

*T.H.R.I.L.*



Therapeutic Horse Riding In Lindsay

*VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK*

### **The Benefits of Therapeutic Riding**

- Improved balance
- Coordination development, fine motor skills
- Mobilization of trunk and pelvis
- Strengthening of weak muscles
- Increase muscle tone and improved circulation
- Prevention of contractures
- Developing confidence, self-esteem and independence and processing skills
- Increased attention span and spatial awareness

### **Assisting Riders With Special Needs**

For safety reasons it is important to be aware of the rider's disability. It is equally as important to understand that the riders are people too. Often in their lives the main focus has been on their disability and it for this reason that at T.H.R.I.L we focus on their abilities and who they are as people. Reminder information about our riders is confidential.

It is of utmost importance that we always let the riders attempt the tasks at hand on their own first and then give assistance only as required. Practicing new riding skills can sometimes be more difficult and take more time for individuals with special needs. If you are unsure when you should offer assistance, ask the rider themselves or the instructor. That way you can assist when the rider is having difficulty or is becoming frustrated.

Focus on using positive terminology. Instead of saying "No, not like that" say "Let's try it this way". Our instructors and volunteers are always role models for our riders, therefore we should show enthusiasm and respect. We should also practise safe behaviour around the horses and stable at all times as many riders learn by what they see.

Learning is best in a relaxed and positive environment. Praise the rider's efforts. No matter how small. Feeling a sense of success encourages further learning and promotes self-esteem.

### **Volunteer Sign In**

We request that volunteers sign in and log their volunteer hours on the volunteer sign-in sheet provided. This serves as a record of your volunteer commitment and is part of the necessary records T.H.R.I.L needs to have available when applying for grants.

### **Stable/Program Rules**

No smoking anywhere on the premises. Please use appropriate language at all times.

No dogs are allowed in the arena during lessons.

No chewing gum (riders or volunteers). There is a risk of choking while riding or running with the horse.

Please wear appropriate footwear in the barn or while working with the horses to ensure safety. No open toed shoes or crocs.

Please keep noise to a minimum and put cell phones on vibrate or shut off.

Please do not take any pictures without the consent from the instructor, rider and volunteers involved.

Arrive 15min before start time of program.

All volunteers should wash hands between each rider.

All jackets must be done up, no loose scarves or dangly earrings.

A two person lift is used when lifting from a wheelchair. Please make sure the wheelchair brakes are on before lifting.

### **In and Around the Stable**

Please do not feed anything to the horses, especially not by hand, unless you have permission from the instructor.

Always lead the horse with a lead rope, even between a stall and the cross ties.

Please walk in the barn. No running.

Never allow the horse to graze while you are leading it at any time as this promotes unsafe behaviours.

Always close and latch all paddock gates and stall doors properly.

A horse should NEVER be tied to the crossties by the bit or bridle (halter only).

Please keep the barn aisle clear and clean at all times.

### **In the Arena**

Always call "DOOR" before entering the arena so as not to startle the horses.

All doors to be closed during mounting/dismounting and during the lesson.

Keep a safe distance between horses during the lesson (at least 4 metres apart)

Pay attention to the directions of the instructor.

Know the emergency procedures for a rider falling off and for exiting in case of fire.

### Assisting with Lessons

Part of the lesson is spent teaching the rider how to groom and tack up the horse. Depending on their abilities they may be very involved or they may only be able to offer minimal assistance. The instructor will inform the volunteers as to what assistance is required.

Hold cross-tie with hand while passing under the cross-ties. Do not bend down or duck under cross-ties or under the neck of the horse.

### Parts of the Horse



### Grooming

Grooming kits include

Hoof Pick – used to pick debris out of the underside of the hooves. Pick up each hoof, standing beside and facing the back of the horse, run your hand down the back of the front leg (and front of the back legs) and work the pick from heel to toe, making sure there are no small stones in the hoof and the shoes aren't loose (if applicable)



Curry comb – use it to loosen and bring dirt to the surface of the coat (not the head or legs) Working in sections from the top of the neck across the body to the haunches and tail. Use the curry comb in a circular motion

Dandy/hard brush – stiff bristled brush used to flick away dirt and dandruff and to stimulate circulation. Use the dandy brush in short flicking motions, following the direction of the hair.



