



MARION THERAPEUTIC RIDING ASSOCIATION

Volunteer Handbook



Table of Contents

Welcome	3
Mission Statement	3
Programs and Services	3
MTRA History	4
PATH International	5
Program Participants and Benefits	5
Working with the Special Needs Population	8
Glossary of Physical and Cognitive Disabilities	9
Volunteer Duties	11
Confidentiality	13
Code of Ethics	13
Dress Code	14
Dismissal of Volunteers	14
The Riding Lesson	14
Other Volunteer Duties	18
Emergency Procedures	19
Hillcrest Facility Layout	23
Greenway Facility Layout	24
Understanding Horse Behavior	25
Grooming	28
Tacking	33

Welcome!

Thank you for volunteering at Marion Therapeutic Riding Association (MTRA)! Volunteers play a vital role in the success of MTRA. As a volunteer, your support and dedication enable us to reach a diverse population of riders. Your compassion and gift of time add an important dimension to their lives.

Most volunteer opportunities at MTRA do not require special skills. MTRA provides the necessary training and guidance to make your volunteer experience safe and enjoyable. This handbook is designed to acquaint you with MTRA and serves as a resource regarding various aspects of the program and your volunteer service.

We welcome you as a member of the growing family of individuals whose lives have been enriched by their efforts to help others. Your volunteer service is a valuable asset and you will always be appreciated at MTRA. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding your volunteer role, please feel free to speak with the Volunteer Coordinator, Program Director or Executive Director.

Mission Statement

Marion Therapeutic Riding Association strives to offer the miraculous benefits of therapeutic horseback riding and equine facilitated learning to persons of all ages and capabilities that are physically, mentally or emotionally challenged.

Programs and Services

Riding Program: The core of MTRA's mission is the therapeutic riding lesson program. MTRA serves over 60 riders per week, offering approximately 180 rides per month over five sessions. Participants attend Hillcrest School and come from Marion and surrounding counties.

Volunteer Educational Program: To assist our volunteers in acquiring the skills needed to support our participants, MTRA has an in-house educational program. This program offers opportunities for volunteers to learn new skills and accept additional levels of responsibility as interests expand or change.

Program Operation

MTRA operates on a school year cycle, starting near the end of August and finishing in June. We offer classes Tuesday through Saturday, at the Greenway barn. Hillcrest classes are on Tuesday and Thursday. We are closed Sunday and Monday and follow the school schedule for major holidays closing.

A Brief History of MTRA

Serving the heart of Florida since 1985, Marion Therapeutic Riding Association (MTRA) is a PATH Premier Accredited therapeutic horseback riding organization for individuals of all ages challenged by physical, mental or emotional disabilities. In 1983 teachers from the Hillcrest School for the Exceptionally Challenged became aware that the synergistic movement of rider and horse improves balance, core muscular strength, coordination and flexibility for individuals with autism. Not only is physical improvement realized, but the ability to control this large animal inspires confidence and a feeling of self-worth. Since Ocala is in the heart of Florida Horse Country, the teachers approached a local horse trainer. Together they wrote a weekly program of specially designed equine-assisted learning activities for a small group of the Hillcrest School's special needs students, transported to the equine facility.

In 1985 this equine education program was moved to the facilities provided on the grounds of the Hillcrest School; with the Marion County Public School District agreeing to provide these facilities and MTRA assuming operating cost. At that point MTRA was born and has continued as a successful symbiotic relationship among riders, horses and a concerned, supportive community ever since. In the mid-90s, as a result of the documented success of the Hillcrest School Program, it was recognized there was a need for a separate therapeutic equine program and facility for people with special needs, a facility that would also serve as a place for the proper rest and regular, preventive health care of the horses (now numbering 18) that are the core of the therapeutic riding program. In 2008, after the careful planning by a number of dedicated individuals, and the assistance of a Marion County Community Development Block Grant, the 30-acre MTRA Greenway Facility opened.

MTRA provides therapeutic horseback riding or Equine Assisted Therapy sessions at a very minimal cost or on a sliding scale for those who cannot afford our very reasonable fees. The program income provides only 10-15% of the funding needed annually to keep our services in place to cover the very high costs of feeding and maintaining horses, maintaining our facility and overhead costs such as insurance, staff and certified PATH instructors. Therefore, we rely heavily on the generosity of the community and its businesses and corporations through donations, grants and other funding. In addition to the expense of our services provided at our Greenway location, for almost 30 years we have maintained the equine assisted therapy program at the Hillcrest School for the exception children, without charging the students and with no funding assistance from the school district.

INTRODUCTION TO PATH INTERNATIONAL

Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH) is a non-profit organization, headquartered in Denver, Colorado that promotes and regulates equine-related activities for individuals with disabilities. PATH accredited centers have been evaluated through on-site comprehensive inspection of facility, equipment, instruction methods, volunteer training, and record-keeping practices by a PATH accreditation team. PATH recognizes three levels of instructor certification: Registered, Advanced, and Master Instructor. PATH members include volunteers, riding instructors, disabled riders and their families, physicians, therapists, teachers, researchers and other concerned individuals.

For information on becoming a PATH member, please visit the PATH web site www.pathintl.org or request a membership form through fax-on-demand (303) 457-8496. PATH may also be reached 1-800-369-RIDE.

Program Participants and Benefits

Program Participants

MTRA serves individuals 4 years old and older. An assessment and screening process conducted by staff determines eligibility into the program. The assessment process provides an opportunity to determine if the program activities would be safe and appropriate for the individual and what resources would be needed (i.e. horse, riding equipment, volunteer and staffing needs). Once accepted into the program, individual objectives are established for the participant and progress is documented each week. Most riders participate in one riding session each week for the length of the session. Lesson activities may include: developing basic riding skills, doing exercises, and performing non-mounted horse related activities.

Benefits of Therapeutic Riding and Non-Mounted Activities

Therapeutic Riding classes focus on acquiring and refining riding skills. Activities include preparing a horse to be ridden, horse care and grooming, and developing knowledge of breeds, colors, markings, and the parts of the horse, as well as the parts and care of equine equipment. Prospective students must demonstrate balance, reasonably age-appropriate behavior, and ambulation with or without assistance.

Goals

- Increase balance
- Increase strength and endurance
- Increase coordination
- Increase sequencing/judgment skills
- Increase range of motion of joints and limbs
- Increase self-confidence/esteem
- Increase motor planning
- Increase independence

- Increase rider interaction with others
- Riding skill development

Socio-Emotional Therapeutic Riding Program

Because horses are sentient beings with feelings, thoughts, emotions, memories, and empathetic abilities, horses can be active facilitators, evoking emotions in those who work with and around them. Equine-assisted socio-emotional classes give riders the opportunity to enhance self-awareness and re-pattern maladaptive behaviors, feelings and attitudes. By developing riding skills and using the intrinsic bonds that horses create, these classes can increase self-esteem, develop patterns of responsible behavior, and create productive relationships between the rider and other people. Prospective students must demonstrate independent balance, reasonably age-appropriate behavior, and ambulation with or without assistance.

Goals

- Developing choice-making and goal-setting skills
- Developing sequencing and problem-solving skills
- Providing social skills training
- Improving responsibility
- Improving sensory stimulation and integration
- Combining body awareness experiences with motor planning and verbal communication
- Improving self-esteem and self-awareness

Sensory Processing Therapeutic Riding Program

Sensory processing refers to the brain's ability to take in, analyze and respond to information from the body's five senses. Riders with Sensory Integration challenges have difficulty screening and prioritizing input. This leads to delays with motor planning, attention span and focus, appropriate behaviors and responses, and orientation in space/time. These classes use the input from the horse, as well as activities and positions on horseback, to help improve the organization of information. Prospective students must demonstrate balance, reasonably age-appropriate behavior, ambulation with or without assistance.

Goals

- Increase balance
- Increase motor coordination
- Increase body awareness
- Increase ability to screen input
- Increase sequencing/judgment skills
- Increase spatial awareness
- Increase attention span
- Encourage early learning skills

Physical Rehabilitation Therapeutic Riding Program

Physical impairments can include muscles with increase tone (spasticity), or decreased tone (weakness), joints that have decreased range of motion (stiff joints), or riders that have difficulty with motor planning and coordination (making their muscles work smoothly together). Physical rehabilitation classes use activities involving the horse and the positioning of the rider on the horse to increase the physical function of the rider, who has movement disorders. Prospective students must demonstrate balance, reasonably age-appropriate behavior, ambulation with or without assistance.

