

# **SPIRIT STRIDES, Inc.**

## **VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

Welcome to Spirit Strides, Inc. We are a volunteer based non-profit organization operating in the Jefferson County area. The program instructors are certified through PATH, INTL. (The Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, International. ) The instructors are responsible for rider admission into the program, evaluation of the horses to be used in the program, coordination of the classes, and documentation of results achieved during each riding session. Generally sessions will be forty-five minutes per session. Please take the time to become familiar with the materials provided in the Volunteer Handbook. We look forward to working with you.

We at Spirit Strides, Inc. are pleased that you have chosen to become a volunteer. Without our volunteers our program would not exist and our riders would not get the necessary equine therapy for their individual needs. Volunteering at Spirit Strides, Inc. is a commitment that you will find rewarding and self-fulfilling. When signing up to volunteer, we would like you to commit to the entire session. We understand that emergencies do happen and we would appreciate as much advance notice prior to class starting. You may call **Brenda at 636-524-5656**. We like to schedule our students with the same horse, leader, side walker and instructor if at all possible. Many of our students benefit from this, so advance warning of your absence will allow us to fill your spot with another volunteer.

As a lesson volunteer, you will be part of a team that consists of a horse leader, side walker and instructor. Your commitment and dedication is vital to Spirit Strides, Inc. and we thank you for becoming a part of our program.

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

Spirit Strides offers developmental support to physically and mentally challenged people using an equine-assisted approach to recreational and physical therapy. This non-traditional therapeutic practice empowers clients to enhance their sensory-motor abilities, cognitive and communication skills, their behavioral and emotional health, and social and leisure skills through professionally guided horsemanship experiences. Spirit Strides is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit tax organization.

### **OUR CLIENTS**

Spirit Strides, Inc. will work with children and adults who have been born with disorders, diseases, injury victims and persons with emotional disorders and/or learning challenges/disabilities. Many of our clients may have more than one challenge/disability.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Our clients at Spirit Strides, Inc. have the right to confidentiality of their medical conditions, progress, behavior, and participation at the facility. No identifying information about our clients may be released in pictures, writing, or conversation by staff or volunteers without written consent of the client, parent or guardian. Clients and volunteers must sign a photo release for Spirit Strides, INC to use audio-visual information for promotional printed material, educational activities, exhibitions or for any other use for the benefit of the facility.

## BENEFITS OF THERAPEUTIC RIDING

Benefits include:

- \* Developing sequencing abilities
- \* Developing a meaningful relationship with the horse and volunteers
- \* Enhancing balance and posture
- \* Building self-esteem and confidence
- \* Improving memory utilization and increasing ability to follow directions
- \* Improving gross and fine motor skills
- \* Transferring aggressive or hyperactive behavior into constructive activities
- \* Experiencing the 3-dimensional movement of the horse that provides hip and back action that simulates natural walking gait and that cannot be duplicated in a clinical setting.

## WHEN YOU MEET A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY

1. **Be yourself.** Relate to a person with a disability the same way you relate to other people. Use conversation and social behavior that you might use in any new situation.
2. **Allow the person with a disability to be himself/herself.** With or without disabilities, each of us is a unique individual.
3. **Appreciate what a person with a disability can do.** Once you get to know him/her, his/her interests and his/her ability may surprise you. Remember that the difficulties the person may be facing could stem from society's attitudes and barrier rather than from the disability itself. Disabled people generally do not view themselves to be as disabled as society perceives them to be.
4. **Explore mutual interest in a friendly way.** Talk about the disability if it comes up naturally, but don't try. Develop a friendship by showing an interest in the person, not his/her disability. Most people prefer to have someone ask them about their disability rather than receiving stares.

