

Volunteer Manual



Welcome to Windrush!

This manual is meant to help guide your work as a volunteer in our equine-assisted activities and therapies programs. It contains ideas and advice that we've developed over time and is meant to be a supplement to your orientation and training, not a substitute.

Please take a moment to look through the information here and join us in our efforts to constantly evolve as a premier therapeutic riding facility. And, thank you!

At Windrush, volunteers are the strength of our program. We greatly appreciate your interest and time. And we couldn't do it without you!

Windrush Farm Mission Statement

Windrush expands and enriches the personal, emotional and physical abilities of all those we serve by partnering with our horses and the environment.

Our History

In 1964, equipped with the firm belief that "all of us, disabled or not, are capable of more than we think," accomplished horsewoman Marjorie V. Kittredge put six learning-disabled and emotionally challenged students from the Gifford School in Cambridge on her own horses and founded Windrush Farm, one of the first therapeutic riding centers in the United States.

Since then Windrush has expanded to provide equine-assisted activities to children and adults with a wide range of psychological, emotional, physical, learning and developmental disabilities. We aim to promote and celebrate excellence in all that we do, and continually evaluate our programs to insure that we are operating to the highest and safest standards. We have achieved Premier Therapeutic Riding Center accreditation from the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.), hosted the Massachusetts Special Olympics Equestrian Fall Tournament since 1992, and been repeatedly named a Massachusetts Horse Farm of Distinction. The numerous accolades we have received are testament to our position as a leader in the field, but it is the achievements of our students and the opportunities they have received that we value the most.

In the years since 1964, we have been proud to help thousands of individuals with disabilities sit taller, grow stronger and become more confident. Each year more than 500 invaluable volunteers invest tens of thousands of hours of their time in the Windrush programs. Thanks to them, each year we can continue to provide services more than 2000 individuals, including children and adults with disabilities, veterans and military-connected families, survivors of human trafficking, and underserved youth.

Our Horses

The Windrush horses are invaluable educators and therapy partners. Therapeutic horse activities have long been shown to benefit to the educational, physical, emotional and social activities of humans. A horse doesn't care what we look like, or if we can see, if we just got out of a wheelchair, or what happened to us at school or home today. Horses live in the moment. They respond to gentleness, kindness and patience, not appearances or expectations. Gaining the trust and respect of a 1000-pound animal takes self-control and builds self-esteem. Taking care of an animal, especially a large animal, teaches children and adults to accept responsibilities. Learning to work with and ride a horse requires determination and perseverance. Our horses encourage their riders to stretch, to improve posture, to correct balance, to work on coordination. Their rhythmic movement can soothe spasms and strengthen muscles. They can carry our clients outside to feel the fresh air, the sunshine, the breeze. Horses offer the opportunity to sit tall, feel powerful, have fun, be in charge, be free.

The therapy horses at Windrush Farm come from a variety of backgrounds. Some have had careers as show horses; others were used for dressage or trail riding. Some are on loan, some are donated, and others are purchased. Each has his or her own unique personality and needs. We try to choose horses that have an exceptional level of tolerance, a gentle and well-mannered temperament, general good health, and the sound rhythmic movement important to therapeutic riding. Horses that meet the criteria are accepted on a two-month trial, placed in an extensive training program, and gradually introduced to classes as our instructors continue to evaluate their progress.

Our horses receive the very best care. Each horse is on a schedule to assure good overall health. This includes veterinary care, hoof care, tooth care and a de-worming program. In addition, each horse's work schedule is tracked and recorded in compliance with PATH Intl. standards and guidelines. Our volunteers play a critical role in preparing our horses for classes and assisting with their daily care.

Our Programs

Windrush offers weekly mounted and unmounted lesson programs during the school year. Most classes are held Monday - Friday, 8:30 - 6:30, although we do have limited and occasional special classes on the weekends. There are three regular sessions during the school year -- fall (September- December), winter (January & February), and spring (March- June). During the summer, we conduct special five-day programs. Windrush is closed on major holidays and most public school vacations. We follow the North Andover Public School System for weather closing and delays.

