

Seven simple safety things recommended for trail riders

For The Love Of Horses
By Fran & J. Buchman

Many unforeseen things can happen during a trail ride.

Often these are memorable experiences such as seeing a wild animal up close in natural environment or a gorgeous view of landscape or scenery. However, mishaps and catastrophes, those un-thought-of occurrences, that are so a part of nature do happen as well.

"Accidents can happen when we go trail riding, and we need to be ready when they do," advised Scot Hansen in one of the most entertaining, yet insightful presentations at the 2010 EquiFest of Kansas in Wichita.

A retired mounted police officer who has trained officers and horses, purchased remounts and worked the streets, Hansen has vast experience on trail rides throughout the country and across the nation's borders.

With his trail-riding saddle laden with "extras" as his prop, Hansen, now of Pilot Mountain, N.C., showed photographs, some quite humorous, as he talked about "Seven Simple Things For Trail Safety."

"Horseback riding spans every generation and all hierarchy from paupers to kings and queens," Hansen acknowledged. "There's nothing like getting on a horse and riding out in nature."

However, lots of things can happen on these treasured excursions, and the most important thing to take along now

spot transmitter should be used on the trail to contact 911 during an emergency."

It is important to not attach the phone to the saddle, but rather in a pocket or on the belt. "Do not put it in the middle of your back, because that can cause serious pain and injury if a person lands on his back when coming off a horse," Hansen pointed out.

Helmets are used by many horseback riders, who once would have jived another for doing such. "The most important piece of equipment you have is a helmet, and it must be worn," Hansen emphasized. "Only rated helmets are available when purchased new now, so be aware of buying a used one that is not.

Lightweight, comfortable helmets that protect the lower part of the back of the head were



Scot Hansen had his trail riding saddle on a stand and mounted it frequently during his discussion of things riders should take along when participating in trail rides. The program was presented at the EquiFest of Kansas in Wichita.

with a blade that is both serrated for cutting rope and cinches, and smooth for wood, leather, etc.

"The knife must be designed so it can be opened and closed with one hand, yet also so it can be locked shut and

While forefathers would have been difficult to convince of its worthiness, many cowboys today include a grab strap or night latch as part of their saddle. Hansen has designed these braided leather

addition to equipment, according to the speaker. "I usually put my rope halter with a 12-foot lead right on my horse and knot the extra rope length up by the saddle tree," illustrated Hansen, who said tying the

is a cell phone. "Bring it, wear it, test and ICE it. In other words, make sure the phone is usable if an accident occurs," Hansen advised. "A recommended. "Wear it for your loved ones," Hansen urged. A one-blade pocket knife is essential. He suggested getting one

open," Hansen said. "Keep it in a back pocket or knife scabbard, not in your front pocket or on the saddle."

Spare emergency reins can serve multiple purposes. "I keep a light-weight rope with snaps on both ends tied to my saddle in case a rein breaks," Hansen related. "This can also be used for other purposes such as an arm sling, to tie on a leg splint or leading the horse."

pieces which can be installed on both western and English saddles.

Seated in his own saddle, Hansen demonstrated how the strap should be used if a horse bolts or starts bucking. "Even if the horse gets its head loose, I can keep my hand gripped completely around this leather, sit back in the saddle and still ride him," Hansen showed.

A halter with a lead rope is an essential ad-

halter on the saddle is fine as well.

Fruit and water completed the list of seven necessities for trail riders. "Ample water supply is needed to keep you hydrated in both hot and cold weather," Hansen claimed. "Fruit provides nutrition and has excellent absorption, so I always take fruit along, too."

Several other items can make a trail ride more enjoyable and safer as well. "I like to have a friend along to get the most out of my ride," Hansen smiled.

Horse and rider both should be identified in case of a situation where they become separated. A first-aid kit can be bulky, but one with a triangle bandage could come in handy for use on a severe cut or other injury.

A hoof pick is good to get rocks and other intrusions out of a horse's foot. An easy-boot can be used on a horse that has an injured foot. A space-blanket to help keep warm and dry can even be made by putting arm and head holes in a large trash bag.

Although many people can make a shrill whistle, Hansen claimed that riders will find a plastic reference-type whistle handy when calling for assistance or relaying location to other riders.