

HIGHWOOD CYCLING CLUB (HCC)

RIDE GUIDELINES

Updated ver. March 06, 2023

Group riding is a collective experience requiring a degree of harmony and cooperation between the participating cyclists. The better everyone understands the ride requirements, the safer and more fun the ride experience is. It is essential that everyone follow the ride requirements. The Highwood Cycling Club (HCC) would like to define how we ride (so everyone is on the same page).

Prerequisites:

1. Alberta Bicycle Association (ABA) rules require that all participants be HCC members or a declared guest of an ABA/UCI affiliated club. Declared guests and first time (trial) riders must sign a waiver form before commencing a ride.
2. You need a road bike in good working order.
3. You must ride with an operating rear/tail light.
4. Be self-sufficient. Do not rely on others for flat repairs, water, food, etc. Bring a charged cell phone, ID, emergency contact information and the appropriate clothing for the day. A few bandages and wipes are also good to carry in one's kit.
5. You need to have a certain minimal level of fitness. Riders should be able to ride for 1.5 hours at 20km/hr. The club is willing to help potential new members attain the minimal level of fitness.
6. A basic understanding of group riding skills is required. The Ride Leader can provide instruction for people who lack group riding skills.
7. You need to be familiar with and willing to abide by our ride guidelines, be courteous and respectful of other cyclists and road users.
8. Children under the age of 16 years must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian and must have the appropriate level of ability as per item #5 above.

RAIN POLICY

Rain in our geographic area is difficult to predict. Often the rain comes in the form of thundershowers. Rides often proceed even if thundershowers are in the forecast. The Ride Leader may alter the ride route to avoid thundershowers or rain. Rides will be cancelled if lightning is sighted. Members should check the club's multimedia Strava site to see if a ride has been cancelled.

HOW WE RIDE

1. With the exception of our Monday night gravel night and destination rides, our group meets in the parking lot of Ridley's Cycle in Okotoks (#110, 14 Crystal Ridge Drive). The Wednesday morning group may also start at a different location, please read the ride postings carefully.

2. All rides are 'no drop' unless otherwise specified. Riders will not be left behind unless they first confirm with the Ride Leader(s) that they are detaching from the group; all riders are responsible for ensuring they properly notify the Ride Leader(s) if they are detaching from the group.
3. Bicycle helmets with a recognized certification for cycling must be worn while participating in any club ride. In addition to the requirements laid out on the road traffic act, bicycles must be equipped with a daytime operating rear tail light. For early and late season rides bicycles must be equipped with an operating front headlight (the use of a headlight during daylight rides is encouraged). In addition to the road traffic act and local bylaws, additional protective equipment such as gloves and eyewear is strongly encouraged.
4. Groups should be no larger than 10 rides. **NOTE THAT THE CURRENT ALBERTA RETURN TO PLAY POLICY RESTRICTS OUR GROUPS TO NO MORE THAN 10.** Ideally, we try to have 8-10 compatible riders in a group. Experience has shown that to have a group of cyclists who have similar fitness, and goals in mind for that day's ride results in a more enjoyable, safer and harmonious ride. So, think about whether you want to go hard or easy that day and pick the appropriate group. We will usually have three groups.
5. We attempt to have all groups led by a designated club Ride Leader. These volunteers know the route, carry a cell phone and have been instructed on how we ride. The Ride Leaders explain the 'Ride Guidelines' to the group before departure. Repeating our Ride Guidelines each ride is key to members absorbing the information and is essential for identifying new riders and informing them of our ride practices. These communication helps keep us 'all on the same page'.
6. We usually have all the groups ride predominantly the same route so that riders who have miscalculated their fitness can easily drift back to the next group.