School Year -- Seasonal Sessions

Riding and Horsemanship Lessons – Therapeutic, Recreational and Integrated

Windrush offers riding and horsemanship lessons -- all taught by certified professionals -- for children and adults with and without special needs. Our group lessons, which generally include up to five clients, encourage the development of positive social skills and provide an opportunity for clients to learn from one another. During riding lessons, we focus on balance, posture, strength, flexibility, coordination, and self-assurance. We also place a strong emphasis on horsemanship, including grooming, tacking, leading, horse behavior, basic care, responsibility and empathy. Our goal is to help *all* clients become as independent, capable and competent as possible.

Hippotherapy

Hippotherapy, a treatment strategy used by occupational, physical, or speech therapists, is generally for clients whose disabilities are too involved to participate in a group lesson. The therapist uses the rhythm, cadence and three-dimensional movement of the horse to stimulate reactions in the client's body. Hippotherapy may be particularly helpful for those with neuromuscular disorders and cognitive or sensory processing challenges, and may be used to treat individuals as young as 2 years old.

Barn Buddies and Vocational Programs

Our "Barn Buddies" and vocational programs pair a client with one of our specially trained volunteer coaches to work on individually developed goals in the barn. Clients have a hands-on learning experience, performing tasks around the farm that help them build everyday living and vocational skills as well as a sense of responsibility. Although it is primarily used for clients with disabilities, this program can also benefit those who are too young to volunteer or adults without horse experience who are interested in learning more.

Special Populations

We also create and run programs that are designed to meet the particular needs of specific populations, including veterans and military-connected families, survivors of human trafficking, at-risk and underserved youth, hospitalized children and others. Some of these programs are one-time, one-day events; others may be held weekly during regular seasonal sessions.

Read, Write and Ride

This weekly “equine facilitated learning” program puts 4th- 6th graders who need a boost with reading, writing, or social/emotional skills in a completely new environment (a farm!) and presents them with challenges totally outside of their comfort zone (groom! tack! ride!). When they arrive at Windrush, the group splits into two teams. As the “Riders” put on helmets and learn to groom, tack, lead and ride, the “Readers” read and write special short stories that feature Windrush ponies. After 45 minutes they switch so each child has a complete experience designed to help grow skills – reading, writing, confidence, responsibility, cooperation -- they can use for success when they leave the farm.

Summer -- Weekly Programs

Giddy-Up and Grow

In summer we hold all-day, week-long group programs that immerse underserved youth at-risk, ages 9 -14, in a complete outdoor learning experience combining horseback riding, animal husbandry, gardening, reading and writing. Clients work with energetic volunteers who provide them with new experiences, opportunities for skill development, and extra attention to reinforce academic skills as they read books and write stories. Clients from City-to-Saddle, Northeast Behavioral Health, Health & Education Services, the Department of Mental Health, St. Ann’s Home and School, Esperanza Academy, the Collegiate Charter School of Lowell, and others have benefitted from this program.

Pony Pals Summer Program

This structured five-day summer program promotes fun and safety in a social setting while teaching basic horsemanship, horse management skills and riding to clients. Pony Pals, held from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, is open to any child with or without special needs who has the stamina to take care of their “own” pony for a week. Clients may experience a wide variety of activities -- from barn cleaning and bobbing for apples, to grooming and decorating their horses -- and are grouped based on age and riding ability, from beginners through more advanced riders.

Volunteer Opportunities

Assistance is needed in all aspects of our program and there are many opportunities for volunteering -- barn, facilities, fundraising, special events (if you'd like to know more about any of these, just ask us!) -- but weekly lesson program volunteers are the backbone of our program.

Program lessons, which generally have one to five clients, may include mounted or unmounted activities, games and skills, and be held inside or outdoors. Each client has an individual team that may include some combination of horse handler, one or two sidewalkers, and/or spotters. Volunteers are generally asked to commit for at least one session (sessions run between 7 and 15 weeks).

