



Volunteer Handbook

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Introduction and History

Welcome to Rocky Top Therapy Center! Rocky Top Therapy Center, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, was established in 1990 and is a premier riding center accredited through the North American Riding through PATH (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship) International. We are located on a working ranch in Keller, Texas. Founders Doug and Vivian Newton understood the physical and emotional benefits that horses and horseback riding can have on the community's population of individuals with physical, mental and emotional disabilities.

Currently, Rocky Top Therapy Center addresses the needs of more than 250 mentally, physically and emotionally challenged individuals each week utilizing upwards of 50 therapy horses. Staff members consist of PATH International Certified Riding Instructors, EFMHA, and Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association Certified Instructors, Challenge Course facilitators, degreed mental health professionals, licensed social workers, counselors and physical therapists. To provide our services we require a minimum of 16 staff members and minimum of 200 volunteers.

We are very pleased that you want to become a volunteer at Rocky Top Therapy Center. Volunteers are the backbone of our riding program. Most of our students cannot ride without the physical and emotional support that the volunteers provide.

Our goal is to provide a volunteer team for each rider so both the riders and volunteers can benefit from a lasting relationship of trust and care for one another. Volunteers will be able to share their knowledge, guidance, patience and love with the rider.

As a volunteer, you will be part of a team creating a professional, safety-conscious environment for our riders, horses and everyone else here at Rocky Top Therapy Center. Therapeutic riding can bring feelings of accomplishment and joy to both you and the rider.

This handbook is designed as a reference for your orientation to our program. It includes safety information, tips on working with horses, tips for working with special needs riders and various other topics. We hope this information will be of benefit to you and that you refer back to it throughout your stay with us.

"For want of a nail a shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was lost; for want of a horse the rider was lost." This well-known line could be the watchword at Rocky Top, because every job in our operation is integral to the overall success. Your involvement is important to us. Thank you so much for your interest in becoming a volunteer here at Rocky Top Therapy Center.



Overview

Understanding Our Mission

Rocky Top Therapy Center Programs

Therapy, Education & Counseling Services

Requirements Of A Good Volunteer

Understanding Our Mission

Horses and horseback riding help physically, mentally and emotionally challenged people achieve a quality of life that is improved, enhanced and enriched. Based on input from doctors, therapists, teachers, and parents, the student's individual goals are designed to complement ongoing therapy and education. The benefits of working with horseback riding are threefold:

Physical Benefits

The three-dimensional motion of the horse provides the rider hip and back action that simulates natural walking. Riding relaxes and strengthens muscles and improves body tone, posture, balance, joint mobility and coordination.

Emotional Benefits

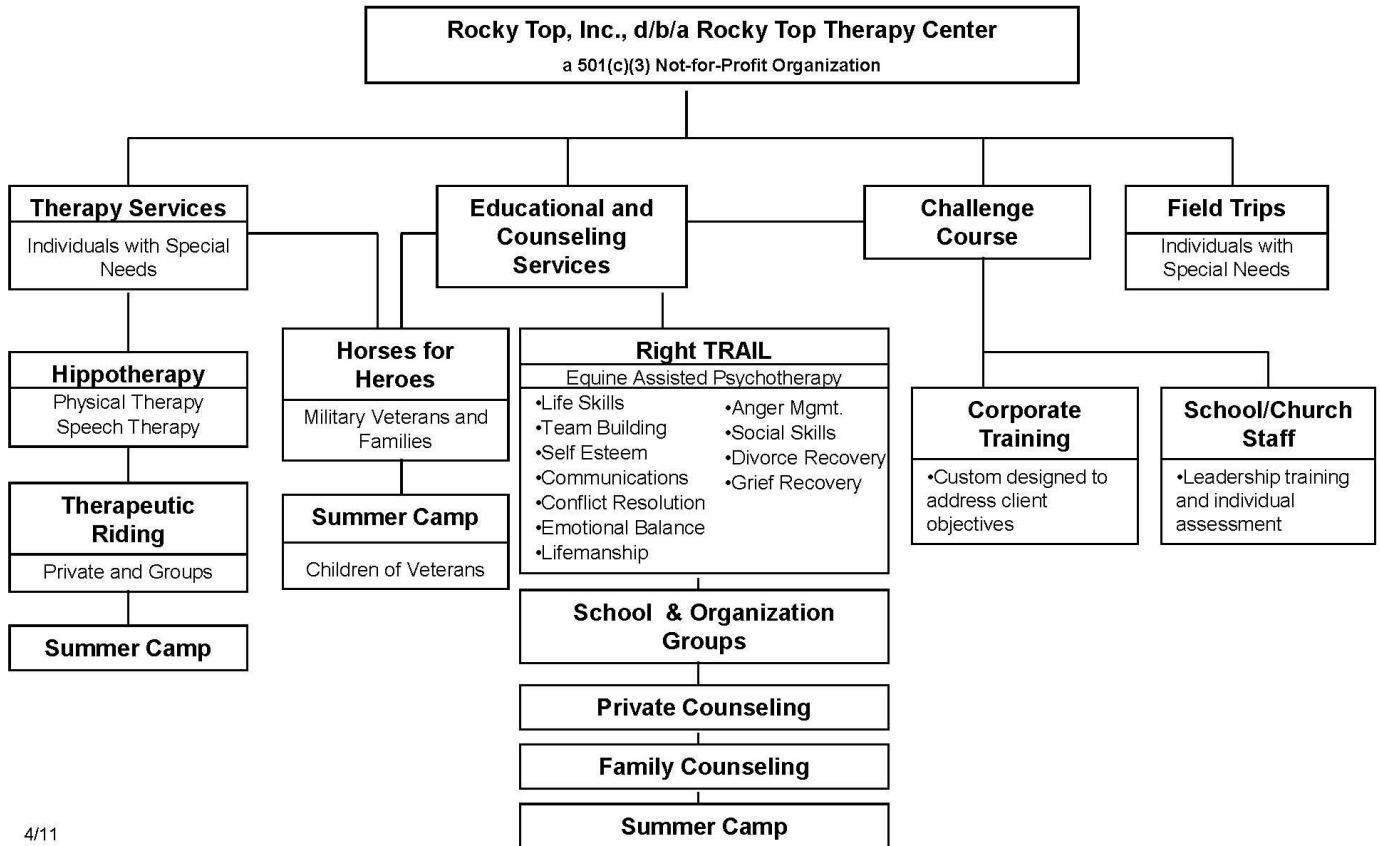
Contact with horses and horsemanship training provides a non-competitive setting for learning. New abilities, self-discipline and improved concentration all help build self-confidence.

Social Benefits

Horseback riding nurtures a positive self-image. Riders benefit from interaction with both the other riders and their volunteers and maybe, for the first time in their lives, experience some independence and a sense of being part of a team.

Rocky Top Therapy Center Programs

Rocky Top Therapy Center Chart of Programs & Services



Therapy Services

Hippotherapy

Hippotherapy is a term that refers to the use of the movement of the horse as a medical tool. The horse's gait provides sensory input through movement which is variable, rhythmic, and repetitive. The resulting movement simulates human movement patterns of the pelvis while walking. Licensed therapists use the horse and ranch setting to accomplish treatment goals as specified by a physician's prescription.

Therapeutic Riding

Taught by PATH international certified instructors, therapeutic riding is a developmental riding therapy program. This program utilizes horseback riding for clients with physical, mental, social or behavioral problems. It often serves as a continuation of the treatment an individual received previously in hippotherapy. Therapeutic riding participants develop more refined horsemanship skills and many go on to compete in Special Olympics, Chisholm Challenge and other competitions.

Education and Counseling Services

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP)

This program is administered by licensed mental health counselors and qualified equine professionals. EAP is an innovative form of therapy that incorporates horses into group, family, couples and individual counseling sessions. It is an experiential treatment approach that provides individual clients with opportunities to enhance self-awareness and re-pattern maladaptive behaviors, feelings and attitudes.

Right TRAIL™

The Right Trail™ program uses an innovative form of therapy that incorporates horses into counseling sessions. TRAIL is an acronym for Trust, Respect, Assertiveness, Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Change and Life skills. The Right TRAIL program utilizes horses, a low elements challenge course, and other experiential activities along with counseling to help youth improve their lives. This program provides tools for youth to better manage their lives and to foster positive relationships with family and others.

