



Riding Instructor and Volunteer Guidelines and Safety Protocol for Animals as Natural Therapy (ANT) Program

ANT's Mission Statement and Philosophy

Goal:

The goal of Animals as Natural Therapy is to provide a safe, nurturing environment where people of all ages practice the skills essential for meaningful and successful relationships based on mutual respect, communication, responsibility and trust.

Philosophy:

All of those involved with Animals as Natural Therapy have experienced the healing gifts of animals. Due to the profound effect animals have had in our lives and the lives of others we have known and researched, we are committed to this form of "therapy" or "non-therapy". Traumatized persons more readily trust animals than they do people. The trust that is developed while persons build relationships with animals is eventually expanded to include a more lasting and mature trust of themselves and other people. The unconditional love offered by animals affects the rest of the person's life.

Our basic philosophy is to accept all who are physically capable of safely participating in one or more ANT programs. There may be an instance where someone needs to be temporarily removed from one or more of the farm programs. Their re-entry would be contingent upon meeting behavioral goals as developed by the program. The program should be fun and educational where students can safely learn and enjoy caring for animals' daily needs, and have the opportunity to develop horseback riding skills.

Objectives of the Program

Communicating – Clear communication between horse and human at a verbal and non-verbal level build an effective working relationship and develop a sense of **trust**.

Respect– Around the farm, a successful outcome demands that the student act with respect and consideration toward others, animals and equipment. Students also learn to respect the authority of the instructor.

Esteem-- One's self esteem increases as one handles responsibilities. This comes as the student gains the skills necessary to handle animals and ride horses.

Safe Judgement- Students learn this through the knowledge and application of the safety rules observing logical consequences.

Reasoning/Predicting Consequences – This can be explored by questioning and allowing the student to observe and interpret animal behavior and modify their own actions based on this.

Goal Setting-Initially, the student is partially motivated by the instructor's encouragement and enthusiasm; with the student learning to set their own goals.

Enjoyment – Riding and animal interaction are participatory sports, physically and mentally healthy, and can easily become life-long hobbies.

Evaluate Skills – To progress in animal handling and horsemanship, a student must learn to evaluate their own skills.

Dogs at Animals as Natural Therapy

To ensure the safety and well being of resident animals and all visitors to Windy Acres Farm, the following rules have been established in respect to program and non-program (volunteers') dogs:

1. During business hours, Resident Program Dogs will be enclosed in fenced dog yard or in the house unless being utilized during programs or directly under supervision.
2. Non-Program Dogs will be enclosed in fenced dog yard or owners' automobile (weather permitting) at all times. When on any ANT property, Non-Program Dogs must be on leash at all times with an attendant present.
3. Only Program Dogs are allowed in the barnyard at any time.
4. Anyone using the fenced dog yard or walking their dog on leash MUST clean up after their dog immediately.

Minimum Qualifications for Riding Instructor

1. Demonstrate thorough understanding of basic horsemanship based on the 4-H Basic Horsemanship Manual. (See Skills checklist)
2. Have prior experience working with youth and can demonstrate respectful interactions with youth with emotional disabilities.
3. Ability to work as a member of a team, while accepting supervision and guidance.
4. Attributes include: integrity, adaptability, enthusiasm, sense of humor, patience and self-control.
5. Ability to comply with confidentiality procedures of the program.
6. At least 21 years of age.
7. Pass a State Patrol Background check.
8. Possess a current Standard First Aid Certificate and Adult & Child CPR certificate.
9. Orientation includes general knowledge of behavior disorders and management of aggressive behavior.
10. Thorough orientation to the facility, forms, policy and procedures. Know the horses they are instructing with, having ridden each a minimum of 4 hours. (Recommended they ride at ANT 20 minutes a week minimum.)

Specific Responsibilities

1. The ability to teach successful and safe animal handling skills.
2. Responsible for the safety of students and staff in the program.
3. Responsible for the well being and safety of the horses.
4. Responsible for the clean up and safety in the program area.
5. Inform students and visitors of the safety rules relating to the program area and equipment and see to it that these rules are enforced.
6. Participate in appropriate facility activities when needed
7. Assume additional responsibilities as requested by the program director.
8. Be on time, neat, and prepared for each session.
9. Review goals and initial assessment plan, and monitor progress at regular intervals.

