

Valley Therapeutic Equestrian Association

Volunteer Training &
Emergency
Procedures Handbook



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Welcome to V.T.E.A and thank you for volunteering your time and skills to make our program successful, we appreciate all you do!

The following outlines our policy and procedures to help guide you to become comfortable and confident in your time here.

Volunteer Attire and Reminders

- All volunteers should wear suitable and appropriate clothing, we are a business and working with the public clientele. We recommend long pants or mid-calf shorts/capris, T-shirts (no strapless/revealing tops), sturdy shoes or boots (no sandals/open toes).

Jackets/sweaters (must be closed so they don't get caught on tack), no scarves or dangling jewellery (riders may try to grab) and no perfume due to rider/ horse sensitivities.

- No gum (volunteers or riders) - it is a choking hazard.
- Please wear your name tag and sign in/out in the attendance book in the volunteer office beside the barn. In case of emergency, the attendance book allows us to account for volunteers on the premises.
- Please do not hesitate to speak to the instructors for additional help or questions, they are more than happy to accommodate your needs to help you feel comfortable and

confident in your volunteer
role!

Safety Rules

- Horses are flight animals, when startled or frightened they will try to run from the issue and may try to go forward, backward or to the side.
- Be alert and aware of your surroundings.

Side walking-TRA1

- The side walker's primary responsibility is the rider's safety and to assist them in maintaining a balanced and secure position.
- Support holds include hip, thigh, knee, ankle and belt.

- The amount of intervention/support required by the side walker will vary and is determined by the rider's ability. The instructor will inform you of the rider's needs.
- The side walker should maintain a position beside the rider's knee/lower leg, with no contact to the horse.
- The side walker may be asked to assist the instructor in communicating or reinforcing commands to the rider as needed, including hand over hand direction. Advise the instructor of any comments or needs expressed to you by the rider.
- If the side walker is required to change sides, it must be done at the halt and ensure the rider is not left unattended

(instructor may step in if only one s/w).

- In case of an **emergency** the side walker should remain with the rider and give assurance, while following the instructor's direction.
- **Please note that the horses are in the arena to work and should be left to stand quietly while waiting for their lesson.**
- A side walker may be asked to assist or "spot" the rider during mounting on the offside. The instructor will provide direction regarding the type of mount and support required. It is important to understand that the mounting area can be intimidating for both the rider and horse, causing it to be the area most likely where

accidents may occur. Once the rider is mounted, a thigh hold is required to walk out of the mounting block and into the center of arena for adjustments.

- Dismounting the rider safely and comfortably is equally important. Please wait for the instructor to provide direction. A side walker may be asked to escort the rider to the viewing area to meet their parent/care giver.

Leading-TRA2

Please note that our horses are handled by many different people and have a difficult job to do as many of our riders are unbalanced, moving around, and can be very loud having sudden outbursts. We have

established these guidelines to ensure uniformity in handling them, providing confidence and security.

We appreciate that many volunteers have their own horses or may work with other horses but ask for your cooperation in following these guidelines while working with ours.

- The leader's primary responsibility is the control of the horse, having the ability to recognize potential problems and take appropriate action to avoid an adverse reaction.
- A halter and lead rope are used for leading, in addition to the horse being bridled with reins attached for the rider or for the leader to take better control of the horse if required. If the reins are not attached to

the bit, the lead rope must be attached to a leading vee or bit connector.

The bit stays level in the horse's mouth and the leader will have more control of the horse if required.

The leader must ensure proper leading techniques and be quiet with their hands in order to be effective and not cause stress and pain to the horse's mouth.



- Gloves should be worn to prevent rope burn.
- Hold the lead rope 8-10 inches from the buckle with one hand and the other end folded in a

figure 8 pattern in your other hand. Ensure the lead rope is not dangling on the ground or looped around your hand to prevent accidents and injuries.