RIDE FORMATION AND HOW WE ROTATE

Our goal as a disciplined, well-organized club is to share the enjoyment of the road with our club members as well as the public. The club emphasizes that we must share the road with motorized vehicles. To reduce the potential conflict between cyclists and motorized vehicles we travel at off peak hours and frequent roads that have less motorized vehicle traffic. The Traffic Safety Act dictates that the single file pace line is the only formation of pace line that we can ride in. Hence, we ride in tight single file formation as far right as is safely possible. This provides approaching drivers with a clear view so that they make a clean and safe pass as possible. By 'tight' we mean that cyclists are separated 0.5-1m apart front to back (distance between the rear wheel of the bicycle ahead of you and your front wheel). **NOTE THAT CURRENT GOVERNMENT RESTRICTIONS MEAN THAT A 2M DISTANCE MUST BE MAINTAINED BETWEEN RIDERS.** The group's primary goal is to safely maintain the cohesion of the formation. Each rider must maintain their position and ride in a smooth predictable manner and not create gaps or overlaps.

HOW WE ROTATE

In the single file pace line we start from the premise where all rides are 0.5-1m apart fore and aft. The leading cyclist breaks the wind and sets the pace. After a reasonable period of time (i.e. 1-2 minutes, it's

flexible) and when it is safe the lead rider will signal with a flick of their right elbow that the trailing rider prepare to take the lead rider position. The lead rider will then drift to the left and let the rest of the pace line will travel past. The rider that had been in the second spot becomes the lead rider and the former lead rider takes up a position at the rear of the pace line. All passes are to be done as smoothly as possible.

While you are at the front of the group, the group is at your mercy. Anything you do, good or bad, will affect the entire group. If you accelerate aggressively it will start to shatter the group and create gaps and confusion. We all have a responsibility to the riders behind us to move in a smooth and predictable way and watch the road surface ahead.

The following are some important points to remember when riding in the pace line:

1. Do not attack or surge off the front when it is your turn to pull. Surging or attacking will cause gaps and jerk the speed of the line. Pull smoothly and gently. You are there to shelter the riders behind you, not gap them.
2. Do not leave gaps in the pace line. Riders wishing to miss a pull can do so by sitting a bike length back of the group. As the former lead rider approaches call out to them that 'you are sitting back'. The former lead rider then merges into the bicycle length gap that you provided.
3. Do not pull too long and overly tire yourself. It is better to do a short pull rather than a long pull that over taxes yourself.
4. Point out obstructions (i.e. potholes, cracks, poor bridge decks, debris, pedestrians, animals) in and on the road.
5. Animals are very unpredictable. A deer that was in the road ditch can suddenly bolt towards the pace line – be prepared. Dogs can also cause the pace line problems. Take note and alert other rides when you see animals.
6. When riding long descents increase the gap between you and the rider in front of you.

GO ZONES

Every group ride must have a degree of compromise. One person's hammer fest is another person's recovery ride. We try to accommodate everyone's wishes by offering as many different groups as possible. We also offer different opportunities along the route for some hard efforts. Almost all our routes involve sections where the option exists for riders to break from the group and go as fast as they wish. We call these the Go Zones. All long climbs are automatically Go Zones and as such the groups are permitted to break formation and regroup at the pre-designated spots at the top. We do ask you to stay to the right and not scatter across the hill when the group breaks apart. Slower riders stay right and make room for the faster riders to get by without forcing them too far out into the roadway. **At no time should there be more than two abreast while passing slower riders.**

Go Zones are also offered on flatter terrain. Your Ride Leader will inform you of the Go Zone locations before and during each ride. There are three common denominators to a Go Zone:

1. A noticeably quiet section of road.

2. No traffic lights or stop signs.
3. A safe regrouping location at the end of the section.

Rules about Go Zones:

1. Going hard is optional, not compulsory. Those that cruise can rest assure that the group will wait for them at the regrouping point.
2. All riders must wait at the regrouping spot. Under no circumstances can anybody soft pedal down the road as this can cause confusion for the late arrivers. They think the group is leaving them behind. If you feel the need to keep moving; come back toward the late arrivers and then ride back with them.
3. Never regroup in a manner that would obstruct traffic in any way. Do not regroup in intersections! On rural roads ride down to an approach into a farmer's field.

