

Heartland Horses & Handicapped, Inc.

Volunteer Procedure Manual



Helping to turn “I wish” into “I CAN!”

863-452-0006

www.heartlandhorses.org

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Welcome!

We are happy that you have chosen to volunteer with us here at Heartland Horses & Handicapped, Inc. As a volunteer, you are an important member of our team, and one who is greatly appreciated. Volunteers are trained to assist with leading the horses, side walking with riders, and preparing the horses for each day's activities. Volunteer opportunities are also available in the office, at fundraisers, and with various onsite activities.

Volunteers are one of the most important aspects of a riding program such as ours. The success of our riding program depends on the participation of devoted volunteers who have chosen to share their time with us. A well-trained and dedicated group of volunteers ensures that our program will be both safe, and beneficial to our participants.

This volunteer manual has been prepared for you to help answer some of the questions that you may have. You may also use it as a resource and refer back to it as needed. Please read it carefully as it is important for the safety of our riders as well as yourself. Please do not hesitate to ask should you have any questions.

Thank you, and Welcome!

Benefits of Riding

There are many benefits to riding, listed here are some of the main ones:

Psychological Benefits

- General sense of well-being.
- Improved self-confidence.
- Increased interest in the “outside world”
- Improved risk-taking abilities.
- Development of patience.
- Emotional control and self-discipline.

Social Benefits

- Friendship with the horse and volunteers.
- Development of respect and love for animals.
- Increased experiences.

Physical Benefits

- Improved balance.
- Strengthened muscles.
- Improved coordination, faster reflexes, and better motor planning.
- Decreased spasticity.
- Increased range of motion of the joints.
- Improved respiration and circulation.
- Sensory integration.

Educational Benefits

- Sequencing, patterning and motor planning.
- Improved eye-hand coordination and visual spatial perception.
- Differentiation.

Volunteer Requirements

Punctuality: It is important that the horses be ready so that the class can start on time. Volunteers are asked to be at HHH at least 30 minutes before the class is scheduled to begin.

Accountability: The objective of the riding program is to provide a safe, therapeutic and recreational riding lesson for the rider. Volunteers are an important component to ensure that the rider's needs are met. Therefore, if you know you will not be able to come to volunteer for a class, please phone the office as soon as possible. This way, the office will be able to find another volunteer to come in for that class. If the rider cancels, or the class is canceled, the office will contact you.

- If at any time you have questions or concerns regarding your volunteer service, please speak to your instructor. We value your input and wish to make your volunteer experience enjoyable and rewarding.

When You Arrive

- If you have not already done so, you will be asked to complete a Volunteer Application.
- Please sign in at time of arrival.

Clothing

- Due to the nature of riding activities, please wear comfortable clothes which you do not mind getting dirty.
- Avoid wearing anything that dangles and could get caught.
- Do not wear perfume/cologne as it attracts stinging insects, also, some riders may be allergic to the scent.
- Wear hard shoes or boots to protect your toes (no sandals or open-toed shoes). Helmets will be provided and required if you ride.

General Safety and Barn Rules

- Absolutely no smoking in the barn or riding area.
- No running or shouting in the stable area, be calm and quiet around the horses
- Do not walk through or under the cross ties when a horse is tied.
- Never approach a horse directly from behind, always approach from the side where the horse can see you.
- Always keep a hand on the horse's body when you go around him, so he knows you are there.
- When there are horses in the aisle-way, riders should wear helmets. If you see participants without helmets, please point out to them they should wear a helmet if they want to be in the barn.

Volunteer Description

When bringing a horse from out of the field or his stall

- If you are unfamiliar with catching a horse, please ask for help from your instructor or more experienced volunteer. They will be happy to help you with the proper procedure.
- If the horse's quarters are facing you when you walk to him either in his stall or in the field, get his attention by speaking to him before approaching him. Let him know you are there; he may get startled if he does not see you coming.
- When putting on the halter, stand on the left side facing the same direction as the horse.
- Make sure the halter is snug but not fastened too tight.
- Always use a lead rope when leading a horse anywhere. Never coil the lead rope around your hand. Never lead by the halter alone.

- When leading the horse out of the stall, make sure the stall door is open completely.
- When entering or leaving the field or paddocks, please close and latch all gates behind you.

The Stable area

- Once the horse is in the barn, either tie him with the crossties in the aisle or in the stall with a quick release knot. Please ask the instructor to demonstrate the quick release knot to you. Never tie the horse with anything else other than a quick release knot. In an emergency, the horses may have to be untied quickly.
- Stall doors must be closed.
- Horses must not be tied too close together, allow at least two stall lengths between the horses.
- If you are in doubt, please ask the instructor.

