

We Can Ride 4-H Club

Family & Volunteer Handbook



4-H Introduction

The 4-Pledge

I pledge...
My HEAD to clearer thinking,
My HEART to greater loyalty,
my HANDS to larger service,
AND
my HEALTH to better living..
for my club, my community, my country, and my world.

The 4-H motto

“To Make The Best Better”

Michigan State University and members of the University Community are prohibited from discriminating against or harassing any person on the basis of age, color, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), genetic information, disability status, ethnicity, height, marital status, national origin, political persuasion, race, religion, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation), military or veteran status, or weight or any other status protected by applicable federal or state law in any of its programs or activities. Persons with disabilities may request accommodations by calling the Berrien County MSU Extension Office at (269) 927-5674.

WARNING

Under the Michigan Equine Activity Liability Act, an Equine Professional is not responsible for an injury to or the death of a participant in an equine activity resulting from the inherent risk of the equine activity.

Michigan Equine Activity Liability Act (1994 P.A. 351) Section 6.3.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We ask that any and all activity and information that may be disclosed to you during an activity, as a volunteer, be considered confidential and are not to be discussed with anyone other than the We Can Ride 4-H staff.

PATH AFFILIATION

We are a PATH (Professional Association of Therapeutic horsemanship) affiliated center. This means we follow PATH guidelines.

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Welcome to We Can Ride!

Dear Members, Parents and Volunteers,

We welcome you and wish to thank you for choosing to be a part of We Can Ride 4-H Club. For some members and volunteers this will be the first year of what we hope will be an enjoyable experience and the first of many years to come. For others who return each year, We Can Ride is a labor of love, and we welcome you back. This handbook was designed and created by We Can Ride 4-H Club to be a resource and guide for Parents and Volunteers alike. Most questions are answered within these pages. However, should questions arise that are not addressed, please contact the Club Coordinator.

Sincerely,

We Can Ride 4-H Club

WE CAN RIDE 4-H CLUB

Our Mission:

The mission of We Can Ride 4-H Club is to enhance the lives of youth with disabilities through educational activities related to horses.

Our Vision:

The vision of We Can Ride 4-H Club is to best meet the needs of the community of youth with disabilities and enhance knowledge and understanding between persons with and without disabilities.

BRIEF PROGRAM HISTORY

We Can Ride 4-H Club is a community organization which was started in 1979 under the auspice of Berrien County 4-H.

Therapeutic horseback riding for the handicapped was first started in England in 1954. In 1969, Lida McGowan, with the help of the Cheff Foundation, started the Cheff Center in Augusta, Michigan. Since that time therapeutic riding programs have been opened all over the United States and abroad.

WE CAN RIDE 4-H CLUB WEEKLY FORMAT

The participants come to the program one evening a week to participate in riding as well as stable management, and showmanship. The following is a description of each of these events:

Riding:

The riding portion of the evening begins with the participants mounting the horses/ponies either from the mounting block or ramp. Care is taken to make sure time is given for the tight leg muscles of the participants to relax and that the tack is properly adjusted for each horse and participant. It is a very important portion of the evening and to be done safely, it can't be rushed. Participants and volunteers can help this process move smoothly by promptly finding your assigned group. Once mounted, the participants will do a series of exercises on horseback to help with flexibility and strengthening muscles. These exercises may be done standing still or at a walk. The riding portion of the evening teaches participants how to control and steer the horse in addition to the correct riding position. This in turn, helps the participants improve their balance, coordination and self-esteem. Following directions and learning concepts such as colors or directions are also goals. Participants may not realize they are learning or improving or improvising physical and cognitive skills because they are having fun! Leaders, sidewalkers, or spotters may be used depending on the needs of the participants. The final portion of the evening is a review of the goals of the evening and possibly a fun activity such as a game that will reinforce the goals practiced. Participants will then dismount when given the signal by the instructor. Please be patient and wait for the instructor.

Stable Management:

Stable Management is the part of the program where participants learn about how to care for horses. We discuss topics such as careers involving horses, various uses for horses in the past and present, care and feeding, different kinds and styles of tack and their appropriate uses etc. However, to be a volunteer in Stable Management you do not need to know anything about horses. Volunteers who are not old enough to volunteer in the riding ring (14 years) or who are physically unable to work in the ring are welcome in stable management. If you can tell the head from the tail, we can use your help. We will welcome and train volunteers. Grooming and tacking is an area that may be learned, each week our participants are encouraged to help clean or groom a horse or substitute.

Showmanship:

Showmanship or Fitting and Showmanship is a class offered at many horse shows. It is the art of showing a horse from the ground in a safe, controlled manner. Showmanship involves doing an individual pattern in which the participant is evaluated on pattern execution, leading, turning, backing, stopping, setting a horse up for close inspection and presentation of the horse. This is all part of what is judged in the class. The participant and horse work together as a team and when done

correctly, showmanship becomes an art form much like a well-choreographed dance. Participants gain patience, pride, reasoning skills, improved posture, listening skills, memory and self esteem all while controlling a horse in a safe, humane manner. The principles of showmanship are adapted to fit the needs of each participant. Those that are able are also challenged to memorize the patterns. These patterns are practiced each week and then fine-tuned for the competition portion at the Berrien county Youth Fair. The horse will interpret the slightest movement of the participant's body. Our horses/ponies are selected to make Showmanship a fun and safe experience. Participants gain self-image as they learn how to stand and present themselves positively to a stranger (the judge). Adaptations are made as needed. Gals are carefully selected for each participant. We are very aware that some participants need the challenge of a patter, while others the goal may be to safely walk the length of the ring correctly while holding the lead line to the horse.

People You Should Know

Club Coordinator:

This person assists in planning and coordinating the We Can Ride 4-H Club. This includes administrative duties, insurance, training and scheduling and other duties necessary for operating a safe, educational program.

- The board of directors may appoint a board liaison to be present during program times when the club coordinator is absent. This person may help with any questions or conflicts.

Riding Instructors:

Before teaching in our program, all riding instructors must be PATH certified and certified by the MI 4-H horse and pony project. This requires them to pass an exam in stable management as well as a test of their abilities to instruct a riding class. Once accepted into the program, they receive intense training in the various disabilities, adaptive equipment, and learn how to teach the individual equine skills including riding and horse handling. They complete both a written and practical exam. Riding instructors complete an internship under the supervision of a certified mentor instructor. Once these qualifications are met, an instructor candidate is certified. They will attend annual mandatory seminars to retain their certification and keep abreast of new information. Anyone interested in becoming an instructor for our program must have past experience working with We Can Ride 4-H Club and be over 18 years of age.