5. **Be patient.** Let the person with the disability set the pace for walking, talking and other activities. Be considerate of the extra time it might take to accomplish something or respond to something.
6. **Do not separate a person with a disability from a wheelchair, crutches or other aids unless he/she asks.** These aids may need to be nearby.
7. **Offer encouragement but not pity.** The person with the disability wants to be treated as an equal in all things. Give him/her a chance to prove himself/herself.
8. **Respect a person's independence.** He/She may prefer to do things for himself/herself.
9. **Wait until help is needed or requested.** Do not overwhelm the person with help or insist upon helping when he/she is managing alone.
10. **Enjoy yourself.** Do not be afraid to laugh and have fun. You will be developing a friendship with a person from whom you may learn a great deal about life and how to live it.

## **HORSE HANDLERS/LEADERS**

To ensure the safety of our participants, volunteers and horses, anyone wishing to lead a horse at Spirit Strides, Inc. should have significant previous experience working with horses. Potential handlers will be evaluated on their skill at working safely around horses, reading a horse's attitude and body language, knowing how to react to horse behaviors, being aware of their own body language and environment and to always remain calm and focused.

### **QUALIFICATIONS FOR HORSE HANDLER/LEADER CERTIFICATION:**

\*\*Significant prior experience with grooming, tacking and handling a variety of horses.

\*\*Follow all safety procedures

Candidates will be asked to halter a specific horse, lead the horse through the gate to the barn. Then will be asked to groom the horse and clean their hooves and tack the horse for class.

**The horse handler/leader is directly responsible for the horse.** As a horse handler/leader, you need to arrive 30 minutes before class to allow for enough time to properly groom and tack the horse. Warm-up the horse 10-15 minutes before class by hand walking/trotting/halting the horse and is familiar with any props that will be used in class.

### **MOUNTING**

When you are leading the horse into the mounting ramp, the horse handler/leader must turn and walk backwards. Stop the horse in the appropriate spot in order for the rider to easily mount. Stand in front of the horse while the rider is mounting so he is less likely to move forward. Always give the horse an arm's length of personal space and don't crowd his head.

## RIDING

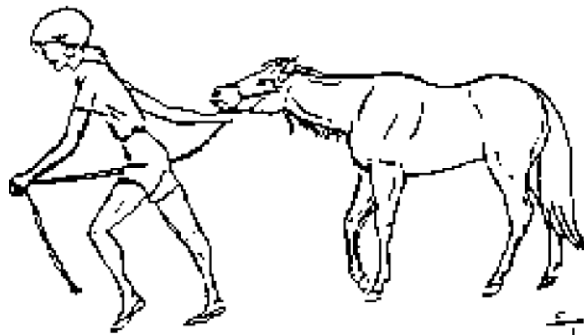
In order to avoid a dangerous situation, **NEVER DROP THE LEAD ROPE OR LEAVE THE HORSE UNATTENDED.** Slowly move the horse forward only when the instructor indicated or the rider gives the signal by tapping on the saddle or the command to “walk on”. Make sure you give the rider time to process any information before gently making the horse comply with any command. Always let the riders ride and avoid the temptation to talk to the rider or other volunteers as not to confuse the rider.

## LESSON

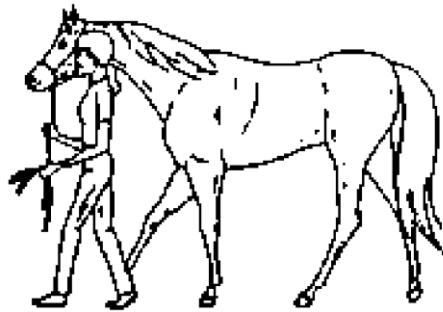
A horse handler/leader’s primary responsibility is the horse, but he must also be constantly aware of the rider, instructor and any potential hazards in or around the arena. Always try to think like a horse and anticipate things that may frighten him or cause him to be upset. The horse handler/leader must also consider the side walkers and make sure they have enough room along fences and around obstacles.

**Figure A** shows a few faults common among horse leaders. The leader is grimly marching along. Her head is down, one hand on the lead snap, the other inside coiled around the lead rope and she’s dragging the horse. In a battle with a horse, you will lose. The horse must cooperate with you. Walk alongside the horse between his head and shoulder. This position helps keep him in a proper frame and is this is more beneficial for everyone.

