



# Windrush Farm Volunteer Manual

## Our Mission

*To promote confidence, independence, and well-being in children and adults with physical, cognitive, or emotional challenges through therapeutic riding and horse-related programs.*

Windrush Farm  
479 Lacy Street  
North Andover, MA 01845  
p: 978.682.7855  
f: 888.642.4907  
w: [windrushfarm.org](http://windrushfarm.org)  
e: [volunteer@windrushfarm.org](mailto:volunteer@windrushfarm.org)

## Welcome to Windrush Farm!

Thank you for taking the time to read this manual, in which you will find information pertinent to your experience as a volunteer at Windrush Farm.

Our goal is to offer our clients a positive experience that addresses each client's strengths and builds opportunities that enhance client goals. It is our wish to challenge our clients to fulfill their goals and even exceed their expectations both physically and mentally. You are a big part of that.

Please familiarize yourself with our policies and procedures and join us in our efforts to continuously evolve as a premier therapeutic riding facility. We greatly appreciate your interest and time. We could not do it without you!

All our best,

The Windrush Farm Staff

Windrush Farm's Mask and Vaccination Policy as of February 18, 2022

We will no longer require masks outside at Windrush. This includes when in the barns and in the indoor arena. We will still require masks in the office. The office and viewing room will remain closed to the public. We will no longer require proof of vaccinations. We appreciate and encourage everyone to be vaccinated

## 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 clients 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 Farm 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 ensure 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 clients 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, approximately 500 invaluable volunteers invest tens of thousands of hours of their time in the Windrush Farm programs. Thanks to them, each year we can continue to provide services to hundreds of individuals, including children and adults with disabilities, veterans and military-connected families, clients living with dementia, clients recovering from addiction, and underserved youth.

## Our Horses

The Windrush Farm horses are invaluable educators and partners. Therapeutic horse activities have long been shown to be beneficial to the educational, physical, emotional, and social activities of humans. A horse does not care what we look like, 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 clients to stretch, to improve their posture, to correct their balance, and 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, and be free.

The 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 Programs

Windrush Farm offers weekly mounted and unmounted lesson programs during the school year. Most classes are held Monday through Friday, 8:30am-6:30pm, 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. We welcome new programming ideas and invite creative one day special event suggestions.

## 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 would like to know more about any of these, just ask us!). However, weekly lesson program volunteers are the backbone of our program.

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

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

- **Instructors**—certified professionals who manage the entire class environment, provide instruction, and support to clients and volunteers.
- **Clients**—both participants with and without disabilities.
- **Horses**—specially trained animals, from a variety of backgrounds.
- **Horse Handlers**—experienced individuals who are responsible for leading and managing the horse during the lesson, including bringing horse to the arena and returning horse to the barn. They must have significant recent horse experience and a willingness to learn our horsemanship techniques to keep handling skills consistent for our horses.
- **Side Walkers**—individuals who act as an extension of the instructor, helping to safely guide the client through the lesson and achieve their goals. They are responsible for walking/jogging alongside the horse while the client is riding. 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.

## Hours of Operation

The Windrush Farm office is open Monday through Friday from 9:00am to 5:00pm. The office is closed on weekends and on major holidays. There is limited coverage during public school vacations.

## Cancellations and Weather Closings

Windrush Farm follows the North Andover Public School System for weather closings and holidays, but not for election days or school administrative closings. Their website is [northandoverpublicschools.com](http://northandoverpublicschools.com). In the case of a two-hour school delay, Windrush Farm will open at 10am. All classes scheduled before 10am will be cancelled.

If you are unable to attend your class, notification must be made by calling the Windrush Farm office at 978.682.7855. Sufficient notice of at least two hours is needed so that we may communicate with the instructors, barn staff, and volunteers.

## Windrush Farm Class Closings

Below is a list of the holidays in which Windrush Farm does not hold classes:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- February School Vacation
- April School Vacation
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Veterans Day
- Day before Thanksgiving
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day
- Winter Holiday Break

## Length of Lesson Changes

Normally, group lessons are for one hour. For any group lesson where only one client is present in a given week, the lesson will run for half an hour that week.

## Volunteer Policies and Procedures

### Non-discrimination Policy

Windrush Farm provides programs to all people regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, color, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, economic class, or age.

### 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 program (horse handlers and side walkers) to commit a minimum of one and a half hours each week on the same day and time for the length of a session.

