

Lander University
Bearcat Therapeutic
Riding Center



Riders/Parents/Guardian/Caregivers
Handbook

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OUR *MISSION*

*Lander University **Bearcat Therapeutic Riding** center (BTR) mission is to change lives through therapeutic riding to individuals of all ages with physical & emotional disabilities, life challenges and to build self-esteem.*

Something truly magical happens when patrons and horses come together.

Our Vision

To develop a growth mindset by enhancing lives through the power, love and healing of horses

Proud and Honored to be:

*Special Olympics Equestrian Training Center for
South Carolina Area 5*

PATH Member Center:

*Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship
Following strict standards and educations for the care of our
participants.*



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THERAPEUTIC RIDING

Brief History of Bearcat Therapeutic Riding Program

Equine Assisted Activities/Therapy (EAAT)

The therapeutic value of riding was documented as early as 600 B.C., but it was not until 1875 that the first organized study of therapeutic riding was reported. After prescribing pony riding as a treatment for a variety of conditions the French physician, Chassaign, came to the conclusion that riding was helpful in treating certain types of neurological paralysis. He noted improvement in posture, balance and joint movement as well as a striking improvement in morale.

Therapeutic riding gained wide attention during the 1952 Olympic games in Finland when Liz Hartel, stricken by polio and in a wheelchair, won the silver medal in dressage. Her victory was the catalyst for the formation of therapeutic riding centers throughout Europe, with the movement gradually spreading to North America.

HISTORY:

- ❖ **Early recognition 460 BC**
- ❖ **Therapeutic Riding in 1875**
- ❖ **French neurologist discovered the improvement of balance, motion and muscle control in his patients.**
- ❖ **United States 1969**
- ❖ **North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA)**
- ❖ **Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA)**

In 1969, the **North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA)** was established. NARHA is a membership organization which establishes program guidelines, safety and accreditation standards for operating centers, instructor/therapist training, certification and insurance options. NARHA centers may offer equine assisted activities (therapeutic riding, therapeutic driving, interactive vaulting, and equine facilitated learning) provided by trained professionals and/or equine assisted therapy (hippotherapy and equine facilitated psychotherapy) provided by medical professionals. There are now hundreds of NARHA affiliated centers and thousands of people involved in therapeutic riding.



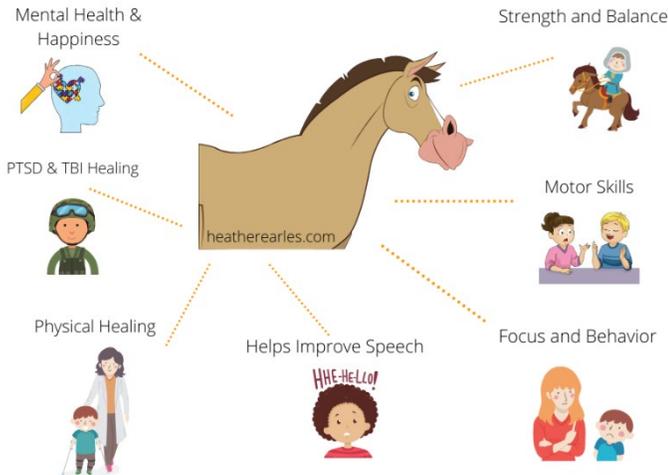
The individual benefits both physically and emotionally from the experience of riding a horse. Therapeutic riding also builds self-awareness, self-control, confidence, trust and independence. And, it does all this while being fun!

The Lander University Equestrian Center (LUEC) was created as a partnership between Lander University and Burton Center. As such, it houses the Lander University Equestrian Team as well as the Bearcat Therapeutic Riding Program, which offers Equine Assisted Activities/Therapy (EAAT) Program.

Adapted riding is a form of equine assisted activity in which adults and children with disabilities are taught how to ride a horse. Educational, recreational, sports, physical and cognitive goals may be incorporated into a riding session, however, the primary goal is to teach horsemanship skills. Therapeutic riding classes consist of 1 - 4 riders and are taught by specially trained Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, International (PATH, Int.) certified instructors.

Benefits of Therapeutic Riding

BENEFITS OF EQUINE-ASSISTED THERAPY



Physically - It is the horse's movement which has a dynamic effect on the rider's body. The horse stimulates the rider's pelvis and trunk in a manner that closely resembles the normal gait of a human. This movement can be used to produce specific physical changes in the rider including normalization of muscle tone and improvement in posture, balance, coordination, and increased endurance.