Talk to the horse; most of them know “whoa”, “walk on” etc. Always watch where you are going and be aware of what is going on around you. **NEVER** walk backward looking at the rider. It is dangerous for everyone and the horse won’t be eager to follow someone who can’t see where he is going.



**FIGURE B** demonstrates the correct position for leaders. The lead shank is held with the right hand, 6-12 inches from the snap, allowing free motion of the horse's head. This position is more therapeutic for the rider and less irritating to the horse. The tail end of the lead rope should be looped in a figure eight in the left hand to avoid tripping on it. **NEVER COIL THE ROPE AROUND YOUR HAND.** A sudden pull could severely injure your hand and fingers.



Use short tugs rather than a steady pull to keep a lazy horse moving. The horse can easily set himself against a steady pull, but tugs keep him awake. Always leave two horse's lengths between you and the horse in front of you. If passing is necessary, pass toward the inside of the arena and state that you are doing so.

**In case of an accident:** 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 is a loose horse running around the arena. Move your horse far away from the fallen rider as possible and remain calm. Listen for the instructor's directions.

**Dismounting & Procedures after class:** Leaders do not dismount riders ever! Be sure the rider has completely dismounted and left the arena before leading the horse away or if the rider is dismounting at the ramp has proceeded down the ramp. Encourage the rider to pat the horse and say thank you and to thank the volunteers who helped him during the class. Follow the instructor's request for what to do with the horse if not being used in the next class. **NEVER TIE A HORSE BY THE REINS, BRIDLE OR SIDE PULL. USE HALTERS ONLY TO TIE A HORSE.**

**Goal:** The goal of a good horse handler/leader is to control the horse, be a good aide to the rider and a valuable assistant to the instructor.

## **SIDEWALKERS**

### **PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES:**

Sidewalkers are the ones who normally get the most hands-on duties in therapeutic riding. **The primary responsibility of the sidewalker is the rider.** They have the capability to either

enhance or distract from the lesson. Sidewalkers supervise the riders upon arrival and until they leave. This means greeting the rider, helping him/her with their helmet and waiting with the rider until it is time to mount. This time can be spent to visit and really get to know the rider.

### **MOUNTING:**

One sidewalker may be asked to stand on the offside. If there are two sidewalkers, the other one will wait to take over from the mounting personnel. Once the rider is securely in the saddle, the instructor or the rider will give the signal to “walk on”.

### **RIDING:**

The instructor will inform the sidewalker(s) about the kind of assistance the rider needs. It is important to maintain a position by the rider’s knee. Stay within arm’s reach of your rider at all times. Being too far forward or back will make it very difficult to assist with instructions or provide security of the rider if a horse should stumble or shy.

Some riders require “over the thigh” hold (see picture). The sidewalker places his forearm gently over the rider’s thigh and holds on to the front of the saddle. Be careful that the elbow doesn’t dig into the rider’s leg. Likewise, do not rest your elbow on the horse’s back or lean on the horse. If your arm tires, ask the horse leader/handler to go into the center of the arena. Stop and switch sides always moving in front of the horse, one sidewalker at a time. If there are two sidewalkers, one must always have the rider secured. If there is only one sidewalker, ask the instructor for help.



Never wrap an arm around the rider’s waist. It is tempting when walking beside a pony or smaller horse with a small rider but it can offer uneven support. At times, it may even pull the rider off balance and make riding more difficult. Some riders do not require any “hands-on” assistance.

### **LESSONS:**

Sidewalkers should help the rider focus his attention to the instructor. Try to avoid any unnecessary talking with either the rider or other volunteers. Allow enough time for the rider to process directions. Too much input from too many directions is very confusing to anyone and to riders who already have perceptual problems, it can be very overwhelming. When there are two sidewalkers, it is preferred that only one sidewalker verbally reinforce the instructor's directions. Too much input can be confusing to the rider. If the instructor says "turn right" and the student seems confused, gently tap the right hand and say "right" to reinforce the command. You will get to know the riders and learn when they need help and when they are just not paying attention.

