

## Confidence in the Saddle – by Lesa O’Hair

BEFORE you start trail riding and camping make sure that you know how to ride and handle your horse. Can you go up and down hills safely? Can you ride your horse comfortably and confidently in all the horse's gaits, including a canter (lope) and fast gallop? Can you control your horse within a group of horses? Do you feel confident negotiating rocky terrain, water, logs, and uneven ground? In other words, you have to be able to ride and control your horse with balance and confidence before you take him for your first camp out. It is best to take your horse on several day trail rides before you take him on an over night camp out. If the answer to some of these questions listed is “no,” then perhaps you may want to take some riding lessons in an arena with an instructor to help build your confidence and to help improve your balance and to teach you how to control your horse in various situations. Knowing how to ride before going trail riding is a must.

If you are new to trail riding and riding, it is in your best interest to start on a horse that is a gentle soul - a “Steady Eddie,” who has been around for a while and who knows how to carry weight up and down steep hills. This is a horse that is in his prime, is older and wiser. The horse is not spooky, jumpy or dangerous. Ranch horses are perfect for trail riding as most of these horses have been there and done it all and going across trail obstacles is certainly not their first rodeo. Remember Green on Green makes Black and Blue. In other words, you need a horse that is experienced and is reliable and dependable.