- Stand beside the horse facing forward, between his head and shoulder (this position should be maintained while leading and halted throughout the lesson) and ask him to “walk on” with a slight forward motion of the lead rope. Stop by asking him to “whoa”, stopping your body and a slight downward pull on the lead rope.
- Announce yourself when entering/exiting the arena with a horse (call “Gate”) and close gate behind if other horses are in the arena.
- **DO NOT ENTER/EXIT DURING MOUNTING**

- Horses should be walked around the arena in both directions and trotted on long side to warm up their muscles and check for soundness prior to mounting the rider.
- The leader should check with the instructor and change/add stirrups to tack prior to tack check.
- The instructor will check tack (**only the instructor is to tighten the girth**) and call horse to block for mounting. The leader should walk into mounting area on horse's right side and halt the horse square and balanced. Stand slightly to side and facing horse to prevent him from walking off. While halted at the block for mounting or during an exercise or game, the instructor may

ask the leader to face the horse while holding the halter, and place your hand on the horse's shoulder to prevent them from moving forward.

- Walk straight and slowly out of block, turning into center of arena with a wide turn and halt for adjustments.
- When the rider is given direction by the instructor, the leader should help with guiding, stopping and starting the horse with only the minimum assistance necessary for the rider to complete the task. **We want to promote confidence and independence in our riders' abilities.**
- Keep a safe distance between horses at all times whether in the arena or on the trails,

including while halted in the center of arena for dismount (minimum one horse length apart) as horses may become irritated and kick out.

- If you need to halt the horse during a lesson, turn in to the center of arena off the track and follow the instructor's direction as to not interrupt other lessons.
- Leaders should always lead from the "inside" while in the arena to be able to hear and see the instructor and other horses.
- When meeting another horse/rider going the opposite direction, always pass left shoulder to left shoulder or going the same direction, slower horse stays to the inside of the track.

- Alert the instructor if your horse becomes irritated or you have concern over his behaviour.
- Know the emergency procedures if a rider falls off or if there is a fire.

Leading on the trail

- Wear appropriate foot wear for mud and water.
- Horses senses are heightened when outside, please pay attention to both your horse and the surroundings.
- Do not allow the horse to increase pace going down hills and maintain a good distance between horses.
- There is wildlife in the trails and horses can sense and smell them before we ever see them.

Horse Behaviour

Horses use a combination of body signs to communicate and display their feelings. Understanding this behaviour will help you recognize if your horse is happy, angry, sleepy, in pain or frightened. They are prey animals with a well-developed flight or fight instinct. Their first response to a threat is to flee, although they will stand their ground and fight to defend themselves or their off spring when flight is unattainable.

Horses establish dominance by moving each other around using their body and body language. If a leader is not confident, the horse may try to be dominant and not be respectful of the leader's control. Therefore it is important to let your instructor know if you are

uncomfortable and require some assistance in establishing your role as leader. **Please do not cuddle or coddle the horses once they come into the arena or have a rider on, this will contribute to unwanted behaviour as well.**

- Ears: forward ears are a sign that your horse is alert and attentive, usually happy. Ears flat back is a sign of anger and is often accompanied with tail swishing and possibly kicking out as a warning.
- Nostrils: Horses will flare their nostrils when unsure or frightened.
- Biting: Horses do and will bite, if accompanied by tail swishing or kicking with ears back, it is a sign of aggression. Horses also

bite/nibble each other when playing/social interaction.

- Head and neck carriage: High head carriage can be a response to fear and getting ready to flee. A low head carriage can be a sign of submission, depression or tiredness.

Barn Safety, Grooming/Tacking-TRA3

General Safety

- No smoking
- No running
- No loud noises or sudden movement
- No open-toed shoes/sandals
- Always lead a horse with a lead rope
- Call out before entering barn or arena

