Staten Island Recreational Association, Inc.

HOOPH Program

( Helping Others Obtain Possibilities through Horses )

Volunteer Manual

599 Father Capodanno Blvd
Staten Island, NY 10305
(718) 981-9251
(718) 876-0459 Fax
Welcome to the HOOPH program!
Thank you for interest in becoming a volunteer at SIRA. This manual will start
you on the right path with the information and tools you will need to be an
effective and productive volunteer. Our hope is that reading the manual and
attending the orientation and training will provide you with a solid foundation that
will enable you to become an important part of SIRA and that your time spent
with us will be safe, fun and rewarding. SIRA appreciates all of our volunteers.
Without you and the gift of your time, energy and skills, we would not be able to
offer these valuable services to our community.
"Those who bring sunshine into the lives of others cannot keep it from
themselves."

SIRA History

The Staten Island Recreational Association Inc. was founded late in 1992 by the late
Mr. Lou Caravone, a long time community leader & activist. He and 10 other like minded
individuals realized that there was a need to help under funded groups here on Staten
Island. The association applied for and received its not-for-profit, 501(c)(3), designation
and proceeded to hold different types of functions to raise funds. The net proceeds of
these events were then distributed to various programs that were unable to secure funding
thru other channels.

The association also hosted many activities for elderly and challenged individuals in the
area. On many occasions we bought blocks of tickets to circuses and shows in the area.
We continued this venue until late 2004. The times changed and to continue the course
we had undertaken became cost prohibitive.

Early in 2005 we came upon an idea that would again allow us to continue to serve the
community in a similar way. The H.O.O.P.H. Program was born and continues to grow
by leaps and bounds.

About Path Intl.
Headquartered in Denver, Colorado, Path's mission is to "change and enrich
lives by promoting excellence in equine assisted activities." The association
ensures its standards are met through an accreditation process for centers and a
certification process for instructors. SIRA is proud to be a NARHA/PATH Intl.
Center Member. NARHAP/PATH Intl. was founded in 1969 and has nearly 800
member centers. More than 38,000 individuals with disabilities benefit from
activities which include therapeutic riding, hippotherapy, equine assisted
psychotherapy, driving, interactive vaulting, and competition. For more
information visit the Path Intl. website at www.pathintl.org.

SIRA Riders
SIRA serves over 100 participants each year. The disabilities you may encounter
include: developmental delays ADHD traumatic brain injury
Learning disabilities Autism/PDD multiple sclerosis cerebral palsy Down syndrome sight or hearing impairment spinal cord injury stroke/CVA muscular dystrophy etc.

Instructors
All SIRA Instructors are PATH Intl. certified therapeutic riding instructors and certified in First Aid and CPR. Instructors are in charge of all lessons. All directions come from the instructor, including the assignment of rider to horse, volunteers to rider, method of mounting and the structure of the lesson. Unless notified otherwise, all volunteers must defer to the instructor's decisions. This is extremely important to ensure everyone's safety. During therapy sessions the instructor is there to ensure the safety of everyone involved including the client, volunteers, therapist and horse but the therapist directs the session. At various times there may be a Student Instructor teaching a class, but always under direct supervision of an SIRA Instructor.

Programs at SIRA
Therapeutic riding is a recreational program designed to provide beneficial physical activity and emotional benefit through learning and applying horsemanship skills. Although learning riding skills is the goal, riders may develop improved balance, stamina and coordination. The emotional or psychological benefits are many as the riders strive to meet the challenges of riding their horse.
Hippotherapy is a treatment tool whereby a licensed occupational, physical, or speech therapist uses the horse's movement to help achieve a client's therapy goals and objectives. Licensed therapists of each discipline are cross-trained in the movement and behavior of the horse and in the application of the horses' movement as an innovative tool in therapy. The three dimensional, rhythmic movement achieved while a client sits astride a horse is unique and facilitates improvements in motor, sensory and cognitive domains. The sensory input that a client is challenged with during a hippotherapy session cannot be reproduced in traditional clinic settings, making the horse a valuable member of the treatment team.

Volunteering at SIRA:

Commitment
Regardless of the service you perform, it is your commitment that needs to be stressed. A program without strong commitment from its volunteers will not survive. If you have made a commitment to assist during lessons, our riders and instructors rely on you to follow through. No one is more disappointed than a rider who comes for a lesson, only to find that he/she can't ride because of a lack of volunteers. Please keep in mind:

• Come each week on your assigned day
• Plan to arrive at the time listed on the registration form which allows time for grooming and tacking the horses before the lessons begin.
• PLEASE call the office and mark the attendance sheets with a letter A (for absent) if you know you are going to be absent in advance. If you are going to be absent with less than 36 hours notice please call the office- do not email the volunteer coordinator unless it is several days in advance.
• Please give as much notice as possible when you know you are going to be absent to allow the volunteer coordinators time to find a substitute.
• Remember that riders can be very disappointed when they are unable to ride due to a lack of volunteers.

Confidentiality
SIRA maintains a strict policy of confidentiality. All volunteers are asked to respect our clients' privacy in any setting away from lessons. This includes avoiding discussion of riders by name or in any way that might disclose their identity or their disability. SIRA preserves the right of confidentiality for all individuals in its program.

Physical Fitness
Volunteers assisting in our therapeutic riding lessons or hippotherapy sessions need to be able to walk with and/or help support a rider for up to 30 minutes, and in many cases will be asked to run along slowly as the horse trots for a few minutes at a time. If you have physical limitations that prevent you from meeting these requirements, you should ask your instructor to find you a less strenuous job such as grooming and tacking up horses for the next lesson, or ask to rotate with another volunteer.

Attire
Wear clothes suitable to the season, including comfortable waterproof footwear. Open toed shoes are prohibited. Because of temperature variations, layering of clothing is a reasonably sure way of being comfortable. High socks can offer some protection against ticks and overgrowth on the trails. Avoid wearing loose, baggy clothes and jewelry, which could get caught in the tack. Long hair should be pulled back. Avoid wearing any perfumes- this may irritate the horses and riders or attract insects.

