

Horse Regulations

1. Roles and Responsibilities

Horse Commander

At every event, the overall commander for either side normally designates a person as a battalion commander for all mounted units. In addition to having overall command of horses on the field, anyone accepting the role of Horse Commander shall be responsible for the following:

- He will walk the site prior to the event with the overall commander and event sponsors. He will check the battleground to ensure its suitability and safety for horse use. He will inspect the area intended to be the horse camp in order to see that it meets all of the requirements (outlined later in this document).
- He will poll all registered horse units prior to the event to assist the event commanders and sponsors in planning for the appropriate number of horses to be present.
- He will act as a point person before and during the event for any horse related concerns or questions.
- He will stay informed of all regulations affecting horse use within the site.
- He will stay aware of all activities involving horses when possible, including encouraging safe behavior and enforcement of these rules and regulations on the field in conjunction with separate unit commanders.
- He will appoint a Riding Master for the event.

Riding Master

The Riding Master shall be designated by the Horse Commander (or the Horse Commander may assume this role). The person filling this role does not necessarily need to be a person of rank or even in the Horse Commander's own unit, but it should be noted that a good working relationship should exist between the two prior to the appointment. The Riding Master shall be responsible for the following:

- Checking every horse on site for Coggins and any other state required tests. The Riding Master will be required to match each description on the Coggins with each horse, thus ensuring that the document matches to the animal.
- Provide, when possible, the name and phone number of the vet on call in the area.

Unit Commanders

The bulk of responsibility of adherence to these rules and regulations shall fall on the individual unit commanders. It is suggested that unit commanders hold drills before and during events and throughout the year with their men and horses equipped as they would be in the battle situation. This is the best way to determine which participants, horses, and equipment are safe or unsafe. As each unit has different guidelines for acceptable proficiency in riding and drill, each unit commander is expected to know the threshold and capabilities of the men and horses under his command. At no time should a unit commander shy away from having an individual horseman step out of line if he believes that the action about to be taken is outside of the man or mount's capabilities. An individual unit's commander's responsibilities shall include but are not limited to the following:

- Ensure that all horsemen under their command are proficient and safe riders.
- Ensure that all horsemen under their command are aware of the proper care for their mounts on and off the field, regardless of whether or not the mount is self-owned or a rental horse.
- Be responsible for the safety and well-being of his men during any sort of mounted action.
- Ensure that all men using weapons are well versed in their safe operation. This includes proper etiquette and safety with both firearms and sabers.
- Ensure that all mounts under their command are fit for service.
- Inspect the tack and weaponry of their men before every engagement to ensure that its care and condition is safe and appropriate.

Individual Rider

There are certain expectations and responsibilities of the individual riders on the field. They are as follows:

- At all times a rider must be in control of his horse and alert to the situation and people around them. At no time will they surrender their horse except to another rider or designated horse handler.
- Riders must be able to control their mounts by the use of one hand on the reins. Riders should appear comfortable while sitting on their mounts and must be able to ride at a walk, trot, and canter, preferably without stirrups, as situations of losing one's stirrups do happen in tactical demonstrations.

- A horse must be trained to withstand loud noise (musket, cannon, fife, drum, etc.), shiny objects (sabers, bayonets, firearms, etc.), and flags before taking the field. Any horse perceived to be consistently uncontrollable may be asked to leave the field by the Unit Commander or Horse Commander in order to ensure the safety of both the rider and other participants.
- Always point firearms away from a horse's head.
- When at all possible, keep a 20 yard buffer zone from the public.
- When at all possible, keep a 5-10 yard buffer zone between themselves and opposing foot troops.
- Unless pre-scripted, do not weave in and out of the infantry ranks.
- Should the horse panic, the rider will make an effort to turn the horse into a tight circle, gradually diminishing the circle until the horse is under control, and turn the horse away from the crowd.
- If a rider falls from his horse, the mount should be recovered by walking slowly towards it and speaking softly at it. Do not carry anything in your hands!
- Outside of a picket line, horses should never be tied up by the reins to any sort of immovable object. They should preferably be tied with a lead to an object with some give.
- Do not allow the public near your horse if they are known to be unfriendly or uncomfortable around large groups of people.
- It is strongly suggested that a rider own his own horse. A strong rapport between a horse and rider is the most important factor to ensure safety on the field. In addition, most regimental insurance policies will not cover rental horses. If a horse is rented, both the lessor and lessee should provide proof of insurance to the Riding Master prior to or at the event.