Intern Riding Instructor:

This person has completed all of the written requirements of certification for our program. An internship under a certified mentor instructor will allow this person to gain the experience needed for becoming a certified instructor. He/She will be instructing in the ring under the supervision of other instructors.

Ring Assistant:

This person is under the direct supervision of the riding instructor. The ring assistant helps to coordinate lesson plans, participants, horses and equipment. The assistant also helps with the participant's mounting and dismounting.

Stable Management Instructor:

These instructors are volunteers who assist the participants with various educational activities involving horses. They organize weekly lesson plans involving such activities as crafts and stable management notebooks. They also coordinate presentations by guests and other activities designed to improve the participants' knowledge of horses.

Showmanship Instructor:

The showmanship instructor has a working knowledge of how to handle a horse on the ground and present it to the judge in a competition. The instructor always has the safety of the participants/handlers as the

highest priority. The instructor works to adapt showmanship to meet the needs of the participant.

Family & Volunteer Coordinator:

This is a volunteer to help families stay informed of upcoming events, to assist participants with their schedule and involvement on the grounds. They will also help volunteers by monitoring hours that are volunteered and will also advise them of upcoming events. This person may often be found at the check in station. They will keep track of scheduled vacations for volunteers and participants. This person must be a 4-H gold level leader over the age of 18, and must meet 4-H leader requirements. They also supervise youth members who may not be age eligible to be in the ring.

Equine Committee:

This person/group of volunteers coordinates the tack used for each session and the storing of the equipment. They assist volunteers with tacking the horses and to make sure the equipment is properly adjusted to the horse and participant. They are responsible for coordinating the vet and equine testing date for all new and returning equines. They handle all communications with the equine owners, including cancellations and changes to the ride nights. They coordinate the entry of the equines into B.C.Y.F. regardless if it is Sunday of fair or Friday of fair. They communicate with the Equine office all paperwork needed for check in during the fair.

Extension 4-H Youth Program Coordinator:

This is the person who is responsible for overseeing all Berrien County 4-H Youth and Development Programming, including 4-H Club management, program development, and all 4-H activities and events.

Check in Station Volunteer:

The check-in volunteer is responsible for the set up and tear down of the check in area. They will record all in and out times for the parents and volunteers as well as participant attendance. They will pass out name tags and other necessary paperwork along with referring inquiries to the proper person or department.

We Can Ride Committees:

There are a variety of committees that will work together for the benefit and betterment of the club. Committee duties shall be agreed upon and assigned by the Board of Directors of the We Can Ride 4-H Club.

VOLUNTEER DUTIES

******ALL VOLUNTEERS MUST COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING FORMS
BEFORE VOLUNTEERING******

Forms include:

- 4-H enrollment form
- Liability release
- Photo release
- Medical information
- Minor volunteer parent permission
- Background check
- All volunteers must complete the MSU Extension Volunteer Gold level Selection Process.

Please let us know of any special talent or interest you may have such as public speaking, photography, writing grant proposals, fundraising ideas, construction or anything else we haven't thought of!!!

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED FOR THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

1. Help distribute equipment from the trailer
2. Help clean equipment
3. Groom and tack horses
4. Sidewalk or spot with a participant (must be 14 years or older)
5. Lead a horse (must be 14 years or older in the riding ring/12 years old or older in the showmanship ring)
6. Assist with stable management
7. Volunteer during Fair week
8. Assist with showmanship
9. Serve on various committees that are necessary to run the program
10. Direct participants to their classes in a timely manner
11. Serve as riding night coordinator to keep activities flowing smoothly

With special training you may also serve as:

- Ring assistant
- Intern instructor

HOW VOLUNTEERS CAN HELP!

Because our organization is run primarily by volunteers, we must all work as a team.

RIDING ARENAS:

The Side Walker:

The job of the side walker is to maintain the safety of the participant. Which could include their balance, posture and/or focus of the participants, especially in the beginning stages, or until the instructor decides they no longer need the support. There may be one or two, or possibly none, side walkers assigned to the participant. The instructors will inform you of the requirements of each particular participant. For example; some participants will not have to be supported all the time, but just need someone to walk beside them for emergencies. **IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT THE PARTICIPANT DOES NOT FALL!!** If a participant starts to slip, gently push them back into the right position. Side walkers are very important as they are constantly aware of the participant and what they are doing. The safety of the participant depends on them.

Since the side walker is always close to the participant, you will find some participants will want to talk to you a great deal. Do not ignore direct questions, but redirect the participant to focus on the instructor in the ring. If the participant is not paying attention or doesn't hear the instructor, you may help by reinforcing the directions given. **ONE OF THE WORST DISTRACTIONS IS IN THE RING IS EXCESSIVE TALKING.** If two side walkers are working with a participant, only one of them should be verbally reinforcing the directions given by the instructor. The instructor will communicate with the team and designate those responsibilities.

Horse Leader:

Leaders are responsible for and will remain at all times with the horse. The instructor will give you directions on the level of independence of the participant. If a side walker is present, they are responsible for the participant. If a side walker is not present and the participant is semi independent you may be referred to as a *Spotter*. A spotter is for a semi independent participant who does not need both a side walker and a leader. They walk near the participant and assist the participant if they begin to lose their balance or need help to control the horse. Usually you will only walk near the participant as they, at this point, are riding almost independently. Spotters are also used in the independent class by being placed at different points of the ring to correct an issue if necessary. You are the extra eyes of the instructor or ring assistant, bringing attention to any issues as they arise.

In the event of an emergency while in the riding ring:

- Halt the horse and secure the horse by standing in front of it.
 - If the horse is calm, remain at the halt until riders are cleared from the arena.
 - If the horse is moving erratically, once the rider has dismounted, move the horse away from the rider's path to exit the arena.
- Remove the horse to a location specified by the instructor.