Grooming the horse

- Each horse has their own brush box labeled by stall number. Make sure to use the correct brushes for each horse. The brush box will contain all necessary equipment- rubber curry comb, dandy brush, body brush and hoof pick. If your rider is present or helping you with grooming, please ensure they are wearing a helmet and safety belt.

Rubber Curry Comb

- Used to loosen caked mud, manure etc., and to bring dirt and dust up to the surface of the coat.
- Can also be used to dislodge dirt from other brushes by rubbing the two together.
- Start behind the ear (the poll) on the near side (left) and work to the tail using small circular motions in direction the hair lays.
- To be used on the neck and body of the horse only, not on the legs, face, mane or tail

Dandy Brush

- Used after the Curry Comb to remove any dirt and mud that was loosened after currying
- Begin at the poll on the near side and work towards the tail
- Use short strokes, with a flicking motion to dislodge the dirt
- Use on the neck and body of the horse only, not on the legs, face, mane or tail

Body Brush

- The short, close set hairs of this brush reach right through the coat of the skin
- Start at the poll, using firm, smooth strokes with the lay of the hair to give the coat a final polish, and remove any remaining dust.
- May be used on the legs, face, and mane, ensuring that the hocks, heels and elbows are free of caked dirt

Hoof pick

- Pick up each foot in turn as demonstrated by the instructor
- Start with the near fore (Left front), then the near hind (left hind), working your way around
- Use the point of the pick to remove any material which may be lodged in it, working downwards from the heel towards the toe, working this way there is no risk of the pick penetrating the soft parts of the frog
- If you feel unsure or uncomfortable about cleaning the feet, please ask for clarification or ask the instructor or another volunteer to do it for you, the foot of a horse is very sensitive and can easily be damaged, so please be careful.

A few considerations when grooming

- Grooming should be done in a quiet manner; aggressiveness at this point may upset the horse for the lesson.
- Never make sudden movements around the horse, especially his head. When walking around behind the horse, always stay close to the horse, keeping one hand on his body to let him know that you are there.

- If there is enough time to give the horse a thorough grooming using the above procedure, please do so. However, if time is limited, at least make sure the following areas are given attention:
 - Clean the saddle and girth area
 - Pick out the feet, removing stones or other foreign matter
 - Please do not brush the mane and tail-excessive brushing may cause the hairs to split and fall out

Tacking (Saddling the horse)

- Collect all your tack, saddle, pad, reins, etc. before removing horse from stall.
- Always tie the horse up, unless a specific horse does not tie. If the horse does not tie, you can ask someone to hold the horse while you groom and tack him, or you can groom and tack him in his stall.
- First to go on the horse's back is the saddle blanket.
- Make sure all hairs are smoothed down under the blanket by placing the blanket further up the neck than necessary, then sliding it back into the proper position. It is important that the blanket be placed high enough over the horse's withers to give full protection to his back.
- The blanket is in the proper position when it almost fully covers the horse's wither. Make sure the blanket is lying evenly on both sides of the horse.
- Stand on the near (left) side of the horse and place the saddle down lightly on the horse's back. The saddle is in the proper position when almost covering the withers.

Make sure the stirrup irons are run-up the leathers so the horse can't get tangled in them, or bite them if he has an itch.

- Do not leave the saddle unattended without the girth being attached. If the horse moves, the saddle may fall off and break. Please have the girth with you, or ask someone else to stay with the saddle while you go get the girth.
- After the saddle is set properly on the back, check that all is lying flat and smooth underneath the flaps on both sides. Be sure that the saddle blanket is pulled up into the gullet (front) of the saddle; it can cause great discomfort to the horse if pulled tight across the withers.
- To ensure the horse's comfort, the girth should be done up loosely at first, just to prevent the saddle from slipping off. The instructor will tighten the girth before the rider mounts.
- Each horse has his own tack; please verify that you have the correct items before tacking your horse.
- Putting the bridle on can be challenging at times with different horses, please ask your instructor if you need help. Place the reins over the horse's neck so that they are not dangling where the horse can get his feet caught in them. Then gently place the headstall over top of the halter allowing the horse to take the bit so it does not bang against their teeth.
- Once ready, the horse can then be taken out to the riding arena and tied at hitching rail.

