

# **Volunteer Handbook**



## **Riley Equine Center**

*A not-for-profit organization providing equine facilitated activities on horseback to people with disabilities*

## **Boonville's Therapeutic Riding Center**

**Bonnie Riley, Founder/Executive Director**

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# Welcome

Welcome to Riley Equine Center of Boonville, MO. We are a non-profit organization offering mentally and physically challenged people a non-traditional approach to recreational and physical therapy. Our purpose is to provide quality equine assisted services to children and adults with disabilities so that they can maximize their sensory-motor abilities, cognitive skills, communication skills, behavior, emotional health, social skills, and leisure skills.

Our goal is to increase therapeutic opportunities available to people with disabilities through activity of horseback riding. These opportunities are made available through instructors and volunteers – both whom are a vital part of the therapeutic riding process. The center's Board of Directors is comprised of concerned local professional and community leaders who volunteer their time and talents.

Riley Equine Center is working toward national accreditation for instructor and facility through NARHA. NARHA was founded in 1969 as the North America Riding for the Handicapped Association to promote safe and effective therapeutic horseback riding throughout the United States and Canada. Riley Equine Center is also working toward center membership.

You have decided to become a part of a dedicated group of volunteers, who give their time, talent, creativity, and good humor to provide a service to people with disabilities. Next to the horse themselves, the volunteers are the single most important part of any program. Without dedicated volunteers to groom and tack horses, walk around the arena in all kinds of weather, accompany our riders outdoors on a variety of trails, clean the tack, office, and barn, make goodies for treats and fund raisers, etc. Riley Equine Center would not have a program at all! Thank you for your decision to help improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

Flexibility, adaptability, and patience are great assets to bring with you to the program. Please – bring any comments, questions, or idea to an Instructor or Program Director. We are always glad to hear from you!

Welcome, and thanks for coming! We look forward to making you a part of the Riley Equine Center family!

# History

Riley Equine Center was formed in 2010 as an independent not-for-profit corporation to respond to a local need for affordable therapy and recreation for people of all ages. Riley Equine Center was based upon a dream to reach out to young and old alike who feel that indescribable attraction to horses. Riley Equine Center will seek to provide services for all those who have desires and needs. Services will include instruction for children and adults with mild physical and/or cognitive disabilities, at-risk individuals, as well as able-bodied students. Riley Equine Center has teamed with Excel of Boonville to offer as part of their program Physical and Occupational Therapy. Research shows that the rhythmic movement of a horse can be calming, aid in balance and coordination, and support one's mental health. Individuals will partner with the horse and instructors to build strength, improve balance, coordination, memory function, muscle tone, motor skills, social interaction, and self-esteem.

Our purpose is to see progress and happiness in our riders. We appreciate the heartwarming support from volunteers, parents, care givers, educators, and medical professionals. Thus far we are partially supported by Developmental Services of Cooper County. The modest tuition that the riders are asked to pay covers only a fraction of the real operating costs. We greatly appreciate donations, matching funds, fundraisers on our behalf and referrals to community service organizations and companies who may wish to support our cause.

Our program will begin to run on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturdays. We operate in various sessions throughout the year.

## **Our Students**

Riley Equine Center welcomes all people with disabilities regardless of age or disability. We work with children and adult who have been born with disorders or diseases, injury victims, and persons with emotional disorders and/or learning disabilities. Many of our students have multiple handicaps.

Students must have permission form their doctor to ride. The instructor is given information about the student form their teachers, parents, doctors, and therapists. Goals are set for the rider, and whenever possible, these goals are shared with that student's volunteers. Progress reports are kept. All riders are required to wear helmets at all times when working around the horses.

## **Confidentiality**

Therapeutic riders at Riley Equine Center have the right to confidentiality of their medical conditions, progress, behavior, and participation at the facility. No identifying information about clients may be released in pictures, writing, or conversation by staff or volunteers without written consent of the client, parent, or guardian. Clients and volunteer must sign a photo release for Riley Equine Center to use audio-visual information for promotional printed material, educational activities, exhibitions or for any other use for the benefit of the facility.

# Our Program

Riley Equine Center offers its students a variety of lesson types. Our riders may participate in whatever best suits their needs. The different types of lessons you may be asked to assist with are as follows:

- **Sports Riding** – These lessons make up the majority of our classes. They can be either a private or group lesson with up to four riders. Sports Riding focuses on increasing riding skills, posture, riding position, communication, and team work. Riders in sports riding may be working at the walk with a leader and two side walkers, or they may be independent riders working on walk, trot, and canter.
- **Hippotherapy** – This takes place with a physical or occupational therapist and certified instructor present. Hippotherapy riders perform different positions to help improve their muscle tone and mobility.

## Volunteer Attire

- Volunteers should come prepared for any type of weather. It is advisable to dress in layers as our weather can change quickly.
- Comfortable, sturdy shoes are important as we do a lot of walking on uneven terrain. NO open-toed or open-heeled shoes, sandals, or flip-flops are permitted.
- Close-fitting clothes are important. Loose-fitting clothes or very long jeans could get caught in equipment and may make the horse nervous.
- Please don't wear any jewelry which may get caught in tack, or which may be tempting for the rider to grab on to.
- You might get dirty! Try to wear clothes that are easily washed.
- Neither riders nor volunteers may smoke or use cell phones during lessons.
- Perfume may attract bugs, bees, or horses!

# Volunteer Duties and Responsibilities

For all volunteers:

- Please sign in and out on the “Volunteer Hours” sheet located on the clipboard marked Volunteer hours in the tack room.
- Please wear your name tag! This is important not only so that we can all get to know you, but also we will have your first and last name in case of emergency.
- It is very important for scheduling reasons that volunteers sign up ahead of time, and attend for the hours committed. In order to provide continuity and consistency for our riders and horses, we ask that volunteers commit to one time slot, and come at that time every week for a session. If you are not able to attend one class, or even part of the session, we would still love to have you! Just let us know your plans in advance. If you know you will be missing your class, it is very helpful for us if you can try to find a replacement off the substitute list.
- Any discussion regarding a student, the program, or the stable is considered privileged information and your discretion is greatly appreciated.
- Please discuss any questions, concerns, or ideas you have with the instructors. But the instructors should never be contradicted while teaching. Any inquiry about the disability of a student, progress, or behavior should be kept to a private discussion with your instructor or program staff.
- The following pages describes in detail the four most common jobs for volunteers at Riley Equine Center. However, don't feel like your possibilities are limited to these jobs. We can always use any skill you may have! Additional places where we could use help are:
  - Staffing booths at presentations
  - Horse shows – planning and duties
  - Assist in office – filing, addressing, and stuffing envelopes
  - Newsletter – folding, addressing, stamping, and compiling materials
  - Cleaning tack
  - Cleaning tack room, barn, aisle, bathroom
  - Taking photographs
  - Anything else you might be good at!