Sometimes the volunteers forget that the riders are doing the exercises and the sidewalkers are there to reinforce and assist. Encourage the riders to use their own trunk muscles to the best of their abilities. The same applies at any games or activities played on horseback. Basically just encourage the riders to try to do their best and only assist when necessary.

Should the need arise for an emergency dismount; it is the responsibility of the instructor to perform an emergency dismount. However, if the circumstances are such that the instructor is not close enough to do the emergency dismount it then becomes the responsibility of the sidewalker on the inside circle of the arena, if possible. In an emergency dismount the sidewalkers will remove the feet of the rider from the stirrups and the instructor will assist the rider from the horse unless the instructor is not close enough to do so, then as stated above the sidewalker on the inside of the arena will assist the rider. The sidewalker on the inside of the arena will assist the instructor if necessary. The leader then will move the horse as far away from the situation as possible and from the arena if at all possible.

#### **GOAL:**

The ultimate goal for therapeutic riding is to encourage the rider to stretch, grow and develop to his fullest potential. Your job by the rider's side is to help the instructor challenge him/her to the best of his/her ability.

## **VOLUNTEER STEPS**

**SIGN-IN:** You must record both your attendance and your hours. The Volunteer Attendance and Hours Notebook are located in the tack room.

## **GENERAL SAFETY RULES**

All participants, volunteers and staff must comply with all the posted safety rules. Spirit Strides requests that all volunteers help enforce these rules as safety **MUST** be a top priority.

**NO SMOKING** anywhere on the property. NO EXCEPTIONS!!! The use of, or being under the influence of, drugs and alcohol is strictly forbidden.

Restricted Areas (must have instructor/volunteer present):

\*\*\*Barns, runs and pastures

\*\*\*Arena mounting area

\*\*\*The tacking area

Off limits areas: Any posted "Authorized Personnel Areas"

Parents are responsible for the supervision of children **at all times**.

In order to avoid distracting riders during class, everyone is asked to refrain from leaning or climbing fences.

Carrots **MAY** be allowed as treats for some horses. Please consult with the instructor regarding treats feeding. Riders may feed carrots (using a feed tub) under the supervision of the instructor after class. **NEVER HAND FEED CARROTS TO THE HORSES**

**PLEASE REMEMBER TO KEEP OUR FACILITY CLEAN BY DISPOSING OF TRASH PROPERLY!**

## **VOLUNTEER POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**NON-DISCRIMINATION:** Spirit Strides maintains a policy of non-discrimination and is fully committed to the principles of equality in volunteer employment and opportunity for all, without regard to race, color, religion, gender, national origin, marital status, sexual orientations, age or handicap. Volunteers will likewise not discriminate against a client, other volunteers, or Spirit Strides staff upon the above mentioned parameters.

- \* To maintain the dignity and integrity of Spirit Strides, Inc. with the public.
- \* To be sincere in the offering of services and believe in the value of the job to be done.
- \* To be willing to continue to learn and participate in any orientation and training programs that are required to remain as a volunteer.

**VOLUNTEER PERSONNEL FILE:** Every active volunteer must have completed and returned each of the following items listed:

- \* Volunteer Registration Form
- \* Volunteer Emergency Medical Form
- \* Volunteer Liability Release Agreement
- \* Photo Consent
- \* Confidentiality Agreement and Code of Conduct



\* Criminal Background Check release form

All information in volunteer files is kept confidential and will not be released without the consent of the volunteer.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Volunteers who work with the riders must be at least 14 years old and physically able to last for 45 minute classes. Take into consideration conditions such as bad knees, asthma or any recent surgeries, etc.

**ORIENTATION SESSION:** Every prospective volunteer must attend one Orientation session. Information about Spirit Strides and its programs, volunteer roles and key policies are addressed.

**TRAINING SESSIONS:** No volunteer may work directly with a Spirit Strides participant without completing Orientation and Training and have all completed forms. If the instructor feels that a volunteer requires more training before becoming involved with a lesson, then you must follow the instructor's direction and complete more training.

