



NORTH COUNTRY
RIDE

**Volunteer
Handbook**





INTRODUCTION

MISSION

North Country Rides mission is to promote personal growth and development through equine assisted therapeutic, educational, and recreational activities.

Do you want to make a difference in the lives of others?

North Country RIDE volunteer experience is a fun way to fulfill a community service requirement or add to a resume or college application!



BARN RULES

NO SMOKING OR ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION ON PROPERTY

NO PETS ALLOWED

VISITORS MUST STAY IN DESIGNATED AREAS:

Arena Deck

Grassy Areas

Community Buildings

NO HAND FEEDING HORSES – Please use designated feed pans
**MOUNTING AND DISMOUNTING OF RIDERS IS TO BE DONE ONLY
BY INSTRUCTORS OR TRAINED VOLUNTEERS WHO HAVE
COMPLETED THE MOUNT/DISMOUNT TRAINING AND ARE
LISTED ON THE “Mount/Dismount” LIST IN ARENA**

DO NOT TIE HORSES TO DECK RAILS – Use the rings on the walls

DO NOT CLIMB ON FENCES OR GATES

**DISINFECT HELMET AFTER EACH USE AND PLACE ON PROPER
HOOKS**

RETURN ALL TACK TO PROPER PLACE AFTER USE

**CELL PHONES MUST BE ON SILENT OR LEFT IN VOLUNTEER
LOCKERS**

BE SAFE AND HAVE FUN!!



HORSE LEADER/HANDLER

OBJECTIVE:

The horse leader/handler is to be responsible for an assigned horse before, during, and after class.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- ◇ Minimum age of 14 years old
- ◇ Satisfactory completion of a North Country RIDE orientation session or one-on-one session
- ◇ Horse experience preferred (NOT Required)
- ◇ Able to halter, lead, tie, and tack a horse (English and Western)
- ◇ Able to groom a horse
- ◇ Must be able to walk for an hour at a time (Indoors/Outdoors) on uneven surfaces with an occasional short jog
- ◇ Ability to recognize possible warning signs and/or hazards pertaining to the horse
- ◇ Ability to communicate with Instructor, other volunteers, and rider
- ◇ Must have adequate vision and hearing to ensure safety of the horses and all other participants
- ◇ Be able to lift up to 20lbs (Saddle) above your head
- ◇ Ability to work as a member of a TEAM

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- ◇ Ensure horse is groomed, tacked, and warming up in arena 5 MINUTES prior to class
- ◇ Lead the horse during class, within a group including side walkers, keeping primary focus on assigned horse while maintaining communication with team
- ◇ Listen to and enact directions of the Instructor
- ◇ Untack assigned horse after class
- ◇ Caring for tack and equipment in a manner to preserve its life and usefulness
- ◇ Adhering to all North Country RIDE policies and procedures



As a volunteer, one of the most challenging duties you could be assigned is the position of the Horse Leader/Handler. A handlers first responsibility is to the horse but you must also constantly be aware of the rider, instructor, side walkers, and any potential hazards in or around the arena.

An effective handler pays close attention to the rider's needs as well as to where the horse is going. This reinforces the rider's attempts to control the horse. However, you should not execute an instruction for the rider before the rider has time to process the information and make an effort to comply. Avoid the temptation to talk to the rider and/or side walkers.

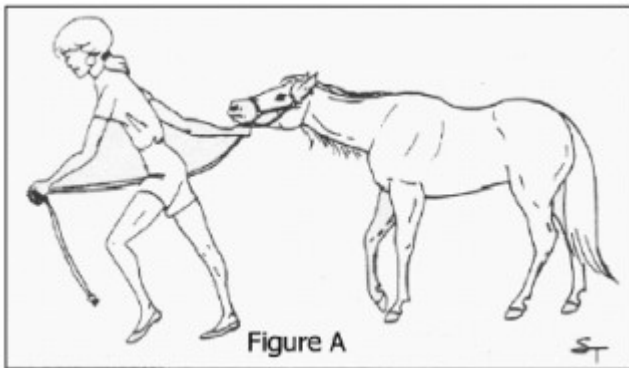


FIGURE A

This image shows a few faults common among handlers. Here is a handler, grimly marching along—head down, one hand on the lead snap, the other hand coiled in the rope—dragging a strung-out horse. **In a battle with a horse, you lose.**

You must get the horse to cooperate. Walk alongside the horse, about even with their eye. This keeps them in the proper frame, which is more beneficial for everyone. Do not walk backwards to look at the rider. It is dangerous and will cause confusion in the horse.