Experience
Volunteers at SIRA must be 14 years and older and a variety of experience levels. Many volunteers have no horse experience, while others may have years of experience. We strive for a TEAM approach to volunteering. Everyone's here to learn and to share his or her knowledge in order to make it a great experience for every volunteer and rider involved.
• We urge you to speak up if you are uncomfortable with a certain situation or rider.
• This is a learning by doing position.
• Do not feel intimidated if you don't know something- just ask- we love questions!
• We ask all volunteers, even those with horse experience, to do things the “SIRA way” to allow for consistency with our horses

**Volunteer Input**
Your comments about riders, Instructors and/or horses are very valuable to us. If you have any concerns, suggestions, or comments, please feel free to contact your instructor or the Volunteer Coordinator. All conversations will be held in confidence. We are grateful for your willingness to share insights and information regarding our programs.

**A Day in the Life of a Volunteer**

**Arriving at the barn**
• Check off your name on the attendance sheet in the Lesson Book.
• Check the saddling list for horses to groom.
• Prepare the horse with a thorough grooming in the tacking area.
• Set out the tack for each horse.
• Tack the horse according to saddling list in the lesson book. When girding a horse, the girth should be done loosely at first, then tightened in stages; never pulled tight all at once. It will be tightened a final time by the instructor just before entering the mounting ramp. Also be aware of the long winter hair and try not to get it caught in the buckle!

**After the horse is tacked**
• Horse leaders should lead their assigned horse around the ring until the riders are ready to mount.
• Sidewalkers should wait with riders.
• The instructor will call the horses into the mounting area from the indoor ring one at a time to mount the riders.

**During the Warm up**
Volunteers may hold conversations while the riders are warming up, but are urged to:
• Remain aware of the rider’s safety at all times
• Include the rider in the conversation
• Choose appropriate topics, keeping the rider’s interests in mind

**During the Lesson**
To avoid distracting or confusing the rider, volunteers are asked to talk only when necessary once the lesson starts. The Instructor will advise volunteers how to appropriately interact with the rider.
• Volunteers may need to prompt the rider and will be instructed as to the proper method to use.
• It is important to remember to give the rider time to process the request or command- some may need more time to process information and then respond.
• It is very important that only one sidewalker interacts with the rider- people talking from both sides may only confuse the rider.
• The Instructor can not see everything that is going on. Relate pertinent observations to the Instructor.
• Have fun!
We value the observations of the volunteers participating in lessons. Feel free to talk to the instructor before or after lessons if you have questions/comments about any student's progress.

Every effort should be made to keep the lessons running on schedule. Work as a team when making tack or horse changes for maximum efficiency.

**After lessons**
- Return all tack to its proper place.
- During hot weather horses may need to be walked until they are cool or bathed.
- Brush or wash the saddle area if needed.
- Assist the instructor in turning out the horses
- Return your nametag.
- Record your hours in the Community Service book. If you would like to receive credit for community service hours, it is **YOUR** responsibility to fill out the appropriate form and have it signed by an SIRA staff member each time you volunteer.

**The Equines at SIRA**
All program horses are evaluated before being accepted into the program and are trained to accept new equipment and props they may encounter at SIRA during their trial period. They receive regular schooling and conditioning, and are evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that they remain appropriate for the program. Always remember horses are horses, with the nature and innate responses of a horse. Humans must learn to understand “herd mentality”. The horse should respect the human handler as if he or she were the lead horse. Leaders during lessons must learn to be the alpha horse to gain the respect of the horse they are working with. This must be done with confidence and without using force or aggression. Horses are easy to handle if they are trained consistently and if you understand why they behave as they do. If you’re not consistent with the horses they may become confused or unwilling. SIRA strives to keep all handling of the horses the same.

**“Horse Sense”**
Horses are herd animals with a distinct pecking order
Horses, being a prey animal, react to danger by fleeing
Horses can’t see directly in front of them or directly behind them
Horses are creatures of habit and learn best by repetition
Horses move away from pressure and resist force
Horses show their moods by their ears and by their body language
Horses are inclined to take cues from an identified leader, whether horse or human
Horses learn to trust and follow the lead of the one in the herd that has earned their respect
Horses are highly social animals
Horses not only respond to voice commands, they also respond to “tone of voice”
Horses instinctively know when another horse (or human) is their equal, their superior or one that can be dominated
To the horse, you are just another two-legged animal
Body language
Horses communicate with each other using body language. Humans can also communicate with horses using body language. Horses learn to read humans quite easily. In a herd, horses will take their cue from the lead horse and react accordingly. In our situation, the person leading the horse should be the “lead horse”. A strong and confident leader will tell the horse that he or she should be following the cues of the human leader. Precise and consistent cues from the leader will keep the horse alert and responsive to what is being asked of them. There must be no confusion over who is in charge. It is not about physical size and strength, it’s about confidence. Humans ask for respect from horses, just as horses ask for respect from humans. It starts by respecting their space- don’t always be in their face, don’t reach into their stalls and don’t groom them in their stalls unless absolutely necessary. Firm and consistent handling in the ring allows horses to respond in calm and respectful way. It is a mutual respect that provides the best relationships between horses and humans!

Horse Lingo
A big part of being consistent with the horses is using the same language. If everyone uses the same words and terms during all handling the horses will better understand what is being asked of them.

Walk on is used to ask the horse to move forward at the walk
Whoa (or Ho) is used to stop the horse
And...whoa can be used to stop the horse but also give them time to “prepare” to stop
Easy is used when you want the horse to slow down
Stand is used when a horse is fidgety and not standing quietly
Trot is used to ask a horse to trot
Tone of voice is also very important. A quiet gentle, tone can be used to soothe a nervous horse. A firm and assertive tone can command a quick response from the horse. These words should be used while grooming and tacking, in the warm-up and during the lessons. Consistency is the key to success with this herd.

The Movement of the Horse
The horse’s movement is the key to what happens in Hippotherapy at SIRA. The horse’s walk provides sensory input through movement that is variable, rhythmic and repetitive. The horse’s walk is also similar to the way a human pelvis moves while walking, allowing the movement of the horse (the horse’s walk) to “teach” a human pelvis how to walk. The movement can be modified or adjusted for each client’s specific needs. The horse’s movement becomes a very valuable therapy tool. It is the responsibility of the leader to create the highest quality movement with each horse. Quality movement is easy to attain if the leader handles the horses in a manner consistent with SIRA training.
Volunteer Job Descriptions

Leader
Volunteers who come to our program with horse handling experience may be asked to be horse leaders. As a leader, the volunteer is responsible for handling the horse throughout the mounting procedure, the lesson and dismounting. Horses are extremely aware of and sensitive to the person leading them. A leader’s manner of walking on briskly or just sauntering along can greatly affect how the horse will respond and how effective the rider’s lesson will be.