## **Volunteer Position: The Sidewalker**

Most volunteers at Riley Equine Center begin as a sidewalker. The sidewalker walks alongside the horse and assist the rider. The sidewalker primary responsibility is the STUDENT! They must stay with their student no matter what! In the case of any sort of emergency, the sidewalker should always remain with the rider.

The sidewalker's job begins as soon as the student walks into the barn. Sidewalkers should greet the student and help them fit their helmet. Most Riley Equine Center students will bring their own helmets to class, but should they forget or not have one, there are extras available in the tack room. The sidewalker will then stay with the rider and await instructions from the instructor on where to do warm up exercises and when to come into the arena for mounting.

The sidewalker should stay with the rider and give proper assistance from the moment the rider enters the arena and mounts his horse until he/she dismounts and leave the arena, even if the horse is standing still or even if the horse spooks. The importance of staying with your student cannot be overstated. Many people with disabilities lack a sense of danger and self-preservation. The sidewalker, therefore, helps to provide an extra level of safety for the rider.

Riders may have one or two sidewalkers. The basic position is facing forward, with one arm grasping the front flap of the saddle with your forearm against the rider's leg, and the other hand grasping the rider's ankle. This is considered a "full hold." Additional positions include a "half hold," where the volunteer grasps the rider's calf with one hand and an "ankle" hold, where the volunteer grasps the rider's ankle with both hands. These positions are often modified to suit the rider, and the instructor will show you what to do in each case. Sidewalkers may be asked to help the rider position himself properly on the horse, to assist with steering and to help with exercises. The instructor will give you specific directions as far as what to do during class.

Sidewalkers are encouraged to bond with their riders before and after the instructor begins class, however they should be careful not to give the rider more assistance or support than the instructor indicates. We promote independence amongst our riders and encourage it in all cases. If, however, the rider seems to be having more

trouble than he should, or something doesn't seem to be working correctly, it should be brought to the instructor's attention.

If there are two sidewalkers, they must try to avoid both giving instructions to the student at the same time. Likewise, the two sidewalkers must avoid giving instructions to the rider when the instructor is speaking.

## **Volunteer Responsibilities: Sidewalker**

One of the sidewalker's first responsibilities is to ensure the rider has a helmet that fits correctly. Please refer to the following "Helmet Guidelines."

*A safety helmet is the single most important piece of equipment for a rider.*

### **Helmet Guidelines**

- EEMV does prefer that all students own their own helmets, however, it is not always possible, and even riders who have their own helmets do sometimes forget to bring them to class.
- Careful fitting is essential. The head is crucial to balance, so an ill-fitting helmet will make proper balancing more difficult. Overly large helmets are dangerous and uncomfortable. They may slip, obscure vision, or fall off the rider.
- NARHA requires the use of properly fitted protective headgear with attached harness. NARHA requires helmets that are ASTM approved.
- Helmet Fitting:
  - A helmet should sit securely on the rider's head, and should not wiggle back and forth when the rider moves their head. It should be tight enough to slightly move the rider's skull on their forehead if it is tilted forward or backward. It should not obstruct the rider's vision, or hurt their head. The chin strap should be sufficiently tight as to hold the helmet on, but not so tight as to pinch or choke the rider.
- If you have any doubts about the fit of the helmet, please bring them to the instructor's attention before the rider is mounted.

## **Switching Sides**

Since you may have to hold the rider in the proper position throughout the entire lesson, for your comfort, it will probably be necessary to switch arms at some point in the lesson. To do this, you must switch sides. When you would like to switch sides, always begin by taking the horse into the center of the arena and halting, so as not to disturb the flow of the class.

If there are two sidewalkers, let one sidewalker hold the student in position, while the other sidewalker walks in front of the horse. He/she then, takes up the position and holds the student while the other sidewalker goes around to the opposite side. One sidewalker **MUST ALWAYS** be holding the rider. **NEVER** leave the rider on their own!

If there is only one sidewalker, the leader, still keeping a hold on the lead rope, should step back and hold the rider with one hand, letting the sidewalker quickly switch to the other side.

# Volunteer Position: Leader

The job of the leader is to be in charge of the horse. If there is any sort of emergency, their responsibility is to stay with the horse. If there are no sidewalkers, the leader is also responsible for aiding the rider when he or she is having trouble. The correct position for leading is about midway between the horse's head and shoulder.

## Basic Leading Skills:

- Hold the lead line at least 12 inches from the horse's head. Without room to move, their heads, it is difficult for the horse to move properly.
- Do not clutch the lead line. For the comfort of the horse, have a "U" draped in the lead line, rather than taut contact. For the leader's safety, have the lead line folded rather than coiled, so that in case of an emergency, the rope will not entangle the leader's hand or drag the leader.
- Do not use your body to push or move the horse into position. Send him away with the lead line. Your weight is not sufficient to move a 1200+ pound animal whose natural inclination is to push back.
- Do not turn the horse sharply, especially from the halt, ALWAYS forward first! Horses have four legs to coordinate, and have difficulty with tight turns and sudden direction shifts. Quick movements will also throw your rider off balance.
- Horses should be "squared up" especially during mounting and dismounting. The key is to keep the horse balanced by making sure all four legs are well-placed on the ground under the horse before mounting or dismounting.
- Warm up the horses before the lesson with walk/halt/walk/trot transitions, changing walk speed from a slower walk to a quicker walk. Just like a human athletes, horses need some warm up time before working.
- As the leader, request specific instructions on the special needs of individual horses when it comes to being led.