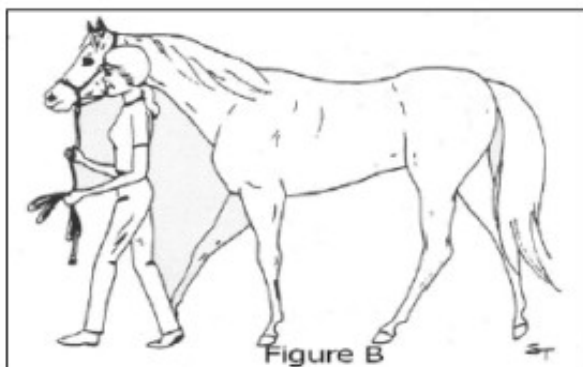


FIGURE B

This image shows the correct position for handlers. The lead is held with the right hand 6-12 inches from the snap, allowing free motion of the horses head. This is more therapeutic for the rider and less irritating for the horse.

The tail end of the lead should be looped in a figure eight in the left hand to avoid tripping. Never coil the rope around your hand. Use short tugs rather than a steady pull to keep a slower horse moving.



When you halt for more than a few seconds, stand in front of the horse with your hands on the halter's cheek pieces (if the horse permits) or loosely hold the lead. Standing in front is a psychological barrier to the horse and he will stand more quietly.

If the worst happens and there is an accident, stay with the horse.

There are other people to care for a fallen rider. The situation could easily become more dangerous if there are loose horses running around the arena. Move your horse as far from the fallen rider as possible and keep calm.

Always be listening for the instructors direction.

These suggestions can help you control the horse, be a good aid to a rider and be a valuable assistant to an instructor.



Correct Handler Position



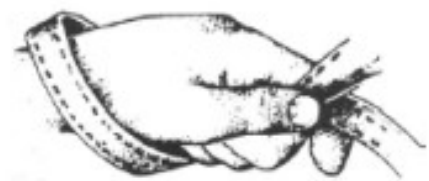
Incorrect Handler Position



Correct Way to Hold the Lead Rope



Incorrect!!



Incorrect!!



SIDE WALKER/RIDER SUPPORT

OBJECTIVE:

The side walker/rider support is available physically to support the rider during grooming, mounting, riding, and dismounting. They are also present to assist the rider in guiding their horse along with the Instructors instructions.

The amount of support required is dependent on the rider.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- ◊ Minimum age of 14 years old
- ◊ Satisfactory completion of a North Country RIDE orientation session or one-on-one session
- ◊ Ability to hold your arms raised and out to the side for extended periods of time
- ◊ Must be able to walk for an hour at a time (Indoors/Outdoors) on uneven surfaces with an occasional short jog
- ◊ Horse experience preferred (NOT Required)
- ◊ Ability to communicate with Instructor, other volunteers, and rider
- ◊ Must have adequate vision and hearing to ensure safety of the horses and all other participants
- ◊ Comfortable in working with the disabled (Including physical contact)
- ◊ Physical and mental ability to support a rider in a crisis situation
- ◊ Ability to work as a member of a TEAM

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- ◊ Safety of rider as directed by Instructor
- ◊ Help prepare horses for class (grooming and tacking) as necessary
- ◊ Assist with rider support during mounting and dismounting as necessary
- ◊ Walk next to rider throughout class, including physical support as necessary
- ◊ Help the rider follow directions given by the Instructor
- ◊ Encourage the rider to stretch and grow to the best of the riders ability
- ◊ Adhering to all North Country RIDES policies and procedures



Side walkers are the ones who normally get the most hands-on duties in therapeutic riding. They are directly responsible for the rider. In the arena, the side walker should help the student focus his/her attention on the instructor.

Try to avoid unnecessary talking with either the rider or other volunteers.

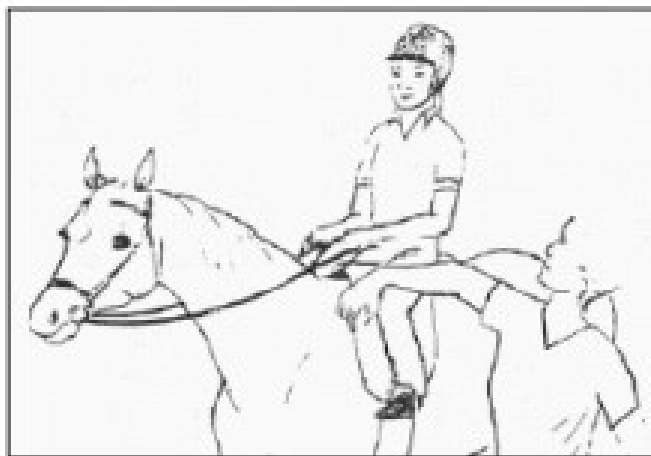
Too much input from too many directions is very confusing to anyone, and to riders that already have perceptual problems, it can be very overwhelming. If more than one side walker is working with a single rider, one side walker should be deemed the “Designated Talker” to avoid this situation.