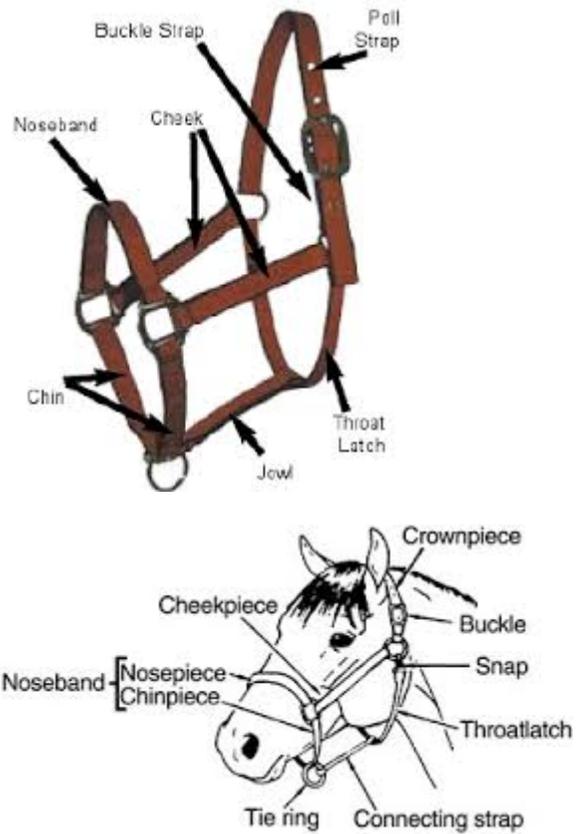
Approaching a Horse

- The horse reacts to your general attitude, your gestures and the tone of your voice. Therefore approach calmly and carefully. A horse cannot see directly behind so always speak to him to make him aware of your presence.
- Once you are near, pat his shoulder to reassure him.
- Take hold of his halter from the left side or put one on if not wearing.

The Halter

- The halter is a piece of tack fitted on the horse's head. It may be

fastened by either the headpiece or throatlatch depending on the style. The halter is used to either tie or lead a horse.

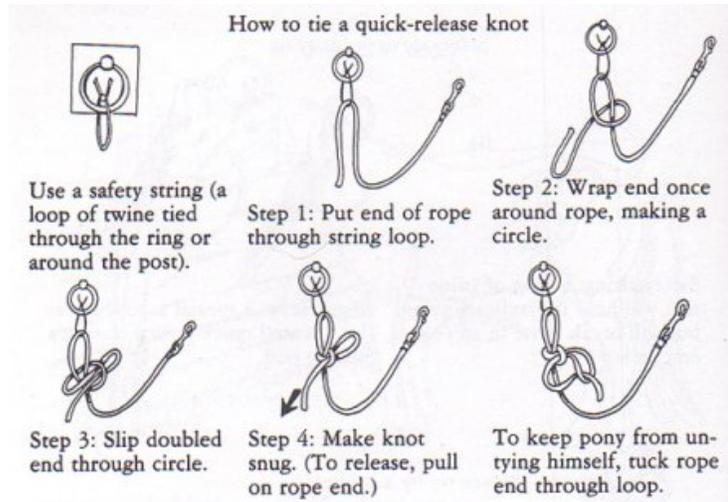


Tying a Horse

- You should only tie a horse by his halter, **never by a bridle, bit or reins.**
- When tying a horse on crossties, fasten snaps to side rings of the halter's noseband. The horse should be positioned in center of aisle with equal lengths of the tie on either side so that he is not pulling or straining on the ties. Never leave a horse alone while fastened to crossties.



- If you must tie a horse with a rope, fasten the snap of the rope to the center bottom ring of the halter's noseband. Leave the horse 2 to 3 feet of rope. Too short a rope may cause the horse to panic and pull, too long a rope could get caught around the horse's legs, both situations potentially injuring the horse. The rope should be tied to a secure ring or proper hitching area meant for tying horses.
- Always tie the rope with a quick release knot, allowing the horse to be untied quickly if necessary



Grooming

Grooming cleans the coat and massages the skin.

- Encourages good blood circulation
- Encourages skin secretion by loosening any dirt blocking the pores

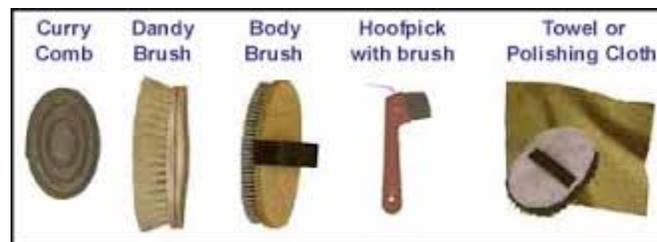
- Ensures that any abnormalities, such as sores, cuts or other developing problems are noticed and therefore treated immediately
- Keeps the coat in good condition
- Improves the horse's appearance and helps keep him comfortable

The hair sheds in the spring, and lengthens and thickens in the fall. Grooming is particularly necessary in the spring to remove the winter hair.