**ATTENDANCE:** Regular attendance is vital to our program. We ask that a session volunteer commit to the full session. In the event that you must be absent, please call 636-524-5656 as soon as possible so a substitute can be found. Upon arrival, please sign in and remember when leaving to record your hours and sign out.

**PUNCTUALITY:** Volunteers should arrive at least 15 minutes before the class starts. Horse handlers/leaders need to arrive 45 minutes before class to groom and tack the assigned horse and to hand walk/trot to warm the horse up for 10-15 minutes prior to class. Please call ahead if you are going to be late.

**BAD WEATHER:** Classes will only be canceled in the event of dangerous or threatening weather. IT IS THE VOLUNTEER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO CALL SPIRIT STRIDES AND CHECK TO SEE IF CLASSES ARE CANCELLED.

**PARKING:** Please do not park in front of the barn and only in assigned areas.

**DRESS:** Please wear sensible and comfortable clothing. Closed covered shoes are a safety requirement. The weather can be unpredictable so come with a few layers of clothing. When it is hot, bring water in cups that are identifiable and one that will not blow away. During and following wet weather, bring boots and any appropriate rain gear. Jewelry can get lost in the arena or stall so we prefer no jewelry be worn. Please do not wear perfumes or scented lotions as certain scents may cause a reaction in some of the riders and it may attract bees or other bugs. If you have long hair, please tie it back.

**CHILDREN & PETS:** Due to safety concerns, **unsupervised children and pets are not allowed.** Please make other arrangements on days that you volunteer with Spirit Strides.

**CONDUCT AT THE CENTER:** It is mandatory that everyone complies with all of the Safety Rules. Abide by all the posted off-limit areas. Spirit Strides is a NO-SMOKING facility and the use of DRUGS OR ALCOHOL ON THE PROPERTY IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED. NO ABUSE OF ANY ANIMAL WILL BE TOLERATED OR WITH ANY OTHER VOLUNTEER OR STAFF.

**JOB DESCRIPTION:** See Volunteer Manual under “Horse Handler/Leader” and “Sidewalker”.

**CRIMINAL HISTORY BACKGROUND CHECK :** A criminal background check must be obtained by the volunteer and submitted to Spirit Strides. THIS MUST BE COMPLETED AND SUBMITTED PRIOR TO BEING ABLE TO VOLUNTEER OR HAVE INTERACTION WITH THE CLIENTS. Criminal histories received by Spirit Strides will be kept confidential. A criminal history does not automatically disqualify a volunteer applicant. Attention to the nature and severity of the offense, length of time since the criminal conduct occurred, and other factors as deemed appropriate under the circumstances may be taken into consideration.

**VOLUNTEER AND/OR GUEST DISMISSAL POLICY:** In the event of misconduct by a volunteer, the volunteer’s direct supervisor or instructor will counsel the volunteer in order to provide the opportunity for corrective action. Should it be necessary the supervisor or instructor maintains the right to dismiss any volunteer or guest who is undermining the stated goals or intentions of the program.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY**

- \* Spirit Strides shall preserve the right of confidentiality for all individuals in its program.
- \* No one associated with Spirit Strides will reveal any medical, social, referral, personal, or financial information regarding any participant or any other person associated with Spirit Strides to anyone unless court ordered.
- \* This policy applies to: 1) participants, 2) full and part time staff, 3) independent contractors, 4) temporary employees, 5) volunteers and 6) board members
- \* Children under age 18 do not have legal authority to consent to disclosure. Only parent(s), legal representatives, or others defined by state statute generally have this authority.

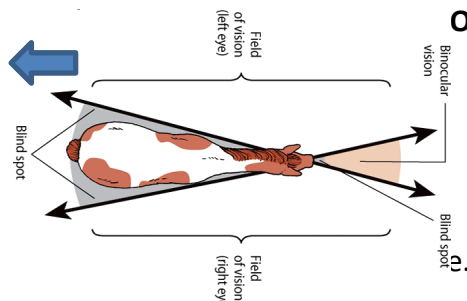
## **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR VOLUNTEERS**

- \* We will honor our commitment to confidentiality.
- \* We will always abide by the Code of Conduct and the Policies and Procedures for volunteers.
- \* We will cooperate fully with our staff supervisor and be open to their guidance.
- \* We will represent Spirit Strides in a positive manner to the larger community.
- \* We will not represent Spirit Strides in any capacity while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.