When the instructor gives a direction, allow your student plenty of time to process it. You will get to know the riders and learn when they need help and when they’re just not paying attention.

It’s very important to maintain a position by the rider’s knee. Being too far forward or too far back will make it very difficult to assist with instructions or provide security if the horse should trip or shy.

There are two ways to hold onto the rider without interfering. The most commonly used is the “arm-over-thigh” hold. The side walker grips the front of the saddle (flap or pommel, depending on the horses size) with the hand closest to the rider. Then the fleshy part of the forearm rests gently on the rider’s thigh. This is demonstrated below.

Be care that the elbow does not accidentally dig into the rider’s leg.





There may be some cases the “therapeutic hold” is more appropriate to use. Here the leg is held at the joints, usually the knee and/or ankle. Check with the Instructor for the best way to assist.

In the unlikely event of an emergency, the arm-over-thigh hold is the most secure.

Avoid wrapping an arm around the rider’s waist. It is tempting, especially when walking beside a pony with a young or small rider. This method often offers too much uneven support. At times, it can even pull the rider off balance and make riding more difficult.

If the instructor chooses to use a safety belt on your rider, be careful not to pull down or push up on it.

As your arm tires, you may need relief. When you are ready to give your arm a rest ask the handler to move into the center to stop and trade sides, one at a time, with the other side walker.

The ultimate goal for therapeutic riding is to encourage the rider to stretch and grow to be as confident as they can possibly be. You are right at their side, so help the instructor to challenge them to the best of their ability.



TIME COMMITMENT

YOU ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO US! OUR RIDERS DEPEND ON YOU

If you do not show up for your scheduled volunteer commitment
your assigned rider may not get to ride.

Please ensure adequate notification for scheduled
volunteer commitments that you are unable to attend.

This will ensure we are able to get the time slots
covered in time for all scheduled riders to be able to
participate in their class.

RECOMMENDED COMMITMENT

ONE CLASS per week (1-2 hours) for 8 **WEEKS**

There is no limit to how many hours you may volunteer



VOLUNTEER BENEFITS

- ◊ Satisfaction of helping out in your community
- ◊ Gain an understanding and appreciation of what it means to live with a disability
- ◊ Learn the care and healing benefits of being around horses
- ◊ Acquire community service experience for school, church, boy scouts, girl scouts, 4-H, personal resume, etc.
- ◊ **Personal growth**
- ◊ **Friendships**

CAN VOLUNTEERS RIDE?

Volunteers frequently ask if they will have the opportunity to ride the horses at North Country RIDE.

The answer is “yes” if you are an approved horse conditioner. These are volunteers who have demonstrated their riding competency through a riding test and an instructor has cleared them to come in and exercise the program horses either during class or on their own time. This conditioning helps out horse stay fresh and engaged in their job.

Volunteers have the opportunity to take paid lessons on our horses during the winter sessions.

We also on occasion offer a riders horse to a volunteer if the rider doesn't show up for a class.



EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

MOUNTED EMERGENCIES — Horse Leader/Handler

If you are LEADING a horse that becomes involved in an emergency, try to stop the horse. Often, if the horse is not moving at great speed, it helps to turn it into a fence, provided the fence is tall and strong.

IT IS NOT SAFE TO DO THIS WITH WIRE FENCING.

Once the horse has been stopped, stand in front and face the horse if it is safe to do so. Always modify your bodies position for safety.

If you are LEADING a horse other than the horse involved in the emergency, halt your horse and stand in front of it facing towards the horse if it is safe to do so.

With an overly frightened horse modification to this may be necessary for safety reasons. You may have to quietly move away from the scene of the emergency to a safe area. As long as your horse, rider, and side walkers are able to, relocate to a less populated area and wait for further direction.

If a horse is running loose, stay in an area where the loose horse can move past you freely, yet you will be out of the way.

Listen for the Instructors direction.



