

INVASIVE HITCHHIKERS Fact Sheet # 2

What Horseback Riders Need To Know!

Invasive species are taking over parks and natural areas throughout Pennsylvania, making horseback riding and the use of pack animals difficult, and also damaging valuable habitat. Luckily riders can play a critical role in slowing the spread of invasives.

“Invasive species” are non-native plants, animals and pathogens that can cause harm to the economy, environment and human health.

Invasive plants tend to grow quickly and thickly, potentially

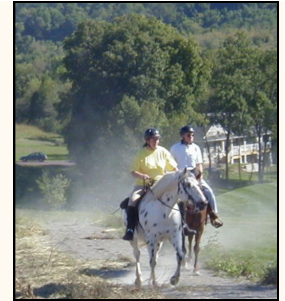
blocking trails. This makes it more difficult for people to horseback ride and enjoy the outdoors.

Mile-a-minute, for example, is a vine that can grow up to a foot per day! It can quickly make trails impassable with its painful spines (*see photo below*).

Invasive species are also a concern to riders because they can ruin the beauty of Pennsylvania landscapes and lower biodiversity (the variety of living things in an area).

We need biodiversity to maintain healthy habitats.

Plus it's simply more interesting and exciting to ride through a landscape full of different shrubs, trees, flowers and grasses, rather than through a boring field of the same invasive plant. But that is exactly what could happen if an invasive species appears... all other species, including wildlife, may be chased out!



Make A Difference!

Now that you know why invasive species are a concern, what can you do to help minimize their spread? Luckily there are many small, easy steps you can take to keep invasives in check.

- Know how to identify some of the common invasives in your area, so you can avoid riding through them. Visit www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/plants/invasiveplants/index.htm to learn more.
- Don't move firewood! Buy it locally. This will help prevent the spread of invasive insects like the emerald ash borer. For more details go to www.emeraldashborer.info
- Use proper mane and hoof grooming techniques to remove hitch-hiking seeds and plant parts before going to a new area. Also clean off clothing, shoes
- Stick to designated roads and trails instead of blazing your own.
- Volunteer to help prevent and control invasives. Contact your local state park or forest office to get involved.

