



Shadow Hills Riding Club

VOLUNTEER TRAINING MANUAL: Horse Care

SHADOW HILLS RIDING CLUB

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The goal of our Horse Care Program is to provide an experience that is physically and mentally positive for our horses. We strive to create an environment that is free from the stressors that inevitably come with the job of being an Equine Assisted Activities and Services (EAAS) and lesson horse.

We understand that all volunteers come to us with different levels of horse experience. It is the focus of this program to provide an opportunity to all volunteers to grow in their horsemanship skills while at the same time maintaining the wellbeing of our equine partners.

GUIDELINES FOR HORSE CARE

Horse Care begins the moment you walk into the stall...

What to Look For in the Stall

1. Is there evidence that the horse is pooping and peeing?
 - a. Wet shavings indicate pee
 - b. Poop should not be watery or too hard. It should be soft enough to somewhat fall apart when it hits the ground
 - c. Do they have adequate water? Is it clean?
 - d. Are they eating?
 - i. All horses eat at a different pace. However, it may be a concern if there is a large amount of hay left and they are not showing any interest in it.
 - e. How does the horse walk out of the stall?
 - i. Did it try to rush out ahead of you? This is not allowed. You must always walk out or into the stall before the horse.
 - ii. Is the horse refusing to leave the stall?
 - iii. Are there any signs of lameness?

Please notify the Horse Care Lead if you have any concerns regarding your observations in the stall or after you take the horse out of the stall. When in doubt, please ask for guidance before removing the horse from the stall.

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Cross-Tie Area Guidelines

The horses can spend a large amount of time in the crossties on any given day as part of our EAAS programs and riding lessons. It can be a very busy place where there are many different stressors put on the horse. They can become sour. It is our goal during horse care not to put any additional stress on the horse.

1. If the horse is standing in the cross ties with its ears pinned, is biting or just seems uncomfortable, then reassess what you are doing or ask for help. If the horse is displaying these behaviors, then it is trying to tell you something!
 - a. The curry comb can be aggravating to some horses, especially to our mares who are in season, and horses who are sore or itchy. If they look irritated, then stop using it.. It is OK! Less pressure is better sometimes. Use a softer brush if needed!
 - b. The horse may be sore in its joints or muscles and be apprehensive about picking its feet up. Try lowering the leg while you pick out the hooves.
 - c. The horse may just need a low key energy from you to feel relaxed.
2. Do not crowd the horse in the crossties
 - a. Do not stand directly in front of the horse. Stand off to the side a bit
3. Only one person works on the horse at a time unless directed by the Horse Care Lead
4. Remove the horse from the crossties before handling the horse's face
 - a. Handling the horse's face while it is immobilized in the crossties is stressful and claustrophobic
5. Do not talk "baby talk" to the horse when it is misbehaving
 - a. This just reinforces the bad behavior

Grooming

1. Watch the horse's body language. Adjust your approach as needed.
2. Grooming steps
 - a. Pick hooves - start front left, back left, front right, back right. Be sure to look for cracks, abscesses, foreign bodies and thrush.
 - b. Curry Comb - counter clockwise circular movements. Don't use the curry comb on the bony parts of the horse. Don't use it if it irritates the horse.
 - c. Hard Brush - Apply less pressure if irritating the horse. Use quick flicking motions. Use time to assess the coat and skin condition.
 - d. Soft brush - the horses generally like this one. Let them enjoy this time.
3. Things to look for
 - a. Overall demeanor (irritated, anxious, listless, friendly)
 - b. Swelling, cuts, skin irritations, tail condition (are they rubbing it)
 - c. Overall condition of hooves

Thrush - a fungal infection that occurs in the hoof. Most commonly invades the frog, but can affect other structures. Leaves a bad odor with a blackish or white discharge on the surface.

Abscess - a pocket of puss that forms inside of the hoof that is caused by a bacterial infection. The horse can become very lame. When the abscess comes to the surface, puss will be released from the hoof.

Foreign body - (Nail, screw, etc.) never attempt to remove a foreign object. Notify the Horse Care Lead immediately!

