



# Volunteering at RideAble

(updated: November 2015)

Welcome!! We are very excited to have you with us! Over 90% of the hours at RideAble are volunteered; instructors are only paid for their teaching hours and the program director receives a small stipend. We are all here because we believe in the program.

**PLEASE ASK QUESTIONS** at any time. RideAble is learning environment for everyone and we encourage you to ask questions at any time.

## RIDEABLE'S BASIC POLICIES:

Safety First! Always think safety for everyone.

Animal Health-If the animals are not physically, mentally, & emotionally healthy we cannot be safe.

**BE AN OBSERVER.** Please follow all guidelines provided in this document and posted at the barn. Look for and read all signs, instructions, and directions. All of us (humans & animals) are living breathing emotional creatures; consistency is very important to everyone's safety. Because life changes daily look for changes in the routine due to weather and herd health. We will do our best to post and tell you of any changes. **PLEASE ASK QUESTIONS!**

We understand all volunteers have diverse backgrounds and may have worked with horses or people with disabilities before. Please remember, that the RideAble staff are always working with many others behind the scenes to improve the program. There are many "working parts" when it comes to ensuring a positive, safe, and healthy experience for students, horses and volunteers. Please respect and adhere to all RideAble's procedures/guidelines for "**how it will be done**"- Your role in maintaining consistency and following all protocols is essential to everyone's success and safety.

We have many tasks to do at the barn. If we ask you to help with a task that you have never done before at RideAble, please remind us! We are more than willing and happy to help you learn the "**RideAble way**". Instructors and all the other volunteers are here to teach you, assist you, and be a great resource for learning and support.

We hope that this volunteer experience is a fun one! ~ Thank you for volunteering at RideAble.

*"We should always be open and willing to consider new ideas. Personal growth is always good!"*

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## Basic Horse and Barn Safety

1. Horses cannot see directly in front of them or behind them, so **approach slowly and calmly** and make your presence known by touching them or saying hello. **\*\*When walking behind them keep a hand on their rump.**
2. Know how to **hold a lead rope properly**, never wrap it around your hand. If the horse were to run it should be easy to let it go.
3. Keep distance between horses. There should always "**room for an elephant**" between horses when walking in the aisle, the arena, or on the trail. **\*\*Never** let a horse walk up behind another horse.
4. Watch your fingers! **When feeding treats use a small feedpan or put it in the horse's stall feeder.**
5. Always close the gate behind you. The rule on the farm is if you open it, close it.
6. **Stay alert!** Always be aware of your surroundings, watching for any unexpected movements or sounds that might startle you, the student, or the horse. Horses are herd and prey animals, they will feed off your emotions, so **stay calm**.

## 1) When you arrive at the barn –

- a) Greet everyone, especially the instructor and **Sign-in**.
  - \* Volunteer Sign-in is located in the volunteer room across from the feed room (upstairs). This information is very important to the business side of the program.
  - \* Interns or student volunteers who are doing service hours for school are responsible for tracking their own volunteer hours. Please talk directly with your instructor if you need your hours signed.
- b) First **check the lesson board** and with the other volunteers to see where to begin.
  - \* If there are no other volunteers around start by preparing horses for the next class.
- c) Barn Chores are to be done if there are no lessons and no horses to tack immediately.
  - \* The chore list is posted \*Be aware of class times and ensure that you are available to tack or assist with a student when needed – do not leave tools out, always returned them to the proper location when not being used.

