



People scattered throughout East Exchange Avenue at the Fort Worth Stockyards after the cattle drive through the historic district March 18, 2024. (Camilo Diaz | Fort Worth Report)

ARTS & CULTURE

Fort Worth riders upset as Stockyards, police regulate horseback traffic for public safety

by David Moreno
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Cody Montes has long enjoyed riding horses alongside her family through the Fort Worth Stockyards — a trip to the historic district July 13 was supposed to be no different.

While standing in the alleyway near the RFD-TV building, Montes said her family was approached by security guards who told them they weren't allowed to station their horses on the lawn. Montes said they were threatened with a \$250 fine per horse.

Montes, who owns Red Barn Ranch in Tarrant County, [posted about the experience](#) on TikTok, accumulating over 300,000 views.

“It’s just kind of a bummer. You can’t go down there and watch the cattle drive anymore,” she said. “It pisses me off even more because the guys that ride for the cattle drive are sitting on the side of the road letting tourists touch their horses. If they can do it, why can’t we?”

Marty Schechter, spokesperson for Stockyards Heritage Development Co., said the historic district welcomes horseback riding as a core part of the area’s identity. However, public streets are subject to city ordinances.

Stockyards officials don’t know why horse riders were threatened with a citation as security companies do not have the authority to issue them or enforce city ordinances, Schechter said.

“The security teams within the Stockyards are here for the safety of all visitors and do not issue fines of any kind,” he said in a statement.

Hundreds of Tarrant residents have joined Montes in her frustration with the launch of an online petition called “[Stop the Crackdown on Horseback Riders in Fort Worth](#),” which argues that the “aggressive enforcement” could damage the city’s cowboy culture.

Montes doesn’t know who started the petition. As of July 29, over 700 people signed the online appeal.

Fort Worth city leaders say the intent is to ensure public safety and traffic laws are enforced in high-traffic areas like the Stockyards.

“It is not difficult to imagine on any given day or night, the density of pedestrians and vehicles in the Stockyards area,” said council member Carlos Flores, who represents the area. “City leadership wants our entertainment districts to be safe for all.”

What is Fort Worth's policy on horse riding?



A sign in the Fort Worth Stockyards lets vehicles, bicyclists and horse riders know they are not allowed to park, stop or stand in the street. (Maria Crane | Fort Worth Report/CatchLight Local/Report for America)

Fort Worth City Ordinance 22-9 requires all horses on a roadway to follow the same traffic laws as motor vehicles and bicyclists. This includes stopping at stop signs, signaling at intersections and obeying applicable traffic controls.

Sgt. J.D. Johnson, spokesperson for Fort Worth police, noted that neither the traffic code nor the city ordinance specifically addresses sidewalks. However, **Texas Transportation Code mandates** that motorized vehicles are not allowed in these areas.

In the past, Fort Worth police addressed incidents involving horses traveling the wrong way on a one-way street. In those cases, riders were informed of the violation and complied when directed to turn around, Johnson said, but no citations have been issued by officers for horses standing on a sidewalk.

Flores said Fort Worth police could apply “obstruction of a sidewalk” in citations since it would be impossible to have horseback riders on sidewalks without obstructing the flow of pedestrians.

“Police officers will exercise appropriate discretion and apply the law to ensure the public’s safety and that of livestock,” Flores said in a statement. “I ask the horse riding public to use common sense and good judgement while horseback riding in the Stockyards to protect themselves, the public and their horses.”

Montes has not returned to the area on horseback since the incident. While she agrees with the efforts to improve public safety, she said those riding their horses in an uncongested area shouldn’t be asked to leave.

“If you’re sitting in the alleyway not bothering anyone, you’re out of the congested crowd,” she said. “Some people that go down to the Stockyards have never seen a horse in their life, so it’s beautiful to see tourists come up and pet them.”

Montes remains frustrated with the “double standards” the Stockyards apply to those who ride their horses during the cattle drive. She hopes the company and city back off the enforcement, saying it could ultimately hurt Fort Worth’s image of Western heritage.

“With time, things change, and we have to evolve,” she said. “I understand it’s become a tourist trap, but there’s got to be some leeway for locals, as well, to be down there and still enjoy it.”

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Cody Montes has gone horseback riding through the Fort Worth Stockyards for years. (Courtesy photo | Cody Montes)