As a lesson volunteer, ideally you'll be working as part of a consistent team that generally includes:

- Instructor -- certified professional, manages the entire class environment, provides instruction and support to clients and volunteers
- Client -- see Our Programs
- Horse -- specially trained, from a variety of backgrounds
- **Horse Handler** -- responsible for leading and managing the horse during the lesson, including bringing horse to the arena and returning horse to the barn. Needs to have significant recent horse experience and a willingness to learn our horsemanship techniques to keep handling skills consistent for our horses.
- **Sidewalker(s)** -- walks and jogs alongside the horse while the client is riding. Responsible for helping to keep the client safe and achieve goals in class. This may involve a safety hold of the client for an entire lesson, or more a hands-off approach depending on the needs of the client. The sidewalker is an extension of the instructor, and helps to guide and coach the client through the lesson.

Volunteer Policies and Procedures

Commitment and Availability

Your support is critical to the success of our program and the safety of our clients. Consistency can be very important for our clients, so we ask all volunteers directly involved with our riding program (horse handlers and sidewalkers) to commit a minimum of one and a half (1 ½) hours each week on the same day and time for the length of a session.

Cancellations

As part of that commitment we ask that you reserve cancellations for emergencies. If you do need to cancel, please contact Windrush as soon as possible so that a replacement can be found. In the event that your rider has canceled with us, we will do everything we can to contact you in advance via phone, email or text, so please be sure we have all your contact information on file. We follow the North Andover Public School System for weather closing and delays. <http://www.northandoverpublicschools.com/>

Arrival and Sign In

When you arrive, please go to the classroom in the indoor arena first (remember to call out “DOOR!” before you duck under the bar to the indoor arena) to sign the Volunteer Log and pick up your name tag. Sidewalker volunteers should arrive at least 15 minutes BEFORE the start of class in order to assist riders from their cars; horse handlers need to arrive 30 minutes BEFORE to assist in the barn and bring horses to the arena. Please plan to stay 15 minutes after the end of class.

Dress Code

Please wear appropriate footwear and clothing. Sturdy boots or shoes are a necessity (open-toed shoes or sandals can be dangerous). Be prepared to be inside or out in any weather -- in winter: think layers, hand-warmers, good gloves; in warmer weather: sunscreen, bug spray, water. Long pants are usually good; dangling jewelry and scarves may be unsafe; perfumes can attract bees and other biting insects.

Smoking & Alcohol Policy

Windrush Farm is a smoke-free environment. There is no smoking outside or inside on any part of our property. This includes all walkways, fields, driveways, parking lots, trails, arenas, office area, and barns. If you need to smoke, please do so in your car and extinguish and dispose of your cigarette/cigar/pipe in your car. There is a no-tolerance policy with regard to alcohol and other controlled substances. Staff reserves the right to require a volunteer to leave the premises if they appear to be impaired.

Dog Policy

We are all animal lovers, but in order to keep our clients safe, our horses content, and our property as clean as possible, we ask dog owners to please keep dogs on leash at all times. With the exception of service dogs, dogs may only be walked on the road and on the trails near the indoor arena. Please do not approach any horses with your dog, as you may not know what the animals' reactions will be.

Conduct, Behavior and Dismissal

As a volunteer, you are a representative of our organization. All volunteers are expected to set a good example for the students. Inappropriate language, disruptive behavior or behavior that threatens the safety of others is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. After a first attempt to correct the behavior, offenders will be asked to leave the premises by a staff member and withdrawal from the program will be immediate. If you are subject to any type of inappropriate behavior by a student, please notify a staff member immediately; do not approach the student.

Communication & Confidentiality Policy

Out of respect for those who take part in the programs at Windrush, we ask that you keep all client information confidential. The professional relationship between Windrush and our clients requires there be no disclosure of any information about an individual client without proper authorization. By attending an orientation and training session you acknowledge an understanding of this policy.