Sensory - The horse and the riding environment offer a wide variety of input to participants. Movement exploration on the horse combined with so many other sights and sounds one encounters in the riding program contribute to the overall sensory experience.



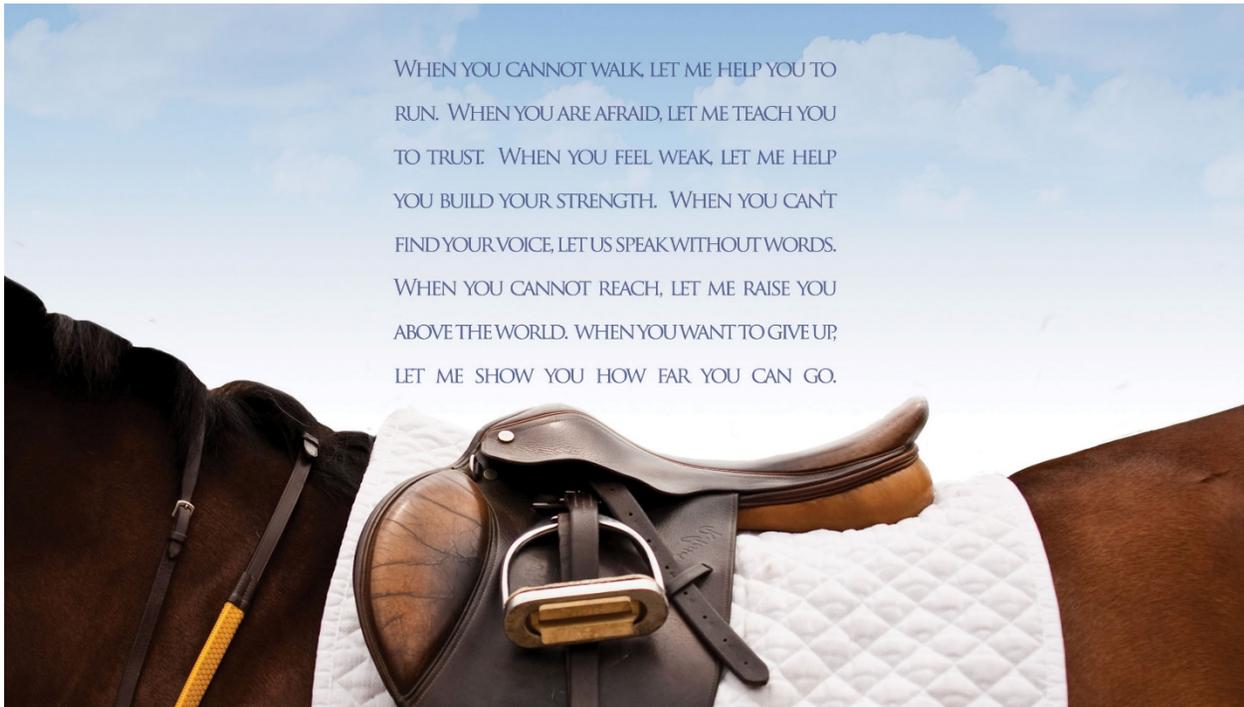
Emotionally - The success of overcoming fear and anxiety and the ability to achieve riding skills help a rider to realize self-worth and increase self-esteem. For those involved with the various activities of a therapeutic riding program, the companion animal bonding and development of new skills are critical components to the success of the experience offered. Relationships develop between riders, volunteers, horses and staff are all an integral part of a positive, emotional experience provided by a therapeutic riding program.





Cognitively - The horse provides a strong motivator for riders. Riding lessons incorporate activities and games on horseback designed to help each rider achieve specific goals such as following direction, staying on task, color and number recognition, and reinforcing existing skills as well as learning new ones.

Socially - Therapeutic riding programs and their associated activities provide an excellent opportunity for participants to interact with their peers, program volunteers and staff in a positive and enjoyable environment. The horse, rider, instructor and volunteers make up a unique treatment team providing an opportunity for physical, emotional, social, recreational and educational gains for participants with disabilities.



RIDERS POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE:

Bearcat Therapeutic Riding serves people age 3, with no maximum age limit who have physical, cognitive, or emotional challenges. Equine assisted activities/therapy is beneficial for those with a wide range of disabilities. Our program currently serves people with



LESSON CONTENT

A lesson is 30 - 45 minutes long depending on the age and physical condition of the rider. The lesson includes mounting rider, tack adjustments, warm-up, review of previously learned skills, teaching of a new skill, games/activities to reinforce skills, cool down, and dismount. Lessons are geared to the abilities of the riders. Some riders begin with 3 volunteers and progress to independent riding if able.



