YOUR HORSE!**

TRAIL RIDE ETIQUETTE

1. A rider is responsible for the manners of himself & his mount.
2. Ride or Drive on the right hand side of the road.
3. Ask to pass on the left.
4. No tailgating
5. No racing.
6. Pay attention to the posted ride registration & start times. Register and start on time.
7. Park your trailer in an orderly, considerate manner.
8. Always walk your horse in the staging area.
9. On the trail, DO NOT pass at the canter (or gallop!)
10. Never pass a rider on foot without first asking permission.
11. When encountering a rider trying to mount on the trail, always stop BEFORE the pair and wait until the rider mounts.
12. At water crossings, allow space between horses & avoid splashing rider or horse.
13. At water stops, wait for ALL horses in the group to drink before continuing.
14. Tie a RED ribbon in the tail of a horse that KICKS;
15. Tie a YELLOW ribbon in the tail of a STALLION;
16. Tie a GREEN ribbon in the tail of a NOVICE horse and/or rider.
17. Respect Rules # 14, 15, and 16!!
18. Be friendly and respect the rights of the local residents
19. Stay OFF lawns and driveways.
20. When crossing hay fields, etc., travel along the edge unless there is a definite MARKED path elsewhere.
21. Never forget to THANK the Ride Management.
22. Before leaving, clean up your area, (hay and manure) or check to see if it can be left.