STABLE MANAGEMENT AREA

Stable Management Volunteer:

You need not have extensive horse knowledge to volunteer in this area and help is always needed. Stable management volunteers will have a short orientation before volunteering. Volunteers may be younger than 14 years of age. Volunteers are needed to work one-on-one with the participants to help them complete their projects, notebooks and the activity for the evening. Again, you do not need to know anything about horses- though we always welcome input and suggestions for future topics. All you need is a positive attitude, a little patience and a desire to get involved. Our participants are a great group with a variety of liabilities. When you are helping the participants, please remember there are a great many things they can do and do not focus on what they cannot. The craft projects and notebooks are intended to be their work. The crafts are designed to be fun and educational, as well as improve fine motor and thinking skills. Participants need to be challenged to do as much as possible by themselves. You should provide encouragement, suggestions and assistance as needed. It is not a neatness or speed competition. Guidelines will be provided to complete each activity and participants may have the opportunity of entering their completed notebook as a project at the B.C.Y.F. The notebooks also provide a visual and written reminder of what they learned over the riding season. Our goal is to have fun while improving their skills.

SHOWMANSHIP AREA

Showmanship Volunteer:

Showmanship volunteers will be trained by the instructor and need to be at least 12 (4-H) years of age. Showmanship volunteers make sure the participants are wearing helmets and are to be constantly vigilant in regards to safety. They may be a leader, spotter, judge, ring master or assist participants in other ways. Volunteers are utilized to work on a one-on-one basis with the participants. For practice, a judge is chosen from the volunteers. This gives the participants an idea of what showing at the fair will be like. Other volunteers are used as spotters in case someone should stumble. Horse leaders are also needed for those participants who require special assistance. Volunteers who have no knowledge of horses can help in many ways. Parents and volunteers can help teach participants “crossovers”; a way of crossing from one side of the horse to the other using a grapevine step. There has been plenty of giggling while learning to “dance” around a horse. A positive, willing to learn attitude is all we ask. Our showmanship program has been a model for other 4-H therapeutic riding programs throughout the state of Michigan.

GROOMING AND TACKING AREA

Grooming and Tacking Volunteers:

Volunteers are needed in the tacking area. These people assist the tacking and equipment committee. These volunteers will be given instruction from the team leader of the tack trailer. The duties may include: retrieving horses from their trailers, grooming, tacking, and cleaning tack. There are many duties in the tack area that can be filled.

CONCERNS

Safety is always first. If there is an immediate safety issue within the riding area, please see an instructor. All other areas find a committee member or any board member. If a volunteer has a complaint that does not involve a safety issue, the procedure is as follows:

1. First, go to the family & volunteer committee chairperson to voice your concerns, verbally and in writing.
2. If the situation is not resolved to the satisfaction of all parties, go to the Club Coordinator to voice your concerns, verbally and in writing.
3. If the situation is still not resolved to the satisfaction of all parties, go to the *Michigan State University, 4-H Extension Educator*, to voice your concerns, verbally and in writing.

WHEN YOU ARRIVE TO THE PROGRAM

Please arrive at least 15 minutes before the start of the first class you have been assigned to help in. It is encouraged to be there as soon as you possibly can as there are many working pieces to making the night go smoothly.

When you arrive go to the check-in station:

1. Sign in with the check-in volunteer. At this time you may leave any notes or messages you wish to pass along, such as a date you may be unable to attend.
2. Please wear your name tag. This serves to identify you as a We Can Ride 4-H Club member. All volunteers and participants need to have a name tag and the first one will be provided to you. In case you forgot yours, please obtain a temporary tag from the check-in station.
3. Be sure to check your email for the posted nights schedule. The schedule will tell you what job you have been assigned to for the evening. At the check-in station, please verify there are no changes or updates as sometimes it happens as different situations evolve. Often volunteers will be needed for more than one activity. The check-in person or the Family & Volunteer coordinator will gladly answer any and all questions. Please let them know of any scheduling concerns you have or changes to your schedule.
4. It is also very important to sign out if you leave before the completion of the final scheduled ride.

CLOTHING

VOLUNTEERS:

Footwear is very important for safety. Horses can step on a human foot causing pain or breakage. Sandals, flip flops as well as soft toe shoes, like ballet shoes, and crocs are prohibited. Be aware hats and sunglasses may be grabbed by a participant so use caution. Leave dangling jewelry at home and please avoid perfume as it can attract stinging insects and can be an irritation to those with hyper sensitivities and allergies. Please dress **APPROPRIATELY** to work around the horses if you are in the ring. Pants are encouraged. Evenings may start very cool and very hot as the season progresses. No short shorts, revealing shirts, or thin strap tank tops. All clothing must follow the 4-H code of conduct. We appreciate a neat appearance for all scheduled activities as all of you represent the program. Photos are taken all year as well. T-shirts, sweatshirts, hats and jackets are offered once a year. If you would like to order any apparel, please indicate your needs at the check in station.

PARTICIPANTS CLOTHING/T-SHIRTS:

Your participant will be encouraged to wear long pants when riding. Even on hot nights, jeans are best to protect their skin from being pinched (by accident) in the saddle. Shoes with small heels are preferred, if possible. **NO SANDALS!** When the participants participate at the horse show, fair or any other scheduled events, they will need long pants and their We Can Ride 4-H Club T-shirt. Each participant will be given a yellow We Can Ride 4-H Club t-shirt before the show day of the fair. On chilly nights, the ring may be damp, so warm clothing is necessary.

4-H Code of Conduct:

We expect all our parents, volunteers, and participants to follow the 4-H code of conduct, which includes but is not limited to, dress code, social media presence, language, illegal substances and alcohol.

Picture Taking:

Please refrain from taking any photos or videos of any individual, that is outside your family. We Can Ride 4-H Club obtains photos of participants and members, who have given their written authorizations that are on file. Many of these photos are published on different platforms for public viewing.

FACILITY RULES

1. Absolutely no running around the horses/ponies.
2. **NO SMOKING** during any We Can Ride 4-H Club activities.
3. Service dogs only are allowed on the grounds, **NO dogs are allowed around the horses.**
4. All buildings are off limits unless they are being used for scheduled activities.
5. Parents, volunteers and families, please park 20 feet away from the rings to the south side of the ring and drive. Do not park near the trailer parking area.
 - a. Trailer parking is on the west side of the rings.
6. No playing on mounting ramps, mounting blocks, bleachers, fences or around the horses.
7. All children under 12 years of age must be supervised by a parent while on the grounds.
 - a. If they are over the age of 14, they may help in the riding ring.
 - b. If they are over the age of 12, they can assist with showmanship.
 - c. Under the age of 12, they can assist in stable management, if they have the capacity to do so.
8. Please pick up all litter.
9. No bicycles.
10. Volunteer horses are only allowed on the grounds during We Can Ride 4-H Club activities. No riding on the grounds other than for the purposes of the We Can Ride 4-H Club. We incur insurance expenses for every horse on the ground. Helmets must be worn while riding.