Goals

- Increase balance
- Increase coordination
- Increase range of motion of joints and limbs
- Increase or decrease muscle tone
- Increase motor planning
- Increase postural control
- Increase righting reactions
- Increase verbalization
- Increase strength and endurance
- Increase spatial awareness
- Increase body awareness

Cognitive Therapeutic Riding Program

Cognition refers to the many processes of the mind, including planning, judgment, memory, orientation, concepts, attention, and ability to express language. Riders participate in exercises on horseback which reinforce carefully selected goals and objectives. Prospective students must demonstrate balance, reasonably age-appropriate behavior, and ambulation with or without assistance.

Goals

- Increase balance coordination
- Increase verbalization
- Encourage appropriate social interactions
- Increase sequencing/judgment skills
- Increase direction/ request following
- Increase confidence/ self esteem
- Increase interaction with others
- Increase attention span
- Encourage early learning skills

Working With the Special-Needs Population

Working with people who have special needs may be a new experience for some volunteers. Individual diagnosis are confidential. Please take time to know your participant, and direct any questions to the instructor. Physical or mental impairments may be present at birth, or may be due to injury, disease, or aging. Often a major barrier for people with special needs is not the disability itself but the lack of awareness and knowledge by others. Above all, please be considerate and sensitive to the needs of others.

Wheelchair Etiquette

Many people are unsure how to act when meeting someone in a wheelchair. Please try to keep the following in mind: always ask the wheelchair user if they would like assistance before you help; be respectful—people’s wheelchairs are an extension of their body space. Don’t hang or lean on them unless you have permission; and speak directly—be careful not to exclude the wheelchair user from conversations. If the conversation lasts more than a few minutes, sit or kneel to get yourself on the same level as the wheelchair.

Escorting an Individual with a Visual Impairment

If an individual with a visual impairment looks like he/she needs assistance, please ask first if help is needed. Remember that they may need only verbal directions/cues. If physical assistance is needed, allow the individual to hold onto your arm above the elbow and walk one-half step ahead. The individual also may have a specific way they prefer to have assistance. Repeat or verbalize information that may be written or posted. If you’re uncertain of what to do, ask your instructor how you can be of further assistance.

General Guidelines for Working with Individuals with Hearing/Language Impairment

Try to maintain good eye contact, looking at the individual when speaking to him/her. Speak clearly, avoid talking slowly or over-emphasizing words and avoid long instructions or conversation. Become familiar with hand gestures and body positions that the participant may be using to represent words and concepts. See your instructor with questions. Provide assistance with communication when needed (i.e. visual cues, gestures, etc.). Alert the instructor if the participant is having difficulty with hearing aid (i.e. ringing or whistling).

Non-Verbal or Limited Verbal Expression

Many of our participants are non-verbal or limited in their verbal expression. To enhance directions with these individuals, instructors and volunteers may reinforce requests and directions with basic American Sign Language (ASL).

Glossary of Physical And Cognitive Disabilities

The following are brief, non-medical descriptions of some disabilities and conditions of participants one might encounter in MTRA's therapeutic riding program. This is not intended as a comprehensive explanation of a specific disability, rather, it is a general overview with an explanation of how therapeutic riding can be beneficial.

Autism

A self-centered mental state from which reality tends to be excluded.

Characteristics: Unresponsiveness to the presence of others; withdrawal from physical contact; severely delayed and disordered language; self-stimulating behaviors; unusual or special fears; insensitivity to pain; unawareness of real dangers; hyperactive; passive; unusual behaviors such as smelling/tasting/licking/mouthing all objects; ritualistic behaviors; developmentally delayed; unusual response to sounds; clumsiness; social withdrawal; resistance to change.

Benefits: Interaction in a group setting stimulates interest away from self and toward others and the horses. Postural and verbal stimulation.

Cerebral Palsy

Brain damage occurring before, at, or shortly after birth. It is a non-progressive motor disorder.

Types and Characteristics:

Spastic -hypertonicity with hyperactive stretch reflexes, muscle imbalances and equilibrium. Increased startle reflex and other pathological reflexes.

Athetoid -extensor muscle tension, worm-like movements, abnormal posturing and slow and deliberate speech.

Ataxic- poor balance, difficulty with quick, fine movements and are often described as having a "rag doll" appearance.

Benefits: Normalization of tone, stimulation of postural and balance mechanisms, muscle strengthening and perceptual motor coordination.

Associated Problems: Seizures; hearing defects; visual defects; general sensory impairment; perceptual problems; communication problems; mental retardation; emotional disturbance; learning disabilities.

Cerebral Vascular Accident -Stroke (CV A)

Hemorrhage in brain, which causes varying degrees of functional impairment.

Characteristics: Flaccid or spastic paralysis of arm and leg on same side of body. May impair mentation, speech, sight, balance, coordination and strength.

Benefits: Promotes symmetry, stimulates balance, posture, motor planning, speech and socialization.

Down Syndrome

Condition in which a person is born with an extra chromosome, resulting in mental retardation and developmental delay.

Characteristics: Broad flat face, slanted eyes. Neck and hands are often broad and short. Usually hypotonic, have hypermobile joints and tend to be short and slightly overweight. Prone to respiratory infections.

Benefits: Riding improves expressive and receptive language skills, gross and fine motor skills, balance, posture, muscle tone and coordination.

Emotional Disabilities

A congenital or acquired syndrome often compounded by learning and/or physical disabilities incorporating numerous other pathologies.

Characteristics: Trouble coping with everyday life situations and interpersonal relations. Behaviors such as short attention span, avoidance, aggression, autism, paranoia or schizophrenia may be exhibited.

Benefits: Increases feelings of self-confidence and self-awareness, and provides appropriate social outlet.

Learning Disabilities (LD)

Catch-all phrase for individuals who have problems processing, sequencing and problem solving, but who appear to have otherwise normal intelligence skills.

Characteristics: Short attention span, easily frustrated, immature.

Benefits: Effects depend upon the particular disorder. Stimulates attention span, group skills, cooperation, language skills, posture and coordination.

Mental Retardation (MD)

Lack of ability to learn and perform at normal and acceptable levels. Degree of retardation is referred to as educable, trainable, severe or profoundly retarded.

Characteristics: Developmentally delayed in all areas. Short attention span.

Benefits: Stimulates group activity skills, coordination, balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination. Provides a structured learning environment.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

Progressive neurological disease with degeneration of spinal column tracts, resulting in scar formation.

Characteristics: Most commonly occurs in the 20 to 40-year-old range. It is progressive with periods of exacerbation and remissions. Fatigues easily. Symptoms include weakness, visual impairment, fatigue, loss of coordination and emotional sensitivity.

Benefits: Maintains and strengthens weak muscles and provides opportunities for emotional therapy.

Associated Problems: Visual impairment, emotional lability, and impaired bowel and bladder function.

Scoliosis

Lateral curve of the spine with a C or S curve with rotary component.

Characteristics: Postural asymmetry. May wear scoliosis jacket or have had stabilization surgery.

Benefits: Stimulates postural symmetry, strengthens trunk muscles.
(Note: Severe scoliosis is a contraindication for therapeutic riding).

Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)

Trauma to the spinal cord resulting in a loss of neurological function.

Characteristics: Paralysis of muscles below the level of injury -can be flaccid or spastic. Fatigue, sensory loss and pressure sores.

Benefits: Stimulates posture and balance, strengthens trunk muscles, is an option for sports participation and recreation.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Accidental injury to the head resulting in intra-cranial bleeding with death of brain cells.

Characteristics: Gross and fine motor skills deficits. Often have impaired memory, speech, balance and/or vision. May have psychological effects.

Benefits: Stimulates balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills, speech and perceptual skills.

Volunteer Duties

The minimum age to volunteer is 12 years old. MTRA volunteers assist in a variety of ways: leading horses during lessons, sidewalking (walking alongside the horse to offer the rider support when needed), grooming horses, tacking up horses, cooling out horses, cleaning tack, horse care, helping with fund-raisers, participating in public relations, assisting with administrative duties, planning of special events, and anything else that enhances the quality of MTRA's programs.

Volunteers must be at least 14 to work in classes. No previous experience is necessary. Volunteers will be trained according to the chosen/assigned field of service. Volunteers are required to read, understand and sign MTRA's liability and medical releases. Volunteers must also sign a confidentiality agreement in compliance with HIPPA. Volunteers must be willing to submit to and pay for a criminal history background check. Because MTRA is frequently featured in newspapers, television, and magazines, volunteers are asked to sign photo releases.