Horses for Heroes

Utilizes Equine Assisted Psychotherapy and Therapeutic Riding to address many of the challenges that arise for veterans who have suffered trauma and/or physical disabilities in the line of duty. These programs help them to adjust physically and mentally to their post-war lives. Additionally, these programs are available to the families of veterans also who need emotional support.

Cowboy Challenge Course

The Cowboy Challenge Course tailors your experience to meet the specific goals and needs of your group with an emphasis on teamwork, communication and trust. Your program will be filled with challenges, both physical and mental -- and sometimes emotional, presented as a series of cooperative games and initiatives, trust and adventure activities, with certified Challenge Course Facilitators leading the awareness and discovery process. The day may be designed to focus on one or more skills depending on the unique needs of your team and the length of your program.

Requirements Of A Good Volunteer

- **Reliability** - Regular attendance or the provision of a reliable substitute.
- **Punctuality** - Late arrivals can be very frustrating to students who have looked forward to their weekly ride or therapy session.
- **Physical Fitness** - Within reason! Most classes are 45 minutes of continuous walking with a little bit of short distance trotting.
- **Be Relaxed** - An anxious volunteer contributes to a nervous rider and a tense horse.
- **Alertness** - Despite your outward relaxation, always anticipate an unexpected emergency.
- **Empathy** - Avoid false sentimentality. It is important to have empathy and genuine regard toward the riders.
- **Horse Knowledge** - Knowledge of horses is helpful, but many excellent volunteers have little or no previous experience.
- **Patience** - Patience is necessary to adjust to the often slow movements and reactions of some special needs riders.
- **Sensible & Comfortable Clothing** - You should wear appropriate clothing for weather conditions and shoes that will protect you from mud or deep footed areas in the arena or getting stepped on by a horse.
- **Common Sense** - ALWAYS!



Volunteer Opportunities

Horse Related Opportunities

Non-Horse Related Opportunities

Volunteer Opportunities

Several opportunities are available for those volunteers wishing to do more than (or instead of) volunteering as leaders and side-walkers. All volunteers are encouraged to spread the word about Rocky Top Therapy Center to friends, clubs and organizations who would be interested in providing financial support, volunteers or riders.

Horse Related Opportunities

Volunteers at Rocky Top Therapy Center help with a variety of things. They do everything from catch horses in the pasture, groom and tack for class, bathe horses, clean tack, muck stalls, etc.

Volunteer Team Leader

- The Volunteer Team Leader will serve as an assistant to the instructor and act as a mentor to volunteers. This person assigns leaders and side-walkers during classes and in general, manages activities in the barn so the instructor can concentrate on classes. This position requires leadership skills, horse and barn experience, the ability to identify tasks that need to be completed without being asked to do so and the willingness to take on new assignments as they occur.
- The Volunteer Team Leader will ensure that the side walker, the leader, the horse and its equipment are ready to carry out the lesson to the specification of the instructor.
- The Volunteer Team Leader oversees the tack and grooming area.

Leader

- The role of the leader is to lead the horse as directed by the instructor during class. The leader cues the horse and is in charge of making sure the horse is under control at all times. If an incident occurs with the horse, the leader will remove the horse from the situation as quickly and as safely as possible. Instructors recommend individuals when they feel the volunteer has the qualifications to be trained as a leader. Periodic leader training classes are held and must be passed in order to become a leader.

At Rocky Top, there are three levels of leaders:

Level 1

- ✓ Able to walk with shoulder to throat latch comfortably in each direction.
- ✓ Able to trot with veteran horses in at least one direction.
- ✓ Able to reverse one direction without any problems.
- ✓ Must be comfortable with the mounting block and ramp.

Level 2

- ✓ Able to do all of level 1
- ✓ Able to trot comfortably in both directions
- ✓ Able to reverse both directions
- ✓ Able to handle a level 2 horse at all requests

Level 3

- ✓ Able to do all of level 1 and level 2
- ✓ Must be invited to attend this level as it is to handle new horses in training
- ✓ Able to handle the most difficult horses
- ✓ Able to handle the most dependent riders

All leaders must pay attention to the horse and not the rider. Leaders must be able to listen to the instructors for directions. Leaders must be able to communicate to the instructor if they are not comfortable at any point.

Side-Walker

- The side-walker will assist the rider with their balance during class. (This could range from merely walking beside a rider to fully supporting the rider on the horse.)

- Side-walkers may be asked by an instructor to use different types of handholds for support.
- If an emergency occurs with the horse, the side-walker is responsible for getting the rider off the horse safely and quickly.

Volunteer Trainer

To be a Volunteer Trainer you must be recommended by a Rocky Top instructor. Trainers must have two years previous volunteer experience with a therapeutic riding program and a good working knowledge of tacking, grooming and helping other riders.

- The Volunteer Trainer will help train new volunteers at orientation and during lessons.
- Volunteer Trainers help coordinate volunteers for special events.
- Volunteer Trainers meet with staff regularly to evaluate our program from a volunteer's perspective.

Junior Volunteer

- Our Junior Volunteer ("JV") program is for 12 and 13 year olds. The JV's primary responsibility is to assist with catching, grooming and tacking horses. JV's do not work in the arena with riders. At such time both the instructor and parent decide if the JV is sufficiently trained, they may begin volunteering without adult supervision. Contact our Director of Volunteer Services for more information.

Schooling

- Our horses need periodic "tune-ups" to keep them interested and responsive in their work in the therapeutic setting. Experienced riders capable of performing elementary movements (leg yield, turn on the forehand, etc.), getting the horse in a round frame and bending through turns, and smoothing gait transitions, are eligible. Those interested should contact our Horse Manager for a riding test.

Non-Horse Related Opportunities

If you have a special interest or ability in any of the following, please contact our Director of Volunteer Services.

Volunteer Recruitment & Coordination

- These volunteers assist the Director of Volunteer Services with recruiting volunteers, scheduling, and record keeping.

Administrative

- Maintain master mail file, prepare materials for mailing, copy and assemble booklets; and copy and assemble informational material.

Fundraising

- Interested individuals are welcome to join any of our committees active in meeting the financial needs of Rocky Top Therapy Center's riding programs. Help is always needed to chair and staff fundraising committees such as our "Tee Up For Kids" Golf Tournament, The Great Trail Drive and Denim & Pearls Dinner Dance, and others.

Special Events Volunteers

- These volunteers assist in the planning and execution of special events such as Chisholm Challenge, Special Olympics, holiday parties, appreciation dinners, riding demos, and various other events

Public Relations & Marketing

- You will assist in writing and submitting periodic press releases as needed. In addition, you will help obtain media coverage, striving for higher community visibility and contribute to the writing of proposals and other written materials.

Newsletter

- We are constantly looking for volunteers to help write articles, edit, publish, fold, stuff and distribute our newsletter.

Assorted Services & Projects

- Tack cleaning and repair, carpentry (building ramps, shelves, etc.), painting, electrical or plumbing services, poster design, and taking pictures of new horses are just some of the opportunities currently available. Workdays are held periodically, generally prior to a special event or before a session, to give the riding center and horses a major "sprucing up".

Technical Support For Computers

- These volunteers provide as-needed technical support for the various office computer systems, including software and hardware, program installation and updates, and general maintenance.

Gifts In Kind

- You will contact vendors to donate needed items, thereby reducing Rocky Top Therapy Center's program expenses.

Corporate Campaign

- You will identify and solicit corporations and small businesses for general contributions and assist in follow-up and recognition of corporate donors.

Rider Recruitment

- Solicit new clients, both individuals and organizations, to maximize the utilization of the programs and to help create community awareness. Also provide support to riders and parents to assist in communicating news within our growing organization.

Foundations & Grants

- You will help identify foundations or grants with a potential for donating to Rocky Top Therapy Center.

Clubs & Organizations

- Identify and cultivate clubs and organizations in the community willing to offer financial assistance and/or volunteers.



