



THERAPEUTIC RIDING PROGRAM

P.O. Box 1820 223-10th Ave. N. Creston BC, V0B 1G0 ph. (250) 428-2296 fax 428-229 sschmidt.cdsc1@shawlink.ca

HORSE HANDLER

REPORTS TO: Instructor

PREREQUISITES FOR HORSE HANDLER

- Minimum age – 16
- Familiar and comfortable with horse
- Completion of therapeutic riding orientation session
- Completion of therapeutic riding horse handling training session
- Able to walk briskly over uneven terrain in all weathers
- Able to run beside horse for brief periods
- Able to control horse

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Primary responsibility is to lead the horse and keep him under control at all times. A good handler anticipates problems and acts in such a way as to avoid them. While your priority is the horse, you must also stay aware of the rider, the Instructor, sidewalkers and your environment.. Offer feedback to instructor and/or program director either in the lesson log book or verbally.

Before Mounting

- Assist with grooming and tacking up
- Check that horse, tack and equipment are as indicated for the rider you are assigned to. List will be posted.
- Lead horse into ring and line up if rider is unable to
- Assist rider to lead horse into ring if he/she is able

Mounting

- Make sure you are familiar with the mounting procedure used with the rider you are assigned to. Rider may mount from the ground, ramp or mounting block. If appropriate, the rider will lead their horse in
- Move the horse into position as straight and as close as possible to the block or ramp if being used
- Hold the horse as still as possible, stand “toes to shoulders” to the side of the horse and gently contain him – do not be too restrictive as this will cause the horse to toss his head and move around
- **NO RIDER WILL MOUNT OR DISMOUNT UNLESS THE INSTRUCTOR IS PRESENT AND REQUESTS THEM TO DO SO**
- After the rider is mounted and balanced, the handler will be directed by the rider or the Instructor to move off at a walk. **MOVING THE HORSE WITHOUT THE RIDER BEING INFORMED AND READY CAN CAUSE A SUDDEN LOSS OF BALANCE.**
- Leave the ramp as straight as possible allowing the Instructor to get off the ramp without having to jump for it!



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While Mounted

- Lead from the left side of the horse most of the time.
- Exceptions – during some games and when on the right rein in the arena.
- NEVER hit a horse while a rider is on
- Keep both hands on the lead rope. Place your right hand on the lead approximately 6 – 12” from the halter. The remaining portion of the lead is held folded in a figure of 8, neatly and safely in the left hand.
- Never put your fingers through any rings on the halter or bridle – if the horse throws its head, you could break a finger
- Do not wrap the lead rope around any part of your body as you could be dragged if the horse spooks
- It is necessary to keep the lead rope between the reins otherwise it will interfere with the “aids” given by the rider and could confuse the horse and cause him to resist. Please ensure that the reins do not hang down to one side. Horses can step through reins that are dangling down and an accident could result.
- To move a horse forward, give the verbal command “and walk on” or “and trot” or cluck, move your right hand forward, then step forward yourself. Do not look at the horse as you lead it forward.
- Be aware of the rider’s ability to control the horse. If the rider is controlling the horse, give him/her enough time to process information and attempt to direct the horse.
- When handling a horse while a rider is controlling the horse with the reins, allow more slack in the lead (move further away from the horse’s head) so you don’t influence the horse unless it becomes necessary for safety reasons. If you are both sending strong signals the horse will become confused and will not attend to the rider’s signals as he should
- Avoid sharp turns with an inexperienced rider or a rider with poor balance, this may cause loss of balance and possibly a fall..
- Lead at an even pace. The handler must be alert to the speed, quality and direction of the horse’s pace. A regular rhythmic pace is necessary for the rider to feel and learn the gaits and for the rider’s body to benefit from the movement
- Always leave enough room for the sidewalkers along the fences and around obstacles
- If you must stop to make tack adjustments or talk to your student, move off the track to the center of the ring to do so. Remember to warn your rider and sidewalkers of your intentions
- Be sure to keep at least one horse length between horses in a small area and two when possible
- Once the lesson has started it is important that the horse handler be alert and pay close attention. The Instructor will address the student by name rather than the name of the horse or volunteer
- When halted, stand “toes to shoulders”, slightly to the side of the horse, using the “quarter system”
- When leading with sidewalkers, position yourself by the horse’s head to allow room for them
- When going from walk to trot, move from a walk to a fast walk into a trot, then from a trot to a fast walk then to a walk. This will make the transition smooth and will not throw the rider off balance
- Pulling the horse will distort his gait and will cause him to move crookedly
- Never trot the horse unless requested to do so by the Instructor. Check to see that the student and sidewalkers are prepared before roaring off! When trotting, keep the horse in as straight a line as possible and at an even pace.
- Do not trot around corners unless specifically told to do so by the Instructor



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- If the horse should shy or suddenly pull, release the lead in the right hand, but maintain your hold with the left hand and go with the horse's movement. If you go with the horse's movement and THEN ask him to halt, you will have a better chance of bringing him under control.
- NEVER TOTALLY LET GO OF THE LEAD IF A RIDER IS MOUNTED
- Falls may happen. If a rider, the horse handler must take care of the horse – a horse left unattended is an added danger

Dismounting – See Mounting

After Dismounting

- Ensure that stirrups are run up and the reins are secured out of the way before removing horse. The rider may or may not do these themselves.
- Assist rider to lead horse away if he/she is able
- Assist rider to untack and groom horse if he/she is able
- Remove horse and tie up safely in designated area
- Untack if horse is not being used again, or if a tack change is required