## 2) Working with Students- Consistency is very important for everyone-students & horses.

- Coming to the barn is a fun activity for our students; it is important to be positive with the students and engage them in the activities around them while maintaining safety first. Our students are all working on skills, but this work should be somewhat masked by the joy of being at the barn.
  - \*Remember that your demeanor and attitude at the barn affects the students and horses. Keep it positive and inviting!
- **All students** must follow the barn rules and procedures.
  - As a volunteer you are here to help them accomplish this; as well as to help them remember and complete all the tasks included in their lesson, i.e. grooming.
- When in the arena or on the trail volunteers are generally asked to assist the student as:
  - **Horse Handler**-leading the horse (\*ensure you know how to do this correctly/safely)
  - **Sidewalker**- walking by the student and sometimes helping them maintain their balance
  - **Companion**-someone to walk next to them merely keeping an eye on them and the horse
  - You may also be asked by the instructor to help in other ways
  - \*Remember to keep your eyes on your student at all times
- **When volunteering during lessons, you are an extension of the instructor.** It is helpful for you to gently remind the student of the directions given by the instructor. For example if the instructor is working on keeping heels down the volunteer could say “Suzie, remember to keep your heels down.” Please don’t feel like you need to remain silent, however **teaching your own lesson is not appreciated**, instead assist the instructor by re-enforcing what is being taught and assist the students in following the instructor’s directions.
  - \*\*Think of yourself as a ‘supporter’ – how can I help this student complete the task as independently as possible? You should provide support in this order:
    - (1) a verbal prompt (question or guidance),
    - (2) a verbal cue (a direct instruction)
    - (3) physical cue (a guiding hand or prompt),
    - (4) hand-over-hand support (do the task together)
    - (5) as a last resort complete the task yourself

### 3) Fitting Helmets- Helmets are **VERY** important and the right fit keeps our students safe

- ❖ Helmets are in the helmet/boot cabinet- On the wall to the left of the helmet cabinet is a step-by-step guide to fitting helmets.
- ❖ Helmets should fit snugly, but not tight. There is a box of pads on top of the cabinet to help the helmets fit all shapes of heads; if you have any questions please ask.
  - a) They can wiggle a little bit from side to side
  - b) Should not fall backward or forward on the student's head
  - c) Student should be able to see well, not looking up to see
  - d) You should be able to fit a finger between the chin and the chinstrap

### 4) Stretching- Treats for stretching can be found in the feed room

All of the horses are stretched daily- this is essential for helping maintain their physical health. Students are learning to stretch their horse as part of their horsemanship and the importance of caring for their horse. Most of students also find it very rewarding and it is a confidence builder.

Depending on the horse and the type of lesson you may be asked to stretch a horse several times during lessons.

- a) There are 6 basic stretches-see diagram for a visual aid if you are not clear on the location of each spot to hold the treat. Due to stiffness each horse's flexibility will be a bit different, but they should be encouraged to try.
- b) The 3 points on each side are mid-hind leg between stifle and hock, to the ground behind the girth line (half way between elbow and abdomen), and bow between the front legs to the mid-line.
- c) The herd manager, instructor, or senior volunteers may do additional stretches as needed.

### 5) Haltering-

Please follow these instructions when haltering our horses. This method allows the horses to show their willingness to accept you (the halterer) as the one in charge which will affect the rest of the lesson/day.

- a) Standing on the left side of the horse unbuckle the halter and hold the "buckle end" in the palm of your left hand with the other "long strap" laying on top of it (close your hand).
- b) Place the leadrope over the horse's neck so it is not on the ground. This also tells the horse you are working.
- c) Put your **right hand over** the horse's neck behind the ears while putting your **left hand under**.
- d) Grab the "long strap" with your right hand, do not let go of the buckle end with your left hand.
- e) Move both hand forward on either side of the horse's head so that they can put their nose through the noseband.
- f) Buckle the halter so that the noseband is half way between the bottom of the eye and the top of the nostril.

\*As a volunteer practice giving these instructions verbally to students, remember you want to help them complete this task as independently as possible.

### 6) Grooming- this is not just about cleaning the horse, but also looking for wounds so be very thorough in the first groom of the day. If you find a wound please notify the instructor.

- a) Use the rubber currycomb to curry in circles going in the opposite direction of the hair. This loosens dirt and dead hair (horses shed in the spring and fall).
- b) Use a stiff brush, brushing in the direction of the body hair, vigorously to get the dirt out. Soft brush is for the face.
- c) Comb the mane and top of tail-work from the bottom up, be gentle, like combing your hair.
- d) Pick the hooves, and then brush them out. It is important to get the area on either side of the frog clean. Please ask if you're not sure if the hoof is completely clean.

