

Press Release: Mountain Bike New Zealand - Riding in a Bubble

Date: 27/03/2020

Facebook: @MTBNewZealand

Website: www.mtbnz.org.nz

MTBNZ Executive members are like many with a bike, keen to keep riding. And like everyone we are trying to interpret how to implement the “Self-Isolation” requirements regarding mountain biking or using a bike for exercise while we are in a bubble. To date we understand you are encouraged to ride your “local” tracks and around the block or a close cycle path for exercise. First and foremost, listen to the Police, in this challenging situation they have the final say if they think you're not abiding by the Self Isolation Rules. For the foreseeable future we need to use our judgement and implement some simple isolation principles when riding. **Ride Local. Ride Safe. Ride Kind. Ride Solo.**

Many of us ride in a solitary mode as usual, however MTBing is a sport that exudes comradery, so for many it will be hard not to go riding with your mates. And when we say mountain bike, most people immediately conjure up a view of a gear clad downhill fanatic heading out for a bash on their favourite mountainous double black diamond trail. However, for a large proportion of our ridership, this is not the case, riding your bike is not just about physical activity, for many it's connected to our mental health as well. It's about getting out into nature and feeding our wellbeing.

“It's all a bit confusing, we need to Stay at Home and obviously at this time to use common sense, it would be nothing but negligent for you to go for that Epic Ride into the backcountry or to take on that Double Black Diamond Trail, well away from the critical eyes of your mates. To add, even on a short ride you should be wearing gloves and obviously a helmet as well. I'd encourage leaving your trail dog at home as they tend not to understand the keep your distance rule. We would further emphasise, to refrain from adding conflict with other users on the multi-use trails and paths at a time where we need to be kind and sensible” – says Chris Arbuckle

Outside our 50 plus clubs and 19000 odd members the activity of mountain biking has a huge recreational ridership that is not connected to a mountain biking community like we are, so maybe you don't have a chance to remain in the “loop” on what's happening. Now's your chance to join your local club and stay in the loop. See our web site (mtbnz.org.nz) which has links to your local club.

What advice has MTBNZ been giving for people to keep safe while under lockdown?

Prior to lockdown, our official statement only a week ago focussed on helping members understand what this meant for events and gatherings, and like our clubs we were watching the ground shift very quickly. Sensibly, the clubs we spoke to postponed events before they were told to. For many it's important to keep events in the calendar as they are valued by the ridership and a primary way our volunteers fund raise money for club activities. It also gives us MTbers something to look forward to.

As things ramped up, we focussed on halting smaller group activities, such as Dig Days and Group Rides. We encouraged club committees to use online tools for meetings, as we do already. Our clubs are professional in their approach to this challenge and like all kiwis doing their bit to stop the virus.

“As lock down hit, some general members of the riding public have got a bit confused by what a “LOCAL” mtb ride means, or what “SOLO” means. “I have watched more of the government announcements than I wanted to ensure bike riding was still ok and see other organisations such as the Mountain Safety Council provide a sensible summary of how this can all work”. says Chris Arbuckle.

MTBNZ Executive members live all over NZ, in Auckland, Tauranga, Wellington and Christchurch and Wanaka so we all must implement riding “SOLO” in different ways, as some of us are not close to our favourite track or live in busy cities and are in different bubbles. For example,

“Now is not the time to be shredding trails. I'm recovering from an injury anyway so have the indoor trainer setup, if I'm going outside probably not riding MTB, maybe bit of road cycling or just a walk round the block. I have good trails within 5 min of home but as they're shared with walkers/runners and are both 2-way and mostly narrow, it is not realistic to use these whilst maintaining separation aside the 4WD sections especially with how busy they've been in the last few days”. Says Ryan (Wellington)

“I'm lucky that being in a small town, 500m away I'm in open country, riddled with gravel and forestry roads. It's easy to notch it back and not be a strava hero. I feel for the city bound folk, that a 30min drive is needed to get isolation”. Says Jamie (Auckland)

“I initially anticipated riding every day of the lockdown, as I would be riding solo and unlikely to run into many people given the one-way nature of my local trails. However, my local trails are challenging and there is a risk of injury. A rider hurt themselves yesterday, and at this time injuries are a waste of the emergency services time, they are already under the pump, and need our support. I have chosen to ride locally in my neighbourhood with my kids, and concentrate on “off the bike” training. Just like the fishermen who cannot fish, I am taking one for the team, and looking forward to hitting the trails after the lockdown has finished. Says Gareth (Tauranga)

"I am hugely fortunate to be 1 minute from a local trail and intend to ride it to keep active and more importantly to retain what sanity I have left. It's a one-way loop track, so as usual it's unlikely you come face to face with another rider. If the trail appears busier than usual, I'll ride at another time. I implemented the Mountain Safety Council recommendations on a ride, without thinking too hard. Chris Arbuckle (Wanaka)

What are the main issues/concerns clubs around the country are dealing with at this time?

Several of our clubs fundraising events were postponed and some clubs have trail networks that they manage, so have sensibly closed them as they are private areas. Many clubs are fielding similar questions and comments as we are, about "can I go for a ride", hence this press release.

While we can go for a ride, follow these simple principles.

Ride Local.

Only ride close to home, use MTB trails and bike paths accessible on your bike.

Ride Safe.

Ride well within your ability; ride easier tracks (use Grade 1 to 3 - see <https://www.mtbnz.org.nz/mtb-trail-grading>). This is not a time for shredding trails or ending up in Hospital.

Ride Kind.

Think twice before using multi-use tracks. One way loop tracks are best. Ride at least 2 meters away from other riders and track users. Choose a spot to enable a wider than just a 2m passing manoeuvre. Respect Trail and park closures.

Ride Solo.

Ride alone, or with those in isolation with you. Don't stop and don't congregate. If you approach another rider, stay clear and give them a yell "Passing on your right" to give lots of warning.

End: Chris Arbuckle (MTBNZ President)

Contact: 0212965879



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MTB bike for
exercise**

**Unite
against
COVID-19**

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