### Communication

We have such a large group of people that volunteer at Windrush Farm, most of our communication is done through email. If you need to cancel, please contact Windrush Farm as soon as possible so that a replacement can be found. If you are canceling on the day of the class, please give us a phone call. As part of your commitment to volunteering, we ask that you reserve cancellations for emergencies. In the event that your client 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.

### **Paperwork and CORI Policy**

Everyone who volunteers or visits the farm for more than a tour needs to fill out an Authorization for Emergency Medical Release Form and a Release and Indemnification Form before they train or help out at the farm. We also run CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) checks on all our volunteers 17 years of age and over for the safety of all our clients, volunteers, and staff.

### **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. Side walker volunteers should arrive at least 15 minutes BEFORE the start of class in order to assist clients 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. Long pants and boots with a small heel are ideal, but any closed-toed shoes with a flat sole or small heel are appropriate. Be prepared to be inside or outside in any weather. During winter, think layers, hand-warmers, and good gloves. During warmer weather, use sunscreen, bug spray, and bring water. Do not wear dangling jewelry.

### **Smoking and Alcohol Policy**

Windrush Farm is a smoke-free environment. There is no smoking outside or inside on any part of our property. There is a no-tolerance policy with regard to alcohol and other controlled substances. Staff reserves the right to require an individual to leave the premises if they appear to be impaired.

### **Cell Phone Policy**

We ask that you do not use your cell phone while you are volunteering in class with us at Windrush Farm. We encourage our staff, clients, and volunteers to be fully present and in the moment, giving your client/horse your full attention. If you have an emergency that may need your attention, please discuss this with your instructor before the start of class.

### **Dog Policy**

We are all animal lovers here at Windrush Farm, but we ask that you do not bring your dog to the farm. If you have an extenuating circumstance, please call the office to discuss.

### **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 health and/or safety of others is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. If you are subject to any type of inappropriate behavior by a client or anyone else, please notify a staff member immediately; do not approach the client. Appropriate action will be taken by staff to correct the situation.

### **Confidentiality Policy**

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

### **Medical Issues**

If you have severe allergies, such as bees, wasps, or nuts, please be sure to carry your EpiPen on your person at all times when you are on property. If you have asthma, carry your inhaler. Be sure to clearly indicate any health issues that could affect your participation in programs on the registration form and to your instructor.

## Safety

Safety must always be taken into consideration when working with horses. Volunteers are taught emergency procedures and accident prevention in the case of a fallen client, a hurt/sick horse, or an unsafe environment for all parties. Please inform staff immediately of any concerns regarding the behavior of the horses such as biting, kicking, etc. Please respect the instructor at all times and follow all directions given.

## Working with People with Disabilities

Working with a special-needs population may be a new experience for some volunteers. At Windrush Farm, we aim to treat everyone—our clients, our horses, and each other—the same way: with respect and kindness, being considerate and sensitive to individual needs. If you are 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, do not 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. Please respect your client and ask before touching someone or their medical equipment.

**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 jargony, 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 Side Walkers

### 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 using the notebook in the classroom in the indoor arena and put on your nametag.
- Your instructor or volunteer coordinator will tell you where to go, but generally you will meet at the indoor arena to assist clients from cars, fit helmets, check-in with caregivers, and talk about the class.
- Try to get to know your client. Ideally, you will meet with your instructor before each session to discuss a client’s special needs, goals specific to riding, forms of communication (verbal, sign, facial expressions), likes/dislikes/fears. However, if schedules have not allowed a meeting or you are 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 client/parents/teacher just to see how the day has been going or if something happened that may affect the class. Please try to convey this to your instructor discreetly before class.



## 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.
- Side walkers 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 client is ready, the instructor will prompt them to ask (if possible) the horse to "walk on." Apply support as instructed. The offside stirrup should be brought down after the client's foot is clear of the mounting area, then make sure the client's foot is in the stirrup. Any adjustment of stirrups or client position should be done in the center of the ring (not at the ramp) where the instructor will also double-check the girth.