- e) **Hourly students know how to brush, but may need to be reminded which direction to brush.**  
Not all students can pick hooves, but most students really enjoy helping. If time allows let them do as much as they can with assistance as needed. If you're not sure which students can pick hooves or how to help a student please ask.
- f) The horses should also be lightly brushed after the saddles come off; helps stimulate circulation.

## 7) Saddling Horses-

**Students riding for an hour usually tack their horse with your assistance.**

**All students get sidepulls from the tack room and put them on their horse or assist in the process.**

- ❖ All students' riding information is in the small binder call "Rider, Horse, & Tack". It will tell you which size helmet they wear, horse they ride, the saddle that they use and all of the sizing information for the saddle. \*This book is for you and the student to reference while you are tacking. If they don't know, prompt them to find their page in the book.
- ❖ Each saddle has a specific rack that it should stay on and is color coded with its corresponding rack.
- ❖ Saddle pads need to stay organized and neat. English pads with English pads, Navajos, western pads and bareback pads are all grouped together. Pads should be placed dirty side to dirty side and clean side to clean side.

**Saddle fit is very important:** The "How to" notebook, with pictures, is in the tack room to aid you. Please feel free to ask for assistance until you are confident.

- a) Please do everything from the left side of the horse. While most of our horses will tolerate being saddled from either side we need to set a proper example for our students on horsemanship practices.
- b) When putting the pad or blanket on the horse put it up higher on the withers than it should be and then pull back to smooth the hairs in place.
  - There are a variety of blankets, pads, wedges, and accessories. It is important that the correct ones are used and placed correctly on the horse.
  - Please make sure that the pad is even on both sides of the horse, the saddle is straight on the horse's back and nothing is under the saddle that shouldn't be like straps and stirrups.
- c) Then place the saddle on the pad or blanket **gently**. The saddle's correct location on the horse's back (behind the shoulder not on it) may vary a bit from horse to horse so if you have questions please ask.
- d) Pull the saddle pads up lightly into the gullet of the saddle to give some airflow under the saddle.
  - Please be sure that the short latigo is the correct length-girth/cinch fit is very important so that the horse is comfortable and does not get rub sores.
  - Then pull the girth/cinch up on the left and get it ready to be tightened, but **DO NOT TIGHTEN!** Instructors will do it at the mounting block during the safety check.

Have questions? See pictures on wall for step by step instructions for girths and cinches.

- e) Please put the correct stirrups at the right length or assist the student before they mount, the numbers are in the book with all of the other student's riding information.
  - There are a variety of stirrups and aids, be sure to check the student's page for details.

### English-

- The English pad has round edges on the front and is quilted. The round edges of the blanket go towards the head of the horse with the dirty side touching the horse.
- The pad should sit in the middle of the horse's shoulder. The front of the flap on the saddle should be four fingers back from the front of the saddle pad with the girth just behind the front legs. (The saddle's correct location on the horse's back may vary a bit from horse to horse so if you have questions please ask.)

Make sure to use dressage girths with dressage saddles and all-purpose girths with all-purpose saddles. If you don't know which is which please ask.

- Always have the stirrups run up unless the student is mounting or riding the horse. The horse should NOT take ANY steps with the stirrups down.
- When putting the saddles away take the stirrups and girth off the saddle and put them back in their proper location.

### Western-

- When getting the saddle off the rack put the cinch up on the seat and hook the right stirrup on the horn. This is to prevent hitting the horse's back when lifting the saddle and you don't have to lift the saddle so high to get it on.
- Western saddles and blankets should sit in the middle of the horse's shoulder. There should be about two fingers or a thumb length between the front of the blanket and the front edge of the saddle. (The saddle's correct location on the horse's back may vary a bit from horse to horse so if you have questions please ask.)
- When untacking (removing a saddle) put the long latigo back through the D-ring two times and the cinch back in its keeper. There are a couple of saddles without keepers-hook on horn. Make sure that all of the stirrups are hanging down and the cinch and latigo aren't twisted when hanging on the rack.
  - Most of the students that saddle their horses know these steps, but may just need gentle reminders every once in a while to remember the details.