- \* We will not smoke, use drugs or alcohol, or possess a weapon while on Spirit Strides property.
- \* We will not sexually harass clients, employees or other volunteers.
- \* We will not physically or verbally abuse any person or animal while on Spirit Strides property.

## SAFETY RULES FOR WORKING AROUND HORSES

1. **APPROACHING A HORSE:** Speak to the horse in a low, calm voice before approaching to avoid startling him. Approach a horse from the side, never the rear, so that the horse can see you. Keep a hand on the horse's body when walking around him. Always walk around a tied



### OR OVER A LEAD ROPE OR TRAILER TIE!

A horse can see this much when facing straight ahead.

One of the horse's blind spots is directly behind, so you should never approach a horse from the back unless the

2. **PETTING A HORSE:** Pet a horse by placing a hand on his shoulder or neck not on the nose. The horse's nose is a sensitive spot.
3. **WHEN A HORSE STARTLES:** People weigh a lot less than any equine. If a horse balks, do not try to out-pull him. A quick tug on the lead shank will generally move him forward. If a horse rears up, release the hand closest to the halter to avoid being pulled off the ground.
4. **TYING HORSES:**

**Short tie:** If you tie a horse up with too much slack in the lead rope, the horse inevitably gets a foot hung up in the rope or ends up with the rope over his neck. Twelve inches of slack is a good length.

**Ducking under:** Never duck underneath a horse's neck to get to the other side. Although many horses don't mind, you could end up with a serious injury.

**Frontal approach:** To avoid startling a horse and perhaps causing him to pull back when tied, always be slow and quiet when approaching from the front.

**Safety restraints:** When tying a horse, always use a safety knot, use a quick release trailer tie.

5. **LOOSE HORSE:** Never chase a loose horse.
  - \* **Move slowly** and speak calmly when approaching.
  - \* **Don't panic:** Stay calm and shout "Loose horse!"

- \* If the escapee is not your charge, but you are leading or standing next to your horse when the horse gets loose, be aware that your horse is probably going to react with excitement.
  - \* If a horse you were handling gets away from you, **DO NOT chase him**:
    - Chasing the horse only makes him run away with increasing speed.
    - Walk slowly in the direction the horse ran: Most don't go far.
    - If he has stopped to eat, speak softly and walk up to him slowly, placing a lead rope around his neck.
    - If he is not eating but just milling around, get a handful of hay or a carrot and slowly walk in his direction. Offer him food in an outstretched hand as you speak to him softly. Speak softly and slowly place a lead rope around his neck.
    - If the loose horse has stopped to eat, but takes off again when he sees you approaching, you'll need the help of one or two other people to catch him.
- 6. RETURNING A HORSE TO PASTURE OR STABLE:** After leading a horse into a stall or pasture, turn the horse so that he faces the door or gate. Close the door/gate, leaving enough space for the volunteer (not the horse) to exit before removing the halter.
- 7. WHEN LEADING A HORSE:**
- \* To avoid a horse stepping on reins and lead line, keep reins and leads off the ground.
  - \* Never lead a horse with your hand in his halter:
  - \* **NEVER** wrap the lead rope around your hand as it may tighten if the horse pulls suddenly and can cause serious injury.

## **UNDERSTANDING HORSE BEHAVIOR**

### **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 horse's sense of smell is thought to be very acute and it allows him to recognize other horses and people. Smell also enables the horse to evaluate situations.

#### ***Implications:***

- \* Allow horses the opportunity to become familiar with new objects and their environment by smelling.
- \* It is recommended that treats are not carried in your pocket since horses may desire to go after them.
- \* Volunteers should be discouraged from eating or having food in the arena.