Methods of Leading
Active leading - The leader is totally responsible for all movements of the horse. The horse is getting all aids from the leader, not the rider. This type of leading is primarily used in Hippotherapy, for riders doing exercises, or brand new riders. Program horses are trained to look to the leader for directions if none are coming from the rider.
Supportive leading - The horse is still on lead, but the leader is not actively giving the horse aids. The rider will be giving the horse aids for walk-on, halt and rein aids for steering, but may not be proficient enough to be completely independent. In this way, the rider can practice skills while the leader makes sure the horse is following the cues given by the rider.
The primary responsibility of the Leader is the horse, and:
Making sure the horse is groomed and tacked properly
Putting the bridle on
To control and calm the horse in an emergency situation

To help the horse follow the cues from the rider

In Hippotherapy, to follow the directions of the therapist
Most riders who have leaders are unable to fully control their horses. It is the leader who must help in guiding; stopping and starting without making the rider feel that they are simply a passenger. The rider must be allowed to do as much as possible with the leader helping only when necessary.

Do’s and Don’ts of Leading
Do walk the horse actively in the ring before the rider mounts. This loosens up the horse’s muscles and “wakes him up” so he will be ready to work when the rider gets on.
Do lead the horse as close to the mounting ramp as possible and help him to stand squarely.
Stand in front of the horse to keep him still while his rider mounts.
Stand in front of and facing the horse whenever the horse is asked to stand still for any period of time.
Don’t ask the horse to walk before making sure the rider is ready to move and the instructor has given the o.k.
Don’t give the horse a command before the rider has had a chance to try it himself, but... Do encourage the horse to follow the rider’s command as soon as possible.
Do watch the rider and allow the horse to follow the rider’s cues.
Do keep your focus on the horse, but be aware of the rider as well.
Don’t wrap the extra lead rope around your hand, instead...
Hold the lead rope in two hands with the extra lead folded in your hand.
Don’t have a “death grip” on the lead rope too close to the horse’s head. Do allow the horses head to move in a natural rhythm. Don’t let the extra lead rope dangle where it might trip you or the horse. Don’t drag the horse behind you… Do use short quick forward snaps of the lead to get the horse to move quicker. Do lead from between the horse’s head and shoulder, on the side of the horse nearest the center of the ring. Don’t lead the horse too close to the wall…this squashes your sidewalkers and makes them quite unhappy. Do use the entire ring… don’t cut corners. Do lead at an even, steady pace. Don’t stop suddenly. Don’t make sharp turns. Always have one to two horse lengths between you and the horse in front of you. Do get your horse in a brisk walk before asking him to trot. Don’t pick up balls, cones, poles etc. - remain focused on the horse during activities. Do alert the instructor immediately if the horse is being difficult, making you uncomfortable, or if you see ANY unsafe situation. Don’t pull against the horse if they are scared and backing up in a panicked state. Instead follow them speaking to them in a calm voice while gently asking them to stop with the leadrope. Do wait until all riders have left the ring, and then lead your horse back into the barn. Check the list, then untack him and put him in his stall if he won’t be used for the next lesson. If he will be used again, check the list to determine if a tack change is necessary. Horses that will be used for the next lesson should stay in the ring or return to the ring after tack changes.

Sidewalker
Sidewalkers are volunteers who directly assist the rider during the lesson. A sidewalkers’ responsibility is the safety and well being of the rider at all times. Sidewalkers can be actively involved in maintaining the riders balance, reinforcing the instructor’s directions or giving the rider moral support. Riders may be assigned 1 or 2 sidewalkers depending on their needs. Some riders do not require any sidewalkers. The sidewalkers’ attention must at all times be focused on the rider. Communication between sidewalkers should not interfere with the instructor’s directions. Sidewalkers may communicate with the horse leader or each other in regard to the rider’s balance. In an emergency situation, the sidewalkker stays with the rider unless otherwise directed by the instructor.

Methods of Sidewalking
Single Arm Armlock - the sidewalkker places their forearm closest to the rider over the rider’s thigh, grasping the front of the saddle, pad or surcingle with their fingertips. Double Arm Armlock - The sidewalkker places their forearm closest to the rider over the rider’s thigh and the other hand holds the rider’s heel or ankle in place. Ankle Hold - The sidewalkker holds the rider’s ankle to stabilize the rider’s lower leg.
Passive Sidewalking - The sidewalker walks alongside the rider and is available for moral support, reinforcing directions or physical assistance when needed.
Spotter - The sidewalker is asked to spot the rider from the center of the ring.
Safety belts- Waist belts are sometimes used for a rider that needs more trunk support. It is important to remember not to pull down on the belt as this may unbalance the rider. Riders with two sidewalkers that are providing armlocks for the entire lesson may need to change sides to avoid tired arms. To do this: (a) ask the horse leader and rider to halt in the middle of the ring, (b) sidewalker “one” walks to the opposite side and takes over that side, (c) then sidewalker “two” walks around to the other side, (d) riding resumes. The rider should never be without one sidewalker providing support while the other is moving to the opposite side.
If a rider has 2 sidewalkers and the instructor asks for his/her instructions to be reinforced to the rider, only one sidewalker should do the talking so the rider does not get confused.
**Do's and Don'ts of Sidewalking**
Do talk to your rider in the mounting area before he is mounted, and in the ring before lessons begin, but...
Don't talk about inappropriate subjects or use inappropriate language.
Do ask the instructor/therapist what type of hold the rider requires.
Don't change the hold because your rider tells you to, always check with the instructor first.
Don't use too much or too little pressure when performing an armlock; allow the weight of your arm to rest on the rider’s leg
Do an immediate armlock on any rider if an unexpected situation arises.
Do let the instructor/therapist know if your arm is tired and you need to switch sides.
Don't rest your arm on the horse’s side or hindquarters or lean into the horse with your elbow.
Don't hit the horse or “tickle” it in the flank to get it to trot.
Don't lag behind.
Don't pull on clothing or waist belt of the rider as this unbalances him.
Don't talk to the rider or other volunteers during the lesson while the instructor is talking, but...
Do reinforce the instructor’s directions if necessary, and do give appropriate praise to the rider.
Do redirect the rider’s attention back to the instructor if they are not paying attention.
Do have only one sidewalker assist the rider verbally... too many people talking may just confuse or overwhelm the rider. Give only as much support as the rider requires, both physically and cognitively!
Do allow the riders to attempt to perform each activity as independently as possible. Let them be challenged!
Do keep your focus on the rider at all times.
Don't stop to tie your shoelace without warning.
Do let the instructor know if the rider is becoming agitated or seems nervous.
Don't allow the rider to dismount until the instructor is at his side; and do not remove the rider's feet from the stirrups until the instructor has asked you to. Do alert the instructor immediately if you see ANY unsafe situation with your rider or another rider. After dismounting, do walk with your rider back to the lobby, help him put away his helmet, and find his parent/guardian before you leave him. Don't reprimand a rider. Bring any behaviors to the attention of the instructor.