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Turnout/ Lunging/Riding Procedures

Sun Pens

1. Check to make sure there is adequate water. This is mandatory!
2. Check for any hazards
 - a. Bees
 - b. Debris
 - c. Safe footing

Round Pens (use only at discretion of Horse Care Lead)

1. Never leave horse alone
2. Check for unsafe footing
3. Do not drive a horse forward if another horse is being led in close proximity of the round pen
 - a. This is a common curtesy as the sudden movements might spook the horse outside of the round pen

Arena Turnout (use only at discretion of Horse Care Lead)

1. Never leave horse alone
2. Check for unsafe footing
3. Do not drive a horse forward if another horse is being led in close proximity of the arena
 - a. This is a common courtesy as the sudden movements might spook the horse outside of the arena
4. Determine how long arena will be available before you turn out the horse
 - a. It can be very hard to catch a horse who was just let loose and is excited to be out. Plan your time!
 - b. Mounted riders have arena priority - plan ahead so that you remove a horse from the arene before a lesson or private ride is starting
5. Arena turnout is for experienced volunteers who have received appropriate training only - consult with Horse Care Lead

Lunging (Experienced volunteers with training only)

Riding (Per approval by Johnny only)

1. Riding lessons and advanced horsemanship lessons may be taken for a fee through Shadow Hills Equestrian Center. Please see the SHEC website for further information or talk to SHRC staff members for recommendations.

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Leading a Horse

Lead with a PURPOSE! A problem encountered leading a horse during horse care will be a problem for our program participants or other volunteers during EAAS sessions. We don't want that! Know what you expect from the horse and from yourself!

1. The horse must walk up when you ask
2. The horse must stop when you stop
3. The horse must not pull you to eat food! Be alert!
4. The horse must never walk before or beside you when entering or leaving the stall
5. The horse must not try to bite
6. The horse must not come into your personal space. It should not be using you as a scratching post.
7. The horse must not rush up or down a hill.
8. The horse must not greet another horse.
9. Always make sure there is at least one full horse length between your horse and the horse in front of you.
10. When passing a horse and person going the other direction, always pass your left shoulder to the other person's left shoulder to put as much distance between your horse and the other horse as possible.

Report any behavioral issues you encounter while leading the horse to the Horse Care Lead so they may be addressed and you can receive instruction on how to properly correct the problem. A small issue today can become a big problem down the road if we are not careful.

Common problems you may encounter while leading a horse

- Not walking up when asked
- Not stopping when asked
- Rushing up or down hills ahead of you
- Pulling you to eat grass
- Spooking
- Bucking
- Rearing
- Biting
- Not standing still while being mounted
- Not standing quiet in the crossties

Don't give the horse a story!

The horse is too old... this horse is too lazy...this horse is too anxious...

If handled properly, our horses can ALL be consistent in their behavior!

These horses are counting on us not only for their care, but to help them be the best EAAS horses they can be!

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GENERAL RULES AND EXPECTATIONS

1. No hand feeding the horses, this encourages nipping.
2. Do not touch/pet horses on the face.
 - a. Horses are prey animals who have binocular vision with a large blind spot in their direct field of vision. They are also by nature claustrophobic. Sudden movement or sensations towards their faces can frighten them because they cannot see you. Simply put, it just ends up being a lot for them to put up with multiple times a day. Give them their space. We don't want them "putting up" with our actions during Horse Care.
3. Approach the horse from the side of the face, not directly in front.
 - a. Give them a chance to see what you are doing. Same principles apply as in #2.
4. Only one person grooms a horse at a time
 - a. Think claustrophobia and their special vision!
5. Always let a horse know when you are approaching by speaking to it.
 - a. Sudden movements can scare it.
6. Release a horse from the cross ties and reattach the lead rope (if applicable) when dealing with the face. This would only be done under the direction of the Horse Care Lead.
 - a. Think claustrophobia! We don't want to stress the horse out.
7. Do not take a horse out of their stall without approval of the Horse Care Lead.
 - a. Each horse has a schedule for that day.
 - b. The Horse Care Lead determines the activity level of the horse
8. Lead the horse with purpose
 - a. Is the horse following your commands?
 - b. Is it walking up when asked?
 - c. Is it stopping when asked?
 - d. Did it walk out of the stall nicely?
9. Make sure there is adequate water in the sun pen
 - a. This is a P.A.T.H. Intl standard that our facility is mandated to meet and a safety procedure for the wellbeing of our equine partners
10. Do not let the horses eat anything (grass, hedge, hay etc.) while being led
 - a. This can lead to the horse expecting to eat which can lead it to being very aggressive in getting to the food source. This behavior is dangerous as horses are large.
11. Do not let a horse rush up or down a hill before you
 - a. This can become a habit for the horse. Do not allow it as it can become dangerous for volunteers and program participants.
12. Report any behavioral or physical issues to the Horse Care Lead.

***Horse Care starts from the moment you walk into the stall.
Work with a purpose! The horses are counting on us!***