WEIGHT POLICY

THERAPEUTIC RIDING MAY BE CONSIDERED CONTRAINDICATED IF:

- The volunteers are unable to safely manage the participant in any situation, including an emergency dismount.
- The safety of the horse is compromised during any mounted activities.
- The participant falls above the maximum weight limit of 250 lbs. Participant will work with the equine on the ground and learning a new skill of groundwork.

INELIGIBILITY/WHO WE DO NOT SERVE

Each applying participant will be assessed by an instructor to determine whether they qualify for therapeutic riding. Based on the following criteria an instructor has the right to disapprove an applicant

- Does not meet the above weight and/or age criteria
- After assessing other factors such as cognitive skills and balance, the instructor may believe that riding is contraindicated
- If a doctor advises against riding
- If the applicant falls under the PATH list of contraindications.
- If the instructor believes the applicant will not benefit from therapeutic riding or that they are capable of typical riding lessons.

WHAT TO WEAR

- Long cotton or denim pants that do not bind or pinch and hard soled shoes with heels are preferred (tennis shoes are acceptable). Shoes must be close-toed.
- All riders are required to wear a ASTM - SEI approved riding helmet provided by BTR.
- Riders are welcome to purchase their own helmets, but please verify the proper type with the instructor first.
- Riders must wear a helmet whenever horses are present (i.e. while mounted and during un-mounted activities such as grooming).



PARENT PARTICIPATION

We have found that riders are sometimes more attentive to instructors if a parent/caregiver is not immediately visible. Occasionally, we may need a parent/caregiver to walk with a student that is apprehensive; however, this is usually only temporary. On occasion, if they are willing, we are forced to ask parent/caregiver to step in if we are short of volunteers. If so, we usually assign them to a rider other than their own. We hope parent/caregiver will have an opportunity to relax and enjoy some quiet time during their rider's lesson time.

DISTRACTION BY OBSERVERS

During lessons in the covered arena, parents and caregivers are encouraged to stay on the picnic table. We do ask that you stay away from the barn during lesson times. We ask that ALL cell phones are turned off or on vibrate to not interfere with the lesson.

All siblings and other children must always have adult supervision!!

ATTENDANCE POLICY & MAKE-UP LESSON POLICY

If a rider is more than 15 minutes late for a scheduled lesson, their horse will be un-tacked and turned out unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor.

Any rider missing 3 consecutive lessons without prior notification of at least 2 hours will be dropped from the Bearcat Therapeutic Riding program. Our volunteers give generously of their time, and we like to let them know if they are not needed.

If there is thunder or lightning, or if the daytime temperature is extreme heat or extreme cold, riders will participate in un-mounted activities including grooming the horses, motor activities fine and gross and cognitive activities. The only conditions under which a riding lesson will be

cancelled and re-scheduled is if road conditions are unsafe for travel (ice, snow, tornado, flood, etc.) or the instructor is sick/out of town. Please call 864-388-8590 to determine if lessons are taking place.

If a rider is absent, there is no make-up class, make-up classes are scheduled only when BTR center cancels for non-weather-related reasons.

RIDER LESSON GOALS

Each rider will have a personal set of documented goals, which will be set for each riding session.



DISMISSAL FROM PROGRAM

If, at any point in the riders/participant active enrollment at BTR center, the instructor believes that therapeutic riding is no longer applicable to the participant, the instructor has the right to discharge the rider/participant

The following are some of the factors that may lead to being considered ineligible:

1. The rider/participant no longer meets the weight limit
2. Participant no longer benefits from therapeutic riding lessons
3. The rider/participant's doctor advises against riding
4. The rider/participant has been absent 3 times without notice
5. If the participant has not paid the tuition for the session, they will not be able to ride until it is paid
6. If the instructor believes the safety of the rider/participant, horse or volunteers is at risk.
7. If a PATH precaution or contraindication is observed

SAFETY GUIDELINES TO MAKE YOUR VISIT TO BTR MORE ENJOYABLE:

- Please inform the riding instructor of any new medical or physical problems which may impact the rider's safety or ability to perform during the scheduled riding lesson prior to beginning the mounting process.