MOUNTED EMERGENCIES — Side Walker/Rider Support

If you are SIDE WALKING a horse that becomes involved in an emergency, try to stabilize the rider using the “Arm-Over-Thigh” hold as mentioned earlier in this handbook.

If the rider slides towards you, try to push them back to midline by pushing at their pelvis. If the rider slides away from you, encourage the other side walker to push the rider back towards you.

Try not to PULL the rider back to midline.

If you are SIDE WALKING a horse other than the horse involved in the emergency, monitor the whole scene, your horse, rider, and communicate quietly the riders needs to the leader and/or the other side walker.

Try to keep the rider calm.

UNMOUNTED EMERGENCIES — All Volunteers

Volunteers should assist riders to safety areas of the facility when a large scale emergency occurs. Examples include: fire, severe weather, etc.

If a horse becomes agitated during grooming, tacking or other unmounted activities, attempt to push the horse AWAY from the rider and assist the rider in moving quickly away from the horse.

Inform the instructor of the incident immediately.



EMERGENCY DISMOUNT

HORSE LEADER/HANDLER:

If an Emergency Dismount is called for, the leader should hold the horse at a halt until the rider is fully clear of the horse and equipment. Once the rider has dismounted, the leader should move the horse away to a safe distance, halt, and await direction

SIDE WALKER/RIDER SUPPORT:

If an Emergency Dismount becomes necessary, the side walker the rider is falling away from (or the side walker on the opposite side of the leader) should remove the stirrup and reins from the rider, while the side walker the rider is falling towards should remove the stirrup and then hug the rider around the waist or trunk, under the arms, and pull the rider off and **AWAY** from the horse.

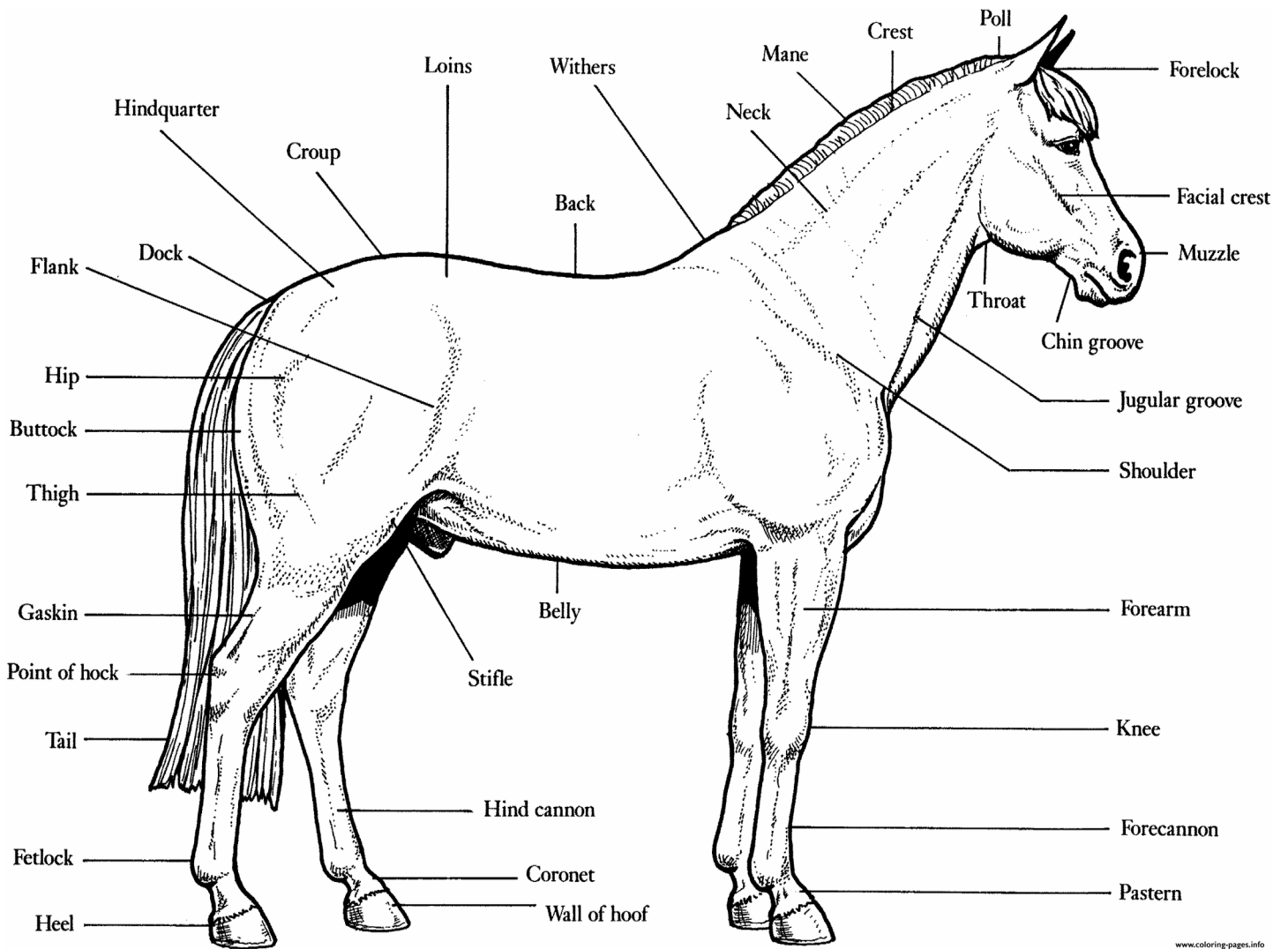
If the side walker does not feel they can bear the full weight of the descending rider, a controlled fall may be initiated.

