

A NEW RIDER'S GUIDEBOOK

For first-time horseback riders of all ages



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Proud to be the official insurance program provider of the Alberta Equestrian Federation and all of its members.



OUR VALUES

VISION AND MISSION

OUR VISION

Alberta's premier resource for education, information and support for the entire equine community.

Horses are a lot of fun; horseback riding can be a challenging and risky sport.

Members of the Alberta Equestrian Federation (AEF) enjoy peace of mind by having automatic personal liability insurance coverage, as well as many other insurance benefits. Members are eligible to participate in a variety of riding and driving programs, have access to educational information, receive discounts and savings on products and services supplied by business members; and receive Alberta Bits (quarterly member magazine) and valuable E-Newsletters.



OUR MISSION

To assist in creating a positive environment for the enjoyment of equines. Through leadership and a proactive approach we promote, facilitate, and coordinate equestrian related activities in Alberta."

The AEF values underlie how we will fulfill our mission as we work toward our vision. The following values influence the decisions the AEF makes and the actions it takes:

- We will take a leadership role in the areas of Equine Sport, Recreation, Industry, Education, Promotion and Publicity;
- All undertakings will be done through partnerships, cooperation, and collaboration;
- The programs and services we provide will demonstrate excellence in continued education, impartial sport, recreation, active living and advocacy;
- This will be accomplished by setting measurable, achievable goals and monitoring effectiveness in all programs and services;
- To ensure efficient and effective use of all resources, we will assume accountability and fiscal responsibility;
- We will be innovative, creative and flexible in our approaches to work and partnerships;
- We will maintain a strong viable organization.



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Important Links and Resources at the AEF website

Memberships and Benefits

Instructors/Coaches

Stables/Facilities

Clubs for all Interests

Business Members

Educational Resources

Programs for the young
and the young at heart

The Alberta Equestrian Federation (AEF) is the 'Provincial Organization' recognized and funded in part by the Alberta Government – Alberta Sport Connection

Equestrian Canada (EC) is the 'National Organization' recognized and funded by Sport Canada and the Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI)

EQUESTRIAN RIDING DISCIPLINES

There are a variety of riding disciplines to choose from. Many riders often try a few, others will choose one or two. It also often comes down to availability of teaching and training facilities or capability of both you and your horse. Read on to learn about different styles and disciplines and how to choose the best one for you. A few examples are listed in the following pages.

BARREL RACING



A rodeo event in which a horse and rider attempt to complete a clover leaf pattern around three pre-set barrels in the fastest time.

COMBINED DRIVING



The driver sits on a vehicle drawn by a single horse, a pair or a team of four. This sport has three phases: dressage, cross-country marathon and obstacle cone driving, and is most similar to the mounted equestrian sport of eventing.

CROSS COUNTRY



An event that tests endurance, skill and agility following a prescribed course through forest and fields. The horse and rider are required to negotiate natural obstacles such as logs, ditches, streams, banks, hills and fences. Cross country is part of three day eventing also known as horse trials.

CUTTING



A western riding event where a horse and rider work as a team before a judge to demonstrate ability to handle cattle by separating a calf from a cattle herd and keep it away for a short period of time.

DRESSAGE



Each horse and rider perform a combination of movements and gaits, designed to demonstrate the level of achievement of the horse to show a perfect understanding with his or her rider.

ENDURANCE



An endurance ride is a test of horse and rider teams over challenging terrain of distances up to 160 kilometers in one day. The welfare of the horse is paramount and vet checks are used to monitor and evaluate each horse's ability to maintain the level of exercise being undertaken.

EVENTING



An event where a single horse & rider combination compete across three disciplines; dressage, cross-country, and show jumping.

HUNTER



A style of competition where horses are judged on conformation, temperament, manners and their ability to manoeuvre a course of jumps and on the flat.

MOUNTED GAMES



A branch of equestrian sport that involves fast games played by people of all ages on horses up to a height of 15 hands.

POLE BENDING



A timed event that features a horse and mounted rider running a weaving or serpentine path around six poles arranged in a line.

POLO



A team sport played on horseback in which the objective is to score goals against an opposing team. Players score by driving a small white plastic or wooden ball into the opposing team's goal using a long-handled mallet.