MTRA operates Tuesday through Saturday, times vary depending on lesson schedules. Committed volunteers are critical to the success of MTRA's programs. MTRA relies on consistent volunteer attendance for a little as an hour each week of an eight-week session to several hours every day.

The ROUTINE

- Park anywhere not designated as handicap parking.
- Sign the volunteer log book. MTRA is required by state law to keep track of your attendance and hours.
- Put on your name badge, kept next to the volunteer log book, identifying you as a MTRA volunteer.
- Check-in with a MTRA instructor and verify assignment.
- Complete assignment(s)
- Sign out of log book

MTRA will maintain a current written registration form for each participant, volunteer, and staff member which included the following:

- Name
- Address
- Telephone Numbers
- Date of Birth
- Parent(s)/guardian name and phone numbers (if applicable)
- Caregiver name and phone numbers (if applicable)
- Emergency contact information
- Date information was completed or updated

All participants, volunteers, and staff members must sign a release of liability agreement.

All participants, volunteers, and staff members must sign an emergency medical treatment agreement.

All participants must have a signed health history and a physician-signed "Rider's Medical History and Physician's Statement" form on site. This form must be updated annually.

All participants, volunteers, and staff members are requested to sign a Photo Release form before being photographed while participating in MTRA activities. They may either consent, or not, to allowing their photograph to be taken. Registration forms (or a consolidated "No Photo" list) must be checked for this annotation before any photographs are taken by MTRA. Outside organizations (e.g., newspapers) must obtain their own permission to photograph.

All participants, volunteers, and staff members are required to review and update their information annually (at the beginning of September) or when any information changes. All participants, volunteers, and staff members must sign and date their review.

Confidentiality

Riders and their families have a right to privacy that gives them control over the dissemination of their medical or other sensitive information. MTRA shall preserve the right of confidentiality for all individuals in its program. No information shall be shared with anyone regarding a rider's medical information, disability, financial status, or other sensitive information. All volunteers and staff of MTRA are bound by this policy to protect the rights and privacy of individuals served by MTRA. Individuals involved with MTRA shall keep confidential all medical, social, referral, personal, and financial information regarding a person and his/her family.

Information pertaining to clients of MTRA or a provider of service is confidential and not releasable to the public or other sources except as authorized by the Executive Director. MTRA will agree to disclose information to outside agencies or individuals only with the specific written consent of the rider or their designated representative. Individuals who breach confidentiality will be removed from the MTRA program. All individuals accepting responsibilities with MTRA are required to sign the Confidentiality Agreement.

Code of Ethics

As employees, board members or volunteers of Marion Therapeutic Riding Association our fundamental duty is to support the agency's commitment to the highest standards of accountability in its expenditure of funds. Honesty, integrity and loyalty are the hallmarks of our profession.

We will never act officiously or permit personal feelings, prejudices, animosities, or relationships to influence our official decisions. We will exercise self-restraint and be constantly mindful of the welfare and constitutional rights of others. Whatever we see or hear in a confidential nature or that is confided to us in our official capacity will be kept secret unless revelation is necessary in the performance of our duty.

We will by conduct and appearance, display the highest standards of professionalism. We will diligently strive to achieve the objectives and ideals of the agency and our profession.

Volunteer Dress Code

Volunteers may wear long pants, jeans, capri pants or Bermuda shorts (inseam must be at or below the fingertips). Closed-toe shoes, preferably boots, will be worn at all times in the barn or elsewhere working with horses. No tight-fitting shirts or tank tops that show bra, bra straps or the midriff are allowed. Dangling jewelry may be unsafe to wear near some participants and should not be worn. Strong scented toiletries, colognes, etc. should not be worn.

Dismissal of Volunteers

A volunteer may be dismissed for the following:

- Becomes disruptive
- Threatens the safety of others or horses
- Is no longer suited for volunteer activities
- Fails to comply with the MTRA Code of Ethics
- Fails to comply with the MTRA Confidentiality Policy
- Fails to comply with the MTRA Dress Code

The Riding Lesson

Each rider may need up to three volunteers to assist in a lesson. Most “teams” will consist of a horse leader and 1-2 sidewalkers. Lesson plans will vary from class to class to address the goals of the individual students.

The main responsibility of the leader is to control the mount. Volunteers who would like to become leaders should have some horse-handling experience to be considered for this position. Leaders must be aware of and guard against any potential hazards in or around the arena. The leader must make sure there is enough room along the fence and around obstacles for side walkers to pass safely.

Most riders who have leaders are unable to fully control their horses. The leader must assist in guiding, stopping, and starting the horse; however, the rider must be allowed to do as much as possible. An effective leader pays close attention to the rider's needs and reinforces the rider's attempts to control the horse. The leader should not execute an instruction for the rider before the rider has time to process the information and make an effort to comply.

The leader should hold the lead eight to twelve inches from the horse's head with the extra lead looped in the free hand, not wrapped around it. The horse may have to be led from either side, rather than from the left, as is customary.

When a rider is being mounted, the leader must hold the animal as still as possible, both at the ramp and the mounting block. The leader should stand approximately one foot away from the horse's head holding the lead rope. Hanging on the bit or holding it too tightly will cause the mount to toss his head and/or move around. Light, firm

pressure should be enough to keep him quiet and steady. Don't put your thumbs through the halter rings; they could be broken with a toss of the horse's head. Never let the lead or reins drag on the ground. A good leader anticipates problems and acts in such a way as to avoid them.

The leader should walk just behind the mount's head and in front of its shoulder. The leader should not hang on the lead or try to drag the animal. The leader should adjust his walk to the mounts pace unless it is unreasonably fast or slow. If a mount is moving too fast, a stronger pull on the lead will be necessary. If it is possible, have the rider help keep the horse or pony walking on by pushing with his seat and/or by squeezing with his legs.

At the trot, the leader will have to speed his walk to a jog. Mounts should trot alongside the leader. The leader should avoid breaking into a run, as the mount will pick up speed accordingly. The leader should use voice commands (whoa, walk, trot, canter) to aid in transitions from one gait to another only when the student requires assistance.

Once the lesson has started, it is important that the leader be alert and paying close attention to the rider, the surroundings and the instructor. Leaders can help the instructor by keeping the rider's attention on the instructor. Many riders like to talk and ask personal questions of their volunteers. The volunteer should not be rude but should keep the rider's attention on the lesson. After the lesson, personal conversation can take place, but not during the class.

Leaders should keep the mounts from becoming too close to other riders if the rider is unable to do so. Commands for the rider to halt, cross the arena, or do a circle prevent accidents or pile ups. During exercises, the leader should stand in front of, and slightly to the side of, the mount to prevent it from moving from the "halt position". The leader must use common sense if a problem arises.

Falls can and do happen. **If a rider should fall, the leader's primary responsibility is the care of the horse.** Leaders should not drop the lead line and run to the fallen rider. The situation could easily become more dangerous if there are loose horses in the arena. Listen for directions from the instructor. The instructor will call the class to a halt and assist the rider. Move the involved horse as far from the fallen student as possible, moving the horse's hindquarter's away from the fallen student and assisting volunteers. The leader must remain calm and should allow the horse to turn and face the situation when they are well away from the student.

Games can be fun for riders, volunteers, and the instructor. During games, as throughout the lesson, the rider does the rewarding and productive work, not the leader. Direct participation from all involved is desirable, but not to the extent that the leader takes complete control and the rider does nothing. Volunteers should not become enthusiastic to the point of detriment to the benefit of the rider.

Sidewalkers

A sidewalker's primary responsibility is to insure the safety of the rider. The degree of assistance from the sidewalker will depend on the balance of the rider. Sidewalkers who accompany poorly balanced riders may need to change sides occasionally to relieve the stress on their arms. Sidewalkers should not pull the rider sideways or backwards. The sidewalker must be able to jog alongside the rider if trotting is involved in the lesson. Sidewalkers must maintain a position by the rider's knee at all times. Being too far forward or back will make it very difficult to assist with instructions or provide security for the rider if the horse should trip, shy or try to kick.

There are two common ways to hold onto the rider without interfering. The instructor will determine which method is most suitable for each rider. The most commonly used is the "arm-over-the-thigh hold". The sidewalker grips the front of the saddle with the hand closest to the rider. Then the fleshy part of the forearm rests gently on the rider's thigh. Sidewalkers must not allow their elbow to accidentally dig into the rider's leg. The "therapeutic hold" allows the sidewalker to hold the rider's leg at the joints, usually the knee and/or ankle. This hold is used to avoid pressure on the rider's thigh, which can increase and/or cause muscle spasticity, especially with a rider with Cerebral Palsy.