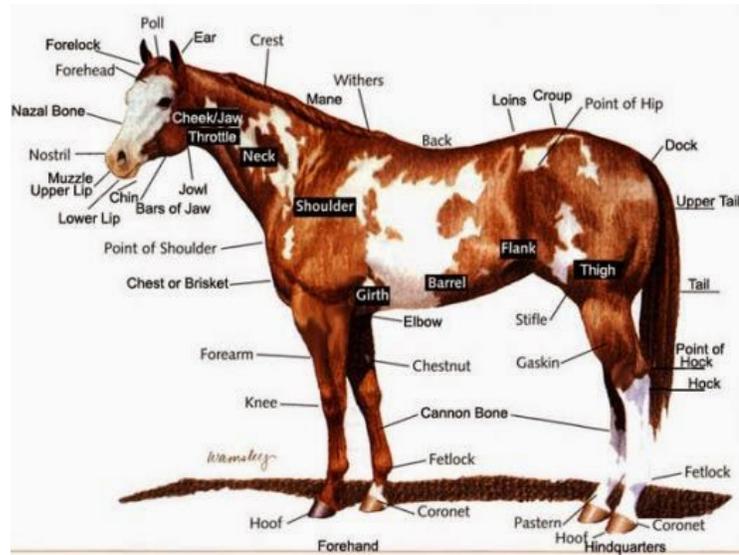
Grooming equipment

- Use the hoof pick to clean the bottom of the hooves to remove any dirt or foreign matter from the frog and sole.
- Use the rubber curry only on the fleshy parts of the body, in a circular motion, to remove heavy dirt and loose hair.
- Use the dandy (hard bristles)brush to remove sweat marks, caked dirt and dust from the coat, in a brisk flicking motion.
- Use the soft body brush to remove any remaining dust and to polish the coat, on the body, legs, and head. The body brush can be used on the mane and tail as it is less likely to break the hair, then the comb can be used after the tangles have been removed.

- A dry rag or towel can be used to smooth the hair and make it shine.
- Use a damp sponge first to clean the eyes and nostrils, then another one to clean under the tail, anus and sheath or teats.



The Body/Anatomy



The Saddle

The saddle is a leather (or man-made material) seat which is placed on the horse's back and fastened with a girth. The saddle protects the rider from direct contact with the horse's sweat, and by its padding also serves as a shock absorber.



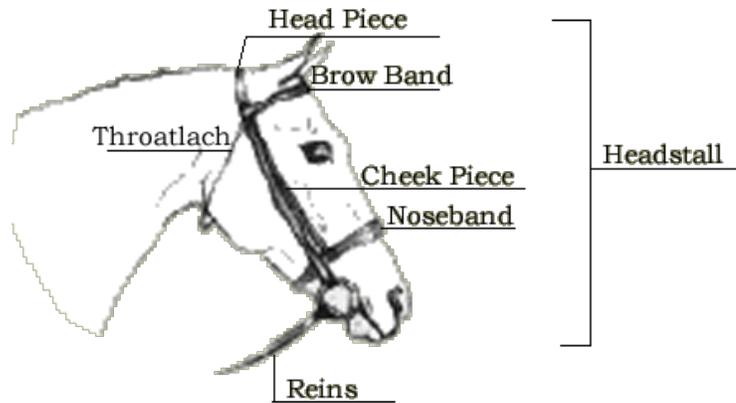
PARTS OF THE ENGLISH SADDLE

Putting on the Saddle

Hold the saddle on your left arm with the pommel facing towards your elbow. With your right hand place the saddle pad on the horse's withers, making sure that it is flat. Place the saddle gently on the

horse's back over his withers and "tenting" the saddle pad into the pommel with your left hand, and holding the cantle with your right hand, rock the saddle back into the natural position behind the horse's shoulder. Fasten the girth just so it is snug, holding the saddle in place. The instructor will check and tighten the girth before the rider mounts.

The Bridle



Putting on the Bridle

- Stand on the left side of the horse and place the reins around the horse's neck.
- Then hold on to the top of the bridle (the headpiece or crown piece) with your right hand, and place your left hand under the bit near the horse's muzzle (mouth).

- Press your left thumb firmly but gently against the bar of the horse's mouth to help them open their mouth. If your horse doesn't open their mouth then try again, a little harder.
- Guide the bit gently into the horse's mouth, taking care not to hit the horse's teeth. Draw the bridle up with the right hand, using the left hand; slide the left and then the right ear under the headpiece of the bridle.
- Next straighten the horse's mane and forelock under the bridle.
- Fasten the throatlatch. Be sure it is loose enough to allow 4 fingers to be placed between the throatlatch and cheek.