REINING



Competitors are required to run one of several patterns. Each pattern includes small slow circles, large fast circles, flying lead changes, roll backs, 360 degree spins done in place, back ups and the exciting sliding stops (the hallmark of the reining horse).

ROPING



The goal of this timed rodeo event is for the rider to catch the calf by throwing a loop of rope from a lariat around its neck, dismount from the horse, run the calf and restrain it by tying three legs together in as little time as possible.

SADDLE SEAT



A style of horseback riding that is designed to show off the high trotting action of certain horse breeds, most notably the saddlebred.

SHOW JUMPING



A competition in which the combination of horse and rider is tested under various conditions over a course of obstacles. It is intended to demonstrate the horse's freedom, energy, skill, speed and obedience in jumping, as well as the rider's horsemanship.

TEAM PENNING



The object is for three team members on horses to collect three head of cattle with the same number on them from a herd of 30 cattle. The team then attempts to put these three head of cattle into a small pen at the other end of the arena, in 90 seconds or less.

THERAPEUTIC



Therapy that provides children and adults with disabilities the opportunity to experience all the physical, social, and emotional benefits of riding on and spending time with a horse.

TRAIL RIDING



Riding outdoors on natural trails and roads as opposed to riding in an enclosed arena both recreational and competitive. There are competitive events, testing the ability of horse and rider to navigate obstacles commonly found on a trail, such as opening and closing gates, crossing streams, etc.

VAULTING



Most commonly described as gymnastics and dance on horseback, which can be practiced both competitively or non-competitively.

WESTERN PLEASURE



A style of competition that evaluates horses on manners and suitability. The horse is expected to demonstrate a relaxed, slow, soft and collected tempo along with a calm and responsive disposition. The term “pleasure” comes from the relaxed overall appearance of the horse and the style of riding used in the show class. Riders wear full flashy show apparel, and the saddles and bridles feature intricate tooled designs and silver decorations.



Find the *right* fit!

ENGLISH | WESTERN | VAULTING | DRIVING

Our stable facility listing makes it easy.

**Riding stables listed with the AEF
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and best business practices.**



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PROFESSIONAL EC CERTIFIED

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN EQUESTRIAN CANADA CERTIFIED INSTRUCTOR/COACH?

Certification of an instructor/coach means that the individual has demonstrated to be professional and accountable, they adhere to established standards of ethics and the EC Code of Conduct. You also have the reassurance that certified instructors/coaches are skilled in first aid and safety procedures.

WHY CHOOSE A CERTIFIED INSTRUCTOR/COACH?

The National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) is a government-initiated program designed to give the public safe, qualified instructors and coaches at every level in all sports. The AEF delivers the equestrian component of this program within the province of Alberta, on behalf of EC.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF CERTIFICATION?

Instructor

This program is focused on those who wish to take on the instruction of children and adults learning to ride, establishing the foundational riding skills with an eye on safety.

Competition Coach

This program is focused on those who are interested in coaching riders in the competitive environment. More advanced skills in the development of a competitive training program, performance analysis and mental preparation for competition are required to become certified at this level.

Competition Specialist Coach

This program is a further progression of the competition coach program, focused on riders competing at the provincial and national levels. Beyond the competition coach level, this level requires a working knowledge of the EC competition rules for the level and discipline they are teaching.

High Performance Coach

This program is administered by EC. These coaches specialize in developing athletes through refining basic sport skills, developing more advanced skills and tactics, and preparing for performance in national to international level competitive standards.



FACILITIES

THE RIGHT ONE

While learning how to ride is an enjoyable and fun experience, it has the potential for inherent risks. For this reason, it's important that you find the best facility you can. Choosing the right facility can make a huge difference in your riding education; choosing the wrong facility could negatively impact your riding and experience with horses.

IS THE FACILITY AND LESSON PROGRAM PROFESSIONAL, SAFE AND WELL-MANAGED?