# Volunteer Responsibilities: The Leader

## Leading during mounting and dismounting

During mounting and dismounting, the leader should be in front of and slightly to the side of the horse. It is very important for the horse to be kept absolutely still during the mounting and dismounting. However, the leader cannot be tense with the horse, as the horse will resist this tension and try to move away from it. It is a fine point, to know how to hold a horse quietly in a ramp or line-up, just enough to control but, not excessive control. If the horse is fidgety, the leader can talk quietly to the horse. The riding instructor or aid will be in charge of actually mounting and dismounting students. Volunteers **NEVER** mount or dismount students. The leader takes up the same position in front of the horse whenever the horses are in line-up, for exercise or games, or are halted for an extended periods of time.

## Leading during ramp mounting

When leading into the mounting ramp, bring the horse around the corner as widely as possible until he/she is facing straight into the ramp. Then turn around and face the horse, and walk backwards as you lead the horse between the two ramps, watching to keep him/her close and parallel to the ramp, but take care that the horse doesn't scrape their legs against the ramp.

When the rider is mounted and the instructor and all the sidewalkers re ready, they will ask you to walk the horse forward out of the ramp. Always walk backwards, watching to be sure that neither the horse nor the riders are scraped against the ramp. After leaving the ramp, turn forward and follow the instructor's direction.

*Riders are NEVER dismounted onto the ramp.*

## Switching Sides

Leaders should always stay on the inside of the horse when leading in arena. This means that when the rider changes direction, it is necessary for the leader to change sides of the horse. The best and safest way to do this is to have the rider halt the horse, and then walk around the front of the horse, keeping a hold of the lead line. Once you are in a good position, between the horse's head and shoulder, you can tell the rider to ask the horse to "walk on." When on a trail rider, leaders should always stay to the left of the horse.

## **Volunteer Position: Barn Assistant**

This is a very important job at Riley Equine Center. Barn assistants help with keeping the barn safe and clean. They are responsible for sweeping the barn aisles, cleaning out stalls, and keeping the tack room and waiting area clean and organized. They may also help clean tack.

Barn assistants are also responsible for making sure the arena is in good shape for lessons. They help rake the arena to keep it even and help the instructor get out and put away obstacles used in class such as cones, poles, and barrels.

This job also includes picking up any tools that may be in a dangerous place in the barn or arena. Barn assistants help to ensure that everything in the tack room is neat and in order.

Being a barn assistant is the perfect job for you if you are not completely comfortable around horses or riders, or if you are under 14 years of age.

## **Volunteer Position: Horse Handler (HH)/Aide**

Horse handlers and aides are volunteers who have additional training and experience in handling horses. The instructors select volunteers based on their equine skills. Volunteers in this position will assist with bringing in horses from their stalls, grooming, tacking, and assist in lessons. HH/Aides typically need to have an understanding of basic horse psychology, horse anatomy, and tack. While on-the-job training is required before volunteers are placed in the position of HH/Aide, some basic information is provided here to get you started.

# Understanding Horse's Behavior

## Equine Senses

When developing relationships and working with horses, communication is key. It is critical to provide a safe environment in a therapeutic riding setting. Beginning a process of understanding the horse senses, instincts, and implications is a step in predicting behaviors, managing risks, and increasing a positive relationships.

## Smell

The horse's sense of smell is though to very acute. It allows him/her to recognize other horses and people. Smell also enables the horse to evaluate situations.

### *Implications:*

- Allow horses the opportunity to become familiar with new objects and their environment by smelling.
- It is recommended that treats are not carried in your pockets since horses may desire to go after them.
- Volunteers should be discouraged from eating or having food in the arena.

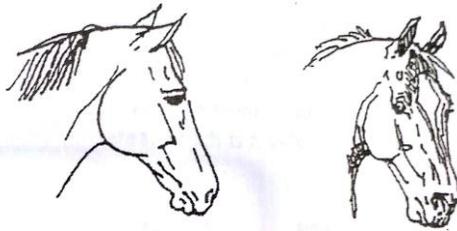


## Hearing

The horse's sense of hearing is also thought to be very acute. The horse may also combine their sense of hearing and sight to become more familiar with new or alerting sounds. "Hearing and not seeing" is often the cause of the fright/flight response. Not the position of the horse's ears. Forward ears communicate attentiveness and interest. Ears that are laid back often communicate that horse is upset and/or showing aggression towards another horse or person.



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Drooping ears means that the horse is relaxed, inattentive (easily startled), exhausted, or ill.



Generated by CamScanner from intsig.com  
Forward ears, stiffly pricked ears, and flicking ears back and forth all mean that the horse is attentive and interested.



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Laid back or flattened ears mean the horse is upset or showing aggression.

### *Implications:*

Horses are wary when they hear something but do not see it. If your horse is acting nervous, talk to him in a quiet and calm voice for reassurance. Avoid shouting or using a loud voice. This can be frightening to a horse.

Watch your horse's ears for increased communication. Stiffly pricked ears indicate interest. Dropping ears indicate relaxation, inattentiveness (easily startled), exhaustion, or illness. Flattened ears indicate anger, threat, or fear. Ears flicking back and forth indicate attentiveness or interest.

### **Sight**

The horse's eyes are set on either side of the head; they have good peripheral (lateral) vision but, poor frontal vision. A horse focuses on objects by raising and lowering its head. The horse's visual memory is very accurate. Horses are thought to see quite well in the dark, due to the large size of their eyes. There is still controversy as to whether or not horses see in color.

### *Implications:*

The horse may notice if something in the arena or out on a trail is different. Allow the horse an opportunity to look at new objects. Introduce new props that may be unfamiliar to him. The horse has better peripheral vision; consider a slightly looser rein, enabling him to move his head when taking a new look at new objects. Although the horse has good peripheral vision, consider two blind spots directly in the front and back. The best way to approach a horse is to his/her shoulder. It may startle him if you approach from behind or directly in front. The horse may be unable to see around the mouth area, which is a safety consideration when hand feeding.

### **Touch**

Touch is used as a communication between horses and people. Horses are sensitive to soft or rough touch with a person's hands or legs.

### *Implications:*

- Handlers should treat the horses gently but firmly.

- Each horse has sensitive areas. It is important to be familiar with them (i.e. flank and belly areas).
- Watch rider leg position. Riders may need appropriate assistance to reduce a “clothes pin” effect with their legs. Ask the instructor/therapist what is the best handling technique.
- Horses will often touch or paw at unfamiliar objects. For example, a horse may paw at a bridge or ground pole before crossing over it.