It is important that the Side Walker breaks the riders fall and does not fall on the rider.





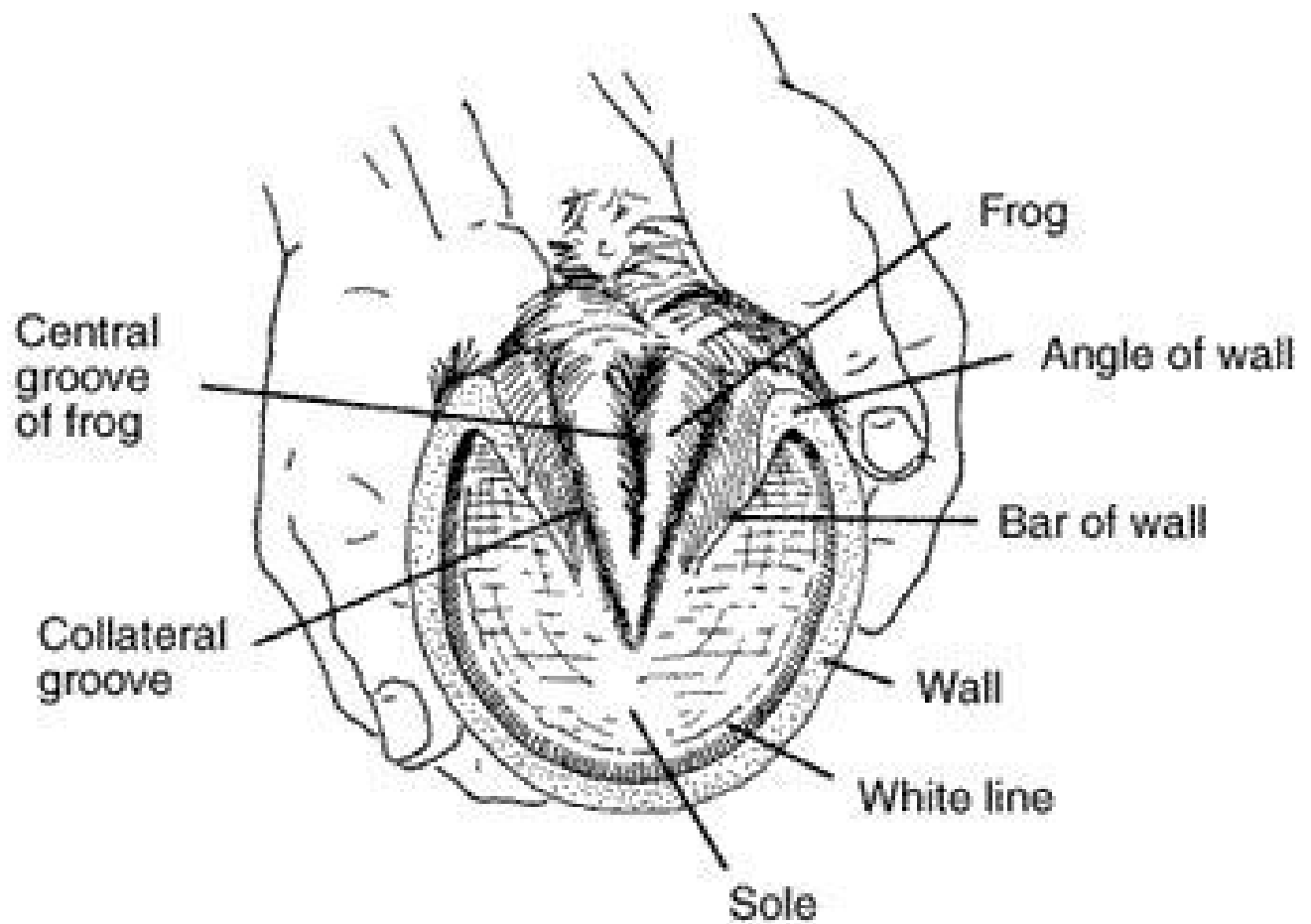