In the class

Leader

- The sole responsibility of the leader is to maintain proper control of the horse. The leader must help in guiding the horse without making the rider feel that he or she is simply a passenger. Also, the leader must anticipate problems and act in such a way as to avoid them.
- The leader should lead the horse from the near (left) side at a point between the horse's head and the point of the shoulder. If you have side-walkers, remember to give them room between the horse and the fence.
- Hold the lead rope in your right hand 6" to 12" from the halter or bit and fold the excess in your left hand. Remember never to wrap the lead rope around your hand, as it may be difficult to free your hand in case of an emergency.
- Remember not to drag the horse around the arena. Encourage the horse with your voice and encourage the rider to use his or her voice and legs. Never poke a horse in the ribs or get physical with a horse (i.e. hitting, pushing, poking) as that could cause the horse to act in a way that may injure a rider. Most horses walk as fast as their leader is going, so try to keep an even pace so that the rider gets the full benefit of the horse's movement.
- The instructor will tell the rider what to do with the horse. The leader's job is to assist the rider carrying out these instructions safely while giving the rider every opportunity to do as much as possible. It is important to allow riders to do as much as they can for themselves, even if it takes a bit longer.

- When you must halt, apply light pressure on the lead shank back towards the horse's chest until the horse halts, then stand in front of the horse to discourage him from walking around.
- Avoid sharp turns and sudden starts and stops as it may unseat the rider.

In the mounting area (ramp):

- The instructor will call you when the rider is ready to mount. If you are leading a horse while another rider is mounting, please stay away from the mounting area.
- If you are leading the horse, it is your responsibility to lead the horse through the ramp and hold him while the rider mounts. This is a crucial time, and it is important that all safety procedures and instructions from the instructor are followed.
- Before the horse enters the mounting area, the instructor will do a tack-check to make sure all tack is positioned correctly and everything is safe. Be aware of the horse's behavior as the instructor tightens the girth.
- Lead the horse into the ramp using a wide turn, so the horse does not bump himself, as you enter, turn to face the horse and lead him in slowly.
- Hold the horse as still as possible.
- After the rider is mounted, you can move out of the mounting area and halt the horse. At this point, the instructor will do the final tack check.

Sidewalker:

- The sidewalker's job is as important as the horse's handler. Sidewalkers walk beside the horse and rider, ready to steady the rider if necessary. However, since the duties of the sidewalker vary greatly with each student, the instructor will inform the sidewalker of a particular student's requirements.
- At the start of the class, keep the rider interested and occupied until all riders are mounted and the class is ready to begin.
- There are two sidewalker's for each horse, however if you are the only sidewalker for the rider, you should walk on the horse's right side so that both sides of the horse are covered.
- Walk next to the rider's hip facing forward. Depending on the amount of support the rider needs, you may grasp the knee roll and provide light pressure across the rider's lower leg. Some riders are assisted in keeping their heels down by gently holding the back of the heel. The instructor will let you know which hold is needed.
- Remind the rider to pay attention the instructor. You may repeat or reinforce the instructor's directions and help your rider carry them out, but try not to encourage chatting. Also, allow the rider to do as much as possible by him or herself rather than the sidewalker doing all the reaching or other activities.
- Most of the riders will wear a safety belt; however, this belt should not be used for the sidewalker to hold on to, as it may pull the rider off balance.
- Do not rest your elbow on the horse's back, this is where the horse's kidneys are and they are sensitive in this area.

In the arena - guidelines to follow:

- Stay at least one horse's length behind the horse in front of you. If you find yourself getting too close, alert the rider, and either cut across the arena, or walk a large circle. If you need to pass another horse, do so on the inside. Never pass a horse on the outside (closest to wall or fence).
- Avoid small circles and sharp turns.
- If a sidewalker has to switch sides, make sure you walk in front of the horse, never walk behind the horse in the arena.
- If you need to stop while other riders continue, bring the horse to the middle of the arena. If you stop on the track, you may interfere with other riders.
- We encourage volunteers to get to know their riders; it serves as social interaction for both riders and volunteers. However, please keep conversation limited to before and after the actual lesson. During the lesson, the rider needs to focus on the instructor and the activities of the class.
- If you see another rider who may be slipping off the saddle or having difficulties, alert the leader of that horse and the instructor immediately.
- During all the exercises, it is important to allow the rider to control the horse as much as possible. The rider should be doing the steering as well as trying to encourage the horse to move on.
- Falls from horses can happen. If a rider has fallen off, halt immediately and follow the instructor's commands.
- If asked to turn the rider loose, or unclip them, the leader must stay with the horse being ready to take control of the horse if necessary.

- The rider should not dismount without being supervised by the instructor.
- When the rider is preparing to dismount, make sure his foot is free of the stirrups on both sides. Offer support to guide his/her leg over the back of the saddle. Rider should exit off the ramp holding the rail and leave arena immediately.
- Once your rider has been dismounted, please wait for the instructor to tell you when you may exit.