General Volunteer Information

Dress Code
Inclement Weather
Attendance / Absence
Parking
Minimum Age Requirement
Volunteer Registration Form
Sign In Procedures/name tags
Do Volunteers Ever Get To Ride?
Volunteer Conduct
Safety & Rules
Policies

General Volunteer Information

Dress Code

Volunteers should dress appropriately for horse related activities around children.

- Wear comfortable, safe shoes for walking in dirt and sand. Do not wear flip flops, sandals or Crocs.
- Wear weather appropriate attire for physical activity. Dress in layers.
- No spaghetti straps, midriffs or halter tops. No shorts with an inseam of less than 6 inches/or no less than fingertip length. No revealing clothing allowed.
- No clothing advertising drugs, alcohol, or other inappropriate subject matter.
- No dangling jewelry that can get caught or tangled on straps or grabbed by small hands.
- No strong perfumes or scented lotions. They attract bees and other insects and riders may have allergic reactions.

Inclement Weather

- In the event of a Keller ISD closure due to adverse weather, Rocky Top will close as well. For all other weather conditions, **do not assume classes are cancelled, please call the office at 817-379-5717 to confirm.** If there is a last minute cancellation, we will make every effort to call the volunteers of that day.

Attendance/ Absences

- We appreciate your time at Rocky Top and so do our riders. Regular attendance is very important. Please arrive 30 minutes before scheduled class time. It is your responsibility to keep track of the days and times you have agreed to work. **It is also your responsibility to notify Rocky Top as soon as possible if you will be absent or late.** There are several methods of notification:

- 1) Write it in the Volunteer Calendar.
- 2) Call 817-379-5717 and leave a message.
- 3) E-mail the Director of Volunteer Services.
- 4) Inform the Program Director.

Parking

- Leave personal belongings locked in your car. Rocky Top is not responsible for lost or stolen items.
- You should park your vehicle in the parking area southeast of the office/barn area. If that parking area is full, you should park in the lot behind the pavilion area.
- Do not park in the concrete spaces on the north side of the barn, as these are for our special needs riders.

Minimum Age Requirement

- No one under the age of 14 can work directly with the horses and riders during class time due to insurance restrictions; however, our Junior Volunteer Program allows children between the ages of 12 and 14 to join this program.
- For more information, please contact the Director of Volunteer Services.

Volunteer Registration Form

- All volunteers must complete a volunteer registration form annually in compliance with NARHA regulations.
- Volunteers must consent to a criminal background check and sign the liability release on the back of the volunteer registration form.
- For volunteers under the age of 18, their guardians must sign.

Sign In Procedures / Name Tags

- Please be sure to record your hours each time you come. Your volunteer time is important to us for funding purposes and recognizing outstanding volunteers. Sign-in sheets are kept in the volunteer sign-in book in the volunteer room. Include your drive time and round off your hours to the nearest half hour. If you do not sign out or we cannot read your writing, you will not get credit for your time.
- You must always wear your name tag. This is a requirement. If you lose your tag or it becomes torn or dirty, fill out a "name tag request" form found in the Volunteer Room.

Dismissal

- Dismissal of a volunteer is at the will of Rocky Top with or without cause.
- Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules and procedures of the organization or who fail to satisfactorily perform their voluntary assignment are subject to dismissal.
- The volunteer may request an opportunity to discuss the reasons for dismissal with the Program Director and/or the Director of Volunteer Services.

Do Volunteers Ever Get To Ride?

- Many volunteers ask this question. Because we focus on our special needs riders to provide a meaningful experience for them, lessons for our volunteers are offered periodically at a reduced cost. We do encourage all volunteers to obtain sponsors and ride in "The Great Trail Drive" each fall.

Volunteer Conduct

- We expect volunteers to treat both riders and horses with respect.
- If there are allegations of abusive behavior or mistreatment, the staff/ranch owners will make a careful examination and the volunteer may be asked to leave the premises.
- There are to be no drugs, alcohol or cigarettes consumed on location during business hours or when therapeutic riders are present.

Safety/Rules

- Rocky Top Phones and Cell Phones
 - A phone is located in the lobby for local calls.
 - Please keep cell phones in silent or vibrate mode during classes.
 - You cannot answer or use cell phones during class, please wait until after class to do so.
 - No MP3 or iPods allowed.
- Medical Conditions
 - If you have a medical condition that will affect your ability to safely perform your volunteer job please discuss it with the Program Director or the Director of Volunteer Services.

- Medications
 - You should be aware that some medications (such as allergy medications or muscle relaxers) might cause drowsiness or interfere with your reaction times. If you are experiencing any side effects from your medication, please notify your Instructor.
- Stay Hydrated
 - Participation at Rocky Top can require strenuous activity. It is very important especially during the summer months to stay hydrated. Drink plenty of water throughout the day and take frequent breaks.
- Never Feed The Horses
 - If you would like to give the horses a treat, please ask permission from the Instructor or Program Director.
- Follow "The Rocky Top Way"
 - Rocky top has many volunteers, students, and families come through our gates each week.
 - When working with horses and students we stress the importance of consistency.
 - Follow the procedures and techniques demonstrated in training when working with our horses and our students.

As of September, 1995, Texas enacted the following law: **Texas Law (Chapter 87, Civil Practice and Remedies Code) an equine professional is not liable for the injury or the death of a participant in equine activities resulting from the inherent risk of equine activities.**

Unauthorized consumption of alcohol beverages on the premises is strictly prohibited!

There is no smoking allowed on the premises.

Policies

- Horse Related Rules

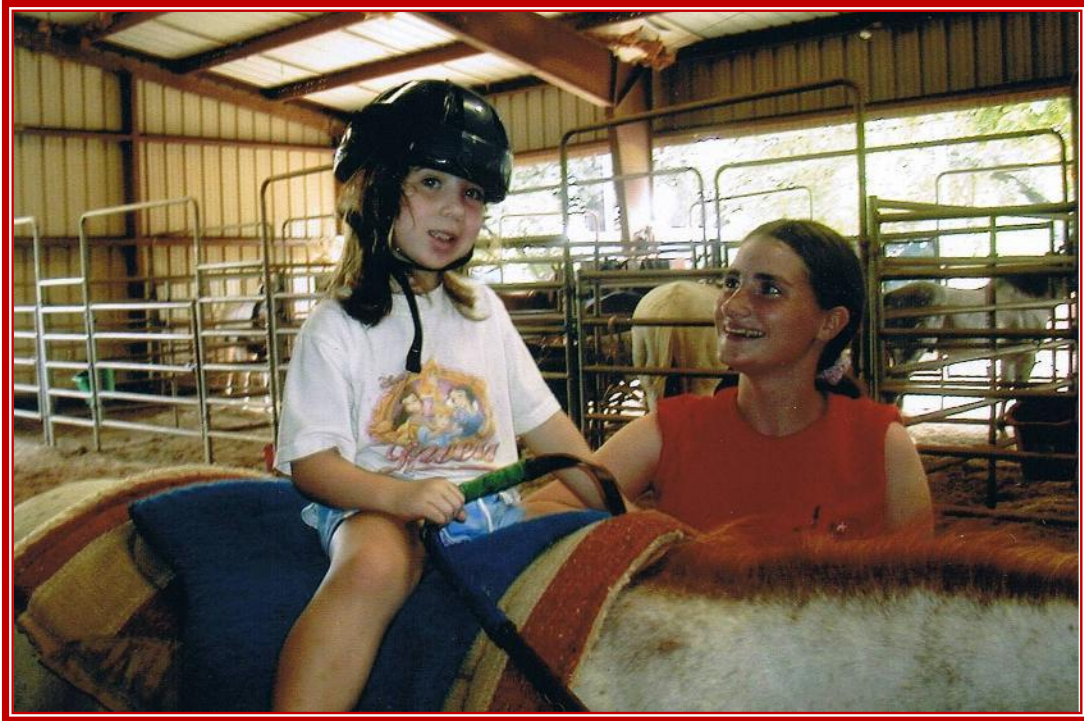
Please become familiar with the following rules. You must adhere to them at all times for the safety of our riders, volunteers, horses and staff.

- Do not bring horses in through the show barn.
- Be careful with horses in the client waiting area in the barn.

