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# HORSES, MULES, AND GOOD CAMPING RULES

## Sierra National Forest

### TELLIN' IT STRAIGHT

At one time, wilderness travel was unrestricted with few or no regulations. Increased use and popularity of the Sierra has caused damage to natural resources. To alleviate resource damage, each group of backcountry travelers needs to be responsible for their actions. "Leave No Trace" is the best way to achieve resource protection. By taking care to protect basic resources and abiding by local rules and regulations, stock users can do their part to reduce impacts on resources and ensure continued use of stock in the wilderness.

Camping practices of yesteryear need to be replaced by a land camping ethic that minimizes the impact on nature. As a temporary visitor to the forest or wilderness, you need to leave few imprints on the land to allow the forces of nature to dominate the landscape.

### GETTIN' IT TOGETHER

Before you leave home, take a few days to make appropriate plans so your trip will run smoother.

A Wilderness Permit is required for all overnight trips into the wilderness. Wilderness Permit reservations are available at [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov). Trailhead quotas are in place year-round, although most of the trailheads are not accessible until early June. For all trails, 60 percent of the trailhead quota is available through advanced reservation 6 months prior to entry date and 40 percent is available 2 weeks prior to entry date. Both the 60% and 40% quotas must be reserved on [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov). There is a \$6.00 non-refundable reservation fee and a \$5.00 per person charge for everyone included in the reservation. Group size is limited to 15 people and 25 head of stock for overnight trips.

To help avoid problems, stock should be conditioned for the trail and familiarized with different methods of restraint (i.e., hobbles, hitch lines, bells, etc.) well before the trip to the forest.

### ON THE TRAIL

Cutting across a switchback begins a path for soil erosion and may encourage others to follow. Please keep stock on trails.

- Plan ahead - Always check regulations regarding stock use.
- Permits - Permits may need to be obtained before using stock in the forest.
- Grazing - Grazing of stock may not be permitted. Pack in stock feed (hay, pellets, cubes, and/or grain) to avoid serious damage to meadow grasses due to overgrazing. As the summer progresses and the ground is firmer, stock can be turned out in the meadow for a few hours each day. To inquire about grazing restrictions, contact the local Ranger Station. In bear country, feed must be hung out of reach of bears, or an approved bear-resistant feed container must be used.
- Noxious weeds - Due to problems with noxious weeds, feeding hay at trailheads or backcountry campgrounds may be prohibited.
- Tethering - When not being used, pack and saddle stock should be tethered. Horses, llamas or mules that are nervous "diggers" or "pawers" should be hobbled when tied to prevent unnecessary damage to the terrain. Please tie at least 200' from streams or lakes.
- Hitches - Always use hitch-racks where provided. Where there are no hitchracks, tie a rope between two trees, "a highline" away from the trail and hitch the stock to the rope. This avoids damage to the tree and trampling around the root system.
- Right-of-way - Hikers are required to stand quietly on the lower side of the trail and yield the right-of-way to stock. Many hikers do not know and understand the need for this procedure, so stock users are encouraged to courteously coach them on proper meeting procedures.
- Stay the course - Please stay on established trails. Check with Forest Service regarding any cross-country riding or riding on paved roads.
- Manure - As a courtesy to others and the forest's resources, scatter manure after camping or stopping for long periods and smooth out any ruts or holes.

### CAMPSITE SELECTION

Selecting a good wilderness horse camp takes care and consideration. Campsites should be located 100 feet or

more from lakes, streams, trails, and meadows. This helps prevent water contamination and loss of bank vegetation. Camping away from meadows keeps grassy areas available for wildlife.

Choose a campsite that retains solitude for yourself and others which will give you freedom from intrusion of urban-type sights, sounds and odors. As a general rule, the best campsites are away from water on higher ground. This makes the site drier, warmer, and less popular for mosquitoes.

Select a site where a hitch line (i.e., lash or halter rope tied between trees) can be located on firm, dry ground. Using hobbles is another way for restraining animals. Both will avoid problems of soil disturbance and root damage.

### **CAMPFIRE AND LITTER**

Firewood is scarce in the higher elevations, so the use of gas stoves is encouraged. Fire rings, blackened rocks, and camping trash are a blight on the natural environment. If you must use a fire ring, build a small one and then return the rocks blackened side down in their natural positions before departing.

To make sure your fire is completely out, pour water over the coals and ashes; stir with a stick until the coals are cool to the touch.

Litter and food scraps are unsightly and create an artificial food source which can alter the behavior and distribution of many wildlife species. **“Leave No Trace”** by packing out cans, bottles, metal foil, feminine hygiene products, disposable diapers, and unused food.

### **PACKIN’ UP AND HEADIN’ HOME**

Take a few minutes to naturalize your camp. Scatter manure, refill holes dug by stock, and remove any trace left by others such as rails, bailing wire, rope or deer racks. Pack out everything you pack in. Do not bury garbage! Take pride in how well you **“Leave No Trace”**.

### **DESIGNATED HORSE CAMPING SITES:**

#### **Bass Lake Ranger District (559-877-2218)**

Kelty Meadow Campground  
Texas Flat Group Campground  
Bowler Group Campground  
(Temporarily closed due to Creek Fire)  
Granite Creek Campground  
(Temporarily closed due to Creek Fire)

#### **High Sierra Ranger District (559-855-5355)**

Badger Flat Family Campground  
Mono Hot Springs Tourist Pasture  
Mono Creek Trailhead at Edison Lake

There are dispersed areas located throughout the Forest that are popular with horse campers.

### **TO OBTAIN A WILDERNESS PERMIT:**

Go to [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) and search **Sierra National Forest Wilderness Permits / Explore Available Permits**