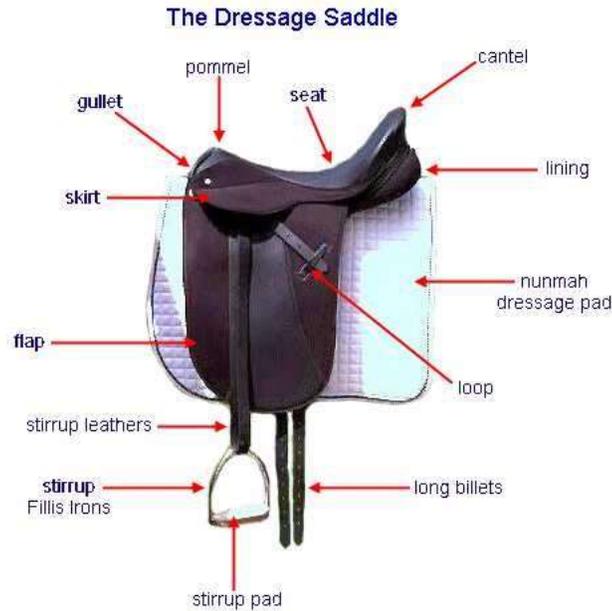
Body brush – soft bristle brush used to brush off remaining dirt and spread natural oils over the whole coat. Can be used on the entire body including the head and the legs.

### **Tacking and Untacking**

Many different saddles can be used in therapeutic riding. The most commonly used at our facility is the English saddle. The following method is for tacking up the English saddle.

#### **To saddle up a Horse:**

1. Once the horse has been properly groomed, place the saddle pad high on the withers and slide it back into position on the horse's back. Make sure the pad is centred on the horse's spine, with the Velcro straps at the front (towards the shoulder). Check the requirements for each horse, as there may be an additional pad or riser. Place that on top of the saddle pad. Place the saddle on top of the pad. Lift the saddle flap and attach the velcro pad straps to the saddle billet (girth) straps.
2. Lift the front of the saddle pad (on top of the withers) by pulling it up into the pommel of the saddle to eliminate pressure on the withers and to allow air circulation.
3. Attach girth on the right side first, utilizing the loops on the saddle pad. Attach girth on the left side (don't forget to go through loops on the pad) by doing up the buckles to a comfortable level. Tighten one hole at a time without tugging to ensure comfort of the horse. Ensure the girth is even on both sides as most of the girths are shaped to fit the horse's anatomy. The girth will be checked and tightened by the instructor before mounting.
4. Ensure the safety strap at the front of the saddle is attached. Check what stirrup length is required for that particular rider and adjust the stirrup leathers accordingly, by pulling the iron down, pulling the buckle down and lengthening or shortening to the appropriate numbered hole. Run the stirrup iron back up the leather.



### **To Unsaddle a Horse:**

1. Ensure horse is correctly standing in the cross ties with his halter on. Undo the girth on the left side. Undo the right side and lay over the saddle.
2. Un-attach the pad loops and Velcro straps.
3. Pull the saddle and pads off the horse. Return it to the locker, wipe the girth off with tack cleaning cloth and place the girth in the locker (do not leave girth lying on top of the saddle as it can leave a mark)

### **To Bridle a Horse**

1. Bridle at the left side of the horse. Place reins over the neck of the horse before you undo the cross ties. Please check the board for the required reins for the horse and rider.
2. Hold the bridle in your right hand and place the bridle over the horses face, cupping the bit in your left hand.
3. Guide the bit into the horse's mouth while lifting the bridle and gently push the right ear under the crown piece, then the other ear as well.
4. Pull the forelock out over the browband.
5. Fasten the throat latch to accommodate a fist between the band and the horse's throat.
6. Standing in front of the horse, ensure the noseband is placed under the cheek pieces and is even and fasten the noseband to accommodate 2 fingers between the band and the horse's nose. Some bridles have an extra strap called a flash which is attached under the chin below the bit.

7. Depending on the lesson, horse and rider, some horses have their halter put on top of their bridles, or a Y clip is attached to the bit for the lead line. Please check instruction board or ask the instructor.
8. Secure the reins through the safety strap to ensure they do not fall and become a trip hazard.



### To Unbridle a Horse

1. Place the reins over the horse's neck or un-attach the reins from the saddle safety strap if still attached.
2. Undo the noseband (and flash) then the throatlatch and gently slip the crownpiece forward over the ears. Gently allow bit to drop out of the mouth.
3. Put the halter on the horse's head and attach the cross-ties.
4. Please rinse off the bit and remove the clip on reins before hanging in the locker from the crownpiece.

