

Horse Handler Responsibilities Fall 2020

Things to keep in mind: horses are prey animals with strong fight/flight, herd instincts; they have a different field of vision, personal space bubble, right/left brain connection; they communicate with body language and are constantly monitoring ours. So try to be aware and pay attention to your horse. Each one is different; if a horse reacts badly, instead of blaming the horse, ask yourself what **you** could do differently. (See: "It depends" at end of outline - :)

Please arrive 15-20 minutes BEFORE the lesson starts.
When you arrive.... Wait in your car for you greeter to meet you.

WASH HANDS and SIGN IN

Your greeter or instructor will give you your horse/rider/number assignment.

Please remember your number assignment for the fall session as it will not change.

Continue one at a time to hand washing station to wash hands, sign in, (use outdoor facility if needed) and proceed up to the barn one by one to your designated numbered under the tent and wait for your horse.

As soon as one person crosses the roadway, the next can proceed. There will be no more than (3) riders in a class, unless it is an unmounted program.

No one is allowed across the road or up in the barn without permission.

Proceed to the tent up in the barnyard and stand behind the chain under the tent and wait to be called.

Receiving your horse

Horseman's handshake is when you approach at angle with arm extended, hand curled under, stop and wait for acknowledgment (horse looks at you, accepts handshake, smells you), be patient.

Take your horse as your number is called and your horse is brought out.

Wait for all numbers to be called and all walk down with good spacing to the arena

Please do not touch horse or tack.

Grooming

This section is for ONLY first class of session or unmounted classes used for training
Clients in class.

Groom front to back, top to bottom. Watch for horse's signals. Talk about the horse and how the horse breathes out, comment on ears, eyes, and tail.

Comment on how the client's energy can affect the horse's energy. If horse seems anxious, try less pressure or doing everything on one side first. Pass in front of nose, not under neck. Breathe! Encourage two hands on horse at all times, bend from waist and knees so you can move quickly, do not kneel on ground.

While using the curry, avoid face and below knees, be aware of horse's reaction.

While using the hard brush make short, hard strokes in direction of hair, and you may need to brush gently below knees if muddy.

Soft brush is for everywhere, careful of eyes, long soft polishing strokes.

Hoof pick, when used, 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. Hold foot low to ground -- with hand on toe -- so as not to stress joints. Place down, don't drop. Tail -- pull around to side, may brush bottom but be careful not to pull out hairs. Explain why the tail is so important to the horse and why we do not brush it!

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 rope around hand.

Say horse's name and command (e.g. "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,). If horse needs encouragement, go back to shoulder and start again, or walk off to side, or try hooking finger briefly in throat latch, or slide hand closest to horse up and "scoop." NO PULLING in front of them -- this is very harsh with a bit in the mouth.

Look where you want to go and where you want your horse to go.

Keep two horse lengths between horses in front and back of you when going down from barnyard and in classes

Whole class leaves barnyard area as a "herd" and stops before road crossing.

THE ARENA

Prepare for Mounting

Please say "Door!"

Enter arena, walk down right wall as far as possible, turn left, stay on outside track, turn left onto center line and halt keeping a safe distance between horses.

Halt and wait for instructor.

Line horses up on center line facing mounting instructions with good spacing from each other.

DO NOT CHECK GIRTH! This is the now the Instructor's responsibility.

The STEPS are no longer needed. No stretching legs as this are also the Instructor's responsibility.

Horse Handlers now just wait for their client/number to be called into mounting area.
Client or Instructor will take stirrups down – Feel free share with the client the “how to’s”
of stirrups (taking down, measuring under armpit) Please reference video on windrushfarm.org.

Client place non dominant hand, on saddle to create saddle stability pull leathers out and down slowly -- and adjust as much as possible; be sure stirrup on ramp side is up over withers and in front of saddle on horse’s neck(e.g. Devonshire boots that may hit ramp).Ask client to do this when possible.

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With the reins over head, the Instructor checks girth one more time before entering ramp area.

Wait for Instructor to call you one by one.

Follow 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, send rider up steps to mount

When rider’s leg is clear, ask horse to halt, put offside stirrup down and put rider’s foot in, otherwise wait until horse is out of ramp area. Instructor may need to hold onto rider’s leg until safely out of area (e.g., Devonshire boots).

Only lead off when rider is ready and asks horse to “walk on.”

Let the client do the asking and walking on. Wait for their response before just leading out.

During the lesson

Go to center of ring if stirrups and girth need adjusting (not at ramp!) and WAIT FOR THE INSTRUCTOR to do this.

Instructor will always recheck girth.

Please do not pat or touch the horse unnecessarily.

If you need to quiet an anxious horse patting is permitted. Otherwise contact with the horse is not permitted.

Be aware of spacing -- other horses, pushing outside side walkers against wall

Give cues in steps of intensity (use the least amount of effort possible, but as much as you need to help the horse understand what you want.)

Avoid sharp turns as they are hard on horse and can unseat the rider.

Review emergency procedures in volunteer manual (spooked horse, rider fall, seizures, bees, etc) and emergency dismount (both feet out of stirrups, side walker (if there) helps get leg over up and over, braces leg, pulls rider off. “It depends.”

Pay attention to horse and try to keep a loose lead while watching for reactions.

Review suggestions for horse who turns in (elbow out, finger in jugular groove, 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 , dives for grass. Remember, prevention and timing is everything!

Dismounting will occur in the center of ring, at ramp, or on rubber mat. Stand beside, not directly in front of, horse. Instructor assists as needed.

Going back to the barn

Instructor will loosen girth two holes on left side.

Clients may put stirrups up or Instructor will run them up.

Before leaving ring, STOP at rubber mat and spray reins and lead rope, pommel, and neck of horse with alcohol supplied. Feel free to spray your own hands as needed.

Instructor will re-attach muzzle (if it's been taken off during class -- e.g., for a grass-diver).

Always keep "the herd" together, cross road all at once with Instructor in the road.

Line up in 1-2-3 order, behind the white painted squares, facing the barn and wait for barn help to untack. Please do not touch tack.

Things to keep in mind: "It depends." These are general guidelines to help us handle our horses more consistently. But with horses, "it depends" -- each horse, each day, each client is different, so at any moment the right thing to do might depend on the situation. The only thing that is "always" true is: it's ***always*** OK to ask a question or ask for help from the instructor, the barn staff, another volunteer. The more we know about horses, the more there is to learn, and we're all learning every day!