Safety

Always take safety -- including your own! -- into consideration when working with horses and clients. During training we will cover emergency procedures, how to understand a horse's body language, how to handle horses in different situations, and proper safety procedures. Our horses are specially trained therapy partners, but all horses are prey animals with strong flight and herd instincts; they live in the moment; have a different field of vision and can't see right in front of their noses (so stroke necks, not noses). Before approaching any horse: stop, breathe, offer the horseman's handshake -- approach **slowly** at an angle with arm extended, hand curled under, stop a foot or so away to assess horse's behavior, then -- if appropriate -- slowly stroke neck, **not nose**. Please respect the instructor at all times, avoid "staff only" areas, share any concerns about horse or client behavior with your instructor, and let us know if you have any health conditions that might affect your ability to assist others. And please never hand feed the Windrush horses (treats may be added to their feed buckets by barn staff for their next meal).

Working with people with disabilities

Working with a special needs population may be a new experience for some volunteers. At Windrush, we try to treat *everyone* -- our clients, our horses, each other -- the same way: with respect and kindness, being considerate and sensitive to individual needs. If you're ever uncertain of what to do or how to act, just ask the instructor how you can be of assistance. These basic tips on how to make everyone feel welcome are edited from an excellent article by the United Spinal Association.

Ask before you help. Just because someone has a disability, don't assume they need help. Offer assistance only if the person appears to need it. A person with a disability will often communicate when they need help. And if they do want help, ask how before you act. Be polite and respectful.

Be sensitive about physical contact. Some people depend on their arms for balance. Grabbing them, even if your intention is to assist, could knock them off balance. Avoid patting a person on the head or touching their wheelchair, scooter or cane; many people consider their equipment part of their personal space.

Think before you speak. Always speak directly to the person with a disability, not to his companion, aide or interpreter (especially important with people who use a wheelchair). As you would with anyone, try to maintain good eye contact and speak clearly.

Put the person first. Treat them like the person they are, not the disability they have. Say "person with a disability" rather than "disabled person." Many people dislike jargon, euphemistic terms like "physically challenged" and "differently abled." Avoid negative, disempowering words like "victim" or "sufferer." Say "person who uses a wheelchair" rather than "confined to a wheelchair" or "wheelchair bound."

Tips for Sidewalkers

When You Arrive...

- Please come 15 minutes BEFORE the lesson starts (and plan to stay 15 minutes after). Call out “DOOR” before ducking under bar to enter indoor. Sign in the notebook in the classroom in the indoor and put on your nametag.
- Your instructor or volunteer coordinator will tell you where to go, but generally you’ll meet at the indoor arena to assist clients from cars, fit helmets, check in with caregivers and talk about the class. If you’re going to be working with a Barn Buddy or a class where sidewalkers help clients groom and tack, refer to Tips for Horse Handlers.
- **Try to get to know your rider** -- *Ideally* you’ll meet with your instructor before each session to discuss a client’s special needs -- including diagnosis, goals specific to riding, forms of communication (verbal, sign, facial expressions), likes/dislikes/fears. But if schedules haven’t allowed a meeting or you’re substituting, try to quickly touch base with the instructor or another volunteer for a few hints. Ask if there is something specific you should work on with the client (e.g. moving hands independently, relaxing, staying in middle of horse). If possible, before class, touch base with the rider/parents/teacher just to see how the day has been going or if something happened that may affect the ride.

Mounting

- Horse handlers and horses will generally enter the arena, walk down the right wall as far as possible, turn left, come up the center line, and line horses up to await mounting. Clients mount one at a time.
- Sidewalkers follow instructor’s directions on where to stand and what to do -- you may be escorting a client up to the ramp, helping get someone out of a chair, lifting a leg over the saddle, or just waiting at the end of the mounting area. When the rider is ready, prompt them to ask (if possible) the horse to “walk on.” Apply leg or torso support as instructed. Any adjustment of stirrups or rider position should be done in the center of the ring (not at the ramp) where the instructor and horse handler will also double-check the girth.