### Duties of the Leader

- The leader will walk the horse into the arena if the rider isn't capable of it him/herself. And then circle the arena both directions to ensure the horse is familiar with the arena set-up and to give the horse a stretch and warm-up. This would include a short jog in hand at the instructor's command. When instructed, the leader will halt to allow the instructor to adjust the tack and tighten the girth.
- The instructor will mount the rider at the mounting platform or mounting block. No riders allowed on the mounting block or platform unattended.
- As a leader you are responsible for the horse. If the rider needs help adjusting equipment (reins stirrups...) it is the responsibility of the side walker or instructor. Bring the horse in off the track towards the centre and halt so that assistance can be given. DO NOT try to assist the rider while holding a horse. In the unlikely event that a rider falls off, quickly and quietly move the horse away from the rider.
- Always hold the lead rope with two hands the excess folded and NOT looped. Never wrap the rope around your hand or let it touch the ground. Keep lead above your knees. Leaders must wear gloves.
- Try to keep the horse walking at a pleasantly forward walk to increase the therapeutic benefit of riding. Please try to always provide enough room on each side for side-walkers.
- Encourage the horse as necessary by using the appropriate voice commands "Walk" "Trot" and "Halt". Always wait for the rider (when possible) to initiate the command.
- When leading the horse position yourself at the horse's head. Do not let the horse get ahead of you or drag you along behind it.
- It is important to hear the instructor's voice clearly. Therefore it is beneficial to lead the horse from the inside.
- Maintain a safe distance between horses at all times. Pass wide, halt, or turn in a medium sized circle to keep proper distance. Communicate with the rider and side-walkers before any change of movement or direction.
- Try to watch for signs of an upset horse: ears flat back, kicking, biting, stomping. Notify the instructor.

### **Duties of the Side-Walker**

- As a side-walker, you are responsible for the rider. Introduce yourself to the rider and assist to fit them correctly with a helmet and accompany them to assist in grooming and tacking up if possible.
- Accompany them into the arena. No rider is allowed on the mounting block or platform unaccompanied.
- As a side-walker you may be asked to reinforce what the instructor is asking of the rider and offer physical and emotional support. This is an extremely important role. Provide positive feedback and encouragement.
- You may be asked to provide physical support for the rider, at the hip, thigh, knee, ankle or toe. Always grip completely under saddle and keep all fingers including thumb together to prevent injury.
- The Instructor will advise you how to help each rider. In the event that your rider falls off, you must remain with your rider. Do not move the rider.
- If you need to change sides, this can be accomplished safely at the halt by communicating with the instructor as well as the leader and other side-walker, one at a time, going in front of the horse. With a rider requiring a lot of assistance, wait until a third person (normally the instructor) comes in and takes your place behind you, before switching one at a time to the new side.
- Side-walkers should not to stroke/pet or lean on the horse while rider is on.
- If a pylon or pool is knocked over please keep your attention focused on the rider. Do not attempt to pick the pylon up

### **After the Lessons**

- Rider will wait for the instructor to assist with dismounting.
- Side-walkers will stay with their rider, and assist to run up the stirrups and leaders (and rider) return the horse to the barn when possible.
- Volunteers and rider (when possible) assist to untack and give a light grooming. Return tack to proper place.
- Side-walkers assist to return helmet and ensure rider is with their guardian, aide, or parent.
- Return tack to proper locker, clean and hung in correct spot.
- Sweep up after horse. Sign out on the volunteer sheet.

## Emergency Fire Evacuation Policy

### Policy:

All persons on the property of Field of Dreams Farm and T.H.R.I.L will follow the designated procedures in the event of a fire, suspected fire or fire drill. All fire drills should be treated as if it were a real fire situation.

### Procedures:

The person who discovers the fire should yell "FIRE" to alert others. The instructor will direct someone to call 911 and someone to work the fire extinguisher (if safe to do so), while the area is evacuated.

Fire extinguishers are located in the following places:

- Outside both feed room doors
- Outside each entrance to the indoor arena
- Viewing lounge beside east door (the one by the steps)

The person who telephones the fire department will report back to the instructor, then wait to meet the fire personnel and direct them to the fire.

If a lesson is in progress, the instructor will evacuate the area and dismount the riders in the following manner:

- halt the ride;
- if possible, lead the ride out to **the designated safety area** and dismount there;
- during winter conditions, quickly dismount riders and take them out through the nearest exit door into the rear parking lot, followed by the horses, keeping riders and horses safely apart;
- designate some volunteers to be responsible for the riders;
- and remind the leaders to take horses to **the designated safety area**.

A head count will be carried out when everyone has been evacuated to the designated area.

**The designated safety area is the outdoor sand ring.**

**IT IS CRUCIAL THAT VOLUNTEERS REMAIN WITH THEIR RIDERS AT ALL TIMES.**

Leaders must follow the instructor's directions. Move quietly and quickly – THE SAFETY OF RIDERS AND VOLUNTEERS IS OF PRIMARY CONCERN.