Avoid wrapping an arm around the rider's waist, especially when walking beside a pony with a young or small rider. This position can offer too much and/or uneven support and may pull the rider off balance. Encourage students to use their own trunk muscles to the best of their abilities.

If a safety belt is used on the rider, do not pull down or push up on it. Grip the handle firmly, and touch thumb and finger together around the safety belt. This position allows the rider assistance if needed, but will neither provide unneeded support nor pull rider off balance. At intervals, ask the leader to move into the center and halt to trade sides, one at a time, with the other sidewalker - never leave a rider with poor balance unsupported! In most cases, the safety belt is only used to assist during mounts and dismounts.

Sidewalkers may help the instructor in many other ways; i.e., keeping the rider's attention on the lesson, assisting in right/left directionality and spatial orientation, understanding the instructor's directions, and helping to keep the mount walking on. Any unnecessary interference during the lesson should be avoided. Too much input from too many directions is very confusing, and to riders who already have perceptual problems it can be overwhelming. If two sidewalkers are working with one student, one should be the "designated talker" to avoid this situation. When the instructor gives a direction, allow your student plenty of time to process the directive. If the instructor says, "Turn to the right toward me," and the student seems confused, gently tap the right hand and say, "Right," to reinforce the command.

During exercises, pay attention to the rider. Sidewalkers must remember that the riders are to do the exercises and the sidewalkers are to reinforce and assist. The ultimate goal for therapeutic riding is to encourage the rider to stretch and grow to be as independent as possible. The sidewalker should help the instructor to challenge the rider.

If a rider starts to fall, pushing the rider back into the saddle is more effective than trying to get the rider off the horse. If there is no way to prevent a fall, the sidewalker should try to soften the fall, making sure not to compound the problem by getting in the way. In most instances, the job of the sidewalker on the left is to pull the child off after the sidewalker on the right assists by getting the rider's right foot free of the stirrup and lifting it over the horse's neck. If the sidewalker on the left is uncomfortable with this role, other arrangements must be made before the lesson begins. The sidewalker should do nothing with the rider who has fallen, allowing the instructor to handle the situation.

The Safety

The safety performs an essential safety role when assisting the instructor in mounting riders. The spotter should be trained to perform the following functions:

1. Holding down on the stirrup on the opposite side of the horse for a rider who is large in stature or is exceptionally slow in getting up into the saddle to prevent the saddle from slipping to the side as the rider mounts
2. Assisting the rider from the opposite side as rider is transferred or mounted from a wheelchair or from any position along the ramp.
3. Receiving the rider's hips as the instructor places the rider onto the saddle. Taking hold of the safety belt with one hand and assists in bringing the rider's legs over the croup or crest with the other will insure the safety of the rider while being transferred to the mount.

Mount/Dismount Assistants

One of the most important single phases of a therapeutic riding program is the mounting/ dismounting procedure. Though relatively simple for the agile, able bodied rider, mounting and dismounting procedures can be complex and challenging for those with disabilities.

The mounting and dismounting procedures used depend on the rider's disabilities, weight, and assistive devices such as wheelchairs, crutches, walkers, or canes. Recommended mounting and dismounting procedures for riders with physical disabilities may be determined on an individual basis by a physical therapist and discussed with the instructor. Mounters and dismounters must go through training and be approved for this activity.

Barn Assistants

Horses must be groomed and tacked or untacked before and after each class. It is extremely important that the horses be very clean underneath their tack to avoid discomfort or sores. Depending on the number of mounts to be readied MTRA may begin tacking about 30 minutes before each scheduled class. Riders may be encouraged to participate in these activities.

MTRA's horses are on a feeding program, based on specific nutritional needs. Horses are fed in the pastures. Hay may be fed and water supply must be checked.

Mucking, sweeping, cleaning tack, washing horses, stripping stalls, and spreading manure and cleaning bathrooms, while not glamorous, must still be done regularly.

Other Volunteer Duties

Facility Assistants

Volunteers are needed to help with a variety of maintenance, cleaning, and grounds-keeping duties including cutting grass/pastures, mending fences, painting, plumbing, maintaining the arena, designing /building activity stations and props, changing light bulbs, raking leaves, sweeping and sanitizing.

Ambassadors

Ambassadors are volunteers who have been through additional training to be more familiar with MTRA. Ambassadors represent MTRA at outreach events and fundraisers, relieving some of the pressure from the staff and board members. If you are interested in becoming a MTRA Ambassador please let the Volunteer Coordinator know.

Office Assistants

Volunteers can perform administrative tasks, such as helping with new volunteer recruitment, writing articles for MTRA's newsletter, fundraising, filing, faxing, making copies, and answering the telephone. MTRA appreciates volunteers' many talents and welcomes any suggestions, idea, or assistance.

Schooling Riders

Schooling riders are competent equestrians chosen by the MTRA staff to school and exercise horses. They must complete one ten-week session as a dedicated volunteer, before starting the schooling rider program. Schooling riders are expected to maintain the horses'/ponies' fitness, obedience, and responsiveness, as well as help to correct behavior problems as directed by MTRA staff. Schooling riders must adhere to our School Riding Policy and meet the requirements for schooling riders.

Emergency Procedures - General

It is the policy of Marion Therapeutic Riding Association to call 911 without delay if there is any doubt as to the seriousness of a situation, illness or injury. For our purposes an emergency is defined as any unexpected occurrence or set of circumstances resulting in a real or potential safety hazard and or loss of control of horse or rider that demands immediate attention.

Before There is an Emergency

Be familiar with the following general safety procedures and know the location of a telephone, emergency contact information, and emergency equipment. If you are instructed to call 911, you will need follow the instructions posted next to the barn phone. To be prepared to complete these instructions you need to have a description of the emergency situation. The other information needed is listed on the posted instructions (i.e. the physical address and specific instruction as to the location of the situation or injured person). Do not hang up until the dispatcher tells you it is OK.

DURING AN EMERGENCY

- STOP ALL ACTIVITY, STAY CALM AND QUIET
- IF YOU ARE A HORSE LEADER: STAY WITH YOUR HORSE. . . DO NOT LET GO OF THE HORSE'S LEAD
- IF YOU ARE A SIDE WALKER: COMFORT THE RIDER IN YOUR CHARGE
- WAIT FOR THE INSTRUCTOR TO HANDLE THE SITUATION
- FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS GIVEN BY THE INSTRUCTOR

Emergency Procedures - Making the 911 Call Instructor/Designated Personnel Responsibilities

The Instructor in Charge or other designated personnel determines if 911 should be called (specific 911 instructions are posted by the barn phone) and completes the following assignments.

Assigns staff to:

- Drive to farm entrance and wait for emergency vehicle to arrive
- Request driver turn off lights and sirens (avoid spooking horses)
- Lead driver to emergency site
- Unlock and open access gates

- Use fire extinguisher, if safe and appropriate
- At Hillcrest facility notify Hillcrest school via phone that emergency vehicles are coming and if a Hillcrest student is involved in the emergency. Follow Hillcrest School procedures at this point.

Physical Injury Procedure

The Instructor or designated personnel determines if the physical injury is minor or requires emergency medical treatment. If injury is minor, the procedures for “Minor Physical Injury” are followed. If the injury is major and emergency treatment is needed, the above procedures are followed.

Emergency Procedures - Physical Injury

Minor Injury Procedures

The instructor or designated person examines the injured person and responds to their needs, i.e. Band-Aids, ice, taken in or out of the heat, etc. In addition the following procedures should be observed:

- bring first aid kit/supplies to the injured
- use rubber gloves to avoid direct contact with blood or body fluids
- wash hands as soon as possible with soap and warm water for a minimum of 15-20 seconds if contact with blood or bodily fluids occurs
- secure wheelchair or vehicle to move injured person if unable to walk without assistance

If the injured person is a rider, have the horse taken back to the barn and properly attended to.

If feasible, the rest of the class should continue in an orderly manner.

If an incident occurs at Hillcrest, the school nurse should be notified immediately. Follow Hillcrest School procedures at this point.

Major Injury Procedures

The instructor examines injured person and determines if emergency treat is required and follows “Making the 911Call” procedures. In addition the following actions are taken:

- completes Minor Injury Procedures
- obtains Emergency Medical Release Form is obtained from files

- decides who will remain with grounded rider and who will take the rest of the class to the safest confined area away from the accident.
- At Hillcrest the school nurse should be notified immediately and Hillcrest School procedures should be followed from this point.

If feasible, after the emergency is over the class will continue in an orderly manner or return to the barn.