ABSENCES:

- If you are unable to attend, please let the family/volunteer coordinator know by noon on riding day, or as soon as possible. Each week there will be a sheet at the check-in station, with which you may add your vacation dates or dates you will be unavailable. The program will meet each week, rain or shine.
- If you haul a horse to the program each week, please reach out to the horse committee chair to let them know of any vacations or absences as soon as possible.

If you are not on the schedule to volunteer it does not mean you are not needed!! We will always need extra volunteers for riding, showmanship, grooming, tacking or stable management!

CANCELLATIONS:

A cancellation event may be due to a variety of reasons including, weather, lighting, ring quality or a heat index of 93 degrees or higher, at the site. The MSU Extension office will have the cancellation information after 3 pm. Horse owners will be notified first, as it takes time and planning to get the horses to the grounds. All others will be notified shortly after by the fastest means of communication.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Medical:

In all emergencies minor or major, the instructor will give the directions. First aid kits are located in the tack trailer and instructors are certified in CPR and first aid. **All volunteers, participants & families will remain on the property until the instructor excuses you. It will be necessary to get information for an incident report.**

Outside of the arena:

Go to the check in table for any emergencies.

Inside the arena:

IF A PARTICIPANT FALLS:

1. Halt **ALL** the horses, remain with your assigned horse and/or participant.
2. Horse leader, move horse far away from the fallen participant. Keep the horse quiet, still and facing the participant.
3. Sidewalker, stay with the participant, comfort and keep the participant still or from moving too quickly.
4. Instructor, will assess the participant and give further instructions. It may be necessary for an available volunteer to get a parent to comfort the participant.

Minor Injury:

1. Notify the instructor of the injury.
2. The needs of the individual should be met, for example, band-aids, ice packs, take out of the heat, ect.

Major Injury:

The instructor will appoint people to:

1. Notify the parent of the emergency
2. Get the emergency medical information form from the file, give it to the instructor.
3. Telephone 911 or (269)-983-7141 and provide any information the dispatcher may need.
4. Go directly to the facility entrance to direct emergency vehicles to the location of the injured and reassure people in the area.
 - a. **VERY IMPORTANT!! ASK THE EMERGENCY VEHICLE DRIVE TO SHUT OFF SIRENS AND LIGHTS TO AVOID FRIGHTENING THE HORSES!**
5. All other participants and their "teams" are to move to the safest confined area away from the incident for the safest dismounting.
6. Sidewalkers return participants to their parents, then remain in the area for further directions.
7. Leaders return horses to the trailers or areas designated by the instructors.
8. Horse owners should go to their horses and provide assistance if needed.

Loose Horse:

In the event a horse gets loose in the surrounding area:

1. Stop **ALL** the horses. Have your horse turn and face the location of the loose horse.
2. Leaders, keep your horses quiet.
3. Sidewalkers, have a hand on your participant by an arm over leg hold in case excitement level increases.
4. In the event it becomes too intense, participants will be dismounted by the instructor and a designated lead volunteer.
5. Sidewalkers are to take their participants to designated areas.
6. Horse leaders are to stay standing quietly in the arena until the last participant is in a safe area. Calmly walk your horse to a designated area.

Fire:

In the event of a fire, volunteers, participants, horses (with owners) will be directed by the instructors (from the ring) or committee members to a safe location. An appointed person will call the fire department and advise them to not use lights or sirens.

Severe Weather Conditions:

In the event of severe weather conditions where members and participants need to gather in the clubhouse:

- Participants gather into the bathrooms.
- Families and volunteers will gather in the back corner (outside the bathrooms) and use tables as cover.
- If there is time, tape or cover the windows to prevent flying glass.

Ring directions:

Medium Weather: (ie: High Wind, Hail, Thunderstorms, ect)

- Riding instructor to dismount riders.
- Leaders remove horses to the tack trailer and return them to their trailers.
- Sidewalkers usher riders to the riders' family members at the clubhouse.
- Instructors oversee the groups.

Major Weather: (ie: Tornado, Extremely High Wind)

- Riding instructor to dismount riders.
- Leaders take the horses to the closest arena fence.
- Untack the horse quickly and let the horse loose in the arena, leaving halters on.
- Leave tack on the fence line.
- Sidewalkers usher riders to the riders' family members at the clubhouse.
- Instructors stay with the leaders until horses are loose
- Instructors and leaders follow to the clubhouse.

In the event of an incident, an incident report must be filed and the instructors and or club coordinator notified. - An incident requires that an unusual circumstance has occurred in which there is an incident with a horse or person.

- Written documentation of the incident must be recorded immediately. Follow up paperwork of the incident will be conducted by Extension 4-H Youth Program Coordinator.

THINGS PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

SHOULD KNOW

WE CAN RIDE 4-H CLUB APPLICATION POLICY:

Applications will be available in the month of October for the next riding season.

- Deadline for submission is February 1st.
- No returning applications will be accepted after March 1st.
- All new applications will be due no later than June 1st.

Any incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant in a timely manner. It will be up to the applicant to re-submit completed applications before the deadline. Any applications received after the deadline but before June 1st, will be considered for any suitable positions that are open. If no openings are available they will be considered for alternate status.

NO member/participant applications will not be accepted after June 1st. Applicants will be encouraged to apply for the next riding season.

No matter the participants' status, there will be a late fee charged after March 1st.

For return of the application(s), there is an enclosed self-addressed manila envelope. Applicants will pay postage or it should be dropped off at the MSU Extension office and it should also be sealed in the enclosed self-addressed envelope to prevent loss of confidential documents.

These envelopes will receive a time/date stamp on the envelope. This will reduce the possibility of lost form and serve as a record the application was received. The application will then be forwarded to the board. Applications are confidential and only qualified board members/instructors will have access to the personal information. Participants for the up-coming season are selected in April with the understanding that riding will depend upon the availability of an appropriate horse.

PARTICIPANTS ATTENDANCE & ABSENCES:

The program will meet each week, rain or shine. Cancellations may be made due to severe weather. The decision to cancel will be made by 3 pm. If this seems like a possibility you may call the Berrien County MSU Extension office or the phone number you will be given. Your participant will be scheduled to ride each week when selected as a regular participant. Alternate participants will be slotted into spots that are available due to illness, vacations or other commitments of the regular participants spots. If your participant is unable to attend, please let us know as soon as possible.