**HEARING:** The horse's sense of hearing is also thought to be very acute. The horse may also combine their sense of hearing and sight to become more familiar with new or alerting sounds.

"Hearing and not seeing" is often the cause of the fright/flight response. Note the position of the horse's ears (picture following article).

- \* Forward ears communicate attentiveness and interest.
- \* Ears that are laid back often communicates that they are upset and/or showing aggression towards another horse or person.

***Implications:***

Horses are wary when they hear something but do not see it. If your horse is acting nervous, talk to him in a quiet and calm voice for reassurance.

Avoid shouting or using a loud voice. This can be frightening to a horse.

Watch your horse's ears for increased communication.

- \* Stiffly pricked ears indicate interest.
- \* Drooping ears indicate relaxation, inattentiveness (easily startled), exhaustion or illness.
- \* Flattened ears indicate anger, threat or fear.
- \* Ears flicking back and forth indicate attentiveness or interest.

**SIGHT:** The horse's eyes are set on either side of the head; there is good peripheral (lateral) vision, but poorer frontal vision. A horse focuses on objects by raising and lowering its head. The horse's visual memory is very accurate. Horses are thought to see quite well in the dark, due to the large size of their eyes. There is still controversy as to whether or not horses see in color.

***Implications:***

The horse may notice if something in the arena or out on a trail is different. Allow the horse an opportunity to look at new objects. Introduce new props that the horse may be unfamiliar with. The horse has better peripheral vision; consider a slightly looser rein, enabling him to move his head when taking a look at objects.

Although the horse has good peripheral vision, consider two blind spots; directly in front and directly behind. The best way to approach a horse is to his shoulder. It may startle him if you approach from behind or directly in front. The horse may be unable to see around the mouth area, which is a safety consideration when hand feeding.

**TOUCH:**

Touch is used as a communication between horses and between horses and people. Horses are sensitive to soft or rough touch with a person's hands or legs.

***Implications:***

- \* Handlers should treat horses gently but firmly.
- \* Each horse has sensitive areas, and it is important to be familiar with them (i.e. flank and belly areas).
- \* Watch rider leg position. Riders may need appropriate assistance to reduce pinching or squeezing the horse too tightly with their legs. Ask the instructor what is the best handling technique.
- \* Horses will often touch or paw at unfamiliar objects. For example, a horse may paw at a bridge or ground pole before crossing over it.

**TASTE:**

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

***Implications:***

Taste is closely linked with smell and touch; therefore, a horse may lick or nibble while becoming familiar with objects and people. Be careful, as this could lead to possible biting.

**SIXTH SENSE:**

Horses do have a “sixth sense” when evaluating the disposition of those around him. Horses can be hypersensitive in detecting the moods of their handler and riders. A good therapy horse is chosen for their sensitive response to the rider. At times there may exist a personality conflict between handlers and horses. It is important to let the instructor know if you’re having a difficult time relating or getting along with a particular horse.

## **THE HORSE’S LIFESTYLE**

In addition to understanding the horse’s sixth senses, we need to appreciate and increase our awareness of the horse’s lifestyle. This will assist us in 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.**

### ***Implications:***

- \* 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 him quickly and usually he will relax. Be sure not to stand directly behind the horse.
- \* If flight is not possible, the horse could either turn to kick out or face the problem and rear, especially in a tight area like the stall. A halter with a lead rope may assist with maintaining control while working around the horse in a stall.
- \* If a horse appears to be frightened or fearful (note the position of the horse's ears in picture following article), it may be helpful to allow a more experienced horse handler to lead the horse.

### **HERD ANIMAL:**

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

### ***Implications:***

- \* Be aware that a horse may not like being alone. This is a consideration when horses are leaving the arena or a horse loses sight of the others while on a trail ride.
- \* Be aware that if the horse in front of a line is trotting or cantering, the horse that is following may also attempt to trot or canter.
- \* If one horse spooks at something, the surrounding horses may also be affected.
- \* For safety, it is recommended to keep at least one horse's length between horses when riding within a group to respect the horse's space and pecking order.