Windstorm Procedure

At Hillcrest facility riders are escorted to the school, if open and time is adequate. If school is not open or storm is immediate; riders are escorted to shelter rooms. Horses are untacked (if warning time allows) and turned loose in safest pasture/arena. When riders are safe, all volunteers and staff will proceed to safe locations.

Greenway facility riders will be dismounted and escorted to safe room or returned to parent/guardian. Horses will be put in stalls or, in extreme emergency left unbridled in the arena.

Fire Procedure

Riders are escorted to the nearest exit away from the fire. At Hillcrest facility riders are returned to school if open, or supervised in a safe area until released to the school. At the Greenway facility, riders are returned to parent/guardian and all are asked to leave the area as soon as possible. Only very experienced horse people should attempt to move horses to safest pasture/arena. When riders are safe, all volunteers and staff will exit to a safe area.

Safety Rules

General

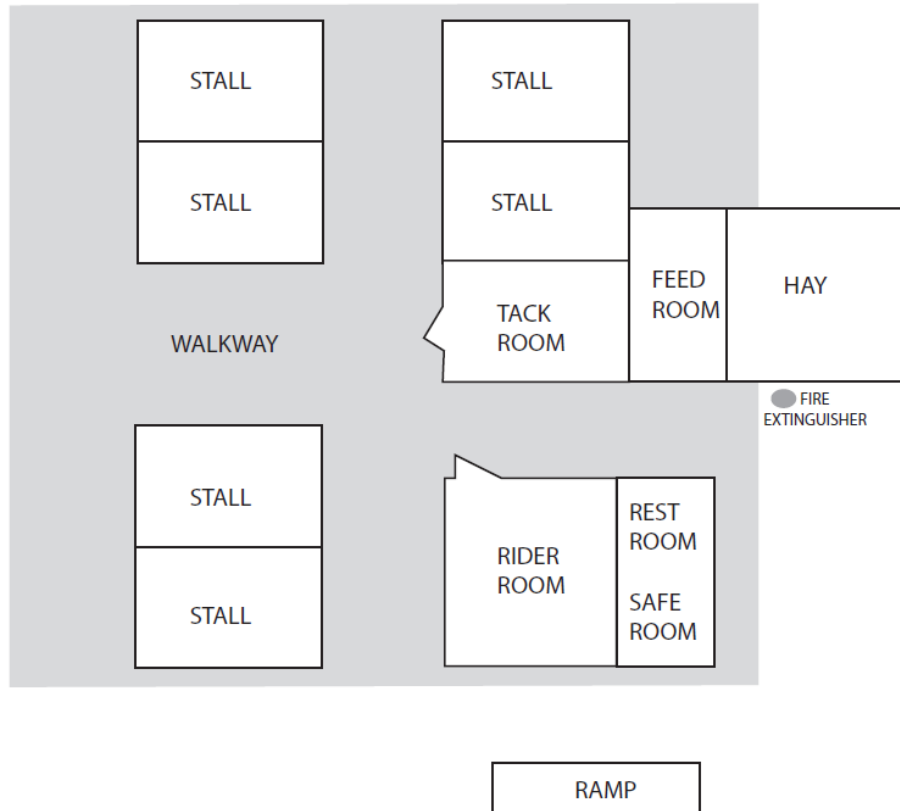
- Smoking is not allowed on MTRA property.
- Volunteers may not bring unsupervised children while volunteering
- Only authorized personnel are allowed beyond restricted area of barn, mounting area, trail course or teaching ring.
- Observe and obey all safety signs posted.
- Volunteers must be 14 or older to be sidewalkers or horse leaders
- Only trained volunteers will be used for mounting and dismounting
- Tractor operators must have a driver's license and approval from staff
- Pets are not allowed in the area when students are present

Horses and Stalls

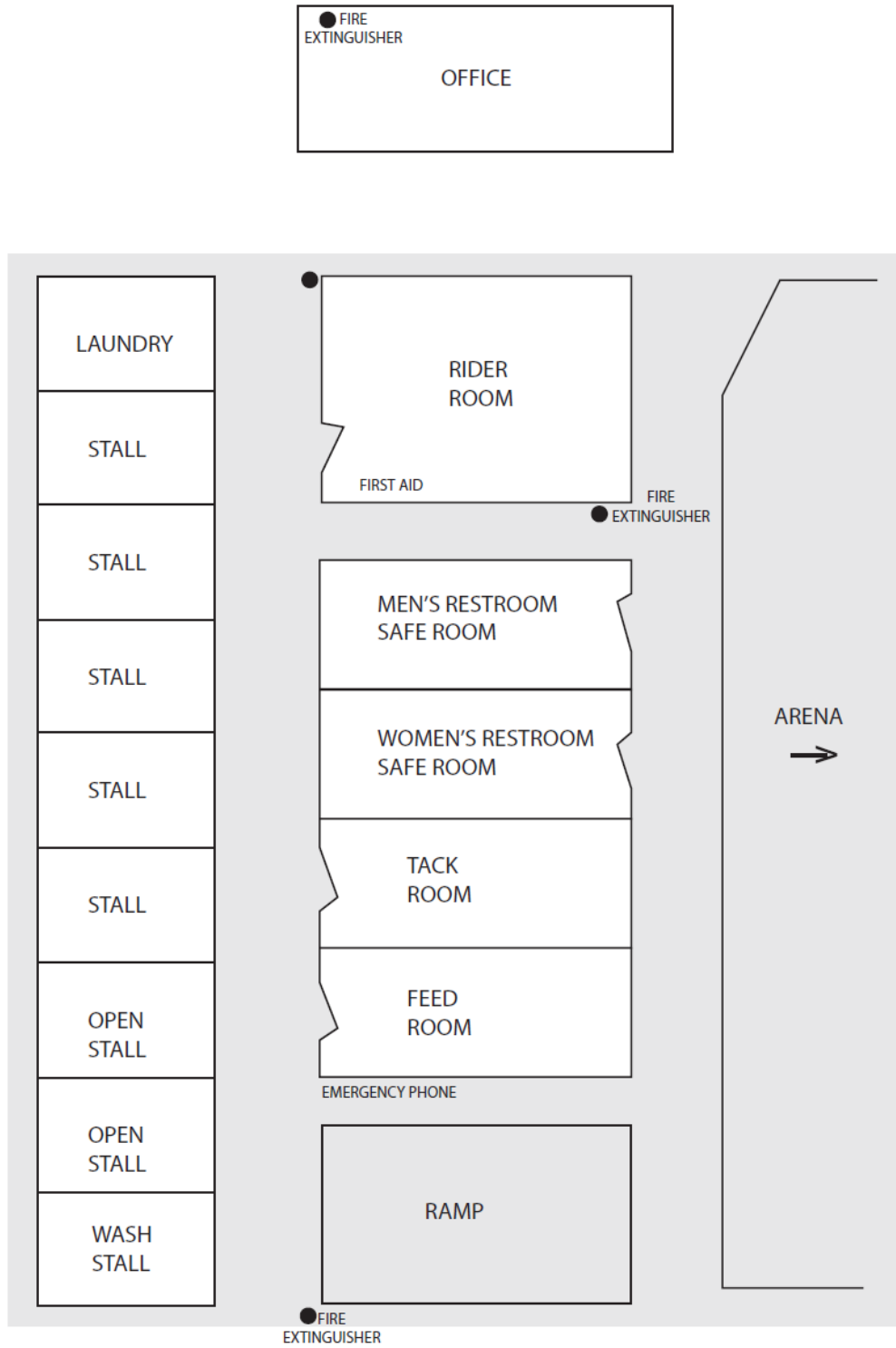
- All riders must wear ASTM-SEI approved helmets when riding horses
- All students must wear helmets when participating in ground work with horses
- Safety stirrups (English/peacock or Western/Tapaderos or shoes with heels) are used for all riders
- PATH certified instructor must be on the grounds and give approval for all rides
- Horses are to have a halter on under the bridle during riding sessions
- Stall doors are never to be hooked (inside or outside) when someone is in the stall
- No tacking in stalls or aisle of the barn
- Horses are to be secured using only quick release snaps or tied with quick release knot
- Do not duck under the horse's neck
- Do not kneel around a horse – bend from the waist
- Do not sit in stall or on stall rails
- When going around the back of a horse, stay close and keep your hand on his rump.
- When a student is allowed in the restricted area of the barn he/she will be under the direct supervision of personnel
- Do not stand directly in front or back of the horse (Note: horse leader exception)
- Saddle racks attached to stalls should be turned down when not in use

If you don't feel you can do a task tell the person in charge or request assistance from barn staff.