2. Site and Encampment Selection and Policing

Site Selection

Site selection to accommodate cavalry must be based on the availability of open space for proper exercise, deployment, and picketing of horses. A suggested rule of thumb is to allow an acre for the first four horseman and an additional acre per each additional four horsemen, if the field is open and relatively well manicured. Additional allowances should be made for rough or partially wooded terrain. Rough areas may require twice those figures for safe horse use. Holes and depressions must be filled and compacted prior to an event, as well as unsafe areas for horses flagged or marked in an extremely visible manner.

Encampment Selection

Encampments must be selected based upon scale, shade, and water. There must be enough space to accommodate a picket line that will fit all of the horses present at the event. This means sturdy trees with which to tie the line off to and no less than ten (10) feet per horse on the line. Several lines may be used; however, it is vital there be enough spacing to accommodate all horses. Picket lines should never be set up next to a well-traveled road or any place that will see a large amount of spectator traffic. Space must also be available to pull trailers into the encampment to off-load and on-load horses. There must also be additional space available to park the trailers after unloading. It is preferable that this space be away from the encampment itself, as no one wishes to walk into an 18th century cavalry camp only to see a four-horse trailer parked directly behind tents and dining flies.

Shade is an essential piece of any cavalry encampment. It should provide a cool and relatively insect free rest area for the horses, as well as a place to string picket lines. This is particularly required at events with hot weather. The shade should not be located in a heavily wooded or dusty area, as this lends itself to an uncomfortable resting place for the mounts.

Clean, potable water is also required at the rate of 15 gallons per day, per horse. In very hot weather, this number should be increased to 30 gallons. The camp should not be farther than a 5-minute walk on foot from any water source. At no time will a watering trough, stream, river, or lake suffice as a water source. Watering troughs provide pools of stagnant water for bugs to congregate at, particularly horse flies and mosquitoes, and no matter how clean a site claims their bodies of water to be, they are not sufficient. A good rule of thumb for the definition of “potable water” is water that you would allow your own men to drink.

Policing

All units are responsible for policing their own camps, but it shall be the duty of the Horse Commander and Riding Master to see that proper policing is performed. All picket lines are to be kept away from the public, and at no time should any line be left unattended. The public should not be allowed to interact with the horses in camp unless a member of the unit familiar with horses is present to chaperone them. At the end of an event, all waste, straw, and hay are to be raked into one central pile in trash bags provided by the site for easy disposal by the latter. At no time is any unit to leave an event without properly policing their picket line.

3. Standards for Horses, Training, and Equipment

Standards for Horses

It is a prerequisite that only horses fit for service will be used at events. Horses that are lame, sore, sick, undernourished, or exhausted can be determined unfit for service by the Riding Master. All animals shall be inspected at the time of their Coggins check to be sure that they are fit and safe for use. It is essential that horses used at events are calm, tractable animals that have been exposed to gunfire, musical instruments, flags, sabers, cannon fire, etc. The horses should

move naturally at the walk, trot, and canter without signs of lameness, excessive nervousness, or irritability.

When a horse or rider that is new to living history is brought to an event, special consideration should be made for both the rider and the mount and the Unit commander should be aware of the novice animal (or rider). Unit commanders should plan in advance to acclimatize any new mounts to the various stimuli which are likely to be encountered. Certainly, new mounts and new riders should participate in drill. When drilling, riding at the event, or participating in battle recreations, care should be taken to allow a new mount or rider to safely exit the area. If possible, a “chaperone” or designated comrade with a more experienced mount should be delegated (in advance) to leave the area with the new horse, should it become unmanageable.