General Do's and Don'ts
Do remove the lead rope after the horse is secure on the cross ties. Don't put a horse in the stall unattended with a bridle on. Never attach cross-ties to the bit. Always attach to the halter. Do approach any horse from the side or front, speaking to them to alert them to your presence. Never approach them from the rear. Do put the bridle on last, and take it off first. When working with a rider grooming or tacking the horse, always stay by the rider's side to reinforce safety rules. Don't play with the horses' faces or mouths. Do make tack changes as quickly as possible between lessons. Do alert the instructor if you find a piece of tack that is broken or needs repair. Don't change assignments without the instructor's approval. Don't coach the riders- let the teacher teach the skills. Don't talk about horse behaviors in front of the riders or comment in a negative way to others. Do open the stall doors all the way when taking a horse through. And be sure to close and latch the door when you are done. Do allow the horses to have “quiet time” in their stalls. Try to groom and tack all horses on the cross ties whenever possible. Let their stalls be the place where they can relax and not be bothered by humans. Do not change the bridle- if you have a concern with the way a bridle fits, bring it to the attention of the instructor. Do use the 15 minute break between lessons to get a quick drink or use the bathroom. Do feel free to make any suggestions/comments to the instructor or ask questions after the lesson, out of the presence of riders and their parents. Do HAVE FUN!

From the Therapy Horses Point of View
We, the hard-working therapy horses at SIRA, have a few thoughts we'd like to share with you. Not that we're complaining mind you, it's just that we'd like for you to try to understand our point of view. We love our jobs! We enjoy people and are very proud that we can help so many of our riders accomplish so many things! But we do get burned out...
Groom on the cross-ties
Our stalls are our sanctuary- it's where we can go to get away from everybody and relax. Just imagine having 3 or 4 people crowd into your space and invade your privacy or "quiet time". This is why we ask that you groom and tack us on cross-ties. Respect our privacy.

Leave my face alone!
Please know that you may be invading my personal space when you constantly bother with my face. I may love having it brushed but please don't poke and prod me in the face. When you fuss with my mouth I think you want to play with me because that's how I play with my other horse friends, but I'm afraid that I may get too rough and bite you or one of my riders!

Don't smother me when I am fidgeting
Sometimes I get impatient and want to walk away or not stand quietly when I am supposed to. Please don't hang on my face to keep me standing quietly- I hate that and want to get away from you even more. Instead tell me to "stand" in a firm voice. DO NOT HIT ME- this only makes me more nervous and fidgety!

Don't cut off my air supply
We would appreciate it if you would attach the girth just tight enough to keep the saddle on during the warm-up. And be careful when buckling the girth- I may have long winter hair and there's nothing worse than when it hurts to walk because my hair is pinched in the buckle!

Make sure my clothes fit
Please make sure that the saddle pad you are using fits properly. It should extend 2-3" beyond the front and back of the saddle. If the pad is too short and ends under the saddle it rubs me and creates a really sore spot on my back!

Bridling
Putting a bridle on is a skill that every person should know how to do properly. Jamming the bit against my teeth will not make me open my mouth, if fact, I will probably lift my head to get away from you next time! Slide your finger into the corner of my mouth and "tickle" my tongue to get me to open my mouth. Then gently slide the bit in while raising the bridle over my ears. Also be careful when taking the bridle off. Gently slide the bridle over my ears and let it slide down along my face so the bit drops gently out of my mouth. Bringing the bridle forward away from my face twists the bit in my mouth and hurts the roof of my mouth and my teeth.

"Whatever"
Inconsistency is the biggest annoyance with us horses. We've got many different people doing the same thing many different ways- that's really hard for us! We thrive on consistency. We need to know what is expected of us and need to have our boundaries clearly defined. That's why the staff wants you to do things the SIRA way.

Respect
Respect our space and we'll respect yours. Be aware of personal space at all times especially when leading.
Leading
Leading is such an important job! It's important for you to understand what makes a good leader. A good leader is somebody who is very aware of me and what I am doing at all times. I admit that sometimes some of us are lazy... but constantly dragging us to make us go faster isn't going to work! I outweigh you by 1000 pounds- do you really think you're going to "pull" me faster? When you drag me my head goes up and my back hollows out- this really makes it uncomfortable for the rider and will eventually lead to a sore back for me. And remember the quality of the movement is what makes therapeutic riding and Hippotherapy work. Ask the instructor or a staff member how to make a lazy horse move along better. Use your voice as an aid and use your body language to let me know what I am supposed to be doing. Don't just slam on the brakes when the instructor says stop. Shift your weight back and apply several gentle downward tugs on the lead before asking me to halt. It's as if you need to give me a hint before you ask me to do or change something. Same thing when we are going to go faster- ask me to walk at a brisker pace and then glide into the trot- don't burst into the trot! When we halt respect my space and don't hang onto my head. If you stay calm and cool chances are I will too! The key to a good leader is communication between you and the horse. Think of it as the human leads, the horse follows. We prefer you to be as gentle as possible but as firm as necessary.

Sidewalking
Again, respect my space! I know that sometimes you need to provide lots of support to your rider but don't forget about me! It's really, really, really uncomfortable for me when you jab me with your elbow or when you constantly bump into my side. Horses find it much easier to do their job if you do yours properly and with consideration.

