**Wheeler Saddle Club**

**Arena Etiquette and Safety**

The first rule of the arena should always be safety of horse and rider. Practicing good arena etiquette is essential for safety. It falls upon the more experienced riders to maintain good practices as the less experienced riders will look to your example. At most barns and shows, riders mount in the arena, out of the way of other riders. Keep in mind that some horses tend to move toward an open gate, some may even bolt to the open gate with a less experienced rider. Before opening an arena gate where riders are mounted, be aware of where others are, and be ready to close the gate quickly if necessary. This is more difficult to do if you enter the gate while mounted.

* When entering an arena with other mounted riders, it is polite to go in the same direction of travel.
* Faster riders stay on the inside track, leaving the outside track (the rail), for those travelling at slower gaits.
* In general, it is never safe to gallop in an arena with other horses. The fastest gait should be canter/lope on the inside track while riding with others.
* Keep at least one full horse length away from other horses; front, back, and both sides.
* When passing another rider going in the same direction, pass on the inside. Never pass by going between another horse and rider, and the rail. This is very dangerous. You can call out to the rider ahead of you, “passing on the inside” to keep it safe.
* When passing a rider going in the opposite direction, pass left shoulder to left shoulder, which means you pass to the right of the approaching horse. This is an international rule that every rider should know.
* If you need to adjust tack, or want to chat with a friend, move to the inside of the arena and stay out of the way of others.
* Be aware of others at all times. Sharing the arena becomes unsafe when riders are continuously looking down at their own horse as they ride. Remember to look up and around the arena.
* If your horse starts to act up, even if you still feel safe, it may be affecting other horses and riders around you. Horses tend to react to another horse’s behavior. Less experienced riders can quickly lose control of their horse when another horse begins to act up. Leave the arena if necessary and school your horse elsewhere.
* When jumping, it is crucial to call out what you intend to do: “jumping the cross-rail, then the vertical!” Warmup arenas at shows tend to be the most dangerous of all. I have witnessed horses collide while two riders attempted to jump the same fence from opposite directions without letting others know. Share the jump course with courtesy always keeping safety in mind.
* Take care when using your whip or using loud voice cues. This may have an impact on other horses, causing an inexperienced rider to lose control of their horse.
* In the event of a rider fall, everyone should immediately halt. There is now a loose horse in the arena, it is best to dismount and help where needed.
* In general, it is unsafe to lunge a horse in the same arena where riders are mounted. It is always better to use the roundpen for lunging if the arena is in use.
* It is extremely rude to talk on your cell phone in the arena with other riders. Be polite.

Always remember that etiquette is a tool for mutual cooperation. All persons at a facility are to remember that the quality of shared space is defined by the example of all who enter it.