- Fasten the noseband being sure to pass underneath the cheek pieces of the bridle and should be loose enough to place 2 fingers under the noseband.

Incident Procedures

Fall or Injury

- **Only** the instructor will give direction and instructions.
- The instructor will call the entire ride to a halt.
- Each leader and all side walkers are to stay with their assigned horse and rider.
- The instructor will attend to and assess the fallen rider or

injured volunteer; and direct the leader to move the horse away from the area.

- If required, the instructor may ask the side walker (or a parent/spectator) to assist or send for a blanket (located in the storage cupboard in arena) or first aid kit (on ledge by arena entrance).
- Depending on the severity of the injury, one person will be instructed to call an ambulance, our address is posted by the arena entrance, be sure to provide the location of the injured party (arena, barn, trails, etc.)
- Any reasonable first aid is to be administered.
- If this is more than a minor injury, the remaining riders

should be dismounted and the instructor will provide direction.

- The most important point to remember when any accident occurs is that several people do not rush to the injured rider, thereby leaving the rider for whom they are responsible for unattended. A calm controlled atmosphere is essential.

Fire Evacuation Procedure

- The person who discovers the fire should yell “Fire” to alert others. The instructor will direct someone to call 911 and report back. The instructor will direct someone to work the fire

extinguisher (if safe to do so) while the area is being evacuated.

- Fire extinguishers are located just inside all entrances to the arena, stables, and office - **signage is posted.**
- Once the person who has called the fire department reports back to the instructor, they should wait in a safe visible area to direct the fire personnel to the fire upon their arrival.
- If a lesson is in progress, the instructor will evacuate the area and dismount the riders once at the designated safe area (**grassy area north of the office where the big tree is**)
- The instructor (or designated volunteer) will take the **Volunteer Attendance**

Book with them (located in the arena), and a head count will be carried out when everyone has been evacuated to the designated area.

- Leaders must follow the instructor's directions in regards to the horses.
- **It is crucial that side walkers remain with their riders at all times.**
- Move quickly and quietly- **THE SAFETY OF RIDERS AND VOLUNTEERS IS OF PRIMARY CONCERN.**

Under no circumstances does anyone return to the barn for the horses. The fire department has all the equipment necessary and all firefighters are trained in the removal of animals from a fire.

Building evacuation exits:

- **Barn, Viewing Area, Office**
– evacuate all personnel
through the closest safe exit.

Horse Evacuation Procedure:

If the fire is located in the barn, all personnel should stay away from the barn and let the fire department deal with any horses in the barn.

However if the fire is away from the barn and it is possible to remove horses from the barn:

- Take emergency halters, lead ropes and towels for blindfolds,

- Direct someone to close doors between barn and fire location.
- Cover the horse's eyes with towels secured by halter,
- Lead the horses out of the barn through the safest exit and release to a safe secure field. If the horse is tacked up, remove bridles before releasing into field. **Horses will run back into a burning barn.**

Earthquake Procedures

- If a lesson is in progress, the instructor will call entire ride to a halt and have riders dismounted.
- Each leader will quickly move the horse to the nearest field, and then move to a safe area as quickly as possible.

- All side walkers are to stay with the riders.

Indoors:

- Take cover under heavy furniture, drop and cover your head and torso to prevent being hit by falling objects.
- If you can't get under something strong, lay flat or crouch against an interior wall; stay away from windows and heavy shelves.
- If a rider is in a wheelchair, lock the brakes and protect the back of their head and neck.

Outdoors:

- Stay outside and move to an open area away from buildings.

In a Vehicle:

- Pull over to a safe place where you are not blocking access by emergency vehicles.
- Avoid any structures that could collapse.
- Stay in your car until the earthquake has stopped.
- If there are downed power lines, do not exit your vehicle!

After an Earthquake:

- Be prepared for aftershocks.
- The instructor will provide direction.
- Put on sturdy shoes and protective clothing to help prevent injury from debris and broken glass.
- Check for structural damage before entering a building.
- Do not light matches or turn on switches until you are sure

there are no gas leaks or flammable liquids spilt.

- If tap water is still available, fill as many containers as possible in case services are interrupted.
- If it is safe to move to the area that the horses are in, try to comfort them and find any that are missing. Turn them out into fields if not already out.
- Place a “**HELP**” sign into view at top of driveway if required.

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