The Family/volunteer coordinator must be notified by **NOON** of the riding night to be considered an excused absence. This will allow us to give an alternate the opportunity to ride.

Failure to tell us in a timely manner may mean a horse may be brought especially for your participant and then not needed.

Unexcused Absences:

- **One** unexcused absence will result in the participant being moved to an alternate status.
- **Two** unexcused absences will result in immediate dismissal from the program for the current year.

Alternates are encouraged to attend stable management and showmanship classes even if they are not scheduled to ride. Unexpected openings will be filled by available alternates.

PARTICIPANTS & FAMILIES MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS:

1. Volunteer Hours:

- a. It is required that 30 hours be volunteered for a student during the membership year. For families with more than one participant, an additional 10 hours per participant is required. Membership is from September 1st to August 31st.

2. Fundraising Requirements:

- a. **All** participants must participate in one club fundraiser.
- b. **All** participants must obtain one sponsor.

3. Berrien County Youth Fair:

- a. All participants & families **MUST** volunteer for We Can Ride 4-H Club at **LEAST 3** times **DURING** fair week (Monday-Saturday) in order to receive their individual passes. Sign-up sheets are available at the check-in station beginning in July.

BERRIEN COUNTY YOUTH FAIR:

The riding season begins each spring and concludes with the participants participating in the Berrien County Youth Fair. Some of the volunteer horses and ponies come for the week and are cared for by the participants and volunteers. During fair week, the participants come and clean stalls, groom the horses, and also help with exercising. We feel that like other youth that participate at the fair, they too should share in the work as well as the glory. In order to participate in the Berrien County Youth Fair, all policies including Michigan State 4-H, Berrien County 4-H Extension, We Can Ride 4-H Club, and Berrien County Youth Fair must be followed.

SPECIAL EVENTS FOR PARTICIPANTS POLICIES:

1. Parents/guardians are responsible for all special event sign-ups. Site personnel will **NOT** come to each parent personally to check on whether or not your child will be participating in a special event.
2. If a participant is signed up for a special event, they **MUST** give advance notice, at least the day before, if they are unable to attend. Failure to do so will result in an unexcused absence.

What we hope the participants will gain from their involvement in our program

1. Learn to ride a horse to the best of each individual's ability.
2. Raise self-esteem.
3. Improve the ability to follow directions
4. Increase their attention span.
5. Create better muscle tone and to relax tight muscles.
6. Improve coordination.
7. Improve balance
8. Improve challenging behaviors.
9. General exercise.
10. Make new friends.
11. Learn about horses.
12. Learn horse safety while riding.
13. Learn horse handling from the ground.
14. Develop bonds and relationships.
15. Sense of accomplishments.
16. Have FUN!

INFORMATION FROM THE THERAPISTS & TEACHERS:

The riding program can be therapeutic, which can help the participants in many ways. Some of these therapeutic benefits can be:

1. Stretching tight muscles with the warmth of the horse and prolonged stretching around the barrel of the horse.
2. Improving balance by working on a moving base.
3. The walking pattern of the horse is similar to a human's, which can help participants learn to walk.
4. Helping to strengthen weak muscles, i.e. head control, trunk muscles.
5. Emotional benefits of working with animals
6. Improvement in cognitive skills.

You may encounter the following people with disabilities (including but not limited to:

- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Autism
- Cerebral Palsy
- Emotionally Impaired
- Hearing Impaired
- Learning Impaired
- Cognitively Impaired
- Seizure Disorders
- Speech and Language Barriers
- Spina Bifida
- Visually Impaired
- Mental Health Conditions
- Physical Impairments

If you wish for more information on a particular disability, contact an instructor after class. We will share with you any pertinent information. Try to not get hung up on the disabilities as our 4-H'ers are people with the same feelings and emotions as you or I.

WHEN YOU MEET A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY:

1. First and foremost, remember that the person with a disability is a PERSON.
2. Be yourself when you meet the participant.
3. Talk about the same things as you would with anyone else.
4. Help only when it is needed. Use your own judgment and don't let yourself constantly assist the participants, they need to develop more independence!
5. Be patient, it is often harder to wait for an inexperienced person to do something than it is to do it yourself. As you know, when you do things yourself, you learn faster.
6. Medications may cause the person to have decreased attention spans, independence or overall balances.
7. Don't be over-protective or over-solicitous. Don't shower the person with a disability with kindness or be over-sympathetic.
8. The person with a disability should be treated as an equal in all things. Don't offer pity or charity. A person with a disability is just another person with their individual set of goals, capabilities, experiences, attitudes, limits, needs and more. JUST LIKE YOU!
9. Don't make up your mind about a person with a disability ahead of time. You may be surprised at how wrong you are in judging their interests or abilities.
10. Enjoy your friendship with the participant. Their philosophy and good humor will give you inspiration.

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY:

In our program we work with a great group of 4-H people who have a variety of abilities. Our focus is on the **ABILITIES** of the participants. If you are uncomfortable working with a particular participant or equine, please let us know so we can change the schedule. There may also be a particular participant or equine that you wish to work with on a regular basis. Please let us know so that we can try and make this accommodation.

Volunteers are what our program is built on. **YOU** are important and we would not be able to operate without the hard work of each and every one of you. The riding, grooming/tacking, stable management and the showmanship instructors need your input!

Wheelchair Etiquette:

- Always ask the wheelchair user if he/she would like assistance before helping. Your help may not be needed or wanted. Ask the person directly about how to provide assistance prior to initiating help.
- Do not hang or lean on a person's wheelchair. It is part of the user's personal body space.
- Speak directly to the wheelchair user, not to someone nearby as if the user does not exist or is incompetent.
- If your conversation lasts more than a few minutes, consider sitting or kneeling down to get yourself on the same level as the wheelchair user.
- Do not demean or patronize the wheelchair user by patting them on the head or shoulder.
- Give clear directions identifying barriers, including distance, weather conditions or physical obstacles that may hinder the wheelchair user's travel.
- Do not discourage children from asking questions. Allow the person the opportunity to respond. Open communication helps overcome fear and ignorance.
- Do not be self-conscious or embarrassed when speaking to a wheelchair user about your own physical abilities or interests.
- Be aware of a wheelchair user's capabilities. Some can walk with assistance, they may use a wheelchair to conserve energy and to move around more quickly.
- Do not classify people who use wheelchairs as sick, they are a mobility tool.
- Do not assume that using a wheelchair is a tragedy, it provides freedom and allows the user to move about independently.
- Wheelchairs do not confine, they liberate
- When unsure of someone's capabilities, ask
- Emphasize abilities, rather than disabilities.