- You are not to bring up or work with horses without permission.
- Never ride a horse to or from pastures, and always use a halter with lead rope to walk the horse.
- When tacking or working with horses in stalls, horses must be tied with a quick release knot to the horizontal bar above water, NOT TO GATE.
- No halters should be on horses in stalls unless horse is tied.
- Do not leave horses tacked for more than 30 minutes.
- Slightly loosen girth between classes.
- Only instructors or trainers may bridle horses.
- No reins attached to bit in stalls, wait until someone takes the horse out of the stall.
- Only two people allowed in a stall.
- If class is in session check with instructor before bringing horses into the barn.
- Never slap or kick a horse. If horse needs discipline, inform the instructor.
- When you are at a halt, face the horse & stand slightly off to the side.
- You should always lock all gates & use chains. Do not climb, jump or hang from any fences or gates.
- Do not remove stirrups, nametags, back girths, or any other parts from the tack without permission from the instructor.
- General Rules & Policies
 - The barn is a classroom area, please be respectful and watchful. No running, loud noise or loud talking allowed.
 - Physical contact of riders by volunteers should be kept to a minimum and only with instructor and/or parent permission.
 - Volunteer Trainers are also responsible for helping the instructors manage and instruct the volunteers. If they ask you to do something, please comply.

- If you are in doubt about anything, please ask your instructor, staff member or trainer for clarification.
- Check in with office staff or instructor if you have nothing to do. Remember we are all responsible for keeping the facility orderly and as clean as possible.
- Lobby Area
 - No one is allowed beyond the front office desk unless invited by staff. The lobby is our reception area. You are welcome to come in and rest, cool off or warm up, but there is always business being conducted. If there is loud and disruptive behavior, it impacts the staff and makes it difficult to conduct business.
- Volunteer Room
 - This is your room. Please help keep it clean. We do not have a cleaning service so everyone is responsible to clean up after themselves. Please wash your dishes and throw your trash away. If you are not needed in the barn, please help clean up the volunteer room by picking up and emptying the trash if needed.

All of these rules are for the protection and safety of our riders, volunteers, horses and staff. Anyone breaking these rules may be asked to leave the ranch.



Getting To Know The Special Needs Rider

General Approach & Interaction

How To Relate To The Special Needs Person

Suggestions To Help You Relate

Choosing Words With Dignity

Disability Information & Definitions

Getting To Know The Special Needs Rider

General Approach & Interaction

It is important to remember that every child or adult, regardless of their having a disability, is an individual and wants to be treated with that understanding. As all people have their own learning rate, style of learning, unique personality and temperament, one must always look beyond the disabilities and into the people themselves. Rocky Top's goal is to provide each individual an enriched experience with warmth and a favorable environment in which they can learn and grow.

Relating To The Special Needs Person

Being around people with special needs may be a new experience for you. You may be overwhelmed at first with things you have never seen or do not understand. This is natural for most people. Allow yourself time to get used to being here. Do not give up on being part of the program without a fair try, for your experience can be very rewarding. At first, you may want to do jobs that are not in direct contact with the riders. Feel free to talk to a staff member about this. If working directly with our riders is difficult for you, consider helping Rocky Top Therapy Center in some other way.

Suggestions To Help You Relate

Each of us has to learn how to relate to others, especially if it requires new skills. Here are a few suggestions to assist your relationship with the special needs person:

- Be yourself.
- Relax. Let the rider put you at ease if you do not know what to say.
- Explore mutual interests in a friendly way. For starters, you can talk about the horse and whether the person has ridden before.
- Speak directly to the rider. Your attention should be to them and not to the person with them.
- Children and adults will be glad to talk about themselves. They prefer to have someone speak to instead of staring at them and like to discuss things like TV shows, movies, sports, school.
- Use conversation and social behavior that you might use in any new situation.

- You should offer assistance when asked or when the situation obviously requires it. Do not overwhelm the person with help or insist upon helping when they are managing alone. When a person is trying to increase their physical ability, effort is necessary.
- Do not hinder the rider's ability to expand his/her skills and independence even when their movements may appear awkward to you.
- Respect everyone's right to independence and their requests for assistance.
- Be guided by the wishes of the individual. Talk about his/her special needs if it comes up naturally, but do not pry.
- Appreciate what the rider can do. Remember that the difficulties the person may be facing could stem from society's attitudes and barriers rather than from the condition itself. People with special needs generally do not view themselves as to be as "handicapped" as society perceives them to be.
- Be considerate of the extra time it might take a rider to accomplish something or respond to something. Be patient.
- Let the person set the pace in walking and talking.
- Do not be afraid to say to either a child or an adult, "I'm sorry I cannot understand you. Please say it again".
- Acknowledge that all people have the opportunity for vast potential in their lives. Share the feeling that each person's potential is found in the present moment.

Choosing Words With Dignity

When talking about a person with special needs, make references to the person first, not their condition.

Instead of: "afflicted with blindness"

Say: "person who is blind"

Instead of: "crippled or handicapped"

Say: "person with special needs or challenges"

Instead of: "confined to a wheelchair"

Say: "person who uses a wheelchair"

Preferred terms focus attention on the uniqueness and worth of the individual rather than emphasizing the disabling condition. The connotation of “dis-ability” is very important to avoid. Words such as defective, deformed, invalid, lame, maimed, spastic, and crippled imply pity, infirmity, and a general lack of competence. People are neither invalid nor defective. People aren't spastic, muscles are. By choosing words carefully, positive images can be conveyed about people with disabilities.

Disability Information

The following is a brief, non-medical description of some of the disabilities and conditions of Rocky Top Therapy Center riders. This is not intended as a comprehensive explanation of a specific disability, but rather as a general overview, along with an explanation of how therapeutic riding is a beneficial treatment aid.

Autism Spectrum Disorders

The term autism refers to a cluster of conditions appearing in early childhood. Impairment of social and communicative skills, behavioral dysfunctions, inattention, hyperactivity and/or impulsivity, and cognitive dysfunction are common impairments. Accompanying conditions may include speech impairment, sensory integration dysfunction, learning disabilities, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and seizures.

Benefit - Relationship with a horse and team builds social skills, independence and greater self-worth. The horse is a strong motivator for behavior modification. Movement of the horse helps postural and verbal stimulation.

Cerebral Palsy

Cerebral palsy (CP) is a non-progressive disorder thought to be due in part to loss of oxygen to the brain. Speech, hearing, vision, learning, and/or memory deficits may be present; however, normal intelligence is generally not affected unless further brain damage has occurred. There are three main types of cerebral palsy:

- Spastic – occurs in approximately 70% of all cases. It may affect motor function in one or more limbs. The muscles stay flexed and tense and the facial muscle involvement may affect speech. Balance is poor.
- Athetoid – occurs in approximately 20% of all cases. There is constant movement in a disorganized, uncontrollable manner, often a worm-like movement. The use of arms and hands for support, grasp, and holding are inadequate. It appears more obvious during periods of emotional tension. Speech functions are usually involved.

- Ataxic – occurs in approximately 10% of all cases. Weakness, poor coordination and difficulty with quick and fine motor movements result in a loose, “rag-doll” appearance.

Benefit - Riding may improve balance, posture, and the ability to relax. It also strengthens weakened muscles.

Down Syndrome

Down Syndrome is also called Trisomy 21 or Trisomy G. It is one of the more easily and widely identified hereditary disabilities. Down Syndrome individuals have a mean IQ of about 50 and are physically and mentally developmentally delayed.

Benefit - Riding improves expressive and reactive language skills, gross and fine motor skills, balance, posture and coordination.

Emotional Disabilities

Emotional disabilities (ED) are a congenital or acquired syndrome often compounded by learning and/or physical disabilities incorporating numerous of the pathologies. In general, emotionally disturbed individuals have trouble coping with everyday life situations and interpersonal relationships. Behaviors such as short attention span, avoidance, aggression, autism, paranoia or schizophrenia may be exhibited.

Benefit – Riding can provide structure to a disorganized thought pattern, increase feelings of self-confidence and self-awareness, and provide appropriate social therapy.

Hearing Impairment

Hearing impairment may vary from mild to severe and may be congenital or acquired. True deafness is defined as hearing loss in both ears severe enough to prevent communication through the ear even with amplification. Communication with the deaf may involve lip reading, finger spelling (the manual alphabet) or sign language.