### **Taste**

Taste is closely linked with the sense of smell and helps the horse to distinguish palatable foods and other objects.

#### *Implication:*

Taste is closely linked with smell and touch; therefore, a horse may lick or nibble while becoming familiar with objects and people. Be careful, as this could lead to possible biting.

### **Sixth Sense**

Horses do have a “sixth sense” when evaluating the disposition of those around them. Horses can be hypersensitive in detecting moods of their handlers and riders. A good therapy horse is chosen for its sensitive response to the rider. At times a personality conflict may exist between handlers and horses. It is important to the instructor/therapist to know if you’re having a difficult time relating or getting along with a participants horse.

### **The Horse’s Lifestyle**

In addition to understanding the horse’s sixth sense, we need to appreciate and increase our awareness of the horse’s lifestyle. This will assist us in responding appropriately to his reactions to certain situations.

## **Flight as a Natural Instinct**

Horses would rather turn and run away from danger than face and fight it.

### *Implications:*

- Any sudden movement or noise, the horse might try to flee. Speak to the horse calmly.
- A frightened horse that is tied up or being held tightly might try to escape by pulling back. Relax your hold or untie him/her quickly and usually he/she will relax. Be sure not to stand directly behind the horse.
- If flight is not possible, the horse could either turn to kick out or face the problem and rear, especially in a tight area like the stall. A halter with a lead line may assist with maintaining control while working around the horse in a stall.
- If horse appears to be frightened or fearful, it may be helpful to follow a more experienced horse.
- Most horses chosen to work in a therapeutic setting have less of an instinct to flee. The horse may look to you for reassurance. It is helpful if the volunteer remains calm and talks to the horse in a soothing voice.

## **Heard Animal**

Horses like to stay together in a herd or group with one or two horses dominant, with a pecking order among the rest.

### *Implications:*

- Be aware that a horse may not like being alone. This is a consideration when horses are leaving the arena or a horse loses sight of the others while on a trail ride.
- Be aware that if the horse in front of the line is trotting or cantering, the horse that is following may also attempt to trot or canter.

- If one horse spooks at something, the surrounding horses may also be affected.
- For safety, it is recommended to keep at least one horse length between horses when riding within a group to respect the horse's space and pecking order.

### **Other Behavior Signs you Should Notice are:**

- Tucking the tail down tightly:
  - Danger to rear
    - Horse may bolt, buck, or kick
    - Watch out if ears are flattened, too!
- Switching the tail
  - Annoyance and irritation at biting flies, stinging insects or tickling, bothersome actions of a rider or another horse.
- Droopy ears and resting one hind leg on toe
  - Calm and resting, horse may be dozing
    - Don't wake him up by startling him!
- Wrinkling up the face and swinging the head
  - Threatening gesture of an angry or bossy horse
    - Watch out for biting or kicking

Being aware of horse behaviors is one of the best safety precautions that can be used in your facility. Knowing how to ready your horse can prevent an accident and increase the quality of your "mutual" relationship.



# Our Horses

## Horses

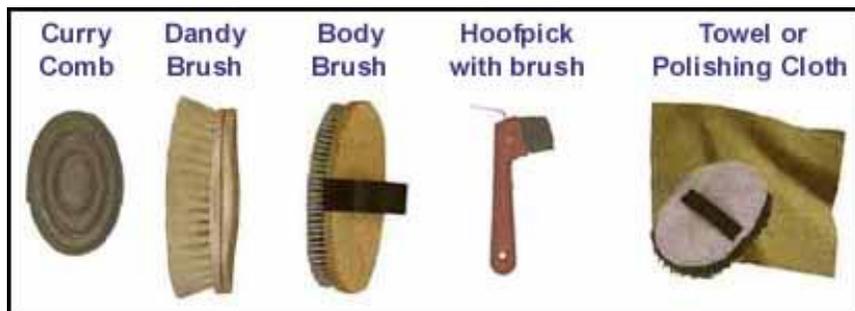
Our horses are selected for their quiet, calm dispositions, and are paired with a rider depending on the rider's needs. Horses and ponies differ in gait, in responsiveness, and briskness of movement. Like people, they have their own different personalities. Riders are assigned to a particular horse for specific reasons. Sometimes a certain horse's disposition suits a rider best, sometimes a horse's gait and "way of going" is the most therapeutic for the rider's disorder.

## Grooming

- Horses enjoy being thoroughly groomed. Regular grooming of the horse will:
  - Give it a clean, shiny coat, and skin
  - Stimulate muscle tone
  - Encourage gentling of most horses because they like what you are doing
  - Provide an opportunity to examine the horse closely, watching for cuts, bruises, and the condition of the feet that might be missed otherwise.



- Basic grooming tools include a rubber curry comb, coarse bristle dandy brush, a fine bristle body brush, a wool cloth or cotton towel rub, a hoof pick, shears, and mane and tail comb. Sweat scrapers and shedding blades are handy tools for mud and when the horse is shedding. The shedding blade, bent double with the two ends fastened, is a handy tool to use during the spring when the horse sheds its winter hair. It can be turned over and used as a sweat scraper in the summer. A sponge can be used to clean muddy legs and other dirty areas.



- Keep your tools clean and simple. Results are determined by how you use the tools, not by their quality.
- The horse should be groomed before and after riding. Start at the head and work back on the near side (horse's left side) including the feet and legs. Then go to the off side (horse's right side) and work back from head to tail. Do not use a metal curry comb around the head or below the knees and hocks. There is not fat or muscle in these areas to cushion the comb's hard edges. Don't neglect the head (be gentle here) and the area around the tail. Use a rubber curry comb to carefully remove caked dirt form below the knees and hocks.
- When brushing, start with the coarse bristle dandy brush. Use plenty of elbow grease and brush in short, brisk strokes. Flick he bristles up at the end of each stoked so they will throw the dirt out from the hair. Brush with the lay of the hair. It changes direction at different points on the body, so look for these changes.
- Use the fine bristle body brush on the head, body, and legs. Again, brush in the direction the hair grows.
- Feet should be cleaned with the hoof pick.
- Tangles in the mane and tail should be worked out with your fingers and the coarse toothed comb. Watch for burrs and sticks caught in the mane and tail.
- Report any "oddities," cuts or ticks to the program manager, instructor, or aide.