PARTS OF THE HORSE



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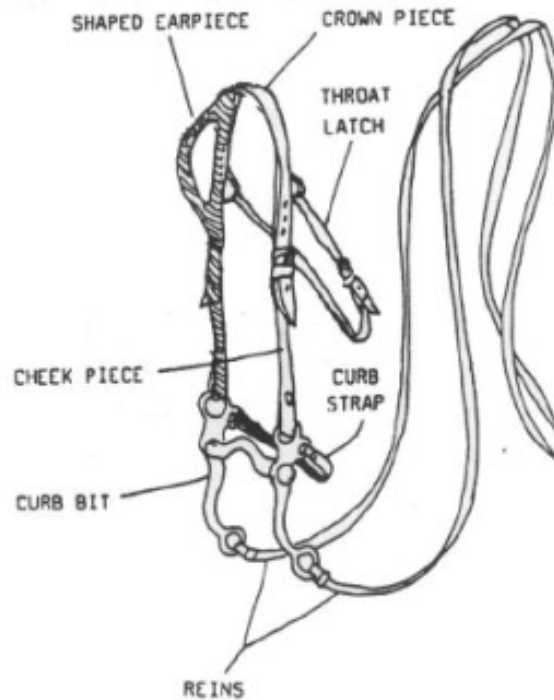
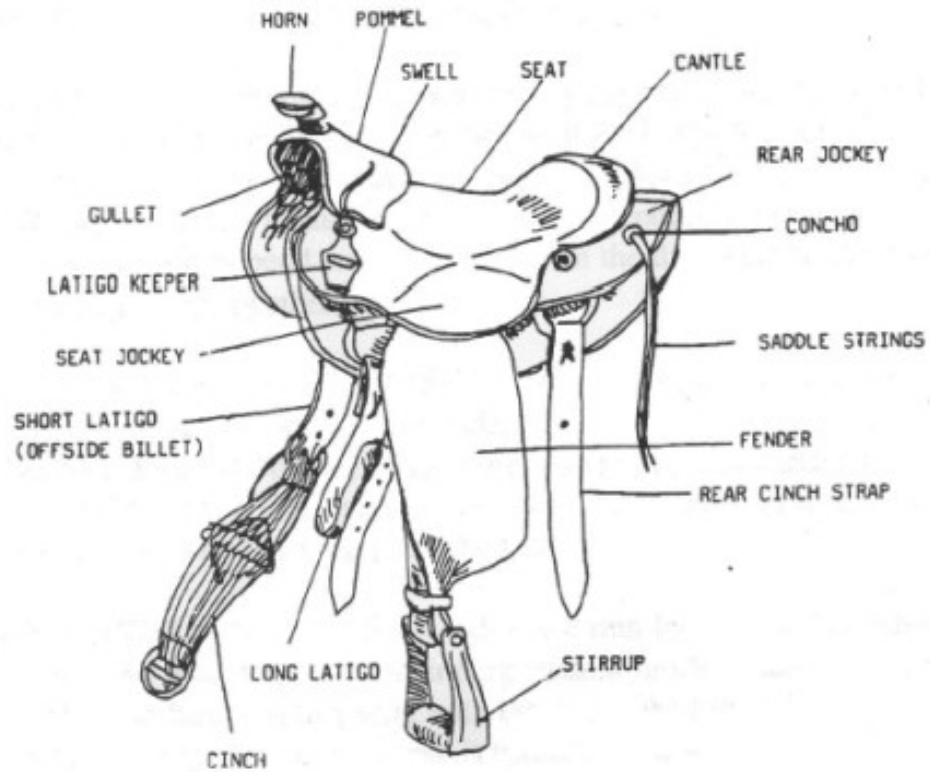