DESCENDING

In our riding area we have several descents that can generate speeds more than seventy kph. On those descents we recommend the group take the following actions:

1. Move into or remain in a single file formation.
2. Riders should move 1 to 2m from the right edge of the road. It is not safe to ride close to the edge of the road at high speeds due to wind gusts (particularly cross winds).
3. Riders should open gaps of at least 2m between each rider in front and back. Increase the length of the gap as the speed of descent increases.
4. Send the heaviest and presumably the fastest riders down first to avoid bottlenecks. The goal is to reduce the amount of passing on the descent.
5. All passing must happen on the left. Never pass on the right!

COMMUNICATIONS

Communication is critical to the success of all group rides. It starts right from the beginning even before the group leaves. The riders need to communicate with their group Ride Leader to determine which group and pace of ride they want. On the road, riders need to communicate the ride formation, pace and rotation. Riders at the front need to call out and point out road hazards and traffic situations. Riders at the back need call out cars approaching from the back. Never assume everyone in the group knows a car is approaching or that the group is turning. Everything that can affect the group needs to be called out.

Ride Leaders try to maintain the quality of the ride but the best way to keep us all at our best is when we all communicate best ride practices. If you see someone riding inappropriately (i.e., overlapping wheels, surging off the front) we all should say something. Be polite but make it known that they are not riding properly. We all own these rides and if someone does something dangerous it is in everyone's best interest to correct the inappropriate behavior or action. Do not let bad habits go unaddressed. Say something before it is too late. We all have a responsibility to the riders around us. When we are at the

front, we are responsible to the riders behind, to provide a smooth and steady pull and to point out hazards. When we are at the back we are responsible to call out cars coming from the back and to maintain the integrity of the group by not allowing gaps. Don't wait for the Ride Leader to say something, we all own the ride.

RANDOM BUT IMPORTANT TIPS

1. Ride smoothly and steady all the time. No sudden or abrupt movements or over reactions to potholes, etc.
2. Don't be that person who surges when it's their turn to pull or leaves gaps in the rotation and never ever overlap wheels.
3. When following a wheel be just slightly offset (i.e. approximately 10cm) so that if there is a sudden stop you don't immediately slam into the wheel ahead. The small lateral offset gives you an additional half meter or so to recover.
4. When you are at the front of the group on short descents pedal to keep the pace up. Remember there are riders drafting behind you who will have to brake if you don't keep the pace up.
5. To keep a group together on rolling terrain, climb slightly easier but descent harder. The group speed will be more consistent, and the group will likely remain intact.
6. When picking your group be realistic. It is better to be comfortable in your group than maxed out throughout the ride.
7. Group rides are not races. We are there to support each other by taking turns in the wind. Only in Go Zones is it ok to try to drop your friends.
8. When you see someone committing a ride foul, politely say something. We are all responsible for the quality of our rides.
9. If you get a flat tire or have a mechanical problem, give a loud shout out right away or there is a good chance the pack will ride away without even noticing you. If the group knows of your problem, they will stop and help you fix it quickly.
10. Do not yell obscenities to motorists or get into arguments with the police. It's never productive and will lead to more bad blood and possibly retribution. We request that cyclists not engage in any kind of confrontation with drivers or police officers. This includes inappropriate hand gestures. We are working to maintain and improve the reputation of HCC and all cyclists in general. If words must be exchanged let the Ride Leader do the talking. Feel free to video the exchange if you feel the individual maybe dangerous. When you ride with the club and when you wear our club jersey you become an ambassador for both the club and cyclists in general. Let us not do anything to fuel the flames of discontent. Nothing meaningful gets resolved on the road.

Keep safe, have fun and thanks for riding with the Highwood Cycling Club!