Benefit – Riding helps increase self-confidence, balance, posture, and coordination. It also provides appropriate social outlets and interactions.

Learning Disabilities

Learning disabled is a catch-all phrase for individuals who have problems processing, sequencing and problem solving but who appear to have otherwise

normal intelligence skills. New learning generally takes time to be integrated and may need to be reviewed frequently to insure retention.

Benefit – Riding may increase attention span, group activity skills, cooperation, receptive and expressive language skills, posture and coordination.

Mental Retardation

Mental retardation is a genetic defect where the individual develops below the normal rate in terms of intelligence. It may also involve delayed physical and emotional development.

Benefit – Riding helps increase group activity skills, balance, coordination, posture, gross and fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination.

Multiple Sclerosis

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a slowly progressive central nervous system disease usually occurring in adults between 20-40 years of age and more frequently in women than men. Symptoms and manifestations include weakness in one or more limbs, visual impairment, minor gait disturbances, weakness on one or both sides of the body, emotional highs and lows and inattention. MS runs a course of progression with periods of remission. There is no known cure for MS.

Benefit – Riding maintains and strengthens weak muscles and provides highly recommended opportunities for emotional therapy.

Muscular Dystrophy

Muscular dystrophy (MD) is a hereditary disorder usually appearing in infancy or early childhood. It is characterized by progressive skeletal and muscle deterioration. There is no known cure for this disease, which often severely shortens life. People with MD are easily fatigued, especially when it is cold or hot.

Benefit – Riding may slow muscle tone degeneration and maintain muscle function. Riding provides appropriate opportunities for social interactions and elevating emotional depressions.

Spina Bifida

Spina Bifida is a congenital defect where, at birth, there is incomplete closure of the spinal column. There are usually varying degrees of paralysis of the lower limbs; however, life expectancies are not necessarily shortened.

Benefit – Riding improves balance, posture, and muscle strength in the affected limbs.

Traumatic Brain Injury

Head injuries cause more disabilities in people under the age of 50 than any other neurological cause. Injuries may be closed head, where inter-cranial bleeding causes pressure, or open penetration, where profuse bleeding and open wounds insure permanent damage. Deficits may include gross and fine motor skills, cognitive disabilities such as long and short-term memory functions and visual limitations.

Benefit – Riding improves balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills, and cognitive deficits such as sequencing and processing.

Visual Impairment

Visual deficits may range from severely limited to total and may be caused by a congenital defect, traumatic illness or injury. If onset is from birth to five years, the person affected has no visual memory. Impairments occurring after five years are accompanied by memories of people, places and things. A person is blind only if that person has total loss of vision. If some vision is present, then the person is visually impaired.

Benefit – Riding helps orient the body in space and improves balance, posture, coordination and self-awareness. The voice of the instructor is a point of orientation in space for the rider; therefore unnecessary sound should be avoided.



Emergency Information

Procedures & Information

Emergency Procedures and Information

General Information

In the event of an emergency the Executive Director, Program Director, and/or instructors will be in charge. You should follow any and all directions from these staff members.

Emergency Equipment

A First Aid Kit and AED Defibrillator are located in the office.

If requested to call 911-

1) Stay calm- It's very important that you remain calm and don't panic.

2) Dial 911

3) Give the 911 operator our address:

Rocky Top Therapy Center
660 Keller-Smithfield Road
Keller, TX, 76248
817-379-5717

4) Provide Information pertaining to the emergency such as:

- Nature of the emergency
- Number of Victims and their condition
- The help being given

5) ***Horses spook easily! REQUEST TO THE DISPATCHER THAT SIRENS BE SILENCED PRIOR TO ARRIVAL.***

6) Stay on the line - **DO NOT** hang up!

Emergency Procedures

Volunteers should notify the instructor immediately of a suspected illness or injury to a horse. Observing the horse closely can prevent an injured or ill horse from entering the arena and can also prevent the necessity for an emergency dismount.

In case of a horse emergency:

- 1) The Instructor will safely dismount the rider and remove him or her from the arena.
- 2) The Leader will maintain control and responsibility for the horse until the Instructor or Horse Manager takes responsibility for the horse.
- 3) ***Never put yourself at risk for a horse!***

In case of fire:

- 1) Evacuate all humans to a safe location before assisting the horses! Horses may be evacuated only under the direction of a qualified staff member or Horse Manager.
- 2) A person should stay at the gate and wait for the fire department.
- 3) Open stall doors and gates to release the horses.

In case of a tornado or severe thunder storm warning:

- 1) All humans should take evacuate to the Executive Director's office. That is the safest place to be during a tornado or severe storm.
- 2) Qualified staff members and Team Leaders will evacuate the horses to the arena. Only these people are allowed to evacuate the horses.



Horse Information

Equine Safety
Anatomy Of A Horse
Color & Markings
Horse Behavior
Body Language
Western Tack
English Tack
Therapy Equipment

Equine Safety

Things You Should Know About Horses To Stay Safe

- **Horses are unpredictable** by nature. They are very heavy, weighing between 500 to over 1300 pounds and deserve our utmost RESPECT.
- **Horses are flight animals.** When frightened, angry, or under stress its instincts are to jump forward, sideways, or run away.
- **Horses Kick.** If a horse is frightened or feels threatened from behind, it may kick straight back, sideways, or even forward with great force.
- **Horses Buck.** If a horse feels threatened from above, it may hunch its back and buck in a way that could throw a rider.
- **Horses Rear & Bite.** If a horse feels threatened from the front it may naturally react by rearing up with its front legs. Strike with one or both of its front legs, bite with its teeth, throw its head up from side to side, or run directly over whatever it fears in front of it.
- **Provocation.** Loud noises, sudden movements, dropping of objects near a horse, approaching vehicles, animals or people, ill-fitting equipment or physical pain can provoke a domesticated horse to react according to its natural protective instincts.
- **Signs of Danger.** The first signs of danger or fear in a horse are the sudden tensing of the muscles of the body, possibly laying its ears flat against its head, tossing or raising its head, or sudden snorting through the nostrils accompanying at least one other warning sign.

Common Sources Of Equine Accidents

- Carelessness and over confidence
- Inadequate training of the horse
- Lack of understanding of the horse
- Equipment failure
- Inadequate training of the personnel
- Outside disturbances
- Failure to anticipate and plan for emergencies
- Inattentiveness