Understanding the Riders
In an effort to help volunteers understand why riding is so important to us, we would like to share some of our thoughts...
First of all you should know what riding a horse does for us. There is an extreme sense of accomplishment for us when the horse does what we ask. We are able to experience things on a horse that we cannot experience in our wheelchairs or walkers. Riding a large and powerful horse empowers us!
Riding a horse can be hard work and allows us to use many different muscles in different ways. The movement of the horse is the key to hippotherapy and even to therapeutic riding. There are so many physical benefits to riding a horse. The rhythmical and constant movement allows tight muscles to relax and weak muscles to strengthen. A horse's pelvis moves in the same way that a human pelvis moves, so by putting a human who has trouble walking on a horse, the horse is able to "teach" the human pelvis how to move correctly. And then there are the cognitive benefits... The movement of the horse can help stimulate areas of our brains or even help us organize our thoughts better. And wow, the incredible power we feel when we make the horse do something all by ourselves! The sense of accomplishment when we learn a new skill is amazing for our confidence and our egos!
We can go on and on about all the good things riding does for us, but we need your help too! We depend on you for feeling safe even when we’re nervous or scared. Sometimes if too many people are talking to us at once we’ll just tune everybody out- our brains just can’t handle it and we will not be able to process anything at all! It’s much easier for us if just one person works with us and helps guide us. We might depend on you to help us learn a new skill, but remember, if you always do it for us we’ll never be able to do it on our own and we really want to do it for our own satisfaction. Don’t feel bad for us if we fail some times- it may take us a while to get something but when we do imagine how great we will feel!! We all like to have fun and hope that you have fun too, but remember that we are here to do more than just ride a horse: we are here to build muscles and coordination, learn skills that can carry over into our everyday lives, to be more independent and to be able to do things on our own! So please respect us and help us, but don’t do everything for us… Celebrate our accomplishments with us!

**VOLUNTEERING FOR EQUINE ASSISTED THERAPY (HIPPOThERAPY)**

Volunteering for SIRA’s Equine Assisted Therapy is a uniquely rewarding experience. Hippotherapy is provided by an occupational, physical or speech therapist in a 1:1 treatment session. The therapist works with the client (often young children) towards specific habilitative goals that have been set during an evaluation with the family and client. Volunteers for hippotherapy must work in a team setting, keep all information about clients private and confidential and take direction well. In Hippotherapy, the client is not learning how to ride the horse, but is receiving medical therapy that incorporates the movement of the horse.

Speech Therapy is designed for individuals who wish to improve speech and language communication through augmentative communication, sign language and/or verbal speaking. In Speech therapy sessions the horse’s movement is utilized for its’ benefit of improving posture, respiration and organizing the body. The horse is also a powerful motivator. When the client says “walk” or “go,” or even utters a sound when prompted, the horse and horse handler reinforce the speech with the horse immediately walking. In this way the client learns that language is a way to communicate, a way to get what he/she wants and is intrinsically rewarding. Some research indicates that vocalization and speech production is more prevalent during therapy sessions incorporating equine movement. As a horse handler for a speech therapy session, you will take your cues from the therapist and often from the client directly. As a sidewalk, you may assist silently or in conversation with the client. Physical Therapy is designed for individuals who wish to increase their balance, strength, endurance, and flexibility, and improve their gross motor and mobility skills. In Physical therapy sessions the therapist is utilizing the movement of the horse to improve the clients’ posture, balance and mobility skills. The horse’s movement helps move the client’s body in ways that replicate normal walking. The physical therapist directs the client in a wide range of exercises to strengthen muscles.
and improve balance and coordination. The horse handler for a physical therapy session must be very skilled in achieving quality movement from the horse to maximize the clients' benefit.

Sidewalkers for physical therapy sessions must be physically fit and able to assist the therapist with specialized handling techniques or remaining “hands off” even when the client appears off balance, if that’s what the therapist requests. Occupational Therapy is designed for individuals who wish to improve motor control, coordination, balance, attention, sensory processing and performance in daily tasks. In Occupational therapy sessions the therapist is utilizing the movement of the horse for its' sensory and motor benefits. The movement of the horse provides a variety of sensory experiences including moving through space visually, movement of the client’s body and head, and sounds and smells that are part of interacting with horses. The goals for occupational therapy include improving skills off the horse such as playing with others, sitting in a school chair and taking turns. The horse handler for occupational therapy must take direction well and have excellent skills in grading the horse’s walk (slow down, lengthen the stride, etc). The sidewalkers in an occupational therapy session may be required to physically assist the client in sitting, practice taking turns and allow the client to do as much as he/she is able to do without any help at all. The rewards of this up close and personal teamwork are great. The clients’ goal may take hard work to achieve, but once reached the feeling of a team effort is exhilarating.

Emergency Procedures

In the event of an emergency during a lesson, all leaders must immediately stop horses and assume halt position in front of horse. Sidewalkers must assume double arm-lock position on all riders.

If a rider loses his/her balance during a lesson:

☐ Leader stops horse.
☐ Sidewalkers try to keep rider in the saddle by stabilizing rider with arm-locks over the rider’s thighs.
☐ If possible gently push the rider back into the saddle.

If a rider must be removed from the horse (Emergency Dismount):

☐ Leader should stop the horse and the rider will be dismounted to ground quickly and quietly. Designate which sidewalkers will do the emergency dismount. This is most often the tallest/strongest or in some cases the one who is on the side that the rider is already falling to.
☐ Rider’s feet should be removed from the stirrups. 2nd sidewalkers will assist rider’s leg over the horse.
☐ If the horse will not stand quietly, the leader should circle the horse around him/herself as the stronger sidewalker hugs the rider around the waist from behind and slides the rider off and away from the horse.
☐ Once rider has been dismounted, leader should circle the horse away from the rider (so hindquarters are NOT towards the rider) or back the horse away from the rider.
If a rider falls from the horse:
☐ Sidewalkers should make sure both of rider's feet are out of the stirrups.
☐ Sidewalkers should try to soften the rider's fall if possible.
☐ Leader should halt the horse and move the horse away from the fallen rider by either circling so that hindquarters are NOT towards rider, or backing the horse away.
☐ NEVER move a fallen rider- wait for the instructor.

Things to keep in mind:
☐ Communicate with everyone involved in the emergency in a calm, concise manner.
☐ If a horse suddenly pulls backwards, DO NOT pull against him. Slowly and calmly follow the movement of the horse until he stops.

IN THE EVENT OF A MEDICAL EMERGENCY
The safety and well being of all individuals is a priority. By following basic safety procedures, most emergencies can be avoided. However, if an emergency does occur, please try to remain calm.
Take a deep breath. In all emergencies, only a trained individual may apply first aid (a staff member who is certified in first aid is always on site during program activities). A volunteer may be called upon to assist.