The best way to find out is to arrange a tour of the facility while a lesson is taking place. When it comes to horses, functional and safe facilities are a must. Keep your eyes & ears open and look for the following:

- Clear space for handling a horse before and after the lesson
- Supervision by a certified instructor/coach at all times
- Enclosed arena for riding, with a fence or gate that is closed during lessons
- Barn aisles should be tidy
- Fences should be in good condition
- Arenas and paddocks should be well maintained

IS THE INSTRUCTOR/COACH CERTIFIED TO TEACH RIDING LESSONS?

Ask about the lesson program and the credentials of the instructors/coaches teaching lessons. EC certified instructors/coaches are listed on the AEF website.

WHAT IS A SCHOOL HORSE?

The primary talents of a good beginner school horse are good manners and an even, forgiving temperament.

DO THE SCHOOL HORSES LOOK HEALTHY?

Horses should look happy and healthy, well-fed, relatively clean with no untreated cuts or wounds. If you see that the majority of the horses look lifeless and dull, you may want to reconsider your decision.

ARE THERE RULES ABOUT PARENT INVOLVEMENT, SUCH AS WATCHING LESSONS?

Stables and coaches will have different rules about how closely a parent or friend is involved during tacking up, lessons and untacking. You should expect to be asked to stay outside the ring or arena during the lesson. Some facilities will have a viewing room or an area outside the ring/arena where you can watch the lesson.



WHAT TO WEAR

FIRST RIDING LESSON

The most important item that you cannot ride without is an **ASTM certified riding helmet**. Approved ASTM riding helmets must be properly fitted to the rider so they do not slip on the head, and they have a chin strap that prevents the helmet from coming off. Riding helmets are specifically designed to protect against the types of head injuries a rider could experience, without interfering with their ability to ride safely. While it is tempting to buy a used helmet, it is essential to purchase a new helmet which ensures there is no structural damage that may compromise your safety. A reputable tack shop will carry certified helmets and will be able to assist you in selecting a properly fitted helmet that meets your needs. Read more on helmet safety on page 14.

Fitted jeans, preferably with a flat inseam, will be sufficient when you are first starting out. It can be tempting to wear shorts

during the hot summer months, but they offer no protection. Thin or loose fitting pants, such as leggings or jogging pants, are not appropriate; close fitting pants allow you to feel the saddle. It is also advisable to



avoid loose fitting tops, hoodies, jewelry or scarves, which could get caught up while working around a horse or mounting and dismounting. Shirts should be tucked in for safety.

While investing in a pair of riding boots is a good idea, it is not essential for your first few lessons. However, make sure that the **footwear** you ride in has a **half-inch to one-inch heel** to prevent your foot from becoming caught in the stirrup. Make sure the shoes or boots you wear do not have a wide, thick sole, as this can make it difficult to remove your foot from the stirrup.

Riders who wear **glasses** should secure their glasses with a strap and should avoid the use of contact lenses, which can irritate the eyes due to the dust at barns and inside riding arenas.

Some riders will often wear other equipment such as protective **riding vests**, riding boots, half or full **chaps**.

This additional equipment is something you may choose to purchase at some point, but is not required to start.

Photos courtesy of Greenhawk Harness and Equestrian Supplies— the source for all your equestrian supplies.



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Roy Burek, the Managing Director of Charles Owen, fitting a helmet.

HELMETS

SAFETY 101

WHY SHOULD YOU WEAR A RIDING HELMET?

Wearing a properly fitted riding helmet is essential to keeping your head safe while riding or driving. A fall from a horse or carriage can cause traumatic brain injury (TBI) which can negatively affect cognitive functioning as well as personality. TBI ranges from mild to severe and varies with regard to side effects. "Severe brain injury is responsible for over 60% of all equestrian-related fatalities. The rehabilitation for a severe TBI can cost from \$1.5 - \$3 million, and a full recovery is rare."

It is important to keep in mind that not all helmets are created equally. Riding helmets are designed with the latest in safety technology and are tested to international standards so that they are guaranteed to offer the most comprehensive protection possible. Helmets designed for other activities such as bicycling or skiing, are not tested

for the same fall scenarios that an equestrian will encounter. Wearing a riding helmet can protect other riders in addition to you. Wearing a helmet can set an excellent example for fellow equestrians, and you could save their lives if they follow suit and strap on a helmet as well.