## During the Lesson

- Your job is to keep the client as secure as possible, but you need to keep yourself safe too. In general, position yourself next to the client'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 client, you need to communicate with your team, stop, come into the center, and/or ask the instructor for help. Do not leave the client until someone has taken your place. Never go behind the horse.
- Instructor directions may include learning the "hand over thigh" hold—face front, fingers holding front of saddle, forearm resting on client's thigh. Throughout the lesson, your instructor may provide various physical prompts to aid in stability. When using gait belts, avoid hanging on to strap or resting your elbow on the horse's back.
- As a side walker, you are an extension of the instructor. Try not to talk over your instructor, but you do want to make sure the client 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"). Try to develop some working cues—e.g., if the client has wiggled their feet to ask the horse to walk, you might say "nice job squeezing your legs" so your horse handler knows it is OK to walk on.
- Be safety conscious and aware of what is happening with the client and the horse. If the client needs more time or does not understand the task, if a client is leaning to one side, if a horse is uncomfortable (pinned ears, swishing tail, head raised) share information with your team. 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 client's position by moving their pelvis and torso, not their arm. If the client slides toward you, try to push him back to the midline of the saddle/horse; if he slides away from you, encourage the other side walker to push the client back.
- Help clients "own their ride." Give them the opportunity to learn, to do, and to make mistakes. Give them the time to process and perform the task (each client 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 client's leg over back of horse).
- After the client dismounts, when appropriate, walk the client back to their parent/caregiver. Offer any positive, specific comments on how the client did that day ("terrific steering," "great trot"). If you are 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 a snack!

## Tips for Horse Handlers

**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. 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 and sign in and proceed to the barn unless otherwise instructed.

### Receiving your horse

- A 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. Acknowledgement can be subtle.
- Please wait in front of the barnyard or in garage bays in inclement weather.
- You are only permitted in the barn if the Barn Manager or the Instructor invites you to do so.
- Take your horse as your name is called and your horse is brought out. The instructor will check all the tack and tighten the girth.
- Instructor will check in and review HH tips and techniques for the horse you are working with in class.
- Instructors will review proper procedures for interacting with the client you will be working with in class.
- Please ask questions as needed!
- Wait for all horses and horse handlers to be ready and all walk down together with good spacing to the arena.
- All horses stop at the road so they can have good spacing. Instructor stands in the road while everyone crosses.

### Grooming - With clients and for HH training

- Groom front to back, top to bottom. Watch for the 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 the horse seems anxious, try less pressure or doing everything on one side first. Pass in front of nose, not under neck. Breathe! Always encourage two hands on horse, 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 flicks 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. Cleaning the hoof for the first time is not necessary. There can be many slow steps to learning this skill for our clients.
- Tail -- pull around to side and take out the shavings. Do not brush the tail. Explain why the tail is so important to the horse and why we do not brush it!

### Tacking

- Make sure you have everything out before putting your horse on the cross ties.
- Bridle, reins, saddle, saddle pads, girth, neck strap if needed (behind the door in the tack room) and the grooming kit.
- Saddle pad-should extend beyond the 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 the saddle.
- Saddle-lift up so the horse can see, pause and gently place on back, look at ears and face for calming signals, and be S-L-O-W to help train bad behaviors out. Adjust the saddle and gently pull the pad up into the gullet so there is a pocket of space at the withers. Saddle pad straps are used on the middle billet. The strap that holds the girth in place is not used as the pad can get bunched up. Girth should lie flat.

- Girth-slow, slow, slow. Put the girth on the lowest hole on both sides. The instructor will be responsible for tightening the girth before leaving the stall, again in front of the barnyard, in the indoor on the centerline and finally, before mounting
- Bridle-As you remove cross ties, put reins overhead ½-way up neck, remove halter. Stand next to the horse facing forward. Hold the bridle by the top of the 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 the horse's lips (put thumb inside if necessary, wiggle jaw, avoid banging teeth). Pull up, avoid eyes, and fold horse's ears forward into the browband, one at a time. Stand in front and make sure everything's straight. Noseband is adjusted up at browband. Throatlatch-4 fingers; noseband-2 fingers (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 the saddle.
- Halter goes on over the bridle, dropping reins down through the noseband. Noseband of the halter goes above the noseband of the bridle. The halter strap often needs to be slid into the center under the horse's throat so that it can fit over the bridle. Remember, the halter typically fits with no bridle, so be sure it is adjusted smoothly on the horse. Check that reins are not caught up in the bridle. If you need to cross-tie the horse again, attach cross ties to the halter (not the bit!)
- If necessary-Hard Muzzle: sides first in D ring of halter, front over both nosebands then back; Soft muzzle: over noseband, between bit ring and horse's jaw, 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 the clip, one near the 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 the door all the way and latch 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).
- Horses with chains over the nose, the chain can be removed when you get to the arena, and a lead rope can be used in the arena for the class. Instructor will put the chain back over the nose when returning to the barn or going out on the trails.
- Ask the client if they're ready. Stand between horse's ear and shoulder, so the horse can see you, say horse's name and command (e.g., "walk on"), bring up your energy (bend head & shoulder/lift arm/ touch neck,). If a horse needs encouragement, go back to shoulder, and start again, or walk off to side, or slide hand closest to horse's chin and "scoop." NO PULLING in front of them -- this is very harsh with a bit in the 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."
- . The whole class leaves the barn area as a "herd," stops before road crossing, and crosses the street together."