Under no circumstance does anyone return to the barn for the horses. The fire department has all the equipment necessary and all firefighters are trained in the removal of animals from fire.

**Building evacuation exits:**

Barn: Evacuate all persons through the closest exit. Each wing of the barn has multiple exits.

Viewing room: Evacuate all persons from closest exit.

Arena: Evacuate through the man door and garage door on the south wall.

**Horse evacuation procedure:**

All personnel should stay well away from the barn. The fire department will deal with any horses in the barn.

However, if the fire is in a location away from the barn where it is possible to remove horses from the barn:

- Take the emergency halters, lead ropes and towels for blindfolds.
- Direct someone to close the doors between the barn and the fire location.
- Cover the horses' eyes with towels secured by the halter.
- Lead the horses out of the barn through the nearest exit.

NOTE- Only experienced handlers should attempt to lead horses out of this situation – the smell of smoke will make even the quietest horse scared and difficult to handle.

## **Incident Report Policy**

**Policy:**

An incident report will be completed whenever an accident or potentially dangerous situation occurs in the course of the operations of T.H.R.I.L. and Field of Dreams Farm. Each incident will be reviewed by the Executive and Head Instructor, where necessary, corrective measures will be taken to prevent future incidents of a similar nature. On an annual basis, the Executive and Head Instructor will also complete an overall review of incidents that have occurred in the past year to look for trends and discuss recommendations for preventative changes.

**Procedures:**

1. The instructor will call the entire ride to a halt.
2. Each leader and all side-walkers are to stay with their own horse and rider.
3. The instructor will go quickly to the fallen rider.
4. The instructor will determine which side-walkers should assist. ONLY the instructor will give direction and instructions. Parents or spectators may be used to help.
5. The instructor will send for a blanket (which should be available in the barn, clean and wrapped) and the first aid kit.
6. The instructor will have one person call an ambulance, depending on the severity of the incident.

A. Only in the case of minor injuries will the person be allowed to move. Once the parent/ guardian arrives they should be advised to take the patient to a hospital or doctor to be checked out, if this is thought appropriate. The procedure is the same for staff members and volunteers.

B. In all other cases, an ambulance is to be called. The patient is not to be moved, neither is their helmet to be removed. Keep the patient warm. Any reasonable first aid is to be administered, e.g., ice packs to swollen areas.

7. The instructor should stay with the injured rider. If this is more than a minor injury, the remaining riders should be dismounted. However, the instructor should decide where it is most important for him/her to be with the patient or supervising the dismounting. This will depend on the expertise of those present.

8. If this is a minor injury, the rider may sit out for a while and the lesson be continued. The rider may be mounted again before the end of the lesson or it may be decided to wait until the following lesson. The instructor is the most familiar with the rider and therefore should determine the best course of action.

9. If a rider has fallen, it is MOST important that they be checked either by the family doctor or at the hospital.

10. **ALWAYS** complete an incident report. If parents or a rider refuse a visit to the hospital, this should be recorded on the incident form.

11. The official Incident Form will be completed by the instructor. Once completed, it will be signed by all those involved and submitted to the Head Instructor.

12. The wording is very important on this form. Each person will be instructed in the appropriate information needed for the final report.

13. The most important point to remember when an incident of any kind occurs is that several people DO NOT rush to the injured rider, thereby leaving the rider for whom they are responsible unattended. A calm, controlled atmosphere is essential.

1. It is recommended that an incident drill be carried out with each class so that the majority of the volunteers know what is expected of them.
2. Forms are kept on record for seven years.
3. When possible have this form completed, including the Health Card #, and copied prior to the arrival of the paramedics. The copy can then be handed to them. This saves time and speeds transportation to the hospital with all pertinent information already completed.

## **Our Thanks**

Thanks to you, our volunteers, we can offer a truly remarkable program that allows children youth and adults with special needs enjoy the amazing therapy of learning to ride a horse. We are indebted to you for your contribution and commitment.

## **Mission Statement**

T.H.R.I.L. is a not-for-profit organization that aims to improve the quality of life for mentally and physically challenged children, youth and adults by providing equine therapy by certified instructors.

Riders will experience the joy and thrill of being on a trained therapy horse, while working on their balance, strength and coordination and improving their self- confidence, self-esteem, processing, communication and socialization skills.

Our aim is to provide quality, insured instruction and therapy on horseback at minimal cost to the participants with the assistance of donations, discounts from local businesses and volunteers from the community.

**T.H.R.I.L**

**A non-profit organization located at**

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