HOW DO I PROPERLY FIT A RIDING HELMET?

While most riding helmets are certified to meet at least one safety standard, the safest helmet is the one that fits properly. When you start the search for a helmet, take into consideration your discipline, the level at which you compete, and what your budget is.

Ensure The Correct Fit

- Keep in mind that different makes and models of helmets will fit differently, so it is important to try on several helmets.

- Start by measuring the circumference of your head by wrapping a tape measure around where the helmet will lie: one centimeter above the brow and around the slight bump at the base of the skull. The circumference in centimeters will determine the size range that your helmet will fall into.
- Do you wear your hair up under your helmet when you ride? If so, make sure you wear it up when measuring for the correct size and when trying on new helmets. If you ride with your hair in a low ponytail, be sure that the elastic is not on the inside of our helmet.
- When you try on a helmet for the first time, take it on and off at least three times to allow the helmet to mold slightly to your head. Keep in mind that a new helmet will feel snug in the same way that a new pair of boots feel. Both will break in and mold to your head or feet respectively as they are worn. However, a new helmet should not have any pressure points. You should also not be able to rock it forward and back on your head when the chinstrap is unbuckled.
- The chinstrap of the helmet should be snug with just enough room to fit two fingers between it and your chin.
- Each helmet manufacturer can provide a helmet manual that details how to fit and care for your helmet.

HOW DO I CHECK THE CERTIFICATION?

All riding helmets should be certified by SEI to ASTM F1163, which means that their ability to protect against traumatic brain injury has been tested. If a helmet has been approved by the Safety Equipment Institute (SEI) that it meets the ASTM standard, it will have a logo visible on the lining of the helmet. Some companies also test to multiple additional standards to ensure a wider range of protection across a variety of fall types. These range

from a fall on hard ground or concrete to an impact on a sharp surface, such as the edge of a jump.

HOW DO I CARE FOR MY HELMET?

Helmets are sensitive to extreme heat (70°C+/158°F+) and should be stored out of direct sunlight. Helmets should also never be dry-cleaned or put in the dishwasher. If your helmet becomes wet, allow it to fully dry before storing it.

HOW OFTEN DO I NEED TO REPLACE MY HELMET?

If you have hit your head in a fall, your helmet should be replaced. Even if there is no visible damage to the outside of the helmet, the material inside the helmet can be compressed upon impact and will no longer offer you the same protection should you fall again. It is also recommended that you replace your helmet every five years even if you have not fallen in it.





RISK PROTECTION

Accidents happen in the blink of an eye and that's why with an AEF membership, we've got you covered. Everyone that rides or spends any time around equines, should have a membership.

The insurance that comes with each membership includes:

- Personal Liability insurance to protect the member against legal action if a horse which the member owns, leases or borrows causes bodily injury or property damage to a third party. The liability limit is \$5,000,000 per occurrence and is in force 24/7 - anywhere in the world.
- Coverage for legal liability arising from the non-commercial transport / incidental care, custody and control of up to 3 non-owned horses.
- Accidental Death & Dismemberment (AD&D) insurance with a Principal Sum limit of \$30,000. This policy is in force 24/7 - anywhere in the world.

The AEF also offers many other optional insurance add-ons such as Enhanced Accidental Death & Dismemberment (includes fracture & dental), Members Named Perils (basic horse mortality), Weekly Accident Indemnity (income replacement), tack, and travel.

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RIDER PROGRAMS

The Learn to Ride Programs are aimed at individuals who wish to become well-rounded horse people, who are able to care for and ride their horses in a correct and safe manner and wish to be recognized for doing so at a national level.

The Program is available for both English & Western riding disciplines, as well as Driving; providing a systematic approach for introducing new riders to equestrian sport. In addition to receiving lessons from a certified instructor/coach, goal-oriented riders who want to measure their knowledge and test their riding skills have the opportunity to be tested at each level progressively.