Below is a general list of guidelines to follow during an emergency:
1. Survey the scene for safety.
2. A staff member trained in First-Aid/CPR attends to the rider
3. A volunteer may be asked to retrieve the First Aid kit and the blanket from the tack shed or inside of the trailer.
4. The horse leader attends to the horse, leading it far from the rider if there has been a fall. Talking to the horse in a soft, soothing tone may assist in calming it.
5. If other participants are present, they should stop what they are doing and leave the scene if possible. The instructor will decide on a plan of action.
6. If further assistance is needed, a designated person will be instructed to call 911 and tell the dispatcher what happened, the condition of the injured person, what help is being given, the location of the injured person and directions to SIRA (621 Fr. Capodanno Blvd SI NY 10305 cross street Seaview View Avenue) Emergency information is posted near the office phone in the trailer.
7. A designated person will retrieve the injured person's medical file so that it is available for emergency and medical personnel.
8. A person will be designated to open all gates from accident site to end of driveway after all horses have been secured. This person will wait at the gate of the driveway to tell EMS to turn off lights and sirens, and to direct them to the injured person.
What to do when there's a Loose Horse

What to Expect from a Loose Horse

☐ A single horse may want to remain with other horses
☐ A horse will have a tendency to remain near or return to the barn or pasture area
☐ If a group of horses are loose, try to identify the lead horse(s). If the lead is caught the rest of the horses may follow.

If a Horse is Loose

☐ DO NOT CHASE IT!
☐ Walk slowly, approaching the horse from the side
☐ Talk in a low, soothing tone of voice
☐ It may help to look at the ground when approaching the horse, so you are not a “threat”
☐ A small amount of grain may encourage the horse to wait or come to you
☐ Put the lead rope over the horse’s neck first, then put on the halter with the leadrope attached
☐ Do not lead the horse with just the halter and no leadrope. You could be injured if the horse bolts.

Loose Horse in the Ring while other horses are being ridden

☐ Have all riders halt
☐ Horse leaders should attach leadropes, if not already, and stand in front of the horse’s head
☐ Sidewalkers should remain with their rider and use an armlock and prepare to assist with dismounts if the instructor decided to do so.
☐ If necessary, horse leaders will be asked to lead horses from the ring. Sidewalkers or designated volunteers will be asked to assist the riders to a safe location.

EXCITED HORSE PLAN

If a horse becomes excited the sidewalkers should place an armlock on the rider, but if the rider seems to be able to handle the situation and is stable they should remain on the horse. This puts sidewalkers in the best position for their own security, for the riders’ safety and for keeping up with the horse. If necessary the Instructor may ask for an emergency dismount.

In the Event of a Fire:

1. Evacuate all participants
   If a class is in session the Instructor will give directions and will take responsibility for evacuating participants. Once all riders have left the barn, horse handlers will walk horses outside to the nearest paddock.
2. Instructors/staff will designate someone to call 911
   - see chart next to the phone
3. Survey the scene to make sure it is safe to enter
   A staff member or instructor will designate persons to begin evacuating horses when all participants are out of the barn.
   Evacuate horses through the nearest door beginning with horses closest to the fire.
Lead horses to the nearest paddock, if possible.
Frightened horses may not want to leave their stalls... talk to them in a
reassuring tone of voice. It may be necessary to cover their eyes.
If a horse is unmanageable or refuses to leave stall, leave door open and move
to the next horse.
Once outside a horse may try to run back into the barn, be aware of that
possibility.

IN THE EVENT OF THUNDERSTORMS or HIGH WIND
In the event of a rapidly approaching thunderstorm or extreme high winds
during a lesson:
• Dismount all Riders immediately under the direction of the instructor.
• Sidewalkers should take Riders into the waiting area in the office, sit near the
walls and away from windows and doors.
• When riding in outdoor ring, Leaders should return horses to barn. If time does
not permit this, untack horses in ring and turn out in pasture or ring, then proceed
to the waiting area outside the office, sit near the walls and away from windows
and doors.

In the event of a rapidly approaching thunderstorm or extreme high winds
and there are no lessons taking place:
• If horses are outside, leave horses in pasture. Close barn doors and take
shelter in the waiting area outside the office, sit near the walls and away from
windows and doors.
• If horses are inside, close barn doors and proceed to the waiting area outside
the office, sit near the walls and away from windows and doors.

PREVENTING DISEASE TRANSMISSION
The risk of getting a disease while working with or caring for a rider is extremely
small. The following precautions should be taken to further reduce the risk:
♦ Before you begin your volunteer session, cover any cuts, scrapes or skin
irritations you have in order to avoid contamination.
♦ Notify your instructor immediately if the rider you are working with has any
sudden health issue, such as a bloody or runny nose.
♦ Avoid contact with blood and other body fluids.
♦ If contact is unavoidable, use protective equipment, such as disposable gloves.
♦ Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water immediately after giving
care.
♦ Hands should also be thoroughly washed after working with each horse and
rider, before working with another horse and rider.

Just a few more things...
Drive slowly in all areas!
Volunteer Manual Questions

1. Fill in the blanks with the following Horse Lingo
   a. __________ is said to ask the horse to walk forward
   b. __________ is used when the horse is fidgety or not standing quietly
   c. __________ is used to ask the horse to trot
   d. __________ is used to stop the horse

2. The primary responsibilities of the leader are:
   a. Making sure the horse is groomed and tacked properly
   b. Warm up the horse prior to the lesson
   c. To control and calm the horse in an emergency situation
   d. To help the horse follow the cues from the rider
   e. All of the above

3. The primary responsibilities of the sidewalker are:
   a. To provide physical and moral support to the rider
   b. To secure the rider in an emergency situation
   c. To assist with therapy activities
   d. To help the rider guide the horse
   e. To allow the rider to learn by their mistakes
   f. All of the above

