

ERCC Protocol for passing horses on Essex roads



I would like to bring to the attention of all Essex Roads riders that whilst cycling we must remain particularly aware that we share the road with other users and particularly those who are also vulnerable such as horse riders. We have recently received correspondence from the Sustrans Area Manager for Greater Essex alerting us to the danger to horses of fast moving groups of cyclists. As our club ever increases in size we can presume that this danger will increase unless we all consider what action we can take in order that any horse we come across does not take fright. Horses are often to be seen on small country roads and cycle riders will not necessarily be aware of their presence until they meet them, often round a corner. However, it is important that when someone in a group sees horses ahead that the following rules are observed: -

1. If you see a horse up the road, shout 'horses ahead, slow down' and use the slow down hand signal (as per the highway code)
2. Riders should avoid any screeching of brakes as this may cause the horse ahead to take fright,
3. Then shout up the road to the horse rider 'cyclists at the rear' and make sure that the rider turns round and acknowledges your presence,
4. Cyclists should then observe the reaction of the horse and rider in keeping the animal under control – if the horse looks erratic or confused in its movements then do not pass until it is brought under firm control by the rider. The rider may pull the animal off the road to assist.
5. Once you are sure that the animal is settled then each rider should file past in single file slowly, patiently and quietly without unnecessary gear clattering/changing. Remember to give the horse a wide berth as you pass and when no oncoming traffic is visible.
6. All riders should thank the rider for their assistance too – it helps us as cyclists to be courteous.
7. In addition, it is also advisable for Essex Roads riders to ride in smaller spread out groups rather than en-mass, as a large approaching group is likely to be more worrisome to a horse than a smaller approaching number of riders.

If our members observe these rules then we will continue to gracefully share the road with our fellow participants in sport. Please remember that you have a responsibility as a road user to reasonably consider the safety of others at all times. Thank you.

Mark Stanbury
General Secretary
Essex Roads Cycling Club