## **Tack**

Tack is the equipment used for a horse.

### ***Halter and Lead Line***

The halter is a sturdy piece of headgear used for leading or tying a horse. The halter needs to fit properly and volunteers will be instructed on what is the proper fit for all tack. The halter and lead line must be in good condition as a 1,000+ pound horse can easily break a frayed halter or rope. If you find equipment that has been damaged, please let the instructor know.

### ***Saddles***

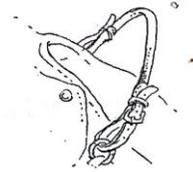
Saddles also come in several styles with adaptation for different uses. We used both English and Western saddles, depending on the rider's needs.

### ***Surcingle with Bareback Pad***

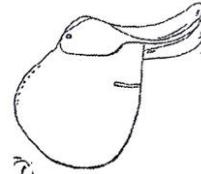
Bareback pads are used for riders who need the physical challenge of riding bareback but are more comfortable with a pad that cushions and prevents slipping. A surcingle is a wide leather strap which fits over the pad and buckles like a saddle girth. Surcingles come in different styles to address the rider's needs.

# Therapeutic Riding Adaptive Equipment

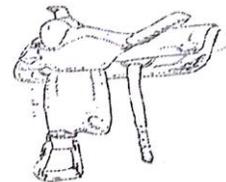
Hand Hold: Used by the rider at the trot and at other times when recommended by the instructor.



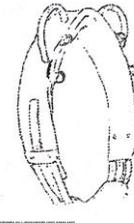
English Saddle: Provides maximum feel of the horse and rider while minimizing stress to the riders' adductors and hips.



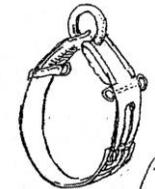
Western Saddle: A western saddle can give the rider more support with the deep seat, a cantle, and fork. It may be difficult to mount for some riders because of the horn.



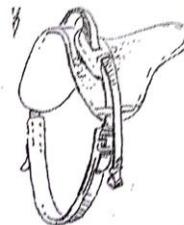
Vaulting Surcingle or Doubled Handled Surcingle: Used over a bareback pad. This surcingle has two handles.



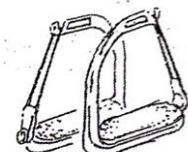
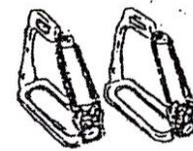
Single handled Surcingle: Also used over a bareback pad.



Natural Ride: This combines the features of a bareback pad and the surcingle. The hand hold is lower than on the surcingle and is solid so it can be utilized better by leaning on it rather than by holding on to it.

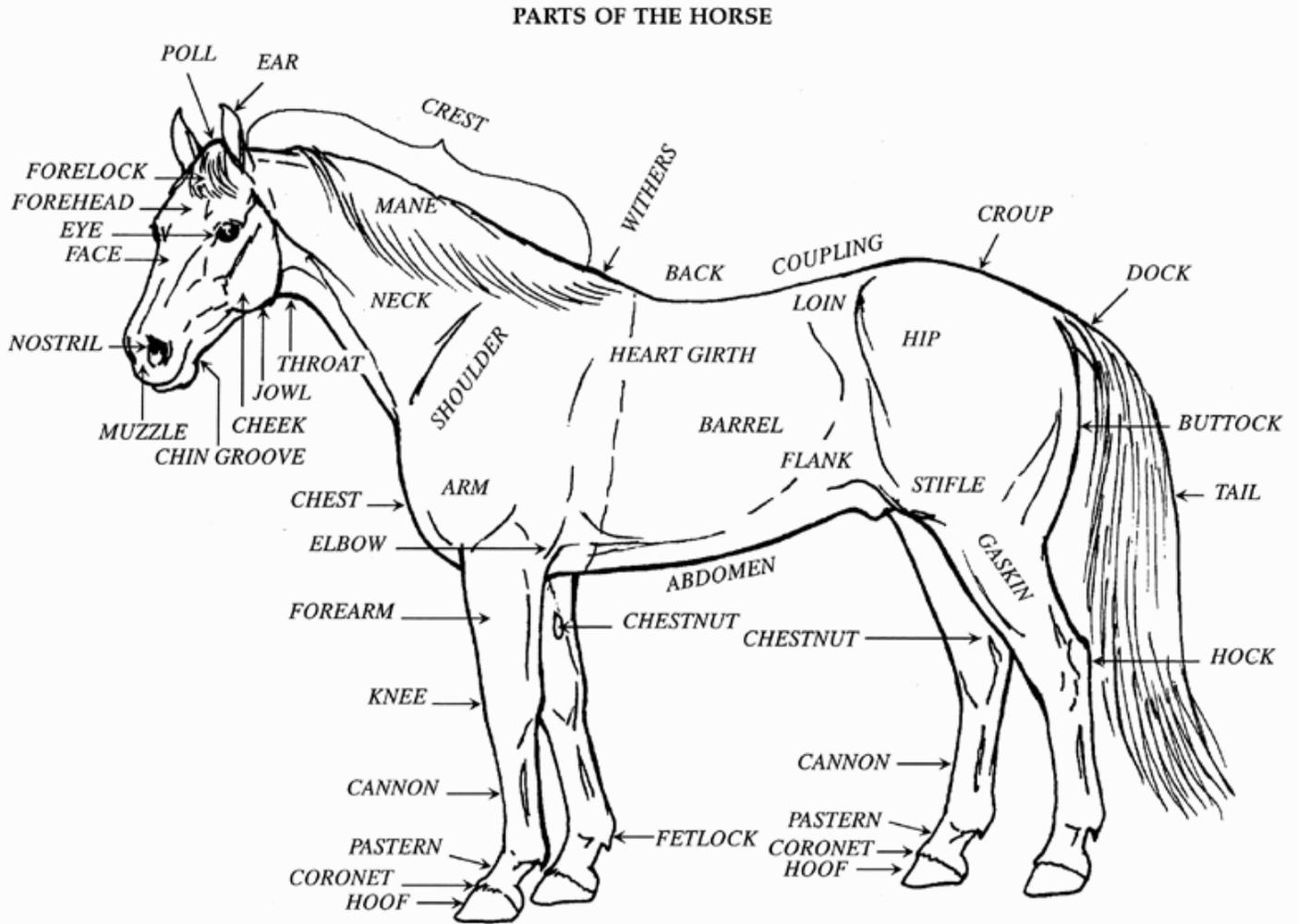


Peacock Safety Stirrups: Stirrups that have a quick-release rubber band on the side that will allow the rider's foot to come out in case of a fall. The safety feature should always face away from the horse when positioned on the rider's foot.