Standards for Training

It is hoped and assumed that a large amount of training with both units and individual riders will be done off the field before any event. All mounted personnel should consider it their primary goal to continuously sharpen their skills in equitation, as this will lead to both safe behavior and a well-ordered event. It is the Unit Commander’s responsibility to only permit those men on the field whom he feels meet the proper level of skill in equitation and safety. As always, should an individual rider ever feel he is not ready or is incapable of participating in a particular action on the field (such as a charge, carouse, etc.) he is absolutely within his rights to pull himself out of the line and rejoin the formation after the action has been completed. Safety is the number one priority, and no individual should feel pressured to participate in any way that they feel would compromise the safety of themselves or their mount. Even experienced riders and mounts sometimes have off days – situational awareness and a focus on safety is paramount.

Standards for Equipment

The specific standards for equipment are as follows:

- Tack should be well conditioned and cared for. Every Unit Commander is responsible for inspecting his men’s tack before every action during an event. Any mount or rider with cracked, torn, or moldy tack should not be allowed to participate on the field, as this can cause a serious safety hazard.
- All saddles are to possess well-fitted stirrups and irons.
- No original (antique) weapons are to be used on the field.
- Sabers should have a proper, well fitting scabbard. Their edges should be blunted.
- In addition to other standards below, all firearms should be well cleaned and maintained. Any firearm that is rusty, dirty, caked in residue, etc. should not be allowed on the field.

Carbines:

- All carbines should possess a flash guard.
- Frizzen covers should be removed **WHILE ON HORSEBACK** (not while on foot). The cover is a safety hazard that could possibly get tangled.
- Carbines must have a proper bucket and strap to be secured to.

Pistols:

- All pistols are to have accompanying holsters. At no time should a pistol be carried in a belt, haversack, etc.
- Flash guards and frizzen covers are not to be used on pistols as they can tangle and cause a safety issue.

Cartridge Boxes

- All cartridge boxes (belly boxes or shoulder slung boxes) are to have a firmly fitted cover that latches in some way.
- Loose powder or powder horns shall never be used in the priming or loading of any firearm and should never be carried by a person on horseback.

4. Rules of Engagement

Saber-to-Saber Combat

- Only well skilled and trained equestrians and reenactors should participate in saber-to-saber combat between opposing bodies of horses.
- **If you do not wish to participate in saber combat, do not draw your sword!** This will signify to the opposing force that you are not a participant and should not be attacked.
- When possible, the attacker should punch with his sword arm, keeping the point of his sword elevated as opposed to swinging a cut. The punching method looks just as good to the crowd and gives the rider far more control over his blade.
- Opponents should avoid long melees. Riders should trade one or two strikes with an opponent and then move on and engage another.
- Participants should make eye contact with their opponents before and during their strike(s), and it should be noted that while firm hits should be placed, you are not swinging a baseball bat.

- All strikes should be above the participants' heads from the right side when at all possible. At no time is the horse to be purposely targeted in any way.
- The use of the point is prohibited, and sabers should never be lunged or thrust at an opponent. At all times the tip of the saber should be pointed up.
- If an opponent is unhorsed, the melee will immediately end until the loose mount is secured and the rider is made safe.
- Back slashes and St. George's/Rear Guards are acceptable. One man shall call out to his opponent: "St. George's/Rear Guard", and this signifies that his opponent will slash behind himself/attack his rear while the man who has made the call shall guard against it. This is the only circumstance in which the back of an opponent should be attacked.
- No firearms will be used during saber melees.
- As a final note, good communication between opposing forces while in the midst of combat is necessary to execute well-run and safe saber combat. A healthy amount of respect to one's opponent must be granted, and at all times the rider should be aware of everything that is going on around him.

Firing from Horseback

The loading and firing of pistols and carbines from horseback should follow the rules of the state or federal site the event takes place on, as well as the rules outlined by any sponsor organization. In addition:

- A firearm should never be pointed at a horse's head and should never be discharged across the body or over a horse's head.
- No weapon shall be discharged closer than 30 yards from any opposing force and will always be elevated 15 degrees above their heads.
- No weapon will be fired in the direction of the public at a distance less than 100 yards. Always elevate your weapon above their heads.

