



Re: Cycling

To Promote Bicycling as an Enjoyable, Safe, Healthy,
Environmentally Friendly Activity for All Ages and Abilities

Otsego Regional Cycling Advocates (ORCA) 547-4020

Cycling Road Hazards: Dogs, Wind Gusts & Rain

Adapted from "Crank from Cooperstown: 50 Bike Rides in Upstate New York" by Dennis Savoie

1) Dogs: Rover is instinctively territorial; he gives chase to protect his yard. Rover is instinctively a hunter; he gives chase to hamstringing his prey's rapidly moving feet from behind. Rover is also easily startled; he may give chase to protect himself. When you are on a bike, Rover does not see you as a kind, domineering human like his master; he sees you, your bike, and your spinning feet, as a startling, invading, vehicular prey.

You can avert most of Rover's chases by avoiding his startle reflex, by coasting or pedaling slowly, and by identifying yourself as human. To this end, get in the habit of seeing Rover before he sees you. Gently inform him of your presence by speaking to him in a kind and friendly manner before you reach his territory ("Hey, nice puppy...What a good dog!"). Listen for the reassuring sound of a chain securing Rover to his post. If he's unfettered, read his body language. If his ears go down and his tail starts to wag, the chase is off. If his ears go up and his body tightens ready to spring, it's time for you to act more authoritatively, as his master. Point a finger straight at time and sternly yell, "NO!" These behaviors ward off most chases. If Rover persists, decide whether you can outsprint him to the end of his territory. (If Rover lives halfway up a long, steep hill, you probably can't.)

Rover's danger is not as much in his teeth as it is in your cycling behavior when you are frightened by his pursuit. The danger comes from swerving into traffic, or off the road, as you try to outmaneuver him. The danger comes from running into Rover himself and losing control of your bike. Remember to bike a straight and predictable line. Make no sideways movements in your lane without first glancing behind. Avoid colliding with Rover's body. If necessary, dismount and use your bike as a physical shield between you and the dog, as you walk to the end of his property. If necessary, wield your pump and squirt your water bottle as weapons.

2) Wind Gusts: Natural wind gusts can occur anywhere, though they are more likely to be experienced when you are biking on a long exposed bridge or in wide open areas without tree cover. But the wind gusts of greatest concern to cyclists are the manmade gusts created by passing trucks. A large truck will create a gust which blasts you away from the truck as it starts to pass and then sucks you in toward the truck as it completes its pass. As you scan behind and see an approaching truck, maintain your line and anticipate both phases of the gust. Hold your handlebars firmly (to keep them straight) and lean slightly first into the blast and then away from the suction. In this way you will maintain a straight and upright course without veering. (Note: Knowledgeable truck drivers will courteously cross into the opposite lane if there is no approaching traffic thereby eliminating or minimizing the gust they create when they pass you).

3) Rain: Rain decreases traction and braking efficiency. Slow down, especially around corners. Brake to a slower speed *before* the corner. Minimize bike lean. Anticipate the need for a longer stopping distance. Be careful crossing slippery painted surfaces such as turn lane arrows and metal surfaces such as grates, manhole covers, steel deck bridges and railroad tracks (Remember to cross railroad tracks at a right angle)

Next Week: What type of bike should you choose?

To join ORCA or to obtain more information about Bike to Work Day, May 13, call Martha Clarvoe, OCCA President, at 607-547-4020