During the Lesson

- Your job is to keep the rider as secure as possible, but you need to keep yourself safe too! In general, position yourself next to the rider’s leg -- NOT in back of the saddle -- even if you are not holding onto their leg. Always move slowly and quietly. If you need to switch sides: depending on the stability of your rider, you may need to communicate with your team, stop, come into the center, and/or ask the instructor for help, then breathe and slowly pass in front of the horse, never behind.

- Learn the **“hand over thigh”** hold -- face front, fingers holding front of saddle, forearm resting on rider’s thigh. For extra stability, place your other hand on the rider’s ankle. You may need to do this consistently for the entire lesson, for only part of the class (e.g., during trots), or not at all. When using **gait belts**, avoid hanging on to strap or resting your elbow on the horse’s back.
- As a sidewalker you are an extension of the instructor. Try not to talk over your instructor, but you do want to make sure the rider understands the task to be performed. You may need to quietly repeat or reinforce what the instructor has said (“Shorten your reins” “Put both hands on your helmet”). Talk quietly to the other sidewalkers and horse handler. Try to develop some working cues -- e.g., if the rider has wiggled their feet to ask the horse to walk, you might say “nice job squeezing your legs” so your horse handler know it’s OK to walk on.
- Be safety conscious and aware of what’s happening with the client and the horse. If the client needs more time or does not understand the task, if a rider is leaning to one side, if a horse is uncomfortable (pinned ears, swishing tail, head raised) share information with your team. Don’t be afraid to take the initiative and work together to resolve a problem. If you need the attention of the instructor, bring your team into center, stop, and let the instructor know you need help.
- Be aware of your client’s balance. **Correct a rider’s position by moving their pelvis and torso, not their arm.** If the rider slides toward you, try to push him back to the midline of the saddle/horse; if he slides away from you, encourage the other sidewalker to push the rider back.
- Help clients “own their ride.” Give riders the opportunity to learn, to do, and to make mistakes. Give them the time to process and perform the task (each rider will vary).

Dismounting and After Class

- Dismounting usually happens in the center of ring, at the ramp, or on the rubber mat. The instructor will tell you where to stand (e.g., beside, not directly in front of, horse) and what to do (e.g., help lift rider’s leg over back of horse).
- After the rider dismounts, when appropriate, walk the client back to their parent/teacher. Offer any positive, specific comments on how the client did that day (“terrific steering!” “great trot”). If you’re in a class where clients are going back to the barn see Tips for Horse Handlers. Share any pertinent information about the class with the instructor. Remember to go back into the classroom, return your nametag, sign yourself out of the notebook...and help yourself to snacks!

Tips for Horse Handlers

IN THE BARN

When you arrive

- Please come 30 minutes BEFORE the lesson starts to help assist in the barn (and plan to stay 15 minutes after). Stop at the classroom to sign in and get your name tag, then go up to the big barn across the street. Check your assignment in the barn notebook or ask the instructor or barn staff.

Approaching the horse

- Before you enter a stall, double-check that the lead rope is attached to halter.
- Stop outside the stall, breathe, assess the horse's facial expression and body language.
- In stall, move slowly, approach the horse at angle with the "horseman's handshake": your arm extended, hand curled under, stop about a foot away and wait for acknowledgment (horse looks at you, accepts handshake, smells you), be patient, stroke neck not nose -- put rope over horse's neck, turn and face front, halter, attach cross ties to noseband.

Grooming

- Run hands over horse to check for any cuts, missing shoes, swelling in legs, heat in feet, general health (especially if horse has been out all night). If worried, alert barn manager. Groom front to back, top to bottom. If horse seems anxious, try doing everything on one side first.
- Cross slowly in front of nose, not under neck. Breathe! Ask horse to back up politely (hand on chest), try to keep two hands on horse at all times, bend from waist and knees so you can move quickly-- do not kneel on the ground.
- Curry -- circular motions, avoid face and below knees, be aware of horse's reaction.
- Hard brush -- short, flicking strokes in direction of hair, may need to brush gently below knees if muddy.
- Soft brush -- everywhere, careful of eyes, long soft polishing strokes.
- Hoof pick -- if possible, start with foot without weight on it; position yourself facing the rear. With hind legs, position horse and yourself so you are safe and have enough distance from wall. Run hand down leg, gently squeeze, "pick up," gently lean on shoulder or thigh. Hold foot low to ground -- with hand on toe -- so as not to stress joints. Place down, don't drop. If you are aware of any foul smells (thrush) tell barn manager.
- Tail -- pull around to side, may brush bottom but be careful not to pull out hairs, pick shavings out with fingers