## THE ARENA

### Prepare for Mounting

- Please say "Door!" BEFORE getting right up to the bar. Please wait for the instructor to invite you in.
- Enter the arena, walk down right wall as far as possible, turn left, stay on outside track, all the way around the ring.
- Turn left to the center line and halt, keeping a safe distance between horses.

- Wait for instructor.
- DO NOT CHECK GIRTH! This is the instructor's responsibility, as is stretching legs.
- Practice trot down long side is encouraged while waiting to be called to mount.
- Horse Handlers wait for their client to be called into the mounting area. Client or Instructor will take stirrups down – Feel free to 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.

### Ramp Mount

- Wait for instructor to call you one by one. With a ramp mount, the reins will go over the horse's head before entering the ramp area. HH will wait at (H) and the instructor will check girth one more time before entering ramp area unless girth has been checked on the centerline. The near side stirrup would go up over horse's withers, so the rider's leg does not get caught between ramp and horse when mounting. The HH comes into mounting area when called by the instructor. If the rider uses the lift, the horse does not need to be close to the ramp as the lift can swing out and over.
- If the client mounts and is ambulatory, the instructor will take the horse's halter and gently ask the horse to move over once halted in the ramp area.
- Only lead off when rider is ready and prompts horse to “walk on.” Let the client do the asking and walking on. Wait for their response before just leading out.
- When the rider's leg is clear, ask the horse to halt. Instructor may need to hold onto rider's leg and walk down the ramp, then halt to put SW in place to walk out of mounting area

### Block Mount

- Follow instructor's directions. Generally, you'll lead in, go between ramp and mounting block, stop horse BEFORE the mounting block, turn around, lead horse in stopping with stirrup in middle of block. 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 in front of horse as client slowly backs the horse into the mounting area. Stirrup should line up in the middle of the mounting block. We NO LONGER ask clients to walk up onto mounting block. The rider will ask the horse to WHOA by pushing the reins back to the horse's chest asking the horse to stop.
- Only lead off when rider is ready and prompts horse to “walk on.” Let the client do the asking and walking on. Wait for their response before just leading out.
- The rider will take 2-3 steps and ask the horse to halt. The rider will take offside stirrup down and put foot in stirrup and walk on out of the mounting area.

### 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 may ask SW to help with this in some cases. Instructor will always recheck girth.
- Keep touching the horse at a minimum for their comfort and benefit.
- 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 rider's leg up and over, braces body, pulls rider off). If rider needs to be dismounted and does NOT have a SW to assist, the instructor will do this. HH will face the client and instruct dismount. Both feet out of the stirrups, drop the reins, swing leg

over. HH then moves horse away from client and swings haunches away from client as they walk away. In the very unlikely event that the instructor is unable to perform the dismount, an HH might be asked to assist. A dismount should never be performed by a HH on their own.

- Pay attention to the horse and try to keep a loose lead while watching for reactions.
- Review suggestions for a horse who turns in or gets too fast. Give cues in steps to set horse up for success. Holding the outside rein works well. If the horse doesn't want to move, bring up your own energy. Try to turn the horse slightly to the right to send the horse's weight off balance and walk on. Instructor may provide a crop to hold in outside hand. Only with instructor's permission or instructions will the crop be used. Remember, prevention and timing are everything!

