

Buzzers and Bells Horns and Hooves

Under the Alberta Traffic Safety Act all cyclists are required to have a bell, buzzer or horn mounted to their bike and use the device to warn pedestrians and other road users, but have we been ignoring another group of users?

The Counties surrounding Edmonton are home to another group of users that you may not have considered. Horse Riders need to know your presence and more importantly the horses under those riders need to know that you are approaching.

Horses are very aware of their surroundings by smell sound and feel. Yes, they can detect movement underfoot and have excellent hearing, but they have an enormous blind spot that can leave them open to surprise and to be spooked. Horses really can't see and recognize you as a cyclist until you almost even with their heads. Riders can maintain control of their mount in several situations, but when an almost silent bike rolls up from behind and surprises a horse then "fight or flight" kicks in and a rider can be thrown from their horse, leaving the horse running loose. Riders, horses, and cyclists can be injured or even killed.

So, best practices are:

1. As you approach a horse and rider (100 metres) ring your bell 2 or 3 times.
2. In 50 metres ring your bell 2 or 3 times and you may also call out with a greeting and a "bike approaching". Ringing at two different times tells the horse that whatever is behind them is getting closer because it becomes louder.
3. A rider may stop the horse and turn the animal so that the cyclist then comes into the visual field of the horse.
4. If the horse and rider are up near or on the road, please pass slowly and give them a wide berth.
5. It may be necessary to come to a complete stop in the case of a young or unusually nervous animal.

Whether you ride steel, aluminum, titanium, carbon fibre or Equus caballus, we all want to ride safe and arrive home safe. Do your part to ensure that our Equestrian friends make it back to the stable safe and sound.