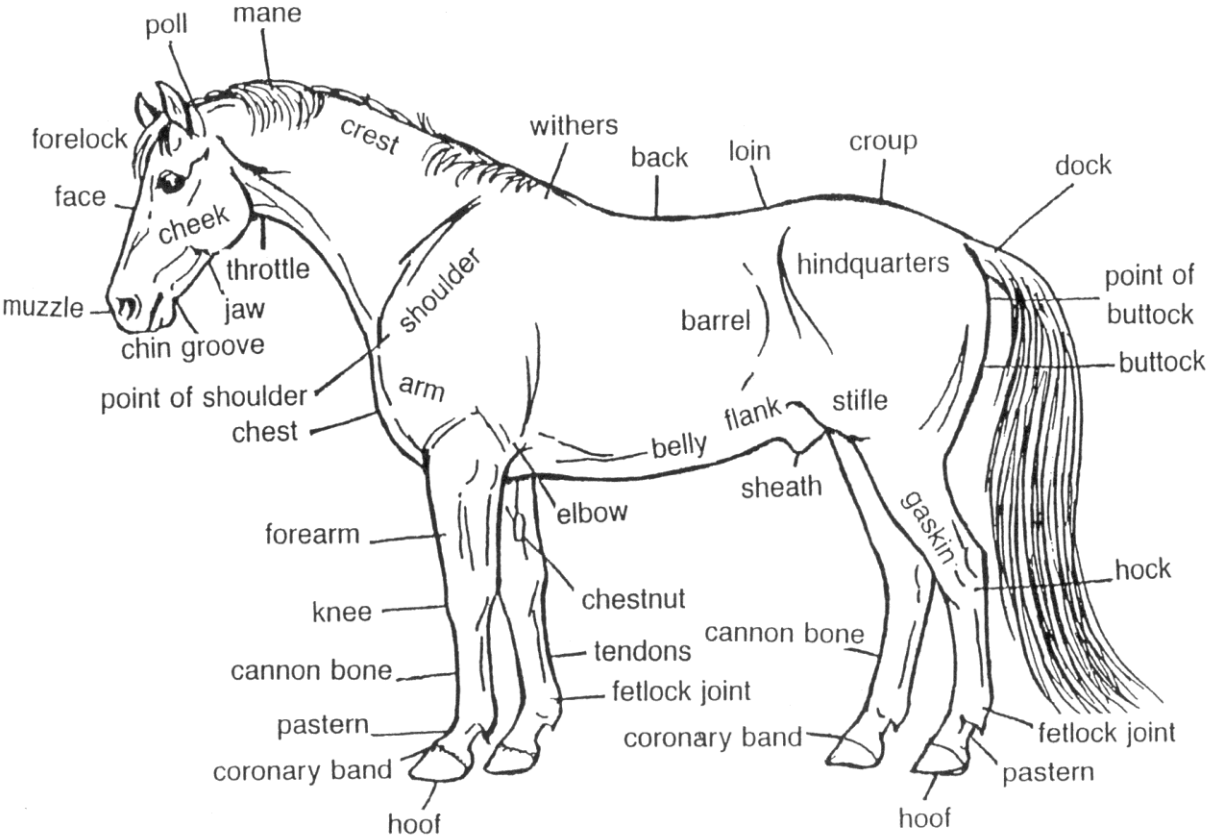
How To Work Around Horses

- **Talking to a horse.** You should always speak to a horse in a calm, soothing and/or assertive voice. Never raise your voice to a horse.
- **Approaching a Horse.** You should speak to the horse before approaching to avoid startling him/her. Approach the horse from its side, never from the rear so the horse can see you approaching. Never run up to or after a horse.
- **Walking around a Horse.** Unless the horse is tied to a fence or post you should always walk around the front of the horse so it can see you clearly. If the horse is tied do not walk under or over the lead rope, walk around its back but when you do make sure you are clear out of its kicking range. If you need to stay close to the horse you can put your hand on its rump and talk calmly to the horse as you are walking behind it so that you do not startle the horse.
- **Petting a Horse.** You should pet a horse on its shoulder or neck. Do not pet a horse on the head or its nose. The nose is a sensitive spot for the horse and some horses can be head-shy.
- **Watch your feet!** While horses are very sure footed by nature, it may accidentally step on a human's foot when balancing itself or turning around. Be aware of where your feet are at all times when near a horse. If the horse happens to step on your feet do not try to pull your foot out from under the horse instead reposition the horse so that it steps off your foot.
- **Miniature Horses.** Miniature horses are still horses. Follow the same procedures as if you were working with a regular horse.

If A Horse Gets Loose From The Pasture Or Stall Area

- Loudly announce "loose horse"
- The horse then can be caught with a lead rope and halter.

Anatomy Of A Horse



Color & Markings

The following descriptions are taken from *The American Quarter Horse* by Steven D. Price

Color

- **Bay** – ranging from tan through red to reddish brown, with a black mane and tail and usually black on the lower legs
- **Black** – true black, without any light areas; the mane and tail are also black
- **Brown** – a body of color of brown or black with light areas at the muzzle, eyes, flank and inside upper legs; the mane and tail are black
- **Sorrel** – a reddish or copper-red body color; the mane and tail are usually the same color as the body, although they may be flaxen
- **Chestnut** – dark red or brownish red coat, mane, and tail (the terms “sorrel” and “chestnut” are sometimes used interchangeably)
- **Dun** – yellowish or gold body, with black or brown mane and tail; a dorsal stripe and usually zebra stripes on the legs and a transverse stripe over the withers
- **Red dun** – a form of dun with a yellowish or flesh-colored body color; a mane and tail that are red or reddish, flaxen, white, or mixed; a red or reddish dorsal stripe; and usually red or reddish zebra stripes on the legs and a transverse stripe over the withers
- **Grullo** – a smoky or mouse-colored body color (not a mixture of black and white hairs, but each hair mouse-colored) with black mane and tail; usually a black dorsal stripe and black on the lower legs
- **Buckskin** – a dark yellow or gold coat with a black mane, lower legs, and tail; no dorsal stripe
- **Palomino** – a golden yellow coat with white mane and tail
- **Gray** – a mixture of white with any other-colored hairs. A dapple gray has darker spots on his coat
- **Red Roan** – a more or less uniform mixture of white with red hairs on a large portion of the body, but usually darker on the head and lower legs. A red roan can have a red, black, or flaxen mane and/or tail

- **Blue Roan** – a coat composed of white and black hairs, with black mane, legs, and tail

Facial

- **Snip** – a marking between the nostrils
- **Star** – any marking on the forehead
- **Strip** – a narrow vertical marking anywhere between the forehead and nostrils
- **Blaze** – a vertical marking that extends the length of the face
- **Bald face** – a very broad blaze, including one that can surround the eyes and/or muzzle
- **Race** – long, thin mark from forehead to muzzle

Legs

- **Coronet** – a narrow marking around the coronet above a hoof
- **Pastern** – a marking that covers an entire pastern (there can also be a “half-pastern”)
- **Sock** – a marking that extends from the coronet halfway to the knee or hock
- **Stocking** – an extended sock that reaches the knee or hock

Horse Behavior

It is important that you understand the horse's reasons for certain actions or habits. If you know the reason why a horse does something, you will be better prepared to respond to him properly. It is important that you know the horse's traits and instinctive responses. They vary to different degrees in every horse, but they are common to all.

Horse Sense

Horses gather information through their senses:

- **Vision** - A horse's eye does not focus the way a human's does. A horse must move his head until he sees clearly. The position of the eyes (unlike humans) creates a blind spot in front of the horse's face and under his nose. He must raise, lower or turn his head to eliminate the spot. This position does enable him to see well behind him. Horses do not see colors, only shades of gray. Also, they find it hard to adjust from dark to bright light.
- **Hearing** - The horse's long funnel-shaped ears allow him to hear sounds much sooner than his rider. Horses have thirteen pairs of muscles in each ear that allow him to swivel his ears to hear sounds in any direction.
- **Smell** - A horse's sense of smell is just as sharp as his sense of hearing. When a horse smells something unfamiliar, he tries to identify whether the odor is coming from a friend or foe. That is why things that do not have a scent, like thunder, bright lights, darkness and noisy crowds make a horse nervous – because he cannot identify them. When about to use a grooming tool on a horse, allow the horse to smell the tool first.
- **Touch** - A horse's sense of feel comes by nuzzling. Two horses establish a bond by blowing into each other's nostrils and by grooming each other.
- **Taste** - Just like humans, horses use their sense of taste to explore their environment.

Herd Instinct

All horses possess a strong group or herd instinct. In their wild state, there is safety in numbers. For this reason, an untrained horse will not leave the group unless he is forced, and even then, he may attempt to remain with other horses. Another way the horse shows his group instinct is in his desire to mimic other horses. If one shies, they all shy; if one bucks, they all want to act up; if one runs, they all run. The horse never loses his herd instinct, but it can be controlled with training.

Homing Instinct

Horses always go more willingly toward the place where they spend the most time than away from them. This is because they have a strong homing instinct; that is, a good sense of where home is and a strong desire to be there. When taking a horse to and from the pasture, you may observe the horse whinnying or attempting to return to his herd or his stall.

Pecking Order

All horse groups have a system of rank or pecking order with a boss or alpha horse at the top. The alpha horse acts as herd leader and gets to eat and drink first. He can pick on any horse below him. At the bottom of the pecking order is the weakest horse that must give in to all the others. Horses determine their place in the herd by bluffing, making threats of biting and kicking and sometimes by actual fighting. Once all know their place there is little fighting, but a new horse has to test all the others to find out where he stands. Often the herd boss is an old mare, rather than a stallion or gelding.

When horses are being ridden and handled, they should respect humans as the "alpha horse." The rider or handler should keep the horse firmly under control. Without being mean or harsh, you should keep your horse firmly under control, so that the horse must accept you as his leader.