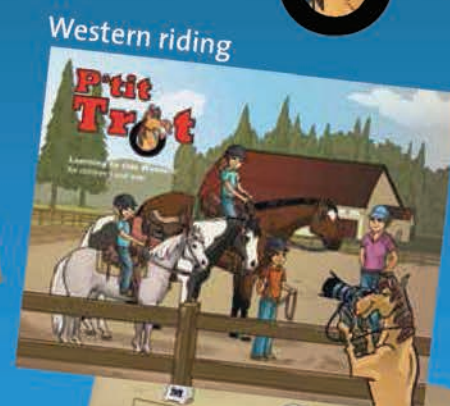
There are also Learn to Ride programs currently under development for the disciplines of Saddle Seat, Driving and Endurance.

P'tit Trot is an introductory program for children ages five or older who love horses and want to learn about riding and caring for them. The P'tit Trot manuals are fully illustrated throughout and introduce readers to the basics of English and Western riding and how to care for a horse or pony. This program can be administered by either an instructor/coach or parent.

If you are interested in learning more about P'tit Trot or Learn to Ride & Drive programs, please visit our website.

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JOHN DEERE



EXPECTATIONS

RIDER PROGRESSION

Many people wonder, when they begin a new sport or activity, how fast they should be progressing with their training and skills development. While each person should be allowed to learn at their own pace, there are some general guidelines you can use to manage your expectations.

Riders taking one lesson per week can expect the following:

UP TO FIRST MONTH:

- Introduction to horses
- Introduction to basic horse handling with emphasis on safety
- Basic horse equipment and care
- Riding Skills: mount, dismount, position, how to ask the horse to walk, stop and turn

UP TO SIX MONTHS:

- Improvement on theory
- Introduction/practice of riding patterns
- Confidence gained in horse control
- Riding skills: introduction/practice of lateral work, gait transitions, balance, two point position (English), riding with one hand (Western)



UP TO ONE YEAR:

- Independently able to tack up horse
- Improving knowledge of equipment and horse anatomy
- Riding skills: walk, trot and posting trot (on correct diagonal), canter/lope (learning correct leads/changes), introduction to sport specialization, introduction to the show ring, understanding of rein effects, introduction and practice of bending, straightness and impulsion

These guidelines will vary from individual to individual. Factors such as frequency of riding lessons and opportunities to practice can also impact how fast a rider progresses. Riders with above average athletic ability may also progress more rapidly.

It is important to remember that you should be challenged, but not pushed beyond your mental and physical limitations. A good riding instructor will know what is best for you and will tailor a lesson program to suit your abilities and goals.

The Long Term Equestrian Development (LTED) model will also outline stages of development for riders of all ages and involvement.

Visit the AEF website for more information.



HEALTH BENEFITS

RIDING MAKES YOU SWEAT

Horseback riding is a sport that has many physical benefits. A one-hour ride can burn similar calories to that of a 30-minute jog (6 mph) or cycle ride (9 mph). Therefore, all the health benefits associated with engaging in regular cardiovascular exercise are gained. After your first ride, you may feel muscles that you never knew you had!

Benefits include:

- Improved balance and muscle strength
- Improved coordination, faster reflexes and increased motor skills
- Stretching of tight or spastic muscle
- Increased range of motion of joints
- Improved respiration and circulation
- Stimulated sensory integration
- Improved visual-spatial perception
- Improved eye-hand coordination

RIDING MAKES YOU THINK

Horseback riding is a great activity to help exercise your mind. Controlling a large animal challenges you to pay close attention to your actions. Your horse will rely on you to make decisions and practice good judgement.

Benefits include:

- Increased vocabulary application and recall
- Increased verbal integration and participation
- Improved attention and concentration
- Improved sequencing and planning skills
- Improved judgement and critical thinking skills
- Improved flexibility in thinking

RIDING MAKES YOU FEEL GOOD

Horseback riding has been identified as an activity that can provide therapeutic benefits. Simply being outdoors and enjoying the countryside will boost your general well-being and act as a great stress buster. Furthermore, developing a relationship and sense of trust between yourself and a horse can have a profound effect on your confidence.

Benefits include:

- Improved self-confidence
- Improved assessment abilities
- Development of patience
- Improved emotional control and self-discipline
- Improved expansion of control
- Development of respect and care for animals



SAFETY TIPS

List is not inclusive.