- All riders are to wait outside the arena until instructed to enter the arena area. Upon entering the arena riders must stand by the "Gibson" plaque, until a volunteer or instructor comes to escort them to the mounting block.
- All parents, siblings, staff, etc. not involved in the riding lesson must remain outside of the arena near the picnic table.
- Please do not wait in the barn area, as our volunteers are busy getting horses ready for the class.
- Do not give the horses treats. This can encourage them to bite. If your rider is interested in feeding treats to the horses, please inform the instructor so that arrangements can be made.
- Do not go into stalls or paddocks with horses.
- All riders should always be supervised and should remain outside the arena near the picnic bench if they are not riding in a lesson.
- For safety reasons, no one is allowed on the mounting block without permission of the riding instructor.
- Please refrain from taking pictures requiring a flash-this can spook the horses.
- Due to the proximity to the riding arena, shouting and rough play are prohibited in the arena area.
- No running or shouting in or around the barn and riding area.



UNDERSTANDING HORSE BEHAVIOR

Equine Senses:

Communication is key when developing relationships and working with horses. 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 risk and increasing positive relationships.

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



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.

Riders cannot eat or drink 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.

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

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 our 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 indicated attentiveness or interest.



The Language of the Ears



Alert And interested



Relaxed, bored or unwell



Sleepy, Unwell, or Submissive



Angry and Aggressive

Drawn By:

Amber Mills

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 perfectly 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 horses see in color.

Expressions of the Eyes



Relaxed



Content



Dread or Irritation



Concerned



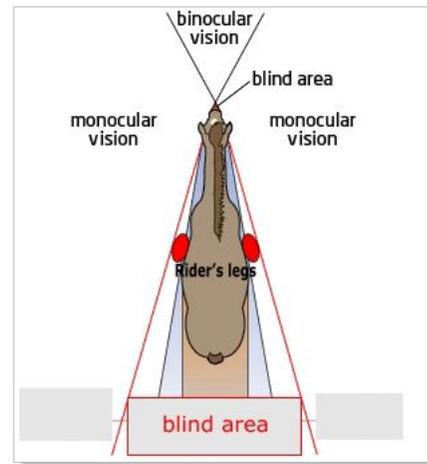
Surprised

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 looking 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.

Handlers should treat the 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’s leg position. Riders may need appropriate assistance to reduce a “clothes pin” effect with their legs. Consult with

the instructor/therapist regarding the best handling technique. Horses will often touch or play with unfamiliar objects. For example, a horse may play at a bridge or ground pole before crossing it.



Taste: Taste is closely linked with smell or 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 handlers 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/therapist know if you are having a difficult time relating or getting along with a particular horse.



A Horses 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 Natural Instinct: Horse's would rather turn and run away from danger than face and fight it.

At a sudden movement or noise, the horse might try to flee. Speak to the horse calmly. A frightened horse 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 a stall. Use a halter with a lead rope to maintain control while working around the horse in a stall.



If a horse appears to be frightened or fearful, please alert the instructor or staff. Most horses chosen to work in a therapeutic riding setting have less of an instinct to flee. The horse may look to you for reassurance. It is helpful if the volunteer remains calm and talks to the horse in a soothing voice.

Herd Animal: Horses like to stay together in a herd or a group with one or two horse's dominants, with a pecking order amongst the rest.



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.

Risk Management:

The Bearcat Therapeutic Center (BTR) at Lander University Equestrian Center strives to ensure that all participants in our program, students, volunteers, and spectators are safe while on the premises. Being prepared in the event of an emergency is part of providing a safe atmosphere. Please review the following policies and procedures on how to handle specific emergencies. It is important, to remember in any emergency to remain calm, reassure riders and take direction from the staff member in charge. The staff member is responsible for managing the emergency and applying any first aid required. Volunteers may be called upon to assist when requested in securing the site. The designated staff member is in charge of critical decisions made during an emergency and will delegate appropriate tasks to appropriate volunteers. The staff member will call 911 when necessary and provide any information needed to emergency medical personnel.

Natural hazards:

Natural Hazards specific to the site are wind, rain, downed trees and branches, wildlife (including poisonous snakes), insects, barn animals such as cats, dogs etc. Please refer to individual hazards outlined below:



Inclement Weather: In case of inclement weather during a riding session, the rider will be dismounted and taken inside Burton Center for shelter or assisted to parent/caregiver's car. Lander staff will untack and return horse to pasture/barn.

If the forecast calls for inclement weather during a scheduled riding session, the instructor will make every effort to notify volunteers of cancellation at least one hour prior to the session.