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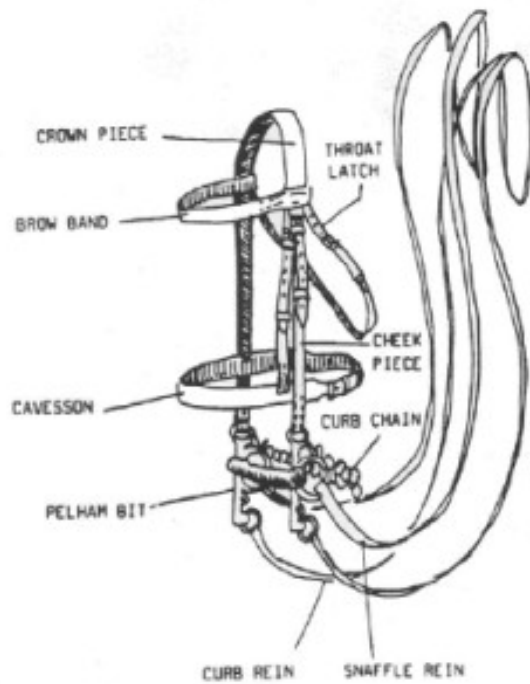
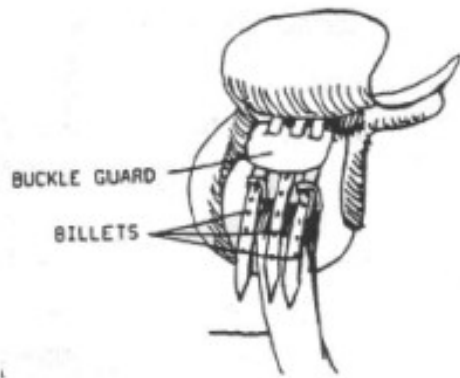
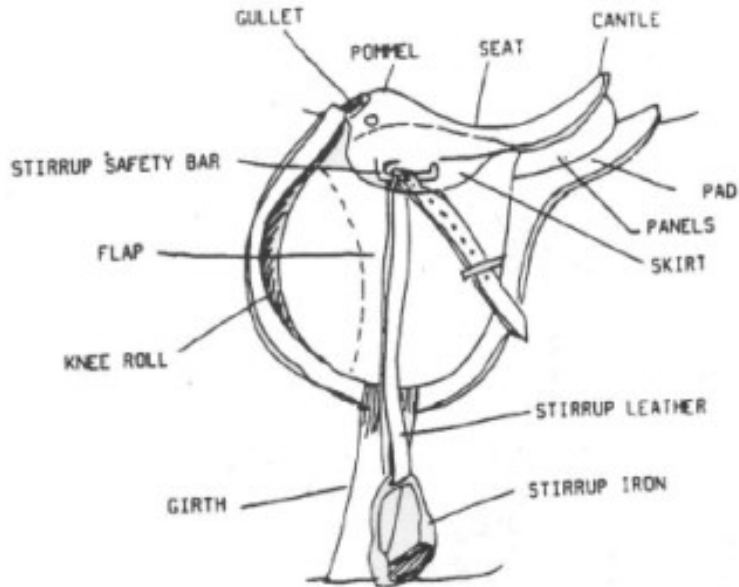


WESTERN TACK





ENGLISH TACK





GROOMING

Remember when you are grooming to look for any problems on the horse. This may include cuts, scrapes, runny nose/eyes, bumps, swelling, hot hooves, etc.

Notify the instructor immediately if you notice any sign of a problem.

When grooming, start at the front of the horse and work your way back with each tool.

- 1 Pick out all four hooves using a Hoof Pick. Dirt and rocks can be trapped in the hollow grooves on the underside of the hoof.
- 2 Using a circular motion, use a curry comb over the neck, barrel, and rump.
- 3 Brush the entire body except for the face with a stiff/dandy brush. Use short, flicking strokes, following the direction of the coat. Be sure to brush the belly area as well, especially where the girth will touch.
- 4 Next use a soft brush over the entire body, including the face. Use long, sweeping strokes going with the direction of the coat.
- 5 To brush out the mane and tail, use a comb. Start at the bottom and work your way up, always brushing in a downward motion.

Remember: It is important to ensure you groom the areas on the horse that will be covered in tack.





EQUINE SENSES

When developing relationships and working with horses, communication is key. It is critical to provide a safe environment in a therapeutic riding setting. Beginning a process of understanding the horse senses, instincts, and implications is a step in predicting behaviors, managing risks and increasing positive relationships.