8) Putting on Sidepulls-All students get their horse's sidepull/reins from the tack room and assist putting it on.

Most students can do this or are learning to put the sidepull on independently. Walk the student through these steps helping them be as independent as possible. This is a very important part of their lesson building fine motor skills, sequencing, and independence. This is the first step of team work for them and their horse.

- ALWAYS STAND ON THE LEFT SIDE OF THE HORSE when putting on sidepulls. Horses cannot see directly in front of them and can startle if you are standing there. Please be very aware of your position and the student's position when helping them put on sidepulls. Both of you should be on the left side of the horse and no other helpers should be in front of the horse.
- Students may need help, especially with getting the horse to lower its head; all students should at least assist. This gives the horse time to prepare for that particular student.
- Some students do ride with bit/bridle, please ask for assistance.

a) First hold the sidepull with your right hand on the center of crown and left hand on the chinstrap forming a circle with the noseband. While standing on the left side of the horse's head; guide the nosepiece over the nose and the chinstrap behind the chin. Switch hands-left on crown and use your right hand to fold the right ear (far ear) forward, slipping the headband over it then slide the left ear (near ear) in. Check that the browband is in the correct place above the eye and below the ear.

- c) Attaching the throatlatch: it should fit loosely behind the cheek bone so that you can fit a small fist or 4 fingers between the leather and the neck (Remember it's more like a necklace, than a choker).
  - Hold the "tail" of the throatlatch with your right hand and the buckle end in the left hand
  - Put the "tail" through the top of the buckle and slide the buckle up the "tail" to the correct hole.
  - Put the pin in the hole with a finger on your left hand, then put the "tail" through the bottom of the buckle.
  - When removing the sidepull unbuckle the throatlatch by pulling the "tail" out of the bottom of the buckle with the right hand and gently pull out toward your body not up (this restricts the pin and it will not come out).
  - Then push the buckle up slightly and the pin will fall out of the hole.
- d) **NEARLY ALL STUDENTS PUT ON REINS or ARE LEARNING: this is done after the side pull is on.** Some students have difficulty with the snaps, help them learn to work the snap and guide it onto the ring. Reins can be attached standing on the left side of the horse or the student may need to walk around to do the right side. When both sides are attached the reins should hang down under the horse's neck, the horse will be lead by the reins to the arena.
- e) Holding both reins together the student should have their right hand on yellow and their left hand on green.

9) Cleaning Stalls-This is a very important part of facility maintenance. Please read the "**Stall cleaning instructions**" carefully before you start. Fresh bedding will be added at staff's discretion.

- a) Put the wheelbarrow in the door of the stall to keep the horse in.
  - All large manure piles should be taken out
  - 95% of all small pieces of manure must be removed
  - All pee spots are scooped out and the mat scraped clean with shovel
  - The stalls should have an even layer of bedding around
  - The entrance of the stall is swept so that bedding will not be tracked into the aisle
  - There should be no bedding under the water buckets and manger unless there have been pee spots in those areas on a regular basis.

10) Water Buckets & Feeders-See "Water Buckets Routine" for details.

- a) There are faucets between the stalls. Fill the buckets to about two inches from the top, the ridge on the bucket is a good guideline. This way the staff knows how much the horse is drinking.
- b) It is important not to spill water on the floor, it takes a long time to dry.
- c) Clean dirt & debris out of feeders/mangers with hand broom and dust pan.

11) Emergency Situations- For additional information refer to the emergency procedures document.

- a) If the power goes out "emergency lights/signs" will come on
  1. Help students dismount
  2. Return horses to their stalls
  3. Help students, parents, drivers, others leave the building safely
  4. Untack horses and follow instructor's directions for securing the animals before leaving
- b) The fire extinguisher is by the arena light switches
- c) The human first aid kit is in the top large drawer on the right as you walk in to the tack room.

**Thank you again for volunteering with RideAble. You play an important role in the experiences of our students, horses and staff. Your efforts to support the positive and safe environment at RideAble are greatly appreciated!**