Possessiveness

Horses can be possessive about their food, their stalls, or their friends. A mare may be very protective of her foal. Always be alert to the exhibition of this type of behavior as the horse may become angry with you if he thinks that you are encroaching on his territory.

Habit

One of the strongest traits of horses is their sense of habit. Horses like to do things the same way over and over again; it gives them a sense of security. They get nervous when faced with new situations. When grooming our horses, we try to follow the same grooming routine each time such as starting on the left side and picking up the hooves in the same order.

Defenses

Nature has given horses speed and an instinct to run from danger, also known as "Flight or Fight". A horse's first means of protecting himself is to run (Flight), so you must remember this when handling a horse around anything that might frighten him. If they can't flee the danger, they also have defenses such as kicking, biting and striking with their front legs that they may use if they are cornered and danger threatens (Fight).

Memory

A horse's memory is excellent. He remembers when he got a reward and what for, as well as things that were unpleasant, hurtful or frightening. Your consistent behavior and grooming techniques will help the horses to be socialized and to expect kindness and a pleasant experience when being groomed.

Handling and Training

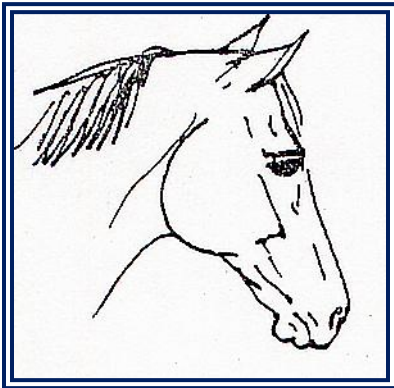
Horses are easy to handle if they are trained fairly and consistently and if you try to understand why they behave as they do. However, if your instructions are confusing or inconsistent, your horse will never know what you want and he may become stubborn, nervous or just hateful. It is important when handling a horse, whether you are bringing him in from the pasture or grooming him, to be consistent and kind. Your horse will respond by forming good habits that will allow him to act well in all situations.

Body Language

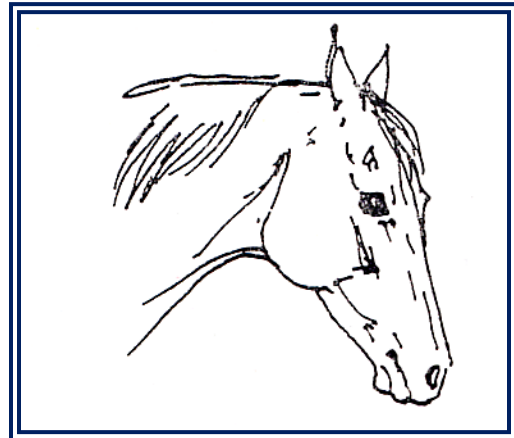
Horses use their ears and bodies to communicate. The position of the horse's ears and actions are the key to his emotions.

Ears

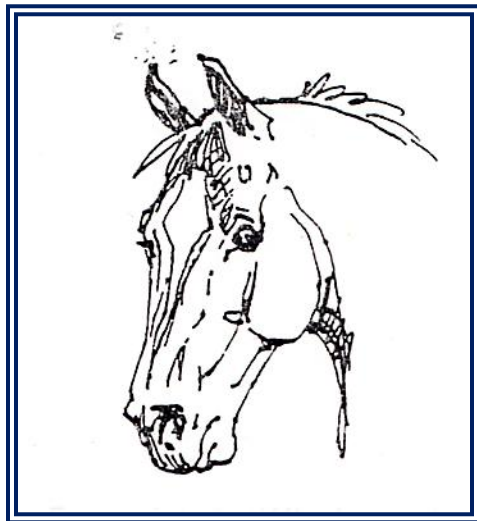
By "reading" the horse's ears, you can tell what he is paying attention to and how he feels.



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



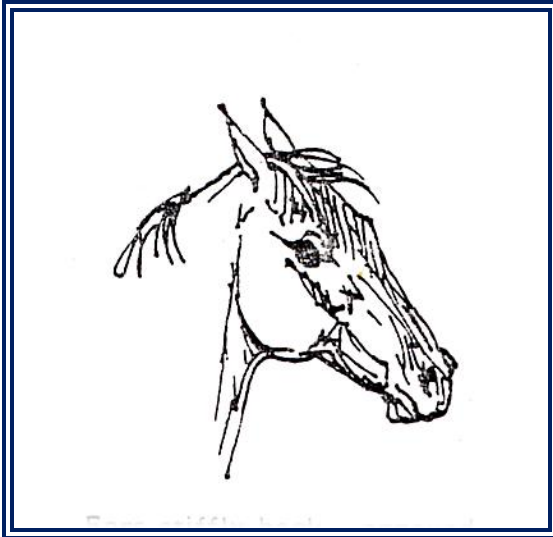
Ears turned back but relaxed – listening to his rider or what's behind him.



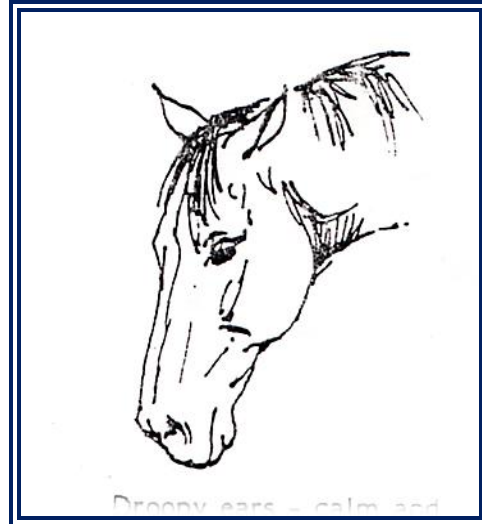
Ears pointed stiffly forward – alarmed or nervous about what's ahead. Looking for danger.



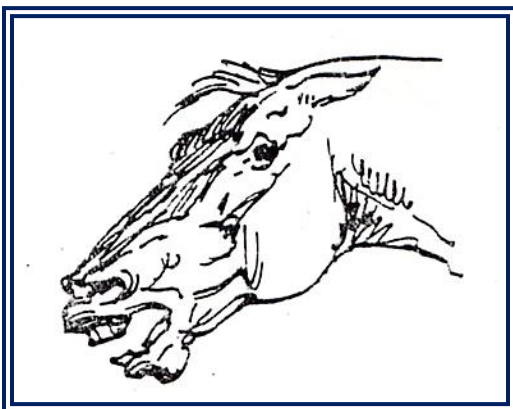
Ears pointed left and right – relaxed, paying attention to the scenery on both sides.



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



Droopy ears – calm and resting, horse may be dozing.

