

WHY NOT RIDE A HORSE DOUBLE WITH A CHILD

American Medical Equestrian Association states that riding double has increased risk. If this is true, then why would it be so?

AMEA gives the following reasons:

- Two persons riding on a horse's back disperses the weight of the riders in areas in which the horse is not accustomed to carrying weight. This weight places additional weight over the lumbar area, the weakest part of the horse's back and the most susceptible area to pain for the horse.
- When riding double, the second rider's legs hang down by the horse's flank. The flank is an area which is naturally sensitive & is also an area which most horses are not accustomed to being touched.
- Both the additional weight and wider area of weight bearing changes the balance of the horse, subjecting the horse to increased chance of tripping and falling.
- Additional weight increases fatigue in the horse, increasing the above chances of accidents.
- Both riders may not move in the same motion nor at the same time. These varying or opposing movements give confusing signals to the horse.
- Some horses tolerate riding double at a walk or slow trot, but many will buck when they are asked to lope, canter or gallop.
- Most saddles are not made for riding double, which leaves one rider without the security of the saddle seat or stirrups.
- Riding double distracts both the rider and the horse.
- Riding double increases fatigue of the rider.
- When riding double, the rider has less control by signals or by reins of the horse.

If riding double has increased risk, riding double with a child increases these risks:

- The child would be the rider without stirrups or a place in the saddle.
- If the child rides behind the saddle, the child cannot see without leaning to the side, increasing the chances of falling from the horse or decreasing the balance of the horse.
- If the child rides behind the saddle, the child has the responsibility of holding on to the adult rider in the saddle. This puts the responsibility of preventing the fall on the strength and attention of the child.
- If the child rides in front of the adult, this places him/her between the rider and the reins, decreasing control of the horse and interferes with the attention on the horse by the adult rider.
- If we can transfer the automobile studies of riders holding children to horseback riding, they show that in an accident the child is the one with the increased risk of being injured more so than the adult holding the child.