Class 8 - Rural Roads

- Why ride rural roads?
  - It can be boring to ride on city streets.
  - One of the great sources of enjoyment in riding is going new places
    - Seeing what’s around the bend and over the hill: fields, redwoods, small towns.
    - It’s one major reward for riding. Do it every once in a while to keep your passion for “drudge” work around town.
    - Once you discover the joy of rural riding, you usually don’t give up cycling.

- The Bay Area is a great place to Bicycle!
  - Fairly flat rural areas nearby:
    - Coyote Valley
    - Livermore Valley
    - Watsonville (Pajaro Valley)
    - Wine Country - Napa, Santa Rosa
Rural Roads – What’s different

- What’s different:
  - Narrow Roads - Basic rules are what you already know
  - High-speed Traffic - You are a slow-moving vehicle

- Ride steadily and predictably. The skills you’ve practiced will serve you well and give you confidence.

- Be attentive to traffic so you can be out of the lane, especially when traffic will be coming over a hill or around a turn.
  - If you ride two across, single up before to avoid obstructing traffic
  - In large groups, leave breaks so traffic can go around parts of your group at a time.

- Wind buffet.
  - Be aware that your bike could be pulled or swerve.
  - Listen for traffic and be prepared to compensate.
  - Practice and experience will help you gain confidence.
Rural Road Car-Bike Crash Types

• Motorist Overtaking Errors
  - The danger isn’t usually getting hit from behind, it’s the motorist pulling back over too soon.
  - If a short vehicle (car or short truck), slow down and let it move ahead of you.
  - If a full size truck, bus, or trailer, get off the road immediately.

• Incipient Head-on (Motorist Passing Errors). Cars overtaking don’t see you quarter-mile or more up the road, and then take your lane of travel.
  - Brightly colored clothes can help them see you further away.
  - Be observant. When you see multiple cars coming, watch for ones trying to pass.
    • Study the road and shoulder and plan an escape route if the emergency develops.
    • Slow down in preparation if it’s possible. May also allow the crisis to pass.

• If you do leave the road surface to avoid either type of crash.
  - Brake on the road before leaving the road if possible.
  - Once off the road, ride straight while braking carefully to a complete stop. Large steering corrections can cause a fall.
  - Don’t try to ride back onto the road unless you know it’s clear and that the road boundary won’t cause a fall.
Dogs

• Rural dogs can be more defensive of their territory than urban.

• A fall is more dangerous than a bite.
  - Your first priority is to avoid hitting the dog with your front wheel. You will most likely fall.
  - After front wheel is past, next priority is to keep control of the bike to avoid a fall.

• Aggressive or non-aggressive response?
  - Non-aggressive
    • Continue pedaling - the dog will usually stop when you leave his territory.
    • Some dogs bark and chase for fun with no intention of biting.
    • The faster your feet are moving, the less likely they are to be bitten.
  - Aggressive
    • Yell “No!” or “Go home!”
    • Spray with water from water bottle.
    • Physical violence or pepper spray should be used only in extreme cases.
  - Every situation is different. Depends on the dog and your technique.
  - Last line of defense is to put the bike between you and the dog.