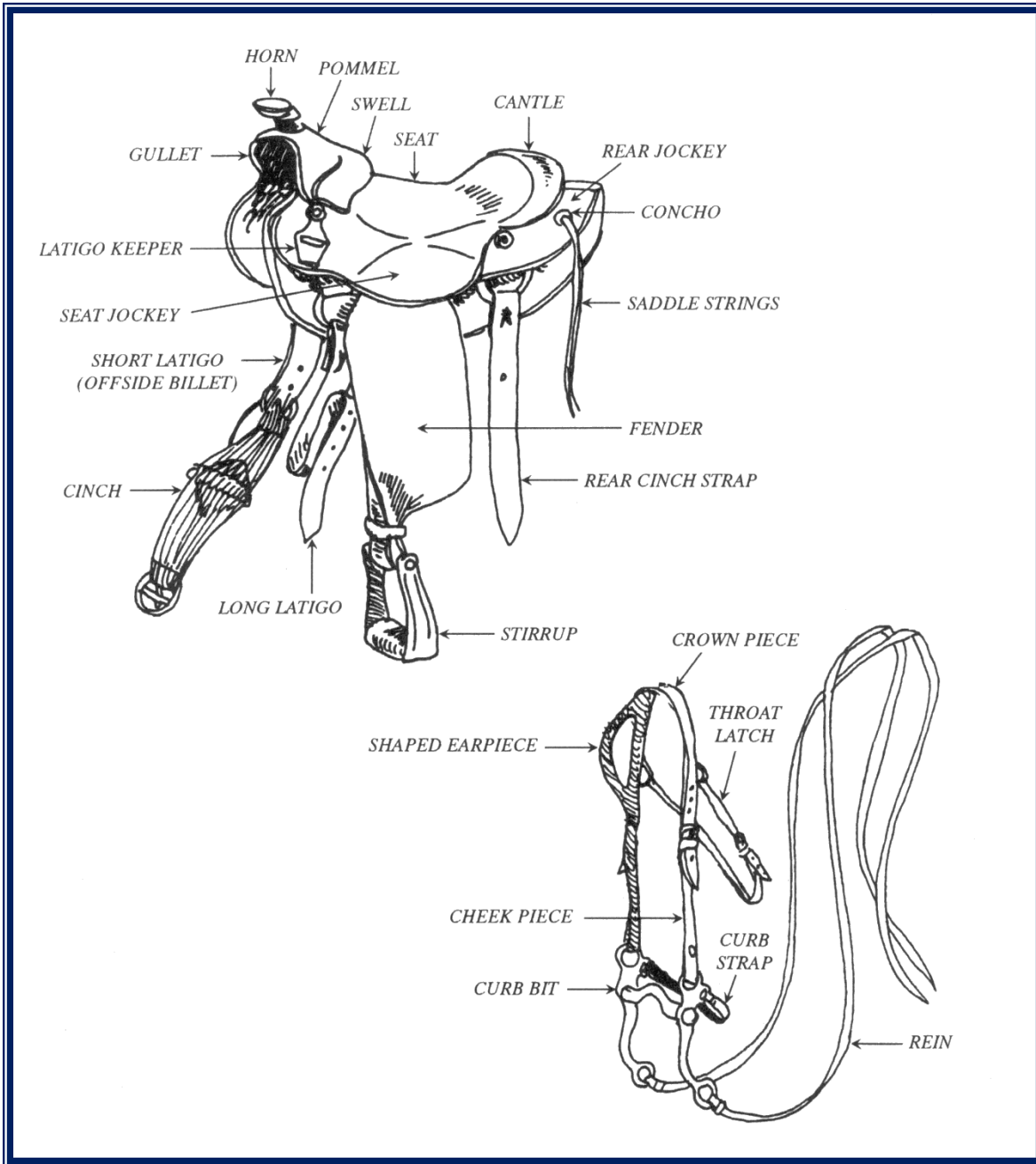


Ears flattened against neck – violently angry, in a fighting mood. May fight, bite or kick.

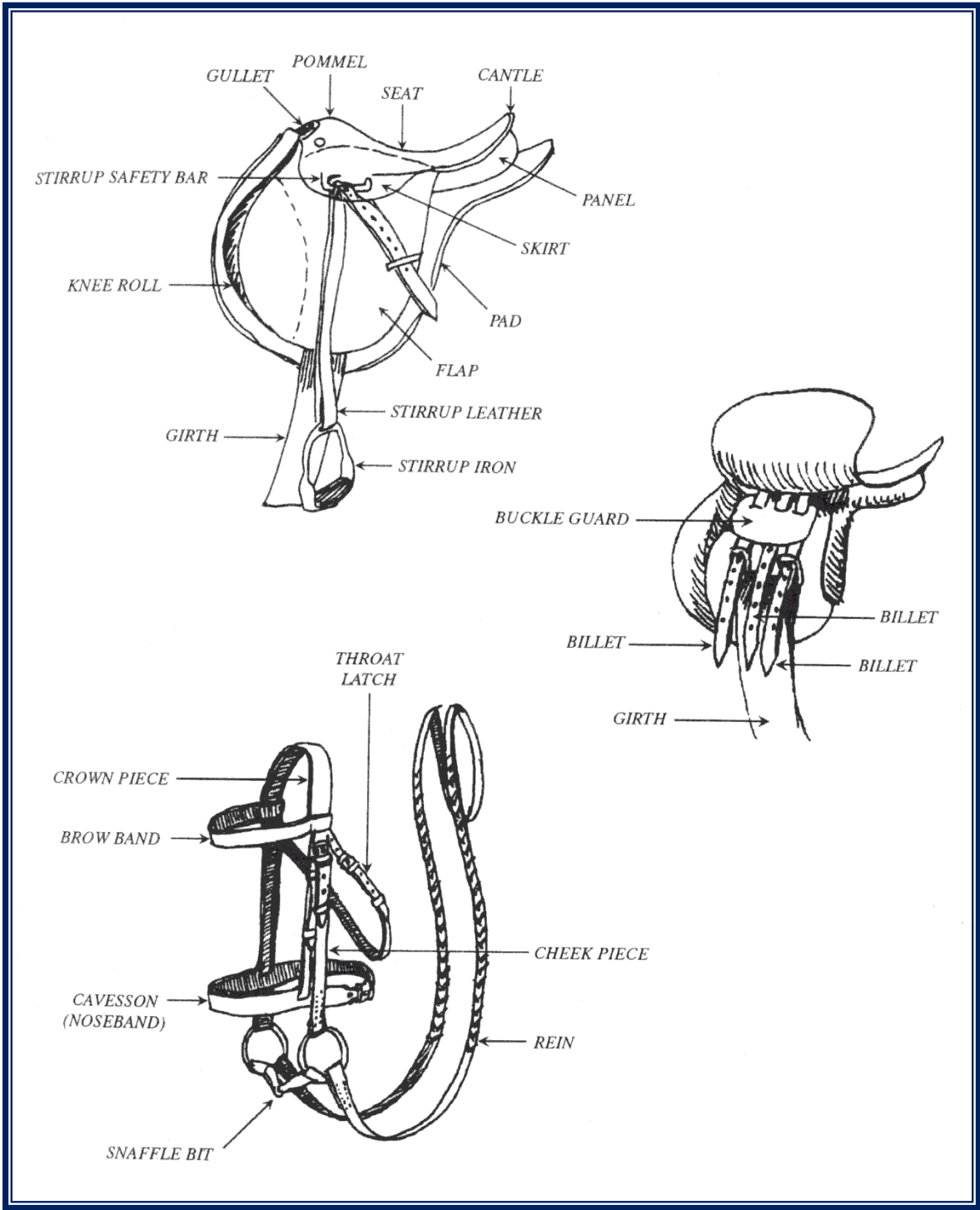
Other signs you should notice are:

- **Tucking the tail down tightly** – danger to the rear; horse may bolt, buck or kick. Watch out if ears are flattened, too.
- **Switching the tail** – annoyance and irritation at stinging flies or tickling or bothersome actions of the rider.
- **Droopy ears, resting one hind leg on toe** – calm and resting, horse may be dozing. Don't wake him up by startling him.
- **Wrinkling up the face, swinging the head** – threatening gesture of an angry or bossy horse. Watch out for biting or kicking.
- **Bringing his hindquarters toward you or another horse** – usually means anger and active aggression
- **Lifting head and tail before running** – this is an invitation to the other horses to play
- **Head shaking** – can be a playful expression or mean that flies are bothering him

Western Tack



English Tack



Therapy Equipment



Halter

The halter is placed on the horse's head and is used like a collar to maintain control.



Lead Rope

The lead rope is attached to the bottom of the halter and is used like a leash for the horse.



Western Saddle

Some of our clients use western saddles. They provide extra support for the rider.



English Saddle

Some of our clients use English saddles. They provide less support than western saddles do.



Peacock Stirrups

The Peacock stirrup is used for some of our riders. The elastic band is designed to be on the outside when the rider has a foot in it. When pressure is applied to the elastic it releases making it impossible to get the foot caught in the event of an accident.



Devonshire Boots

The Devonshire boot is a modified covered stirrup that allows a person added security when the heel of the foot cannot be pushed down. The rider's foot is prevented from falling through the stirrup.



Anti-Cast

The anti-cast provides a solid handhold for riders who are riding only with a blanket.



Helmet

All riders must be wearing an ASTM approved helmet at all times when they are on or around a horse.



English Saddle Pad

An English saddle pad is used underneath an English saddle.



Regular Saddle Pad

You should use a regular saddle pad under all western saddles unless otherwise stated.



Neoprene/Ortho Pad

Ortho pads are used with western saddles on certain horses.