SMELL: The horses sense of smell is thought to be very accurate and it allows them to recognize other horses and people. Smell also enables the horse to evaluate situations.

HEARING: “Hearing is not seeing” is often the cause of the fight/flight response. Always take note to the position of the horses ears. Forward ears communicate attentiveness and interest. Ears that are laid back often communicate they are upset or showing aggression.

SIGHT: Horses eyes are set on either side of the head; there is good peripheral vision, but poorer frontal vision. A horse focuses on objects by raising and lowering its head.

TOUCH: Touch is used as a communication between horses and between horses and people. Horses are sensitive to soft or rough touches from a persons hands or legs.

TASTE: Taste is closely linked with the sense of smell and helps the horses to distinguish palatable foods and other objects.

SIXTH SENSE: Horses do have a “sixth sense” when evaluating disposition of those around them. Horses are hypersensitive in detecting the moods of their handlers and riders.



EQUINE LIFESTYLE

In addition to understanding the horses sixth senses, we need to appreciate and increase our awareness of the horses lifestyle. This will assist to responding appropriately to his reactions to situations.

FLIGHT AS A NATURAL INSTINCT:

Horses would rather turn and run away from danger than face and fight it.

- ◊ At a sudden movement or noise, the horse might try to flee. Speak to the horse calmly.
- ◊ A frightened horse that is tied up or being held tightly might try to escape by pulling back. Relax your hold or untie the horse quickly. Do not stand directly behind the horse.
- ◊ Most horses chosen to work in a therapeutic riding setting have less of an instinct to flee. The hoses may look to you for reassurance. It is helpful if the volunteer remains calm and talks to the horse in a soothing voice.

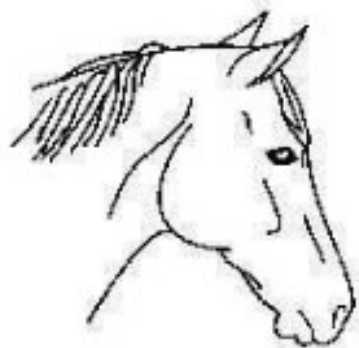
HERD ANIMAL:

Horses like to stay together in a herd or group with one or two horses dominate, with a pecking order amongst the rest.

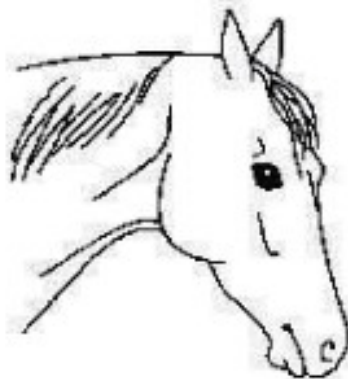
- ◊ Be aware the horse may not like being alone. This is to be taken into consideration as horses are leaving the barn and/or arena.
- ◊ Be aware that if the horse in front of you is trotting or cantering, the horse following may be tempted to trot or canter.
- ◊ If one horse spooks, the other horses around may be affected.
- ◊ For safety, it is recommended to keep one horse length between you and the horse in front of you.



READING THE EARS



Ears forward but relaxed
interested in what's
in front of him



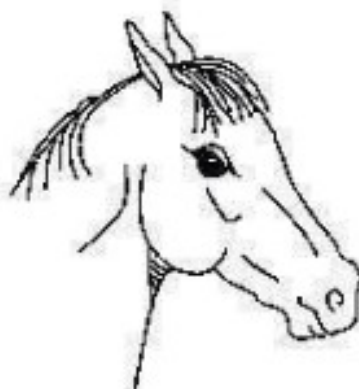
Ears turned back but relaxed
listening to his rider
or what's behind him



Ears pointed stiffly forward
alarmed or nervous about what's
ahead. Looking out for danger



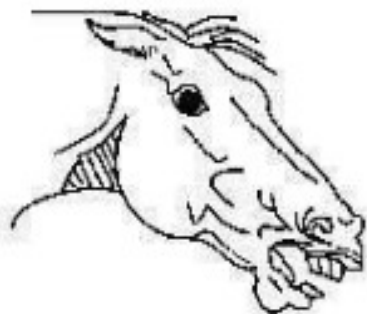
Ears pointed left and right
relaxed, paying attention
to the scenery on both sides.



Ears stiffly back
annoyed or worried about what's
behind him; might kick if annoyed.



Droopy ears
calm and resting,
horse may be dozing.



Ears flattened against neck
violently angry, in a fighting mood.
May fight, bite or kick.



Find Your Stride

PROGRAM COORDINATOR

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