



Trail Care Day

Students will participate in a trail maintenance activity and demonstrate an understanding of stewardship and multi-use trail responsibility and protection.



Welcome students to your farm and explain safety and conduct rules for spending time at an equine facility. Trail riding is a popular activity and there are many recreational trail riding groups throughout the state who participate. These groups also help care for trails and act as stewards for the land through which these trails pass.

Divide students into pairs. With thirty seconds or a full minute between pairs, send partners down a section of riding trail for a quiet walk. Designate a gathering place at the end of a 50 to 100 yard walk. Tie a piece of **flagging tape** in a clearing or open area to mark where students will stop. Explain that as they walk they will look at their surroundings through the eyes of many trail users.

As you launch each pair, whisper to them whose eyes they will be exploring on the trail: a fox, a deer hunter, the farmer on whose land this trail crosses, a horseback rider, the rider's horse, a ranger who patrols the nearby park trails to which this trail connects, a child from the city, a child from the country, a deer, and a mouse.

At the meeting place discuss their observations. How do different perspectives change and strengthen our commitment to maintaining trails for humans and non-humans? How do different perspectives increase our commitment to stewardship of land? Accept all answers.



Walk together further along the trail while introducing trail etiquette. Point out interesting views, trees and wildflowers, give a history of the land. Encourage students to use all of their senses. What senses might a horse use as it walks along?

Discuss how the group should respond if they meet a trail rider on a horse. Demonstrate how to step off the trail to give the horse and rider plenty of room to pass. If possible, arrange to have a trail rider meet you later along the trail. Speak with them and get to know the horse.

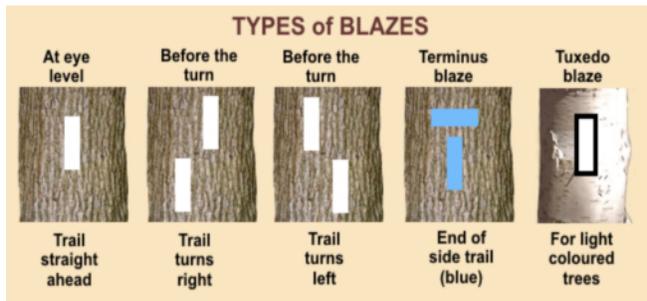


Trail riders are one of many user groups who enjoy using trails. Sometimes, however, there are conflicts or dilemmas between groups.

A *dilemma* is when a difficult choice must be made between two or more alternatives. Dilemmas often involve different opinions and levels of compromise. Private land owners as well as state and national parks and forests must decide upon rules or regulations that protect trails from degradation. Sometimes regulations limit which user groups may or may not use certain trails.

Show a variety of trail sign photographs and discuss why certain user groups are permitted or restricted from some trails. Use the samples provided or better yet, photographs of trail signs from your area that students may encounter on their own hikes or rides.

Trail clubs and hiking clubs may have old signs to lend or give away (as long as they are not re-posted). Have students look at the materials used in sign-making. Explain the function of trail blazes painted or nailed to trees or posts. How do they indicate trail direction, the end or start of a trail, and identify specific trails from others?





Have a variety of **tools** available and demonstrate their safe use. Assemble students at a work site along the trail to:

- Repair a bridge or crossing
- Brush out an overgrown section
- Remove a downed tree or branches
- Place or set a sign
- Restore trail markers.

Complete the trail maintenance task and take a well deserved break! Have **snacks and water** available. While resting, ask students how it felt to contribute to and participate in a stewardship activity.

Now that students have a more intimate connection to the trail through a stewardship activity, ask them to decide upon some rules for how the trail should be cared for. Are there important historical or natural features that should be protected from too much human use? Is the trail on a steep slope or otherwise located where certain kinds of travel might be dangerous to a particular user group? How could user groups be encouraged to help care for the trails they use? How would trail rules be enforced if certain groups were excluded from use?



As you exit the trail and head back to the bus, students can help carry out the equipment, water cooler, snack box, etc. Work together to put away materials and supplies. Gather students together in a circle.

Meeting the needs of a trail and the wants of multiple user groups can get tricky! Go around the circle and ask students to mention a new perspective they gained today. Go around again and ask how it felt to help maintain a trail that others will enjoy.

Invite students to come for a trail ride (if your farm offers them, of course) and become part of a trail crew for service hours.

Suggest to teachers that trail use issues can be further investigated in the classroom. These issues are important conservation and social concerns especially in and around urban areas and biologically sensitive environments.