Program Horses and Ponies

Each week horse owners transport their equines for the program, which requires a lot of dedication. Each equine is screened by the instructors and must be extremely patient. The program assists the owners by paying for required vaccination expenses if they so desire. The equines are various sizes and shapes, this allows the student to have the best possible mount to meet their needs. One common variable the equines have is the uncanny ability to realize they have a special passenger on board. They are truly the unsung heroes of our program.

Equine requirements for the program:

- Recommendation and approval by an instructor
- Horses must be able to be used for the entire summer, at the discretion or request of the instructors, at our riding sites, this can include, but not limited to:
 - Buchan Westerners
 - Berrien County Youth Fair
 - Other 4-H Sanctioned events
- Instructors have the final decision as to which horse a participant will ride.
- Participants will be fit to the participating horses following guidelines that include weight and work bearing limits.
- Horse owners are responsible for transportation to the riding sites this can include, but not limited to:
 - Buchan Westerners
 - Berrien County Youth Fair
 - Other 4-H Sanctioned events
- Must provide documentation of vaccinations & coggins if not provided by the club.
- Any out of state horses must provide a certificate of health to enter the Berrien County Youth Fair (see their requirements), this is not covered by We Can Ride 4-H Club.

If your horse is selected into the program, please keep track of your mileage.

*****Policy: The program pays mileage at the rate approved by the Berrien County MSU Extension office, and \$1.00 per horse hauled to each riding site when needed. *****

BASIC SAFETY RULES FOR WORKING AROUND HORSES & PONIES:

1. Always speak to an equine when approaching it and before touching it. Never approach directly from the rear.
2. Pet an equine by placing your hand on its shoulder or neck. No not pet it's face, nose or mouth.
3. When removing the equine from the trailer, always use the green lead with the equines name, **NEVER UNTIE THE EQUINE FROM THE TRAILER.**
4. To avoid being accidentally bitten, place all feed/treats, in a pan or bucket (supplied by the tack trailer) before offering it to the equine.
5. Never be loud or rowdy around the equines. They can become frightened by loud noises or unexpected movements.

6. Never lose your temper with an equine or mistreat it. An animal will respond best when you are kind and gentle, but firm with it.
7. Always hold an equine when grooming or saddling.
- 8. DO NOT TIE THE EQUINE WITH REINS OR A CHAIN LEAD!**
9. Equine owners: always use a quick release knot when tying an equine. Leaving a short length of rope between the knot and the halter.
10. Always tie the equine to a solid object such as a trailer, tree, or post. Do not tie the animal to any plank fence boards or unstable objects.
11. Always walk around an equine that is tied when going from side to side. Do not walk under or step over a tied lead.
12. Wear leather shoes or boots when working with an equine. Keep your feet in the clear of their hooves and to avoid being stepped on by watching what the equine is doing.
13. When you are leading, walk next to the equine beside the neck on its left side. Do not walk in front of the equine.
- 14. NEVER WRAP THE LEAD LINE AROUND YOUR HAND OR BODY!**
15. Keep at least one equine length between the equines at all times.
- 16. For safety reasons, NO PARTICIPANTS ARE ALLOWED AROUND THE HORSES IN THE TRAILER AREA.**

RIDING EQUIPMENT

Safety is the prime objective when working with a person with disabilities and adaptations of certain equipment may become necessary. Equipment is adapted for teaching aids, the safety of the participants and the comfort of the equine. Equipment is designed to correct the participant's position and facilitate mounting.

Helmets:

An ESTM equine safety helmet is the single most important piece of equipment. Careful and correct fit is essential. The head is crucial to balance an ill-fitting helmet will make balancing more difficult. Overly large helmets are dangerous and uncomfortable. They may slip, obscure vision or fall off. Participants and volunteers are required to wear helmets when mounted or driving an equine. Participants are also required to wear helmets whenever equines are present, this includes Showmanship and Stable Management.

Helmet fitting and expiration needs to be reviewed yearly! All helmets deemed expired will need to be replaced.

Please see the helmet fitting diagram on page 28.

Saddles:

We Can Ride 4-H Club uses a variety of saddles that best suit the participants and horses needs. We currently use, but not limited to, close contact, dressage, all purpose, trail, western and Australian stock saddles. These saddles are made of leather or synthetic materials.

Handholds:

The handhold is a leather or web strap that attaches to the D rings in front of the saddle. Participants use these as an aid in maintaining balance without using the reins for support. They may be attached to the saddle with snaps or buckles that should be checked before a participant mounts to make sure the handhold is secure.

Adaptive Neck Holds:

This hand hold wraps around the horse's neck and connects to the D rings on the saddle. The handle moves the participant's hands into a correct position for the more advanced skills. This allows the Participants to reach more forward and to not pull on the saddle when trotting.

Safety Bar:

This is a metal bar that may be permanently secured to the pommel or in front of the saddle. It is designed for participants who need more support than a hand hold would offer. The bar is also useful for participants that are working to improve weight bearing with their arms.

Stirrups:

You may see a variety of stirrups in our program and all should fit so the stirrup rests on the ball of the foot:

The following three types of stirrups can be used with or without a rubber pad. Participants who wear rubber soled shoes should not use a rubber pad in the base of the stirrup.

- **Peacock Safety Stirrups** - These stirrups are designed with an optional rubber band attachment that should always face away from the equine when the student's foot is in the stirrup. In the event a participant needs to quickly remove their foot, the band will come free and allow the foot to slip

from the stirrup. Care should be taken that the bands are hooked over the stirrup and replaced when they become worn, cracked or stretched.

- **Foot free or S bar Safety Stirrups** - These stirrups are designed to allow the foot to slip out easily in case of an emergency. The sculpted outer edge, in an S shape, allows the foot to slide out to avoid becoming stuck.
- **Hinged Polo Stirrup** - This stirrup is designed to bend and fold in the event a participant needed to quickly slip their foot out of the stirrup.

Other types of stirrups you can see are:

- **Devonshire Boots** - These special stirrups were designed for participants who have difficulty lowering their ankles to correctly hold onto the stirrup. The stirrup is enclosed by a leather hood with a leather soled that prevents the participant from pushing their foot through the stirrup and becoming stuck.
- **Trail Stirrups** - These are similar to the Devonshire Boots but have a plastic cage instead of a leather cage and can fit onto western type saddles.