# The Parts of a Horse

When working around horses, there are some special terms that you will need to know. Some parts of the horse are shown below.



# Volunteer and Guest Dismissal Policy

A volunteer or guest at Riley Equine Center may be asked to leave at any time. It is up to the discretion of the staff to determine if a volunteer or guest has become a problem to the program. Grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to:

- Drinking alcohol or drug use at or before coming to the barn.
- Disregarding staff instructions or written barn rules.
- Any activity that is disruptive to lessons and program activities.
- Any action that in anyway threatens the safety of our riders, horses, staff, and volunteers.

If a volunteer or guest has been identified as being a problem, the following steps will be taken:

- The volunteer will address an instructor, fellow volunteer, or a program manager. They will be asked to end the disruptive behavior.
- If the behavior continues, Riley Equine Center will send a written statement to the volunteer/guests' home asking them not to return to the program.

If the behavior is unsafe, a volunteer/guest may be asked to leave immediately without the above steps being followed. This action is taken at the discretion of the staff and will be accepted without question to ensure the safety of our riders.

## Safety Precautions

- Never approach a horse directly from the rear. Approach from the side, talk to the horse in a low voice and keep a hand his/her body when walking around him/her. Or, make a large circle around the back of the horse while talking to him/her. This allows the horse/pony to see the person.
- Always speak to a horse/pony before approaching or touching him. Some horses are likely to jump and may kick when startled.
- If a horse rears up, release the hand closest to the halter to avoid being pulled off the ground.
- People weigh a lot less than any equine. If he balks, do not try to “out pull” him/her. A quick tug on the lead line will generally move him forward. If the horse continues to pull backward, step back with him rather than pulling against him.
- Never warp a lead line or reins around a hand, fingers, wrist, or body.
- Pet a horse/pony by placing hand on his shoulder and neck. Don't dab at the end of his nose.
- Always walk around a tied mount; NEVER under or over the rope.
- After leading a horse into box stall, turn the horse so that he faces the door. Close the door, leaving enough space for the volunteer, not the horse, to exit before releasing the lead line or removing the halter.
- When saddling, have the mount properly secured so he will stand quietly.
- Tighten girth/cinch slowly don't pull up abruptly. Adjust saddle carefully with girth snug enough so, the saddle will not shift during the warm up. The instructor will tighten the girth prior to the student mounting. Horses/ponies often swell up when first saddled and failure re-tighten the girth just prior to and after mounting can result in serious accident.
- To avoid mounts stepping on reins and lead lines, keep reins and lead lines off the ground.
- We use electric wire fences at Riley Equine Center. Please be careful.

# **Barn Safety Rules**

- Keep alleyway clear of tools, debris, feed. Do not leave unattended horses in alley.
- Do not go into stalls with horses alone unless you are instructed to do so.
- When approaching a horse, use a gentle voice and a light hand to pet or rub him/her. Avoid making loud noise or sudden movements.
- When saddling a horse, tie him to the outside of the stall with about 12” of play in lead rope using a slip knot so that horse can be untied quickly.
- Volunteers & Staff should use appropriate language when engaged with or around riders.
- Smoking & drinking alcohol beverages are prohibited in/around barn.
- With the exception of instructors and staff, no cell phones are permitted in the barn. The barn is our horses’ home, be respectful of it.
- Cruelty or abuse of animals (horses, cats, or dogs) will not be tolerated. You will be asked to leave immediately if you are caught in this behavior.
- Verbal & physical abuse towards participants, volunteers, instructors, or animals will not be tolerated.
- Help to keep the tack room & bathroom clean. Put tack in its proper place, keep feed bins and carts against the back wall. Maintain unobstructed walkways into bathroom.
- In case of a fire in the barn,, all riders, volunteers, and horses shall exit barn immediately and meet in the paddock area near the south gate. Instructor & Staff will notify 911 and attempt to put out fire. Instructors & Staff will also be responsible for getting any remaining horses out of the barn.

- Never approach a horse directly from the rear. Approach from the side, talk to the horse in a low voice and keep a hand on his body when walking around him. Or, make a large circle around the back of the horse while talking to him. This allows the horse/pony to see the person.
- Always speak to a horse/pony before approaching or touching him. Some mounts (horses) are likely to jump and may kick when startled.
- If a horse rears up, release the hand closest to the halter to avoid being pulled off the ground. Go with the horse, allowing enough slack in the rope to stay a safe distance from the horse.
- People weigh a lot less than any equine. If he balks, do not try to “out-pull” him. A quick tug on the lead shank will generally move him forwards. If the animal continues to pull backwards, step back with him rather than pulling against him.
- Never wrap a lead or reins around a hand, finger, wrist, or body.
- Pet a horse/pony by placing a hand on his shoulder and neck. Don't dab at the end of his nose.

# Emergency Evacuation Procedure

## Fire

In case of fire, all people (and horses if possible) are evacuated from the area. Emergency personnel are notified from a cell phone.

## Fire Drill Procedure

Do not panic. Listen to the instructor. If mounted, students should remain on their horses and with their teams (leader, sidewalkers) and be escorted out of the barn calmly and swiftly through the large door at the end of the barn and meet as a group in the paddock outside of the barn. The students will then be dismounted (sidewalkers to remain with students) and the leader or horse handler will take the horse to the appropriate location.

The horse handlers or designated volunteer should clear the aisles and barn of volunteers, exit through the nearest door and meet in the paddock area outside of the barn with the others. Everyone must leave, do not linger behind, or return to the barn! A designated staff member will attempt to contain the fire.

The volunteer coordinator (or designated person) is to direct everyone in the tack room and surrounding barn area to the outdoor paddock. Once the volunteer coordinator has reached the paddock, they should call 911. If safe to do so, the volunteer coordinator should make sure no one re-enters the barn.