Tacking

- Double check notebooks and saddle rack to make sure you have everything (correct size girth, breastplate, rainbow reins, adaptive tack, etc.)
- Saddle pad -- should extend beyond saddle, place high on withers and smooth as you bring back so hair lays flat, middle of pad over spine. Bounce pad (if called for) -- should extend beyond saddle. Saddle -- lift up so horse can see, pause and gently place on back, look at ears and face for calming signals, be S-L-O-W to help train bad behaviors out. Adjust saddle and gently pull pad up into gullet so there is a pocket of space at the withers.
- Girth -- slow, slow, slow. Put left/near side girth on lowest hole. On right side, s-l-o-w-l-y run up girth until it starts to feel tight (then leave it alone)
- Bridle -- As you remove cross ties, put reins over head ½-way up neck, remove halter. Stand next to horse facing forward. Hold bridle by top of headpiece OR hold in right hand ½-way up cheek pieces, left hand hooked through bit; slide right hand under horse's chin so you can use wrist to keep nose down if necessary. Gently lift up, bit flat in hand, until it just touches horse's lips (put thumb inside if necessary, wiggle jaw, avoid banging teeth). Pull up, avoid eyes, and fold horse's ears forward into browband, one at a time. Stand in front and make sure everything's straight. Throatlatch -- 4 fingers; noseband -- 1 finger. (on hackamore: noseband should be tight enough so it does not slide back and forth with rein contact).
- Jump strap -- adjust so it can be reached from saddle.
- Halter goes on over bridle, drop reins down through noseband. Noseband of halter goes above noseband of bridle. If you need to cross-tie horse again, attach cross ties to halter (not bit!)
- If necessary -- hard muzzle (sides first, front over both nosebands, then back); soft muzzle -- over noseband, under bit, velcro in back); fly masks (go over bridle and halter for class); fly spray outside to avoid contamination of water buckets, etc., with horses facing barn (horses who need natural horse spray, with green tape on bottle, are written on whiteboard), start low on legs, never near face.

Leading

- Hold rope with two hands...one about arm's length from clip, one near end of rope (figure 8 or fold if long), never wrap a rope around your hand! Center the horse in the stall and then open door all the way; in the small barn, be sure the latch is open all the way.
- Handler & client (if present) leave stall first, then horse (client has reins on left, handler has lead rope on right).
- Ask the client if they're ready. Say horse's name and "walk on", stand between horse's ear and shoulder so horse can see you, bring up your energy (bend head &

shoulder/lift arm/ touch neck,). Watch for horses with heads out who may nip. If your horse needs encouragement, go back to the shoulder and start again, or walk off to one side, or try hooking finger briefly in throat latch, or slide hand closest to horse up and “scoop.”. NO PULLING in front of them -- it’s especially harsh with bit in mouth.

- When walking near hay or grass, you may want to softly take the cheek piece of the horse’s halter in your hand to avoid “snacking.”
- Look where you want to go and where you want your horse to go. Keep at least one horse-length -- preferably two -- between the horses in front and back of you when going down to the arena. The whole class leaves barn area as a “herd,” stops before road crossing, and crosses street together.