4. T or F: Always stand in front of the horse when the horse is stopped or standing.
5. T or F: Leave some slack in the leadrope and allow the horse to move his head while walking.
6. T or F: It is okay for the leader to pick up a fallen toy or ball and to hand props to the rider.
7. T or F: Call in as soon as possible when you are going to be absent to give the Volunteer Coordinator time to find a replacement.
8. T or F: Both sidewalkers should do the same hold.
9. T or F: It is okay to for a volunteer to dismount a rider at the end of a lesson
10. T or F: Tickle the horse in the flanks or hit the horse if it won't trot.
11. T or F: Do an emergency dismount any time a rider loses his/her balance.
12. T or F: Never allow the rider to make a mistake.
13. T or F: Always leave 1-2 horse lengths between horses.
14. T or F: It is okay to put a horse back into the stall with the bridle on.
15. Therapeutic riding is:
   a. A riding lesson for people with special needs.
   b. A therapy session with a horse.
   c. A fun activity for a person with a disability who likes horses
   d. A and C
   e. B and C
16. Hippotherapy is:
   a. A riding lesson for people with special needs.
   b. A therapy session with a horse.
   c. A fun activity for a person with a disability who likes horses
   d. A and C
   e. A and B
17. If a rider falls from a horse:
a. Move them out of harms way
b. Take off their helmet
c. Help them stand up
d. Do not move them and wait for the instructor
18. In an emergency, you need to dial _______ to call 911 from the barn.
19. Do an armlock if:
a. The rider loses his balance
b. The horse spooks
c. The horse seems nervous or upset
d. Other horses in the ring are upset or nervous
e. All of the above
20. The order of evacuations for a fire is:
a. Horses, staff, volunteers, participants
b. Participants, staff, volunteers and horses
c. Volunteers, participants, staff, horses
d. Participants and volunteers, staff and horses
21. To prevent disease transmission, you should:
a. Cover cuts or scrapes you may have
b. Notify the instructor if the person you are working with has a runny nose
c. Wash your hands after touching every horse and every rider
d. All of the above
e. None of the above
22. If you want to know about a specific riders’ disability:
a. Just ask your rider
b. Ask another volunteer in the class
c. Avoid discussing disabilities
d. Ask the instructor but know that SIRA cannot tell you due to confidentiality, but will help you understand how to work with the riders
23. The horse’s ears position will be:
a. Pricked forward if he is alert
b. Flat back if he is angry
c. Back or to the sides if he is listening to you
d. All of the above
e. None of the above
24. You had a great experience at SIRA; you want to tell everyone about it! You should remember:
a. to keep it to yourself, remember confidentiality
b. spread the word, tell everyone the good news that you are volunteering
c. tell only your close friends and family the story
d. tell others, but leave out details, such as names, age or any personal information
e. b and d
Bring this quiz with you to the orientation. We will review these questions and answer any questions you may have at that time.
Stable Rules and Regulations

General Rules

1. There is NO SMOKING on the property.

2. Please park in designated areas. No parking in handicap spaces without proper permit. Volunteers and larger vehicles may use the back gate and park in the rear of the stable when necessary. Please reserve parking for participant on busy days. For the safety of all, please resect the 5MPH rule in the driveway. Violators may be subject to fines.

3. All visitors/volunteers must sign in and out.

4. No dogs are allowed in the stable.

5. Children under the age of 14 must be accompanied by an adult.

6. No running in the barn.

7. Please keep all gates closed and latched. If you see one open, please close it.

8. Feed room and tack room doors should be closed at the end of the day.

9. Please do not touch anyone else's property without permission.

10. Please take care of your own personal property. We will be responsible for your items.

11. In case of a fire alarm, please exit the building immediately. Everyone should proceed a designated area near the outdoor paddocks. DO NOT go to the Parking Lot. A member of SIRA, FDNY or the Parks Department will let you know when it is safe to return.

12. If you bring snacks, drinks, food, etc. Please clean up after yourself and place all garbage in the proper receptacles. Please clean up the sink and surrounding area after each use.

13. Please be neat when using the bathroom. The facilities are maintained by volunteers so let's all do our part to help.

14. Emergency Numbers are listed by the phone. First aid kits are located in the main observation room. Horse emergency kit is located in the office. If you use something please mark in on the chart so we are always in stock.

15. We want everyone to enjoy their time here and appreciate your commitment. We ask all staff, volunteers, participants and visitors to respect each other. If you don’t know something, ask. We don’t give orders, we say please and thank you, we DON’T bully and if you don’t have something nice to say, say nothing. If you encounter any difficulties while at the stable, please speak to Megan or our volunteer coordinators, Mike or Margaret.
Barn Safety and Etiquette

All tack, brushes, manure forks and equipment must be put away or hung up after each use. Please put everything away neatly in the tack room. Do not leave clutter in the aisle way.

Please clean up any mess that is made while using the cross-ties or wash stall. Manure, hair, dirt from hoof picking, etc.

Tack room and feed room should be kept neat and clean.

All horses are to be lead using a lead line. Do Not lead horses using just the halter. Horses should never be unattended in the barn.

When using arena for turnout, please remove all manure after use. Do not feed hay in the arena unless there is an emergency and a horse needs to be in there for a longer period of time. If hay is used it must be in a bag and raked up immediately. When using outdoor turnout, please clean up manure and hay as much as possible.

Please make sure water is shut off and hose coiled neatly and drained after each use.

Do not hand feed the horses.

Do not slam the arena gate shut. Lift the latch to close.

When closing the bi-fold doors, make sure all gates are secured closed first.

During winter months, please keep big barn door closed.

Do not adjust, thermostats, exhaust fans, etc. If you believe this needs to be done, please tell the office.

Please check that all horses stall gates are secured at the end of the day.

No sitting or leaning on the arena fences.

If something breaks or needs attention, please let the office know immediately.

Horses are NEVER to be ridden in the stable area.

No visitors/spectators in arena or stable area unless accompanied by a person designated by SIRA

Horses should not be lead over concrete promenade except for in the case of an emergency. The dirt ramp is to be used for horses leaving or entering the building. If you are coming up the ramp and the arena is in use, please shout out that you are coming. Do not enter the gate until horses in the arena are secured.

Programming takes precedence in the arena. If sessions are going on and you are observing or are in the stable area. Please refrain from making loud noises, yelling, running up or down the stairs, etc... We do not want to distract our participants or spook the horses. Please take care when exiting from arena side exits. Do not slam doors shut.

Please refer to your volunteer manual or rider's manual for additional information. If you have questions, please ask.
Be sure that you do not get too far behind the rider.

Sidewalkers are no longer helpful when they are not in correct position relative to the rider.

Note that the side walker is also doing the hold incorrectly, due to being too far behind the rider.

Do not play with the horses while you are a sidewalk!

Pay attention! Your responsibility is the rider!