## **GROOMING & TACKING GUIDELINES**

### **1. Stall Safety:**

- \* **ALWAYS** close gate/door behind you!!!
- \* **ALWAYS** put halter on horse when grooming
- \* Always tie horse with a trailer tie or, if not available, a quick release knot.
- \* Never go under a horse's neck while tied up!
- \* Walk closely around the horse's rear end with hand on horse.

### **2. Grooming Tools:**



**Curry comb** - small circular motion; dislodges dirt & hair. Be careful around bony areas. Never use on the face



**Dandy/stiff brush** – stiff bristled brush; the motion for this brush is like the same motion you use when sweeping a floor. You “flick” the brush away and up from the coat.



**Body brush** – soft bristled brush; quick strokes; removes dirt & hair. Smooth it flat over the coat.



**Mane & Tail comb/brush** – use gently to remove dirt.



**Hoof Pick** - clean frog & pad; both front & rear.

**3. Cleaning Hooves:** When checking or cleaning hooves do it from the side, and facing the rear of the horse. Bend at the waist, never squat or kneel down. Stay on both feet. Scrape away from you. Thoroughly clean out the hollow areas on both sides of the frog and around the sole of the foot.

#### **4. Tacking Horse:**

Check tack sheet in the Tack Room for specific horse tack.

Take trailer tie and grooming bin to tacking area. Hook tie to a tacking station ring.

Grooming bin placed outside of fence away from horse's feet.

Utilize horse safety procedures.

Make sure tack is placed out of horse's reach.

Placement of pads on horse's back - forward over the withers with equal amounts on each side.

Make sure the pad is raised a bit over the withers as saddle is placed on the horse.

Attach girth to saddle - elastic goes on left (side you are saddling on).

#### **5. Saddling a Horse**

(a) *When saddling* have horse properly secured with a trailer tie (so he will stand quietly). If a



trailer tie is not available, use an approved quick release knot so the horse can be easily released, in case of emergency.

(b) *Tighten the girth or cinch SLOWLY* - do not pull up abruptly nor over tighten. Adjust saddle carefully with girth tight enough so the saddle will not shift when mounting. Horses often swell up when first saddled, and failure to re-tighten the girth just prior to and after mounting can result in serious accident

**Bridle** - only instructors will put on bridles.

**Side pulls** - trained, authorized volunteers may put on side pulls.

**Halter** placed over the bridle/side pull and tied using trailer tie. Lead rope to be removed and tied to fence. If trailer tie is not available, tie with a quick release knot.

**NEVER** tie a horse up with lead rope attached to bit/bridle or side pull. Remove halter and attach lead rope to noseband or lead shank for class. Exit from stall or tacking area with horse - announce to others "horse coming through".

**After Class:**

Return horse to tacking area and untack.

Remove side pull.

Replace halter & tie horse.

Remove girth - remove from both sides; lay over saddle.

Lift saddle and pads together from horse's back.

Take all tack to tack room and put away in the correct place.

\*\* If horse is to be used in the next class, put halter over the bridle/side pull and tie horse at a tacking station using a trailer tie.

\*\* Instructor or Daily Coordinator will direct leaders to put horse in the stall or pasture (check stall and pasture assignment sheets).

## **6. Return tack to Tack Room**

Hang girths on appropriate hook (small, medium, large, western, pony, dressage)

Place pads (sweaty side up) in appropriate place.

Place saddle on correct number corresponding rack – do not cross stirrups over seat.

Rinse bit in water/sponge.

Hang bridle/side pull on correct hook.

If you are uncertain, at any time, about tack or procedures, *please* ask.

## **Volunteer Manual Verification**

When you have read the manual completely, please sign and remove this sheet. Please return this form to Brenda Gilliam. Don't forget to sign and date this form.

I have read the Spirit Strides Volunteer Manual in its entirety. I agree to follow the policies and procedures set forth in this manual.

---

*Signature*

*Date*

*Printed Name*