HILLCREST FACILITY LAYOUT



GREENWAY FACILITY LAYOUT



Understanding Horse Behavior

When working with a horse, communication is key developing a relationship. This is critical in providing a safe environment in a therapeutic riding setting. Understanding a horse's basic instincts and senses enhances communications and your ability to predict behaviors. This understanding is the first step in managing risks, preventing accidents, and increasing the quality of your "mutual" relationship.

Smell:

The horse's sense of smell is thought to be very acute and it allows him 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
- Recommend treats not be carried in a pocket since a horse may try to go after them
- Discourage volunteers from eating or having food in the arena

Hearing:

Also, the horse's sense of hearing is thought to be very acute. The horse may combine their senses of hearing and sight to become more familiar with new or alerting sounds. Often "hearing and not seeing" causes the fright/flight response. Note the position of the horse's ears. Forward ears communicate attentiveness and interest. Ears that are laid back often communicate the horse is upset or feels threatened or fearful and may become aggressive towards another horse or person. Drooping ears indicate relaxation, inattentiveness, exhaustion or illness; a horse with drooping ears could be easily startled. Stiffly pricked or flicking back and forth ears indicate interest.

Implications:

- Watch a horse's ears for increased understanding of behavior
- Avoid shouting or using a loud voice at all times but especially when horse is already upset
- Speak to the horse in a calm quiet manner to reassure an anxious horse

Sight:

A horse's eyes are geared to finding danger. Horses don't have very accurate vision close up, but they can detect tiny movements at a distance. With their eyes set on either side of the head they have good peripheral (lateral) vision but poorer frontal vision. Although the horse has good peripheral vision, consider two blind spots: directly in front and directly behind. The lens of the horse's eye doesn't change shape as a human eye lens does. Instead, a horse focuses on objects by raising and lowering the

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 color.

Implications:

- Allow horse to look at new objects in arena or on trail before mounting rider
- Use a slightly looser rein to enable horse to move his head when looking at objects
- Approach horse at his shoulder—not from directly in front or behind
- Understand the horse cannot see things near his mouth or directly in front of or behind him.

Touch:

Touch is used as a communication between horses and between horses and people. Horses can detect a very light pressure. They will look, sniff and feel an object with their muzzle. Each horse has sensitive areas and it is important to be familiar with them (e.g. flank and/or belly). The tongue, lips, and bars of the mouth are especially sensitive places and caution is needed when a horse has a bit in his mouth. Horses are trained by applying and removing pressure and may be sensitive to rough touch by a person's hands or legs.

Implications:

- Use a gentle but firm touch when grooming and handling horses
- Learn each horse's sensitive areas
- Watch rider's leg position and pressure and consult with instructor to protect horse from irritating contact
- Understand a horse may paw at a bridge or ground pole before crossing it

Taste:

Taste is closely aligned with the sense of smell and helps the horse to distinguish palatable foods and other objects. Be aware a horse may lick or nibble while becoming familiar with objects or people and this could lead to biting. Always allow the horse "his space".

Sixth Sense:

A horse does have a "sixth sense" and can be hypersensitive in detecting the moods of their handlers and riders. A good therapy horse is sensitive to the rider. At times there may exist a personality conflict between handler and horse. It is important to let the instructor know if you're having difficulty relating to or getting along with a particular horse.

Flight as a Natural Instinct:

Horses would rather turn and run away from danger than face and fight it. Most horses chosen to work in a therapeutic riding setting have less of an instinct to flee. At a sudden movement or noise the horse might try to flee. The horse looks to you for reassurance so remain calm and talk to the horse in a soothing voice. A frightened horse being tightly held might try to pull back. Relax your hold or untie him quickly and if no rider is on his back he will usually relax. If flight is not possible, the horse could either turn to kick out or face the problem and rear, especially if in a tight area like a stall. When a horse appears frightened or fearful notify the program staff.

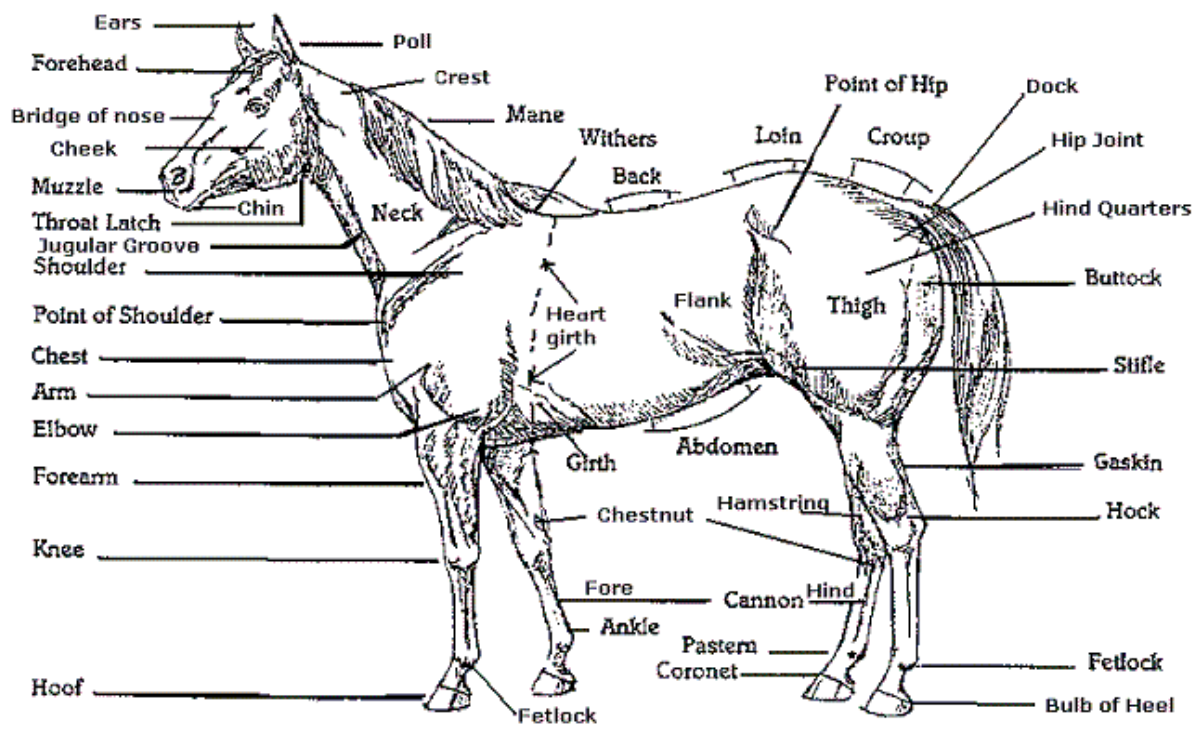
Herd Animal:

Horses prefer to stay together in a herd or group with one or two horses dominating and a pecking order among the rest.

Implications:

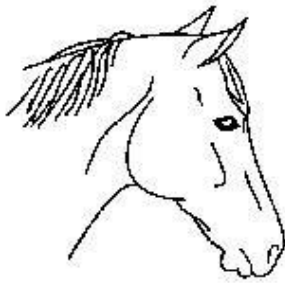
- Understand a horse on its own may not want to leave the arena or lose sight of the others on a trail ride
- Recognize that if the horse in front of a line is trotting or cantering, the following horse may attempt to trot or canter; if one horse spooks at something, the surrounding horses may also spook
- Keep at least one horse's length between horses when riding within a group to respect each horse's space and pecking order

Parts of the Horse



Reading a Horse's Ears

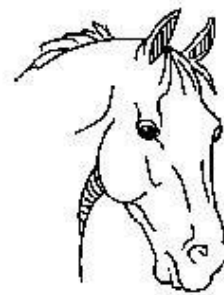
The horse's ears and actions are the key to his emotions. He can tell you what he is paying attention to and how he feels by the way he uses his ears and the way he acts. Following are some tips to his emotions.



Ears forward but relaxed
interested in what's
in front of him



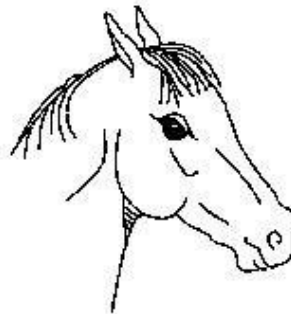
Ears turned back but relaxed
listening to his rider
or what's behind him



Ears pointed stiffly forward
alarmed or nervous about what's
ahead. Looking out for danger



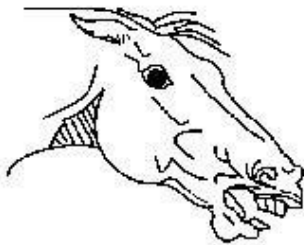
Ears pointed left and right
relaxed, paying attention
to the scenery on both sides.