Essential Functions

1. Identify and respond to environmental and other hazards related to activities.
2. Abilities to observe student behavior, assess its appropriateness, enforce appropriate safe behaviors.
3. Physical and cognitive ability to respond appropriately to situations requiring first aid.

4. Cognitive and communication abilities to plan and conduct the activity to achieve student developmental objectives.
5. Ability to consult with therapists and/ or parents to develop goals and assess progress.

Communication Techniques and Suggestions

1. Approach with unconditional positive regard; be open, accepting, non-judgmental, erase preconceived notions from your mind.
2. Use active listening skills; listen for comments, repeat back what you heard him/her say. Pay attention to any changes in behavior, mood, voice; ask if he/ she is feeling comfortable.
3. Maintain a calm relaxed posture, keep gestures mild, maintain a soft encouraging tone of voice.
4. Use simple clear precise language.
5. Be encouraging, supportive, reassuring, soothing.

Safety Management and Accident Prevention Policies for Riding Instructors and Volunteers

Facility

Safety Requirements and Legal Responsibilities

In case an accident occurs and leads to litigation, the riding program and these standards and practices that follow will be scrutinized according to the standard practices within the industry, probably by an expert witness who is an established equestrian. If the program meets the standards there is less likelihood of negligence leading to an accident, and a better chance of defending the program if a lawsuit should occur.

1. Liability insurance is provided for all:
 - Clients
 - Volunteers
 - Instructors
2. Riding is allowed in the barnyard, round pen, arena and tack building under supervision of an instructor.
3. Grooming and saddling are allowed in the tack building and at the hitching rails; mounting in tack building, barnyard, or arenas.
4. Getting horses out of their pens may be done by the volunteer/instructor or may be an activity involving the client and volunteer. No client is allowed in a horse pen without an instructor.
5. Minimum number of staff required per student: one volunteer for up to four students.
6. The instructor is to carry a cellular phone when working alone with client.
7. Safety rules are posted in the riding area.
8. Incident/Accident reports will be reviewed at least annually to assess if changes need to be made in practice.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS IN HANDLING HORSES

To disregard simple safety rules in handling horses can result in some serious mishaps. A knowledge of safe riding is imperative. Here are some rules for safety which will be strictly enforced at all times at ANT. These precautions are based on the fact that the horse is basically a fearful animal whose reaction to anything new or sudden is fight or flight.

1. Always verbally warn a horse when you approach, approach at his shoulder if possible, never from directly behind.
2. Do not **pat** the horse on the face at any time and do not allow students to do so. Do not irritate the horse's head (in front of the throat latch) when they are tied up. Encourage the student to stroke the horse on the neck or shoulder. Discuss the horse's name, body parts, likes and dislikes, fears, and ways to reassure.
3. Do not EVER walk UNDER the neck of a horse when they are tied up.
4. When working around a horse stay in close. Teach going around horse at first contact. When grooming, keep one hand on the horse while other uses the brush etc.
5. When the horses are tied, if you and/or the student are not working with your horse, stand back away from the horse.
6. If your horse is hanging back on the lead rope while tied up, slowly approach from the shoulder. Approaching from the front will make him pull back and jump forward, possibly pinning you against a wall or rail. Tap the horse on the rump to move him forward so he is not at the end of his rope. (great metaphor)
7. Walk beside the horse when leading, not ahead or behind him. Always *turn* the horse away from you and walk around him when turning.
8. *Never* wrap the lead rope, halter, or reins around your hand, wrist, or body.
9. If the horse you are leading rears or pulls back suddenly, release the hand nearest the halter and step back out of the way, letting some lead rope out of your hand. Speak calmly to the horse to ease its fear. Do not pull on the lead rope as this will make things worse. Wait until the horse settles then approach again.
10. Tie only to approved places at Windy Acres: hitching rails, tie rings, and at least shoulder high on sturdy posts (no rails!)
11. Tie only with a quick release knot.
12. Tie with only a halter and lead rope. Never tie with bridle or reins.