The instructor or assistant instructor should continue to direct everyone to the outdoor paddock, make sure all gates are closed with the people outside. The instructor and assistant instructor will remain in the paddock area, taking a role call and allowing no one to leave.

If it appears safe to do so, Riley Equine Center staff **ONLY** may run horses out of the barn. **PEOPLE SHOULD NEVER PUT THEMSELVES AT RISK TO SAVE HORSES!**

## Environmental Disaster

Staff members determine measures to take and implement them.

## **Storms**

In case of torrential rainfall/high winds, all riders, parents, staff report to the tack room where it is determined to continue or cancel class.

## **Tornado**

In case of an oncoming tornado, all people are evacuated to the interior of the house adjacent to the stables or to the bathroom in the tack room.

## **Earthquake**

In case of an earthquake, all people (and horses if possible) are evacuated from the building. Emergency personnel are notified by phone.

## **Student, Staff, or Volunteer Injury**

All volunteer and/or students are taught to freeze when they hear the command “All halt immediately!” from the instructor.

## **Major**

- “All halt immediately”
- Instructor is responsible for evaluating situation.
- Remove students and horses from arena if possible and applicable. (Leaders are instructed to stay with horses should the rider fall, sidewalkers are instructed to stay with student.)
- Appropriate implementation of first aid measures while parents/guardians/emergency specialists are notified.
- Injured’s emergency release information is pulled out of the office.
- Emergency personnel contacted – numbers are posted by the phone.
- Incident report filed.
- Follow up contact to check on status of injured by program director.
- Insurance company notified.

## **Minor**

- Dismount students (if applicable) and delegate treatment – to trained volunteer or parent/staff.
- Treat with appropriate first aid measures using materials from first aid kits on top of the refrigerator.
- Parent or guardian is notified verbally or in writing (if applicable).
- Incident report is filed. Follow-up contact at discretion of program director.

## **Horse Emergency**

All volunteers and students are removed from the immediate area, except as needed by staff. First aid measures are implemented and veterinarian is notified, if necessary.

## **Glossary of Disabilities, Activities, and Special Considerations**

**Autism:** A withdrawal into oneself or into fantasy, characterized by a lack of willingness to communicate with the outside world. These riders are easily distracted and out of touch. You must work hard to keep this student's attention. Encourage coordinating movements of the body and reinforce accurate perceptions and completed tasks. Constant repetition and a focus on the task are necessary. Initial tactile defensiveness may make relaxing on the horse difficult and stretching should be encouraged. Communication is often difficult. Behavior modification techniques should be used. Watch for non-verbal as well as verbal responses

**Amputee:** The removal of a portion of entire limb through trauma, surgery, or a birth defect where the limb never developed. Watch for stump soreness. Our goal is to improve balance and posture, strengthen both limbs, and sometimes improve their mental attitude. The rider may ride with and/or without their prosthesis. Another goal is to improve body awareness and "integrate prosthesis" into their whole body self-image.

**Blindness:** Lack of partial or complete sight due to congenital, injury, or disease hysteria. Be definite and exact on directions and have good tactile orientation of facilities and horse. These riders sometimes have weakness in trunk muscles with balance problems. Let the student know where you are, but direct his attention toward the instructor during classes. Focus on balance, posture, coordination, and coordination of gross motor tasks, body image, and spatial orientation.

**Cerebral Palsy:** A neuromuscular disability in which the person has difficulty controlling the voluntary muscles due to damage to some portion of the brain. They may be spastic, where muscles are in a constant state of contraction, or flaccid, where the muscles are in a constant state of relaxation. The problems range from mild to severe. The damage is fixed and does not become progressively greater. These students require activities focusing on postures, neck and trunk extension, balance, reciprocal movement (coordinating independent leg or arm movements), and gross motor planning. The ability to coordinate perception with action is impaired in most cases, so time is increased in tasks. Relaxing, with many slow movements to stretch and strengthen muscles aids riders.

**Deaf, Hearing Impaired:** These riders often have a low frustration level and many have other balance difficulties. If the rider is wearing hearing aids, make sure they are turned on. Encourage and direct their attention to the instructor. Mime is often helpful in communication with the hearing impaired. Establish sign language signals for *help*, *walk*, *stop*, and *trot*. Sight and touch are very important also.

**Emotionally Disturbed and Behavior Disorders (EBD):** With these riders it is important to focus on the relationship that the student's action have on others. Stress the importance of appropriate behavior towards the horses and people. Do not tolerate abusive behavior toward self and others. Directions must be clear and concise; consistency is a must. Corrections should be non-judgmental, immediately and clearly explained. This student is often easily distracted with a short attention span. These riders need, but it must be genuine, as they can be especially sensitive to insincerity and dishonesty. Set goals. Set up success through controlled challenges.

**Epilepsy (Seizure Disorder):** A disorder of the central nervous system that results in periodic disturbances of consciousness. These episodes may range from mild, momentary loss of consciousness to major seizures. Seizures may be triggered by stress, fatigue, diet, menstrual period, alcohol, or changes in the weather (especially storms). It is important to promote a relaxed consistent environment. Keep instructions simple and direct. If a grand mal seizure occurs, remove the rider from the horse AFTER the seizure if possible. Do not put anything in the rider's mouth. These riders must always have at least one sidewalker.

**Head Injuries:** Neurological defects from damage to the brain, involving a wide range of problems. These riders often have impaired sensation, spasticity, difficulty in the following directions, poor balance, poor memory, and poor judgment. Be consistent. Give brief clear instructions. Repeat as necessary. Promote balance, coordination, and posture. Watch for fatigue, as this will decrease accuracy and safety.

**Learning Disabled:** An inability of the brain to correctly receive and process information sent by the senses. These riders may exhibit hyperactivity and/or inappropriate behavior and low tolerance to frustration. These riders are often extremely sensitive to failure. Immature behavior might be exhibited along with impatience and a short attention span. May adjust to change more slowly than others. There also may be explosive and impulsive behavior. Discipline should be consistent. Set limits.