Ears stiffly back
annoyed or worried about what's
behind him; might kick if annoyed.



Droopy ears
calm and resting,
horse may be dozing.



Ears flattened against neck
violently angry, in a fighting mood.
May fight, bite or kick.

OTHER SIGNS YOU SHOULD NOTICE ARE:

- **Tucking the tail down tightly.**
Danger to the 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.

Grooming

Grooming is an important aspect of horsemanship, which requires sufficient time and thorough procedures. You will attend a grooming training class as part of your volunteer training. Grooming is a good way to establish trust and respect between the horse and the handler. Grooming is important for the health of the horse's skin and coat. It massages the skin and underlying muscle and promotes blood circulation and hair growth. Grooming is a good opportunity to examine the horse closely. Look for signs of lameness, injuries, swelling or unusual behavior during the grooming process. **Any observed conditions should be brought to the attention of the Barn Manager, the Instructor or Staff.**

MTRA horses are groomed before and after each riding session and several times a week during the off sessions. Each horse has his own grooming bucket labeled with his name. Be sure to get the horse's grooming bucket out of the grooming area before bringing the horse out to groom. The grooming buckets are kept in the storage bin near the Greenway's outdoor grooming area and on shelves in the Hillcrest barn aisle. Each grooming bucket consists, at a minimum, of the following grooming tools:

- Hoof Pick
- Rubber Curry Comb/Rubber Curry Mitt
- Stiff Brush
- Soft Brush
- Main and Tail Brush

Horses are groomed in the designated grooming areas at each facility. There is NO grooming in stalls. When grooming the horse, always be sure someone is either holding the horse, the horse is on cross ties or tied to the designated tie rings. Horses that cannot be cross tied will be listed on the white board at each barn.

Groom systematically. Start at the same place with each tool and work over the horse in the same order. This routine provides security to the horse and establishes trust.

1. Begin by using the currycomb to loosen up dirt and loose hairs. Use a circular motion beginning with the horse's neck and continue working your way back. Be sure to clean the horse's stomach and hindquarters. Give careful attention to the areas that lie below the saddle and girth. Use the rubbery curry mitt to groom the lower leg area, from knee or hock to the hoof. This mitt can be used lightly over scabby areas and face.
2. Follow up with the stiff brush by making short definite strokes following the hairline of the horse (don't go against the grain). Use the stiff brush for the neck, body and upper legs. Periodically rub the currycomb firmly and quickly across the brush to remove dirt that might accumulate in the brush. Continue brushing until visible dirt is gone. Some horses have a "sensitive spot" on their flank and a light brush stroke should be used in that area. Remember to always brush with

the hairline. Also, don't be afraid if the horse stomps his hoof down periodically, swish his tail or shake while you groom him. The horse is probably trying to get a fly off of his leg. Watch the horse's ears in response to your brushing pressure. If his ears go back or he moves away from you, lighten the pressure and brush softer. Some horses are more sensitive to the stiff brush and will be annoyed by aggressive grooming.

3. The soft brush is used primary to remove additional, while less visible dust and dirt. Brush the same areas listed under #2 including the lower legs and face. Approach the horse's head from the side and begin brushing the horse's jaw. Gently brush around to the other side of his face. Do not suddenly lift the brush towards the head, as the motion may startle the horse. Be aware of a horse's sensitivity to touch his ears. Do not brush near or over the ears if the horse shies away.
4. Use caution while brushing out a horse's tail. Stand on the left side of the horse and bring the tail around to the side for rushing. **Don't do it if it makes you uncomfortable.** Begin at the bottom of the tail and work out tangles and knots. Take only small sections of hair at a time. Never pull on a horse's tail. If very tangled use Show Sheen or similar product sparingly.
5. Brush the mane to one side of the horse's neck, usually the side where the majority of the main naturally lays. Use caution as you get closer to the horse's head. Again work out tangles beginning with the ends and work your way toward the base of the mane.
6. When you pick a horse's hooves, stand to the side of the hoof you are picking and face the rear of the horse. For the front hooves lift the hoof and hold the fetlock with the hand nearest the hoof, allowing the toe to point toward the ground. Never attempt to force a hold on the hoof. At times, the horse may have a good reason to want his hoof on the ground (loss of balance or a fly on his leg). Use a hoof pick with a brush. Using the pick, remove all dirt from the frog (V shaped section of the hoof). Move the ick from heel toward the toe. With the brush part of the hoof pick clean the whole bottom of the hoof and brush off any dirt clumps on the outside hoof wall. Use caution when moving from one hoof to another. **Report any hoof injury, tenderness and/or missing shoes to the instructor or barn manager.**
7. A damp washcloth may be used to gently wipe around the horse's eyes, face and nostril. To wipe the eye start above the upper lid and move down toward the lower lid. Clean the nostril last. If the horse is cross tied unclip one side when brushing or cleaning the face. Be sure to reattach the tie when finished with the face.
8. A grooming mitt is made of rubber and is very flexible. It is good for thin skinned and sensitive horses. It may be used over the entire horse.

9. A shedding blade is used to remove the loose heavy winter coat in the springtime. It should not be used on the legs.
10. Fly repellent may be applied after the horse has been saddled. Generously spray the body and legs. Avoid spraying near or on the face. Use a towel to apply fly spray to the face and ears. Unhook the horse from the ties and back away from other horses. Some horses are sensitive about being sprayed. If you have not fly sprayed a particular horse before please ask for assistance.

GROOMING TIPS

If riders are capable, they are encouraged to participate in the grooming process. Provide support and guidance as necessary. Safety is foremost.

Position your feet at a 45 degree angle to the horse. This lessens the chance of the horse stepping on your feet.

Pay attention to the horse's comfort or to his sensitive spots and adjust your grooming intensity accordingly. Do not brush hard over bony protrusions (hips and legs).

When grooming the flank, belly or hind quarters, place your free hand on the horse to feel any movement toward you.

It is safest to walk around the front of the horse. Do not duck under cross ties, tie rope or under the horse's neck.

When moving behind the horse from one side to the other, always place your hand on the horse's hindquarters as you walk around. Talk to the horse to let him know you are back there. Stay close to the hind legs.

If your horse walks forward or backward during grooming, stop and return the horse to his original position.

Never stand directly behind a horse.

Never sit or kneel on the ground to reach lower parts, always squat or bend so that you can move quickly if the horse moves.

Never clip a tie rope or cross tie to the bit or bridle.

Do not try to brush off wet mud/sand. It is best to hose it off.

Use a sweat scraper to get rid of excess water after hosing off a horse.

When hosing a horse, use warm water beginning with the lower leg and work up to the shoulder and chest. Hose all four legs before hosing the back and hindquarters. Know your horse's behavior before spraying water on his face. Attach a lead roper to the halter and remove the crossties before spraying the face. The water pressure may need to be light or a mist. Some horses only tolerate a wet wash cloth on their face.

A dirty brush will never make a clean horse. Periodically grooming tools will be washed with soap, water and disinfectant. When a brush has been washed let it dry with its bristles down so the water will not collect and rot the base.

Do not share brushes or hoof picks between horses.

Be sure to remove the grooming tools back to the horse's bucket and the bucket back to its storage area when you are finished grooming.

TACKING UP A HORSE

A horse's tack will be set out in the grooming area prior to taking the horse out. The daily lesson schedule will identify the type of tack needed for each class. Each horse has been assigned an English saddle and a Western saddle, pads and bridles, which are found in the tack room under the horse's name. The saddle pads and saddle blankets are laying on top of the saddle. In some cases two pads are needed for the saddle. English girths are also found unattached on the top of the saddle. Girths for Western saddles lay on top but are attached to the off side of the saddle.

At the grooming area, each saddle shell be placed on the saddle stand and the bridle hung on the fence hook. The saddle can be carried two ways:

1. Over the forearm with the back of the saddle near the elbow and the other hand holding the pommel or horn.
2. Against the side of the body with the hand holding on to the pommel or horn.

The crown of the bridle and the reins may be placed on your shoulder. Be sure the reins are not dragging on the ground.

It is important not to drag any of the equipment along the ground as it may become damaged or dirty and will be a tripping hazard to you.