Saddle Covers:

The following can be viewed on top of the saddle itself:

- **Fleece Saddle Covers** - This is a protective pad used to cover the saddle to prevent chafing and pressure sores of the participants who may have a limited or lack of lower body sensation. It is held in place by the stirrup leathers, which are passed through a slit in the pad. It can also be used to protect the saddle in cases where incontinence may be present.
- **Gel Seat Saver Pads** - These pads attach to the seat of the saddle providing additional comfort and shock absorbency for the participant at critical pressure points of the buttocks and pelvis.

Saddle Pads:

Saddle pads you may see being used:

- **Dressage Pads** - These fit our English type saddles
- **Western Pads** - These fit our larger western/trail saddles
- **Thin line Pads** - These are special shock absorbing pads that are used between the saddle and the main saddle pad. These help us to maintain the equine's back and absorb the "shock" that a participant can place upon the equine's back. Many of our equines are older or have participants who may not be able to "move" with their equine. These can make the difference in keeping the equines comfortable and usable for the participants.
- **Wedge Pads** - This pad allows the saddle to be lifted in the back, front or both ends of the saddle making it level on the equine's back.

Not all equines' backs are the same and we work hard to make sure the equines are padded correctly and to be the most comfortable for the equine and participant.

Natural Ride Saddles:

This is an upgraded "bareback pad." It provides the security of a saddle with the closeness of a bareback pad. The warmth of the horse can help tight leg muscles to relax as the participant is positioned closer to the horse. It is an excellent training device as it allows the participant to feel the equine's back and movements. This encourages relaxation and helps to improve the participant's balance and can be used with or without stirrups. If a volunteer rider (back rider) is needed, no stirrups will be used.

Vaulting Surcingle:

This strap is designed to be used for vaulting (gymnastics on horseback). It is useful to us in much the same way as the natural ride saddle. It has two handles attached to a leather band that goes around the equine's girth. This is helpful for weight bearing activities for the arms, promoting balance and development of midline awareness. It is a useful tool for teaching a natural balance without the use of stirrups.

Reins:

Our most common used reins are as follows:

- **Rainbow Reins** - These reins are color-coded in sections. This is an excellent visual aid and a great way to teach the participants colors. For example, a participant can be instructed to move their hands to the yellow portion of the rein.
- **Smooth Reins** - These reins are used for participants who may be tactilely defensive. Tactilely defensive participants do not tolerate the feel of textures, therefore, as a result they will only hold the reins if they are smooth and do not bother their senses.
- **Knotted Web Reins** - These reins have knots spaced several inches apart to aid in holding the reins. For participants who find holding a smooth rein difficult, the knotted rein gives them stoppers to hold.
- **Laced Reins** - These are flat leather reins with overlaced leather intended to provide a better grip for the participant.
- **Ladder Reins** - The purpose of ladder reins is to enable a participant who has the use of only one arm to steer the horse by holding onto a cross piece. These reins can be made of leather or nylon with adjustable cross pieces that can be switched for the participant's comfort.

You may see other adaptive equipment not listed as it may be used on a case by case basis only.

Index



use your head

DO THE FIVE-POINT SAFETY CHECK when selecting your riding helmet.

1. FRONT

The helmet should sit firmly in place about an inch above the eyebrows.

More than 1" = too small.
Less than 1" = too big.

2. SIDE

The straps on the side should meet just below and in front of your earlobes.

3. BACK

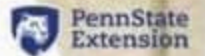
A snug-fitting helmet is best. The harness on the back should prevent the helmet from moving forward. Avoid using your hair to create a proper fit.

4. THROAT

The strap under your chin should be snug but not tight. Tilt your chin up and down to ensure a proper fit.

5. TEST

Grasp the helmet with two hands and rock it back and forth. The skin and eyebrows should move with the helmet.



Always choose to wear a certified riding helmet.



No helmet can protect against every head injury. However, studies show a dramatic reduction in the severity of injuries when a properly fitted helmet is worn every time you ride a horse. Replace your helmet every five years or immediately after a direct impact from a fall.

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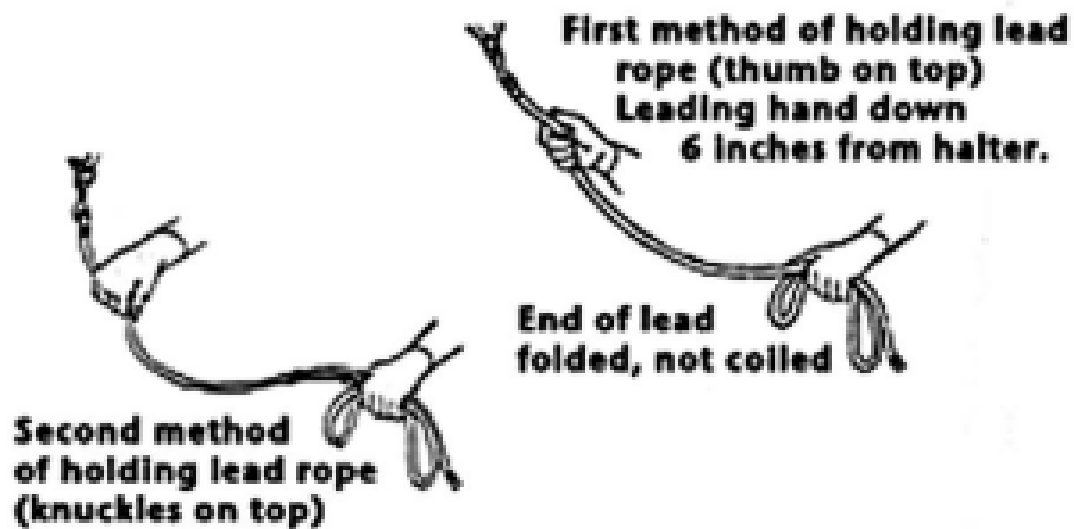
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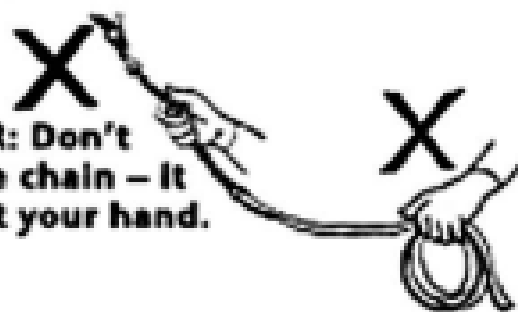


Leading don'ts:

DANGER: Never lead by the halter without a lead rope.