Engaging Infantry

At times, cavalry will engage infantry on the battlefield. This not only looks good to the public, it is also extremely accurate. The following guidelines are suggested to keep horses, riders, and infantry safe:

- The cavalry commander leading the charge must make sure he has a clear route of approach and a clear route of exit before ordering a charge.

- If a body of cavalry charges a body of infantry and receives a volley between the distance of 75 to 25 yards, the cavalry charge has been dispersed and the cavalry must honor the infantry's fire and retire.
- If a body of cavalry charges a body of infantry and receives no volley from the infantry between the distances of 75 to 25 yards, the infantry has been broken by charging cavalry and must honor this result and retreat from its current position.
- Two horsemen cannot charge a brigade of infantry with any hope of success. However, twenty horsemen could break the line of over 100 infantry. To keep things accurate and fair, no force of cavalry should charge a force of over five times its size and expect a successful outcome.

Given the above guidelines, there is no need for cavalry to come closer than within 3 yards of opposing infantry unless they are taking part in a pre-scripted scenario.

NEVER CHARGE A LOADED CANNON. All Unit Commanders should reference the Continental Line Artillery symbols. Never get between a caisson and its field piece.

5. Procedures for Other Reenactors in Regards to Horses

While many people in the hobby have contact with horses, not everyone is as knowledgeable or experienced as the riders themselves. The following are a list of guidelines any non-horsemen should follow to ensure the safety of both himself and the horse:

- Always approach a horse from the front where it can see you. Approach the horseman at a walk, not a run.
- Be alert to how many horses are on the field and what area they are operating in. Do not block the battlefield to where the horsemen cannot move behind your infantry lines to maneuver around the battlefield. Always be aware of the cavalry and make sure your infantry line is allowing them a safe route of travel when not in combat.
- Never run at a horse making dramatic movements.
- Do not wildly wave or flail objects (flags, banners, etc.) within 20 feet of them.
- Try to gauge the mood of the horse before approaching. Is it nervous, frisky, panicked? If it is, avoid the area. Is the rider in control and paying attention? If not, avoid the area.
- Never fire a musket at a horseman who is closer than 30 feet.
- If a horse panics, clear the area. Do not try to recover the horse unless you have had experience in doing so before. Let the rider take responsibility. In the extremely unlikely event that an uncontrolled horse charges and you have no place to go, stand still and raise

your hands above your sides, making yourself as large as possible. The horse will veer off.

- In camp, please do not feed the horses. Do not approach the horse unless the owner or designated handler is present. Please do not ask the owner if you can ride the horse. Strict insurance rules forbid this.
- No smoking, candles, fires, open flame, etc. around the horses, feed, or bedding.
- Do not permit unauthorized personnel or the public to handle the horses. Do not allow the public to feed the horses.
- Do not allow the public near the horses unless the owner or designated handler is present.

6. Ownership and Insurance

- It is strongly suggested that every mounted reenactor owns his own horse. While good equitation can be learned through riding lessons, the proper care of a mount on and off the field is not always covered.
- Any lessor (of a horse) should be required to provide proof of liability insurances to the Riding Master prior to the event and any lessee will also be required to provide his unit's proof of insurance to the Riding Master prior to the event.
- All units are recommended to have a minimum of \$1,000,000 in liability insurance and proper insurance to cover mounted reenactors. Any unit, rentor or rentee found to have an improper insurance policy or complete lack thereof shall **NOT BE ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE**.

It is understood that being a safe mounted reenactor is influenced by both a horse and its rider and that what they do has an element of risk involved. These policies and procedures reflect the best way to mitigate risk while still allowing a correct and authentic interpretation of cavalry during the War of Independence. While all mounted reenactors agree to abide by these rules, it should be remembered that the inherent influence of a horse throws countless variables into scenarios on the field. Excellent situational awareness, respect for your fellow riders, understanding, and common sense trump any other rule and will ensure a safe and fun experience for all.