NEVER LEAVE A HORSE UNATTENDED IN THE GROOMING AREA

1. Place the saddle pad(s) on the horse's back high up on the withers. English pads usually have straps on one side. Make sure the pad straps are visible. If you cannot see the straps the pad is upside down. Western pads do not have straps but usually have wear leathers on one side. The wear leathers are on the top of the pad from the girth. Make sure the wear leathers are visible and are located near the horse's shoulder.

2. Lift the English saddle over the horse's back and gently lower it into position on the pad. Make sure both saddle flaps are lying flat against the horse's side. If the saddle is too far forward on the withers the pad and saddle may be slid in place. If the saddle is too far back, both the pad and the saddle need to be lifted off the horse's back then set down in its proper place. Do not slide the pad and saddle forward because it will ruffle the hairs and cause discomfort to the horse.
3. Before placing the Western saddle on the horse, put the off side (horse's right side) stirrup over the saddle horn and be sure the girth is laying across the top of the saddle to prevent both from slapping against the horse's side. Lift the saddle over the horse's back and gently set it down. Once on the horse's back move to the off side and release the stirrup from the horn and hang the girth down. Make sure the girth and girth straps are not underneath the saddle before moving back to the near side (horse's left side). Lift the pad up into the gullet of the saddle so that it is clear of the horse's withers. This is done to prevent tightness of the pad on the withers once the girth is tightened.
4. To assure the pad does not slip under the English saddle, attach the pad's top straps to the saddle's billets, then insert the billets through the pad's bottom strap before doing up the girth. If the billets are too short to reach the bottom strap, the girth should be passed through the strap.
5. Buckle the girth to the English saddle billets on the right side first. The girth on the Western saddle is already attached on the off side.

Check the fit by moving the girth under the belly. If the middle of the girth meets the middle of the belly, the length is correct. Move back to the left side of the horse, facing forward and reach under the horse and take hold of the girth.

Buckle the girth to the English saddle billets just tight enough to assure the saddle does not slip. You should be able to slip your hand between the girth and the horse's side. **Please cinch your horse slowly and respectfully.** Pay attention to his attitude and ears. Slow down if necessary.

Loosen the long girth strap from the Western saddle. Attach the girth using at least two wraps by pulling the strap out toward you as you pull up to tighten. This will avoid pinching and rubbing the horse's side. Tighten the girth slowing and enough to keep the saddle from slipping. You should be able to slip your hand between the girth and the horse's side.

The girth will be tightened gradually by the instructor.

6. If the stirrup length for the rider is known adjust the stirrups.
7. Only instructors will bridle and unbridle the horses.

8. If bridles are not used, you may attach the reins to the rings on the halter. The instructor will specify which halter ring to attach the reins. Place the reins over the horse's neck. The buckle or the middle point of the rein should be placed near the horse's withers. When walking the horse from the grooming area occasionally check the reins position. If the reins have slid to one side, stop and re-center the reins.
9. Bareback pads are used in place of the saddle. A pad will be used under the bareback pad. Some bareback pads have girths attached, others do not. Bareback pads may be used on any horse and there are not assigned to specific horses. Bareback pads are tacked similar to the English saddles.
10. A pad and surcingle may be used. The surcingle is placed on top of the pad near the horse's withers. Some surcingles have one hand hold, others have two hand holds.
11. Adaptive equipment –
 - a. Rainbow reins are multicolored reins to assist the rider in holding the proper rein length.
 - b. Ladder reins have multiple D-rings to attach hand holds.
 - c. Hand holds are individual handles or a single bar handle. Ladder reins and hand holds must be used together.
 - d. Gait belts are fastened around a rider to assist in transfers and to help balance a rider on the horse.
 - e. Little Dudes are stirrups that slip over the Western saddle horn when the saddle stirrups are too long for the rider. Little Dudes are used for short riders in a large saddle.

Students/Riders are encouraged to groom and tack the horse to their capabilities. Please allow them to do as much as possible. Supervise and assist them when needed. Students can learn from mistakes.

**Safety is of utmost importance at all times
for the students the horse and you**

TACK "PUT AWAY" PROCEDURE

Bridles: Unbuckle any noseband/cavesson, throatlatch or curb chain (left side only). The instructor will unbridle all horse.

Rinse bit, use wash cloth if necessary to ensure all curd is removed. Avoid, as much as possible, getting leather parts of the bridle wet.

Neatly hang bridle facing forward on appropriate horse's bracket with reins looped over headstall. English bridles goes on top bracket, Western on the lower.

Saddles:

English Saddle - Ensure stirrups are neatly "run up". Unbuckle both sides of the girth and lay over top of the saddle. Remove saddle billets from pad straps. Place saddle on Horse's rack with pommel facing the wall.

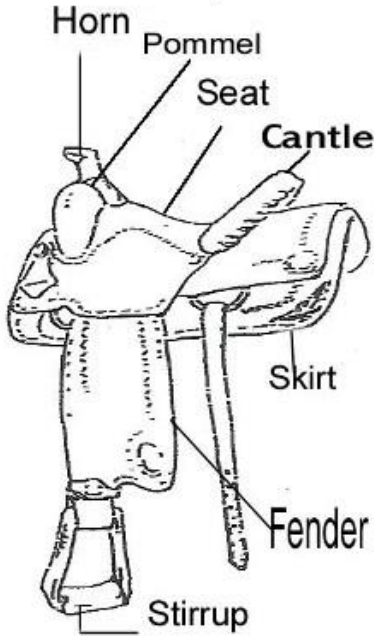
Western Saddle - Undo left side of girth only. Neatly loop cinch strap through D ring or leather holder. Lay girth over seat, damp side facing up. Place saddle on Horse's rack with pommel facing you. Place assigned pad over saddle, horse side up.

Pads – DO NOT leave wet/damp pads in tack room. At Greenway hand the damp pads along the ramp's wall in the aisleway. At Hillcrest the pads may dry hung over an empty stall wall. By the end of the lesson day all pads should be returned to their place in the tack room.

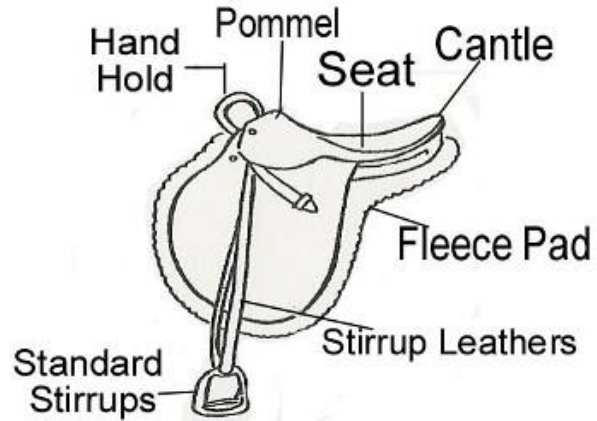
Thank you for helping keep our tack room organized, neat and clean!!

Frequently Used Tack

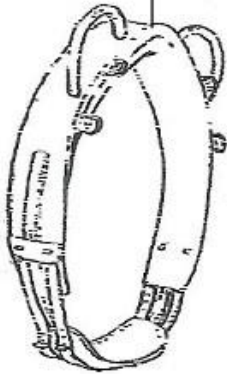
Western Saddle



English Saddle



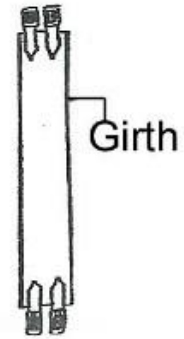
Surcingle



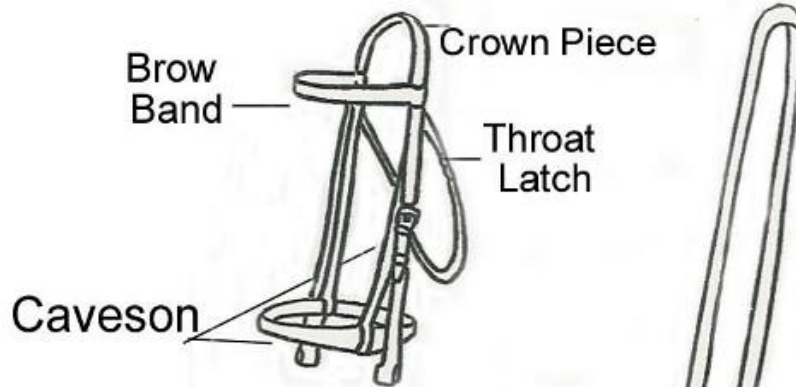
Peacock Stirrup



Rubber Band
(check often)



Bridle



Snaffle Bit



Reins

By signing below I am stating I have read and understand the MTRA Volunteer Handbook.

Signature

Date

Printed Name