THE ARENA

Prepare for Mounting

- Call out “Door!” when about 25 feet out. Enter arena, walk down right wall as far as possible, turn left, come up center line. Line horses up on center line facing mounting instructions -- one horse-length sideways between.
- THE SIX STEPS:
 - 1) Double check pads -- undo girth to correct if they’ve slipped (pulling across horses spine is painful), then **s-l-o-w-l-y** tighten girth -- one hole at a time, stroke horse after each hole. Smooth out any bunching in pads or girth.
 - 2) Go for a little walk -- if your horse is very “girthy” you may want to walk after each hole.
 - 3) S-l-o-w-l-y finish tightening -- one hole at a time. Check under actual girth (between legs if horse will allow), remember the white fluffy part of girth may feel loose even when girth is tight.
 - 4) Stretch front legs - two hands behind knee, arm hooked through reins (handler can hold for client), pull out straight, not to side, (safest to spread your legs and stretch horse’s leg between them), PLACE down (not drop down). If there’s time, lead your horse around the arena before class, start, stop, turn, maybe trot.
 - 5) Stirrups down -- pull leathers out and down slowly and adjust as much as possible; may want stirrup on ramp side up and over saddle (e.g. large adaptive stirrups may bang the ramp on the way in).
 - 6) Put reins over the horse’s head, check girth one more time before entering ramp area, then usually line up against wall, swinging wide to avoid the fence.
- Follow the instructor’s directions. Generally, you’ll lead in facing forward, go between ramp and mounting block, stop horse with stirrup in middle of block (unless using ramp or lift); if client is leading horse too, you go through first, stand ahead and slightly to the side (not directly in front) of horse, and send rider up steps to mount. Once the rider’s leg is clear, it’s OK to put their ramp-side

foot in stirrup, otherwise wait until horse is out of ramp area. The instructor may need to hold onto the rider's leg until safely out of area.

- Only lead off when rider/sidewalkers are ready and ask horse to "walk on."

During the lesson

- Go to center of ring to adjust stirrups and girth (not at ramp!). Re-check girth after walking (instructor should do this, but just in case...).
- Be aware of spacing -- other horses, pushing outside sidewalkers against wall
- Pay attention to your horse -- try to keep a loose lead. Watch for reactions. Try to give your horse clear cues. Use the least amount of pressure possible, but as much as you need to help the horse understand what you want.
- Avoid sharp turns -- they can unseat rider and are hard on the horse.
- Review suggestions for a horse who turns in (elbow out, finger in jugular groove or at cheek, hold right rein), gets too fast (reach under for reins), doesn't want to move (bring up your own energy, turn slightly, try hand behind elbow, finger in throatlatch, lead rope flicked behind girth), dives for grass (prevention -- timing is everything! -- hand on halter).
- Dismounting may happen in center of ring, at ramp, or on rubber mat. Again, try to stand beside, not directly in front of, horse.

Going back to the barn

- Loosen girth two holes on left side. Re-attach muzzle (if it's been taken off during class -- e.g., for a grass-diver). Again -- keep "the herd" together, cross road all at once.
- If untacking in stall, lead in, turn around to face the door, put reins over head, attach halter to cross-ties, remove bridle from underneath halter, take off all tack, brush under saddle -- keep horse on cross ties for as short a time as possible. Untie cross ties, take off halter, double latch door, attach lead rope to halter and hang.
- Rinse off bit, store saddle, bridle, and pads (put in laundry if dirty).
- Share any pertinent horse behavior issues with instructor or staff.
- Don't forget to sign out in the classroom, return your nametag, and have a snack!

Emergencies and Accidents -- Just in Case

Accidents and emergencies don't happen often, but it's important that we all know what to do if they *do* occur.

Accidents & Mounted Emergencies

No matter what happens in a class, the instructor is in charge, but sometimes things can happen very quickly -- a spooked horse, a hazard on the trail, branches or snow moving on the arena roof -- so it's important to work as a team to help keep everyone as secure and safe as possible.

If you are **the horse handler** of a horse that becomes involved in an emergency, try to stop the horse and (even if you can't) keep it as straight as possible.