DANGER: Don't hold the chain – it can hurt your hand.



DANGER: Never coil the end of the lead – it can tighten up on your hand.

Holding the lead rope

Accent On Accreditation

Follow The Leader

By Susan F. Tucker, NARHA Accreditation Committee

As a volunteer, one of the most challenging duties you could be assigned is the position of leader. A leader's first responsibility is the horse but you must also constantly be aware of the rider, instructor, and any potential hazards in or around the arena. In addition, you must also consider the sidewalkers, making sure there is enough room along the fence, and around obstacles for them to pass.

An effective leader pays close attention to the rider's needs as well as to where the horse is going. This reinforces the rider's attempts to control the

horse, about even with his eye. This helps keep him in a proper frame, which is more beneficial for everyone.

Talk to the horse; most of them know "whoa," "walk," and "trot," or can learn the words. Watch where you're going and what's happening around you. Do not walk backward to look at the rider. It's dangerous for everyone and the horse isn't eager to follow someone who can't see where he is going.

Figure B shows the correct position for leaders. The lead shank is held with the right hand 6-12 inches from the snap, allowing free motion of the horse's head. This is more therapeutic to the rider and less irritating to the horse.

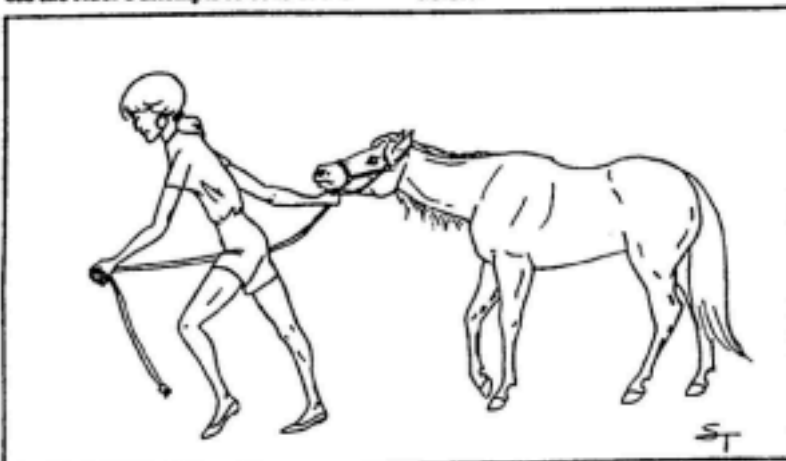
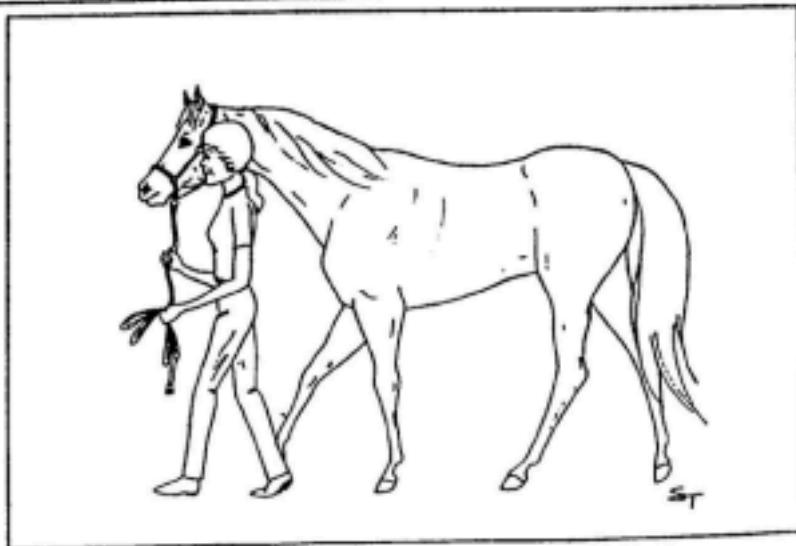


Figure A (above) and Figure B (right).

horse. However, you should not execute an instruction for the rider before he has time to process the information and make an effort to comply. Sometimes it may be appropriate to walk into the corner and stand until the student figures out what to do.

Avoid the temptation to talk to the rider and/or sidewalkers. A rider may get confused by too much input and not know who's in charge. (Instructors often make terrible leaders because they can't keep their mouths shut!)

Figure A depicts a few faults common among leaders. Here is a leader grimly marching along—head down, one hand on the lead snap, the other inside the coiled end of the rope—dragging a strung-out horse. In a battle with a horse, you lose. You must get the horse to cooperate. Walk alongside the



The tail end of the lead should be looped in a figure-eight in the left hand to avoid tripping on it. Never coil the rope around your hand. That could end a close relationship with your fingers!

Use short tugs rather than a steady pull to keep a lazy horse moving. The horse can set himself against a steady pull, but tugs keep him awake. Move out, about 1,000 steps per 15 minutes, to provide the most therapeutic benefit.

When you halt for more than a few seconds, stand in front of the horse with your hands on the halter's cheek pieces (if the horse permits) or loosely hold the lead or reins. Standing in front is a psychological barrier to the horse and he will stand more quietly than if he has an easy chance to move out. If you like your thumbs, don't put them through the snaffle or halter rings.

If the worst happens and there is an accident, stay with the horse. There are other people to care for a fallen rider. The situation could easily become more dangerous if there are loose horses running around the arena. Move your horse as far from the fallen student as possible and keep calm. Listen for the instructor's directions.

These suggestions can help you control your horse, be a good aide to a rider and be a valuable assistant to an instructor. You will provide real therapeutic input to your rider, as well as make it safe for them to have fun riding. In short, if you lead, we'll be happy to follow.

AUTISM

Persons with autism may possess the following characteristics in various combinations and in varying degrees of severity.



Inappropriate laughing or giggling



No real fear of dangers



Apparent insensitivity to pain



May not want cuddling



Sustained unusual or repetitive play: Uneven physical or verbal skills. May say the same phrase over and over.



May avoid eye contact



May prefer to be alone



Difficulty in expressing needs: May use gestures



Inappropriate attachments to objects



Insistence on sameness; difficulty changing from one activity to another



Echoes words or phrases



Inappropriate response or no response to sound



Spins objects or self



Difficulty in interacting with others



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