UNDERSTANDING A HORSES BODY LANGUAGE

Horses, ponies and other members of the equine family are herd animals and are used to living as part of a group, feel secure in the company of other equines and familiar surroundings. They are timid by nature and their natural reaction to danger is to flee. The horse's sense of hearing is very acute and its sense of smell is also good enabling it to sense danger some distance away. A horse is a very sensitive animal and able to pick up on feelings of its riders and handlers, particularly hesitation, fear, confidence and anger. Being around horses can be loads of fun, but even a quiet horse can accidentally hurt you.

Here are a few important things to remember.

- Do not shout; speak quietly
- Always wear a helmet
- Do not run; walk
- Do not wear sandals; wear sturdy shoes
- At all times, before approaching a horse, let it know you are there by speaking to it
- Only approach after you have gotten it's attention
- Walk toward it's shoulder and gently pat it's neck
- Never approach from behind
- Bend or squat when caring for or brushing the horse's legs, no kneeling

- When moving from side to side, walk around the front of the horse and keep a safe distance (never crawl under it's legs)
- When you want to pass behind, keep speaking and keep your hand moving around it's croup (hind area)
- Tie your horse, with a safety quick-release knot, to a solid object that will not break or move if the horse pulls back
- Tie a horse at the height of its withers and short enough that he can not get a leg over the rope
- When leading your horse, walk on the left side between the head and shoulder, and always turn your horse away from you
- Never wrap a lead rope or reins around your hand, arm or any part of your body; if the horse spooks you could be dragged or badly hurt
- Always be calm around your horse; speak quietly and firmly

SPEAKING HORSE

Ears alert & forward – Indicates the horse is happy and interested.

Ears flat & back – Ears laid flat back against the neck show the horse is unhappy or annoyed.

Ears lowered – Slightly to the sides show the horse is relaxed, bored or could show that it feels unwell.

Flickering Ears – Indicates that the horse is listening and attentive.



QUESTIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED

Q: *What can I expect at my first riding lesson?*

A: Riding lesson formats vary. You may not even ride at your first lesson. Initial lessons typically focus on grooming and handling in order to teach the preparation of the horse for riding and safe handling techniques on the ground. Ask your instructor or coach when you schedule your first lesson how long the lesson will be and what you can expect to learn.

Q: *Will I need to buy a saddle or a bridle?*

A: Your riding school should provide all the necessary tack for the horse you will be riding.

Q: *My child wants to ride and I would like to try it too, are riding lessons just for kids?*

A: Riding lessons are for everyone! Regardless of your age or experience level, riding lessons will enable you to develop correct skills in a safe environment. A certified instructor/coach has the training necessary to tailor a lesson plan to your needs, learning style and abilities. AEF has individual and family memberships!

Q: *I am not interested in showing. Should I still take lessons?*

A: Of course! Everyone has their own riding goals and a certified instructor/coach will be able to design a lesson program to help you achieve them. Riding lessons give you the knowledge and skills needed to be a safe and effective rider no matter what discipline you ride or how you choose to enjoy your horse. Goal-oriented riders may be interested in the Learn to Ride program. For more information on the Learn to Ride program, see page 18.

Q: *How old does my child need to be to participate in riding lessons?*

A: A certified instructor/coach can help you determine if, and when, your child is ready. The age at which a child is ready to take riding lessons depends on the individual. Every child matures differently, both physically and mentally, and this needs to be taken into consideration.

Q: *How old is too old to take up riding?*

A: Riding has no age restrictions, it's for the young and the young at heart! There is something for everyone whether you choose recreationally or competitively. The bond and mutual trust between horses and humans can be absolutely amazing. Why not give it a try!

Q: *Should I buy a horse?*

A: Horse ownership is extremely rewarding. However, it also requires a major commitment. Financial considerations such as if you plan to keep the horse at home, outdoor boarding, indoor boarding will have an impact. In almost all cases, expenses to be considered are boarding, hay, bedding, feed, supplements, water, equipment such as hoses, shovels, pitch forks, etc. Keep in mind that horse owners should always have a bank account reserved for unexpected expenses, such as emergency veterinary bills, dental, farrier and yearly vaccines. Leasing a horse is also an option that may make the investment easier.

Accidents often happen in the blink of an eye...

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