### **Dismount at Ramp or Mat**

- Dismounting will occur in the center of ring, at ramp, or on rubber mat. Stand besides, not directly in front of, horse. Instructor assists as needed.
- HH will wait at "H" before bringing the horse into ramp or mat so wheelchairs, chairs, caregivers can be in place.
- The instructor will call for a horse. If the dismount is at the ramp and the lift is used, the horse DOES NOT need to be close to the ramp.
- If lift is NOT being used, the horse will come as close to the ramp as possible. Be sure to stop right before entering so instructor can take rider's foot out of the stirrup and Instructor assist with left leg.
- SW may be needed up on ramp to assist.

### **Dismount in the ring**

- All clients will line up on centerline and dismount with the instructor.
- Clients may put stirrups up or Instructor will run them up.
- Instructor will loosen girth after dismount.
- Debrief with volunteers on centerline as time allows.

### **Going back to the barn**

- Instructor will re-attach muzzle (if it's been taken off during class -- e.g., for a grass-diver) and chain. Always keep "the herd" together, crossroad all at once with Instructor in the road.
- Clients may put stirrups up or Instructor will run them up.
- Line up facing the barn and wait for barn help to untack. Instructors will ask for assistance depending upon clients' abilities. SOMETIMES part of the lesson is untacking and comfort grooming.

**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

*\* Please do not hand feed the Windrush Farm horses, ever. Treats can be dropped off with the barn staff and will be given to the horse at dinner time. Horses have very sensitive digestive systems and we monitor their diets very closely. Thank you for your help in keeping our horses healthy and happy!*

## Emergencies and Accidents—Just in Case

Accidents and emergencies do not happen often, but it is important that we all know what to do if they do occur.

### Accidents and 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 is important to work as a team to help keep everyone as secure and safe as possible. In an emergency, the horse handler controls and focuses on the horse, while the side walkers focus on the client.

### Directly Involved

- If you are the horse handler of a horse that becomes involved in an emergency, try to stop the horse and (even if you cannot) keep it as straight as possible.
- If you are side-walking a horse that becomes involved in an emergency, stabilize your client using the “arm over the thigh” hold. If the client slides toward you try to push them back to midline (the middle of the saddle/horse). If the client slides away from you, encourage the other side walker to push the client back toward you. It is preferable to correct the client’s position by moving their pelvis and torso. Make every effort NOT to pull the client by the arm.

### Indirectly Involved

- 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 side walking a client other than the one involved in the emergency, apply the “arm over thigh” hold and quietly communicate your client’s needs to the horse handler and/or the other side walkers. Work together to keep your client calm.

### If an Emergency Dismount Becomes Necessary:

- The horse handler should hold the horse at a halt, or keep it as straight as possible, until the client is fully clear of the horse and equipment.
- The side walkers should remove the stirrups and reins from the client. Speak to the client about what is happening, and they may be able to help remove their feet from the stirrups.
- The side walker on the “near” side, where the client is coming off, should bend one knee to help brace and balance themselves, hugging the client around the waist or torso (not the arms).
- While the side walker on the other “off” side helps lift the client’s leg up and over the horse’s back, the “near” side walker pulls the client off and away from the horse, trying to slide the client down their bent leg to break the client’s fall.
- Once the client 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 client as they walk the horse away, then halt and await instructions.

### Fallen Client or Medical Emergency

If a client falls from a horse, becomes injured, or has a medical emergency during a session, all horses are halted and all activity should stop. 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 Automated External Defibrillator (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 Farm 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 client, moving the horse away, and then halting. Side walkers should stay with and reassure the client. Be prepared to give the instructor an account of what happened to the client as they fell, to help in the assessment.

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

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

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

### **Emergency Plan**

The Emergency Plan goes into effect if a client 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 call Emergency Services (911) from the landline in the office. The client is given any necessary first aid and kept warm. Someone will wait by the street to direct the emergency personnel to the client. The other clients 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 under the apple trees near the hospital pen and road and await further instructions from a staff member.

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 Farm is it is always OK to ask a question or ask for help from the instructor, the barn staff, or another volunteer. We are all part of a team, we all want to do the right thing, and we are all learning and working to be better every day!



Thank you for choosing Windrush Farm!  
For more information, contact us at any time:

Windrush Farm  
479 Lacy Street  
North Andover, MA 01845  
p: 978.682.7855 f: 888.642.4907  
w: [windrushfarm.org](http://windrushfarm.org)  
e: [volunteer@windrushfarm.org](mailto:volunteer@windrushfarm.org)