After the lesson

- Back in the barn, un-tack and groom the horse. A staff member or instructor should be there to supervise.
- To un-tack the horse, first tie him with cross ties (if he tolerates being tied). If the horse is wearing a bridle, make sure you unclip the lead rope from the bridle and only have the lead rope attached the halter. Ask the instructor take off the bridle if you are unsure how to properly un-tack. Take off the saddle and the blankets. When grooming, concentrate on the areas where the saddle and girth were to help restore proper circulation.
- The instructor will let you know whether the horse should be turned out, or stay in for another class.
- All tack should be put back in its assigned space. If you are unsure of where something goes, please ask.
- Any treats that the volunteers or riders bring are greatly appreciated; however, please do not feed the horses by hand. If you have a treat, please put it on the ground or in the feed bucket in the horse's stall. Horses learn too quickly to expect treats and become 'Nippy'

if they are often fed by hand. Carrots and apples are favorite treats; however, please break up the apple or carrot if it is too large.

In An Emergency

If there is an emergency while a lesson is in session:

- All horses will be halted.
- All leaders will position themselves in front of the horses.
- All sidewalkers will stabilize their riders, unless back riding, in which case sidewalkers will stabilize the back rider who will stabilize the rider.
- The instructor will supervise dismounting procedures verbally or personally.
- If circumstances call for the arena to be evacuated, the riders will be escorted out first by their volunteers (if used) and the horses will be removed by their leaders to an appropriate place, after the riders are out of danger.
- The instructor will determine if medical personnel are required and will request assistance in contacting specific personnel.

Please note that this plan may need to be modified due to the individual circumstances of each situation.

In case of a fire:

- Place lead rope around horse's neck and lead them to the nearest doorway, away from the fire. Horses reluctant to lead should have their heads covered with jackets, towels, etc.
- Turn them out into pasture furthest away from fire and secure the gate.

In case of fire while riders are in the arena:

- Ask them to halt; instructor will determine order of horses to be dismounted from ramp. Those who are capable may be dismounted to the ground.

- Remain calm; direct riders outside of arena and to a safe place.
- Pull saddles from horses; turnout quickly to furthest pasture.

Other points to remember:

- Emergency numbers and emergency fire plan are posted in the barn, make sure you are aware of where they are and are familiar with them.
- Know the location of the emergency first aid kits and fire extinguishers.

Points to Remember

- In whatever capacity you are a volunteer; you are a very valuable member of the HHH team. The instructors greatly appreciate your input and feedback on the riders, horses, safety, program procedures and content. With your support, our program gets better each session and meets the need of our riders more effectively.
- Volunteers are encouraged to seek information or assistance whenever they are unsure of the procedure. Remember, there are no stupid questions, and it is better to be safe than sorry.

Again we thank you for choosing to volunteer with us. We hope you will enjoy working with the riders and the horses and that it will be a worthwhile; memorable; and valuable experience for you.

Volunteer Information – Minors (ages 13 – 17)

We here at HHH are thrilled that you have interest in helping others. Giving of yourself and your time is the most precious gift of all. The following are some rules and regulations that help to insure your safety as well as the safety of other volunteers; the horses; and participants. Thank you for your cooperation.

- Absolutely no rough-housing; fighting (verbally or physically); or foul language.
- LISTEN- Please follow directions and all safety precautions.
- Please dress appropriately. Long pants; closed toed shoes; and full shirts (no midriff showing).
- Those under age 15 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian (unless other arrangements have been approved).
- Do not handle horses without permission.
- Riding privileges are available for those who show an effort to participate and follow directions.
- Please do not come to just “hang out” we need volunteers who can help with our program. Remember that we are a place of business and that our participants and horses depend on the generous donation of time that our volunteers give.

Thank you.

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Rules:

- No **Running** or **Yelling** in the barn
- No Hand feeding horses
- Absolutely no Smoking in stable, arena or pastures. Please use designated smoking area.
- No riding without stable manager's permission.
- Do not ride or handle any equine unless you have signed liability release
- Use halters and lead to ground handle horses
- Do not use tractor or lawn equipment without permission from Stable Manager
- Do not feed horses till all have been stalled.

I have read Heartland Horses and Handicapped's Volunteer procedure manual and watched the ground handling video. I agree to follow all rules and procedures and understand that they may be changed at any time by the stable manager or Program director in order to maintain a safe work environment

Volunteer Name (print name): _____

Signature: _____