

RIDER BEE WARE
By Pete Dillingham

In the Southeastern regions, bees and horses seem to start doing the “tango” around the first week in July, and end their fancy dancing around the early part of November. The potential harm to horses and riders can be reduced significantly with good organization and communication.

When traveling on a trail with a group of horses, the bees generally will attack the third or fourth horse in line. If this happens, that rider will usually feel their horse do one of the following things; stomp the ground hard with one of its legs, flash its tail very quickly, aggressively rub its face on its front leg, kick at its belly, or possibly kick up its back legs. When any of these unordinary actions happen, the rider on the bee-stung horse should clearly and loudly yell “BEES!”

Persons in front of the bee stung horse should quickly trot their horses down the trail. Riders behind that area should try to move back. The object is to keep horses from being crowded together near the bee’s nest (that’s when most kicking injuries occur). Once the bee-stung horse has room, the rider should trot (a frantic steed moving at a canter is physically more capable of “bucking”) their horse from that territory. The group left behind should find a detour route. Once out of the danger zone, check for hitchhiking bees on your clothing or the horse’s mane or tail.

In 1993, my wife and I hit 28 bee’s nests on different trail rides. With the exception of a few bumps and bruises, we had no injuries. It could have been a lot worse if we didn’t have an alarm system or people willing to use it. This is a wonderful and safe to time ride if riders will bee ware.