If you are **sidewalking** a horse that becomes involved in an emergency, stabilize your rider using the "arm over the thigh" hold. If the rider slides *toward* you try to push them back to midline (the middle of the saddle/horse). If the rider slides *away* from you encourage the other sidewalkers to push the rider back toward you. **It is preferable to correct the rider's position by moving their pelvis and torso. Make every effort not to pull the rider by the arm.**

If you are the **horse handler** of a horse other than the horse involved in the emergency, stop your horse and try keep him calm. You may have to quietly move away from the scene of the emergency to a safe area, then stop and wait for instructions.

If you are **sidewalking** a horse other than the horse involved in the emergency, apply the "arm over thigh" hold and quietly communicate your rider's needs to the horse handler and/or the other sidewalkers. Work together to keep your rider calm.

If an **emergency dismount** becomes necessary: 1) the **horse handler** should hold the horse at a halt, or keep it as straight as possible, until the rider is fully clear of the horse and equipment. 2) The **sidewalkers should remove the stirrups and reins** from the rider. 3) The sidewalker on the "near" side, where the rider is coming off, should bend one knee to help brace and balance themselves, hugging the rider around the waist or torso (not the arms). 4) While the sidewalker on the other "off" side helps lift the rider's leg up and over the horse's back, the "near" sidewalker pulls the rider off and away from the horse, trying to slide the rider down their bent leg to break the rider's fall. 5) Once the rider has dismounted, the **horse handler** should move the horse away to a safe distance, taking care not to turn the horse's haunches into the rider as they walk the horse away, then halt and await instructions.

Fallen Rider or Medical Emergency

If a rider falls from a horse, becomes injured or has a medical emergency during a session, all horses are halted and all activity should stop and **the rider should not be moved.**

The instructor is responsible for managing the incident, including applying any necessary first aid. Volunteers may be asked to assist by retrieving a first aid kit or AED (in the classroom across from the helmets), or running to or calling the office to request assistance. (If you carry a cellphone, please add the Windrush office number -- 978-682-7855-- to your contacts!!)

The horse handler of the horse involved should take care of the horse only, carefully turning the haunches away from the rider, moving the horse away, and then halting. Sidewalkers should stay with and reassure the rider. Be prepared to give the instructor an account of what happened to the rider as they fell, to help in the assessment.

All other horse handlers should halt their horses and head them off. Leaders remain at horses' heads. All other sidewalkers are to apply "arm over thigh" support and calmly stay with and reassure their riders, awaiting further direction from the instructor.

The instructor assesses the situation to see whether the rider is able to return to the class or needs further assistance. If the rider is not injured, but chooses not to continue riding, the horse is taken away and the rider is brought to the classroom for further assessment.

If the rider is in serious condition, the emergency plan goes into effect. The instructor makes sure that the injured rider is in a safe location and **the rider is not to be moved in any way until medical personnel arrives.**

Emergency Plan

The Emergency Plan goes into effect if a rider has a suspected serious injury or loses consciousness for any period of time. As in any emergency, the instructor will take charge and give you instructions, but just so you know what to expect:

We always call 911 when a serious injury is suspected. Generally, the instructor or a volunteer will call the office and ask them to make the call on the landline. Emergency Service (911) is called, "Mutual Aid from Boxford" is requested, and the rider is given any necessary first aid and kept warm. Someone will wait by the street to direct the emergency personnel to the rider. The other riders and horses should be taken to a safe location to clear the way for the emergency vehicle.

In the event of an emergency requiring evacuation (e.g. a fire): if you are on the **office/indoor arena** side of the street, meet at the gazebo in the parking lot; if you are on the **barn side** of the street, meet at under the apple trees near the hospital pen and road and await further instructions from a staff member.

Thank you!

These are all general guidelines to help you as you volunteer -- but, as with much of life, “*it depends.*” Each horse, each day, each client can be different, so at any moment the right thing to do might *depend* on the situation. The only thing that is “always” true at Windrush is: it’s **always** OK to ask a question or ask for help from the instructor, the barn staff, another volunteer. We’re all part of a team, we all want to do the right thing, and we’re all learning and working to be better every day!

If you have any questions

or want more information, contact us at any time:

Email: volunteer@windrushfarm.org

Phone: 978-682-7855

Web: www.windrushfarm.org

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