ANT Barn/Stable/Program - Regulations and Policies

Points to ponder for volunteers

1. If there are two or more volunteers assigned to a student, make sure only ONE person talks to the student at one time. Allow for reaction time from the student. Don't expect the student to have an immediate response to every question.
2. When you arrive at the barn, first check for posted instructions of any changes in routines will be posted on the white board and read carefully. Check with the instructor or head volunteer if your horse is not in the stall or pasture.
3. During class you must keep track of safety spacing. Don't rely on the rider to do it. Keep at least two horse's lengths between horses at all times to avoid any kicking or striking. Be knowledgeable about each horse's individual need for personal space and boundaries and teach this to the youth. (another great metaphor)
4. Remember that horses are large, sometimes unpredictable animals. Know the safety precautions and ALWAYS STAY ALERT to what is going around you.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FOR RIDING INSTRUCTORS AND VOLUNTEERS

Runaway horse/Rider out of control:

1. In the ring, halt all horses; move to calm the horse that is out of control but don't step in front of him and make him dodge and lose the rider. He will probably stop at the gate. Call quick, simple instructions "Sit up!"... "Pull back!"

2. On the trail, halt all horses. Other riders may have to dismount and hold their horses or have their volunteers hold their horses while they remain on their horses. In some situations youth who go on trail rides as part of a riding lesson will have volunteers at the head of their horse to prevent runaway situations.

Falls:

1. Instructor should calmly but quickly stop the class; the volunteer leader working with the fallen rider should immediately get the horse away from the rider.
2. Independent riders should dismount; volunteers assisting riders should take charge of horses immediately while the instructor goes to the aid of the fallen rider.
3. Keep the rider down where he is and still until he can be checked for signs of injury.

Signs of injury include:

- A. Unconsciousness. Check airway immediately.
 - B. Bleeding or fluid draining from the mouth, nose or ears.
 - C. Serious bleeding—apply direct pressure.
 - D. Limb at unnatural angle or pain on pressure, pain on movement. DO NOT MOVE
 - E. Pupils contract unevenly.
 - F. Signs of shock (paleness, mottled color, sweating, nausea, fainting)
 - G. If you suspect either the possibility of head or spinal injury keep the victim absolutely still until skilled help is summoned who can immobilize the rider and transport him/her properly.
4. If the rider is uninjured, reassure him and help him reason and verbalize what probably caused the fall. Give further instruction to prevent reoccurrence.
 5. When a rider remounts, give him time to rebuild his confidence with easy riding before he is asked to try a more difficult task.
 6. Be sure the rest of the class is in control and that they understand what happened, you may make it a learning experience for all by having the fallen child explain the cause. Often those who watched a fall are more frightened than the one who experienced it.
 7. Make out an accident report, send to insurance company and keep copy on file.

Guidelines for Rider Safety

1. Instructor will ascertain a rider's level of experience and may need to change that client's choice of horse-partner or limit the activities pursued by that team.
2. Check equipment to be sure that it is appropriate for the activity, in safe condition and adjusted properly to the horse and rider before each ride.
3. Riding attire should include long pants and shirts with sleeves recommended. Avoid bell bottom or baggy pants, as floppy clothes can cause accidents. Layer clothes for more extreme temperatures. Avoid loose jackets and coats that can catch on the saddle horn.
4. Wear boots or sturdy walking shoes while working around the horses
5. No slip-on clogs (including Birkenstocks) or sandals permitted.
6. Hair must be out of eyes at all times. Tie it back or put under a hat.
7. Do not allow students to chew gum while riding, it can be accidentally inhaled causing the student to choke.
8. Leave all fine jewelry at home. They cannot be found easily in a riding arena.
9. Gloves are advisable most often for warmth and protection.

Horses

1. You must warn riders of any bad habits the horse may have. This is to be done in a reassuring way with instruction in how the rider can help the horse to not elicit the fear response. You teach the rider to read the horse's body language and know when it is getting irritated. You teach what may irritate the horse so the rider can be thinking one step ahead when an event occurs that could alarm the horse (donkey braying or photo flash or pop can opening). Reminders are continually needed, depending on rider's age and abilities.
2. Do not use a horse with dangerous habits like rearing, running away or attacking other horses.
3. Irritable horses may need to be used alone in an area. (metaphor? When we need time alone)
4. Do not use horses with physical disabilities which could cause them to stumble, fall, or act up with a rider, even if this possibility seems unlikely.