**Mentally Impaired, Trainable Mental Retardation, Developmentally Disabled:**

These riders may have myriad problems: motor, language, developmental, and social. Safety and judgment is stressed. Structured activities are important and frequent, clear instructions given repetitively are necessary. Activities to improve coordination and balance are used. Remember that the time to finish an activity must be increased and distractions should be kept to a minimum. Set goals. Set up for success through controlled challenges. Keep instructions simple and sequence slowly. Show-and-tell and a small teaching area are helpful.

**Multiple Sclerosis (MS):** An ongoing, progressive neurological disease, mostly in young adults, characterized by speech problems, progressive weakness in coordination and generalized fatigue. With these riders overwork and fatigue must be avoided. Activities that encourage ranging all joints, stretching, coordination, and minimal strengthening are used. Progress is affected by the erratic course of the disease along with emotional, perceptual and judgment components of the disease.

**Muscular Dystrophy:** A group of disorders of genetic origin in which slow degeneration of muscle fibers occurs. This is a progressive disease. These riders are easily fatigued. They usually have poor balance. Colds and infections are common. Avoid extreme temperatures and strenuous exercise. As the disease progresses, ample sidewalkers are very important. Allow the rider to maintain independence, always keep safety in mind.

**Spina Bifida:** A form of paralysis caused by a lack of prenatal, bony spinal-cord development. This disease is characterized by leg weakness, loss of sensation, and/or paralysis. These riders may have balance problems and may wear leg braces. Goals are to maintain mobility and good posture. Increase strength and improve balance as much as possible.

**Spinal Cord Injury:** A spinal cord injury can produce a lose of neurological function. The injury may produce partial or complete loss of function depending on the degree of severity and the location on the spinal column. The person will have loss of sensation and voluntary muscle movement below the level of the injury. With *paraplegia* only the legs are involved; with *quadriplegia* all four extremities are involved. Occasionally the riders have metal rods inserted in their spine. This limits flexibility and affects their balance. These student must focus on balance, postural stability, and compensation skills. Muscle strengthening and stretching with relaxation is important. Fatigue must be prevented.

**Stroke (CVA):** The blood flow to the brain is eliminated or restricted, causing death of part of the brain. The effect may be flaccid or spastic paralysis or weakness of one arm or leg on the same side of the body. It may impair reasoning, speech, balance, coordination, strength, and sensation. We need to encourage balance, coordination, and strengthen weak muscles and create opportunities to develop memory, reasoning, and concentration.

# Lesson Terminology

**Ankle Hold:** The sidewalker grasps the rider's ankle behind the leg with the hand nearest to the rider.

**Block Mount:** The mounting block is used in order to get the rider onto the horse.

**Charge Rein:** Change direction.

**Crest Mount:** Using the ramp, the rider is assisted to sit, seat first, in the saddle and then the right leg is lifted across the horse's neck.

**Full Hold:** The sidewalker places the arm nearest to the rider across the rider's thigh with his/her hand grasping the front of the saddle.

**Go Large:** The rider will steer the horse close to the outside of the arena by the fence or wall.

**Hand-Over-Hand:** The sidewalker places his hand firmly around the rider's fist as the rider holds the rein, taking care that the rider keep his "thumbs up." We teach out riders to steer by thinking of "opening a door" rather than "pulling" the horse around.

**Heads Up!:** A notice for the team/teams to pay extra attention to the activities in the arena.

**Mount or "Mount Up":** Instructor will assist the students in getting on the horse.

**On the Rail:** The rider steers the horse in a path close to the outside of the ring by the fence or wall.

**Prepare To:** The instructor will usually say this before giving a command so that all team are ready and alert to help the rider comply.

**Pick Up Your Reins:** The rider should grasp the reins and assume control of the horse.

**Ramp Mount:** The instructor will use the ramp to mount the rider.

**Regular Mount:** The student puts their left foot in the stirrup, stabilizes the left hand on the mane, right hand on the front of the saddle and springs up, bringing the right leg over the rump of the horse and gently sitting down in the saddle.

**Reverse your Horses/Half Turn Reverse:** The rider will steer the horse toward the center of the arena, turn a half circle and go in the opposite direction, returning to the wall.

**Reverse Across the Diagonal:** The rider will ride to the directed letter, turn toward the center of the arena, and ride in a diagonal line to the other side of the arena. Then they will ride in the opposite direction.

**Two Point Position:** The rider lifts his/her seat about two inches from the saddle, flexing at the hips with the upper body in a more forward position. He/she places their hands on the neck of the horse with their weight carried through the heels.

# Guaranteed Ways to Become an Effective Volunteer!

- Consider safety first at all times.
- Do not mistreat or abuse horses or riders.
- Remain calm in an emergency and remember your job.
- Smiles say a thousand words...only louder.
- Acknowledge the efforts of your rider.
- Minimize the distractions for riders who are easily distracted.
- First ask the rider to do the task independently, and then assist.
- Encourage teamwork.
- Re-latch all doors and gates behind you.
- **If you are not sure, don't be afraid to ask questions.**
- Notify an instructor immediately if a horse is acting oddly.
- The riding instructor is in charge of all riding emergencies.
- If you are unable to understand a rider, ask for assistance.
- **Be reliable. Everyone is depending on you to do your part.**
- Be courteous and respect each person's needs.
- Greet your rider upon arrival and acknowledge departures.
- **Notify a volunteer organizer ASAP of scheduling conflict.**
- Listen to and help the rider focus on the instructor's directions.
- Encourage the rider to be as independent as possible.
- Be attentive to the instructor. Keep talking to a minimum.
- Help maintain a safe and welcoming environment.
- **Please remember, no smoking and no cell phones.**
- Keep an elephant's distance between you and the horse in front of you.
- Treat another as you would like to be treated.
- Return things to the spot where you found them.
- If a horse is lame or injured, tell an instructor immediately.
- Do not run or make loud noises around the horses.
- Be aware of the phone and first aid kit locations (on top of the refrigerator in the lounge).
- **Do not bring pets, children, or others without permission.**
- Respect your coworkers and their responsibilities.
- Sign or check in every time you volunteer.
- **Check your schedule and put on your name tag upon arrival.**
- Patience + Praise = Success and Results.
- Be attentive to signs of rider fatigue and frustration.
- Alert the instructor immediately if a seizure takes place.
- Be sober and drug free when you volunteer.

***We are glad you are here!***