SIDEWALKING HOLDS

CORRECT: Arm over thigh, holding the saddle
LEADING

CORRECT

INCORRECT
Definitions

Aids – signals used by a rider to communicate instructions to the horse. Aids may be natural – hands, legs, voice, seat, or artificial – crop, spurs.
Bay – color term for deep brown to blackish colored horse with black mane and tail.
Bit – used to control the horse and generally made of metal, bits attach to the bridle and are placed in the mouth.
Bridle – The complete outfit of headstall, reins, and bit used to guide the horse when riding.
Canter – A three beat gait of the horse, faster than a trot, a bit slower than a gallop.
Cantle – back of the saddle behind the seat.
Chestnut – color term used for horse with brownish yellow coat color. Mane & tail are usually the same color.
Conformation - structure and general make up of the horse.
Farrier – profession of trimming and shoeing horses.
Gaits – various movements of the horse at different speeds; e.g. walk, trot and canter.
Gallop – fastest of the horses gaits. A three beat gait.
Gelding – a male horse that has been castrated and incapable of breeding.
Girth – long strap with buckles on each end, attaches to saddle straps and holds saddle in place.
Girth Cover – soft fabric tube that slides over girth to help prevent horse from getting girth sores.
Gray – color term used for horses with coat color from white to dark gray in color.
Ground poles – wooden pole placed in arena used to school horse and/or practice rider’s two-point position.
Grooming – caring for horse’s coat includes currying, brushing, and picking feet.
Half Circle & Reverse – change of direction by turning horse toward the center of the ring and back to the rail.
Halter – leather or nylon bitless headstall used to control the horse when leading in or out to the paddock.
Half seat or Two Point Position – rider places hands on horses neck and stands up in stirrups.
Hand – a standard unit of measure equal to four inches, used to determine the horse’s height.
Hoof or hooves – horses feet.
Lead line – used to lead the horse, a cotton or nylon rope with snap on end which attaches to halter.
Long line – use of long reins which run from the bit through the sides of the saddle to steer the horse from behind.
Long side – the longer side of the arena
Lunging – exercising the horse by placing it on a long line, and having the horse go around in a circle.
Mare – female horse
Mounting ramp – area used to mount the rider on to the horse.
Near side – refers to the left side of the horse.
Off side – refers to the right side of the horse.
Off side barrier – block or cone used to keep horse next to mounting ramp.
Posting – a rider moving up and down in rhythm with the horse at the trot.
Rail – the outside area of the arena along the fence line or wall.
Reins – long leather straps attached to the bit held by the rider to steer and control the horse.
Saddle – usually made of leather and placed on horses back for rider to sit on.
Saddle pad – cloth pad used under the saddle to protect the horse’s back.
Stirrups – usually made of iron, they hang from the saddle and rider places feet in them.
Tack – term used to refer to riding equipment.
Trot – a two beat diagonal gait.
Walk on – command to have the horse move forward into a walk.
Withers – bony projection between on horse’s back between the shoulders.
Whoa – command to stop the horse from any gait.
Parts of the Horse

When working around horses there are some special words and terms that you will need to know. Some parts of the horse are shown below.
TOOLS FOR GROOMING YOUR HORSE

A CURRY COMB is used to loosen caked mud and dirt from the horse. The CURRY COMB is also used to clean loose hair off the horse.

A BODY BRUSH is used to remove loose dirt and hair from your horse’s coat.

A HOOF PICK is used to clean dirt from the horse’s hooves.

A SHEDDING BLADE is used to remove loose hair from your horse.

A MANE & TAIL COMB is used to free your horse’s mane and tail of tangles.
GROOMING YOUR HORSE

WHY DO I NEED TO GROOM MY HORSE?
- To make friends with the horse
- Horses liked to be groomed. It's like a massage
- To clean the horse and make him look nice and feel comfortable
- To check the horse for any skin problems

YOUR GROOMING TOOLS
- Grooming Tote
- Curry comb
- Body Brush
- Hoof Pick
- Shedding Blade
- Mane & Tail Comb

USE THE CURRY COMB TO CLEAN THE HORSE'S COAT
- With your instructor's help, brush the horse with the curry comb
- Move the curry comb in circles around the horse's neck, back, rump, stomach and under his stomach where the girth goes to loosen dirt and hair
GROOMING YOUR HORSE

USE THE SHEDDING BLADE TO REMOVE AND LOOSE HAIR AND DIRT

- With your instructors help, use the shedding blade gently to remove any loose hair. Make sure to always move the blade with the hair.

USE THE BODY BRUSH TO CLEAN OFF THE LOOSE DIRT AND HAIR

- With your instructors help, use the body brush in a sweeping motion to remove hair and dirt loosened with the curry comb and shedding blade

USE THE HOOF PICK TO REMOVE DIRT FROM THE HORSE'S HOoves

- Your instructor will lift the horse's hooves for you
- You will use the pointy end of the hoof pick to gently loosen dirt stuck in the horse's hooves
- You will use the brush end to remove the excess dirt you cleaned out with the pick
RIDING EQUIPMENT (TACK) FOR THERAPEUTIC RIDING

PEACOCK STIRRUPS
Stirrups that have a quick-release rubber band on the side that will allow the rider's foot to come out in case of a fall. The safety feature should always face away from the horse when positioned on the rider's foot.

"S" SHAPED STIRRUPS
Stirrups that have a safety feature of a curved outside bridge that will allow for the rider's foot to fall free from the stirrup if a fall should occur. The safety feature should be positioned on the outside of the riders.

RAINBOW REINS
To teach proper use of the reins, the instructor can direct a rider to "hold in the green" or "hold in the red". The rider can then feel an appropriate response to their aids and have a guide for proper positioning.

HAND HOLD - to channel reins
For a rider whose handling of the reins tends to be high due to spasticity or whatever, channeling the reins through a hand hold can maintain a more natural line from the bit.
Note: A completely natural line may not be feasible. The more acute the angle of channeling, the more severe the pressure on the bit.
**READING HIS EARS**

The horse's ears and actions are the key to his emotions. He can tell you what he is paying attention to and how he feels by the way he uses his ears and the way he acts. Following are some tips to his emotions.

- **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**
  - blindly 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 biting flies, stinging insects or tickling bothersome actions of a rider or another horse.

- **Droopy ears and 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 and swinging the head.**
  - Threatening gesture of an angry or bossy horse.
  - Watch out for biting or kicking.