Equipment for Riding

1. A student will wear an ASTM-SEI-approved fitted helmet when mounted or driving a horse.
 - ❑ Helmets must fit the rider's head and have a strong, secure chin strap to stay in place during a fall.
 - ❑ Helmets should have adequate padding and/or suspension type headband to protect the head in case of a fall.
2. A student will always wear boots with smooth soles and heels when riding with stirrups. There is one large set of stirrups made for tennis shoes for those with tennis shoes if there are no boots that fit.
3. Instructors will always:
 - ❑ Check tightness of cinch-the main cinch must be fastened securely before the flank cinch or breast collar and removed last when untacking.
 - ❑ Western flank cinches must be attached to the front cinch to prevent slipping back and flanking the horse and causing bucking.
 - ❑ Determine that the saddle fits the horse's back without creating painful pressure on the spine or back muscles.
 - ❑ Adjust stirrups
 - ❑ Stay beside student when they mount assuring horse is controlled. Encourage their independence and their *asking* for help from you or peer if necessary.
 - ❑ Recheck cinch and stirrups for security and comfort
 - ❑ Do a communications check to ensure student's ability to control horse (i.e. walk, whoa, turn and again whoa).
 - ❑ Do not bridle or unbridle your horse when they are tied up.
 - ❑ Monitor student at all times while on the farm, within sight and voice control (unless in bathroom).

The Role of Sidewalkers

A student may have one or two sidewalkers.

- Everyone should keep his or her focus on the instructor. If you talk to the student, you may miss important directions from the instructor.

- You must BE ALERT to your student at all times.
- The sidewalker's position in relation to the rider makes it tempting to carry on a conversation. Excessive talking in the arena is very distracting to all concerned.

Supporting the student

- The sidewalker will be responsible for helping maintain the student's balance and leg/hand position.
- Should the student start to slip, resist the urge to grab them. Instead, gently push them back into the proper position. You are responsible for the comfort and safety of the rider while he is on the horse.
- The major support position you will probably be asked to maintain is called a "thigh hold". This position is when you place your forearm closest to the rider across the rider's thigh and hold on to the front of the saddle or pad with your fingers.
- If you push down with your wrist, you keep the rider's thigh tight against the horse. This allows firm support and keeps you in the correct position next to the rider's leg.
- Another position you may be asked to support the rider is at the hip. This involves holding your hand and wrist cupped around the riders hip, on the side you are on. This allows for more support of the rider's pelvis and spine. It is important in this position that you do not rest on the horse's back., The horse needs to carry the rider and can get uncomfortable if it needs to carry you as well.

LEADERS

While the sidewalker is mainly responsible for the student, the leader is responsible for the horse. They must see to it the horse is properly groomed, tacked up, under control throughout the lesson, and properly put away.

Should a problem arise during a lesson, all leaders should quietly bring their horses to a halt and then stand directly in front of them. You will remain in this position until the instructor directs you to do otherwise.

Please be aware the horse is a professional, and needs to be treated as such. This is their job. While at work, please do no play with the horse's head, or distract their attention away from the rider and class.

SPOTTERS

The spotter is frequently used with independent riders, those that can safely balance and guide by themselves. The spotter will be assigned a rider and will help that rider from the time they arrive to the time they leave. During the lesson, the spotter will be positioned by the instructor in a certain spot of the arena. He will be available to assist the rider whenever necessary.

Documentation for Clients

All new clients will have the following forms completed. See specific guidelines regarding the completion of each of the following documents.

- Rider Liability Release form, Photo Release (optional)
- Rider Emergency Medical Treatment Plan (includes medical insurance information)
- Treatment plan and/or goals that are done collaboratively with parents and/or caseworker or client.
- (optional) General Physical/Psychological Assessment form and Physician's statement for clients with unstable conditions.

How to Complete Documents

For *certain clients* an initial and periodic assessment of the rider's physical and mental status may be required. This will be documented on specific forms and performed by a health or mental health professional.