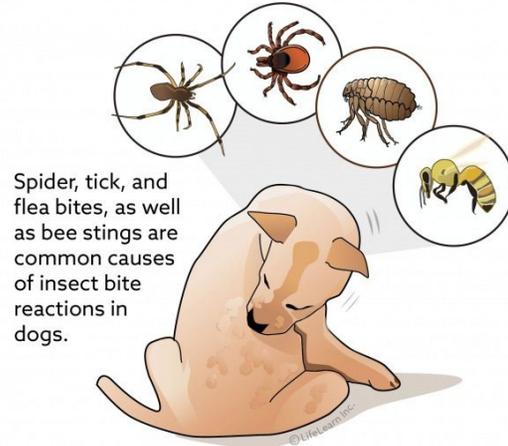
Lightning/Thunder: At the first sign of thunder and/or lightning, riders will be dismounted off the horse and the rider will be dismounted and taken inside Burton Center for shelter or assisted to parent's car. Lander staff will untack and return horse to pasture/barn. Lessons/Sessions can continue after 20 minutes from the last experience of thunder/lightning.

Extreme Heat Conditions: In the case of extreme heat/humidity be sure to keep the rider hydrated. If the riders begin to show signs of overheating the riders will be dismounted safely and, steps will be taken.

Extreme Cold Conditions: In the case of extreme cold temperatures make sure your rider has proper attire including hats, gloves, jackets, layers, etc. should be worn.

Snake Bite: If a snake bites a participant, spectator, volunteer or staff member, a staff member will administer first aid while another individual immediately calls 911 to summon appropriate medical personnel. All snake bites will be handled as though the snake is poisonous.

Insects: Because of the variety of insects in our area including mosquitoes, gnats, bees, etc., we encourage all participants, spectators and volunteers to use an appropriate insect repellent while onsite. The site will also maintain insect repellent in the first aid area. Any beehives on the site should be reported to a staff member extermination.



Wildlife/Barn Animals/ Dogs: If an animal appears to be acting in a strange or threatening manner, report such occurrence to a staff member.

Although dogs are not allowed on the facility, there may be a few that stray onto the property. Never assume that an animal is friendly unless told by the owner that it is ok to approach and pet. This is true with ALL animals, so please ask before approaching.

Should it be necessary, Animal Control can be called to remove the animals from the premises. Should a bite occur, first aid will be administered by a staff member or 911 will be contacted.

Other Emergencies: Should there be an intruder or an unruly person onsite; police will be immediately called to remove the person from the site.

Manmade Hazards:



There are very few man-made hazards on-site. The access drive to the site is unpaved but BTR/LUEC requires all drivers to maintain a safe distance between each vehicle and to always observe a speed limit of 10 miles. No honking of horns on the site is permitted and cell phones should be on vibrate during lessons. Any violation of the speed limit or noise violation may result in a suspension of riding privileges.

Any areas under construction on-site will be clearly marked and should be avoided by anyone not working in the designated area.

Operation of facilities and/or equipment:

The facility may experience loss of power or loss of water which will result in the closure of the facility and the suspension of riding sessions until such situations are remedied. Participants will be notified as soon as possible after such event occurs.

Farm Equipment such as tractor, Side by side, lawnmowers, etc. may move from the barn to the arena and to the pastures. Everyone must be aware of their surroundings and maintain proper distance from the equipment.

Any area of the grounds under construction, etc. will be clearly marked, and these areas should be avoided by visitors and volunteers to the site.



Natural Disasters such as fire, flood, tornado, hurricane:

Hurricane/Tornado watches and Warnings: Since the safety of our participants is of utmost importance to us, in the event that the National Weather service is calling for extreme weather conditions such as a tornado, hurricane, torrential rain, etc., and has called for a severe weather watch or severe weather warning, the site will be closed.

If class is in session:

- Riders will be dismounted
- Escorted to the meeting place (door to warehouse of Burton Center)
- Once all is accounted, we will move inside of the warehouse.
- Leaders will keep the horses in the arena and remove the sidepulls from the horse.
- Leaders will then exit to the warehouse of the Burton Center



We ask that participants stay safe!

Fire Hazards: Any person detecting a fire in any area of the site should immediately notify the Barn Manager and/or instructor who will call 911 to alert the Fire Department. If unable to alert a staff, make the call yourself. Emergency information is posted adjacent to the phone in the barn. Fire extinguishers are in the Office and around the barn. If possible, locate the nearest fire extinguisher to aid in putting out the fire. **NEVER PUT YOURSELF IN DANGER.**

If lessons are in session, we will conduct the following:

- Riders will be dismounted
- Sidewalkers will escorted the riders to the meeting place(door to warehouse of Burton Center)
- Once all is accounted, we will move inside of the warehouse.
- Leaders will lead the horses to a safe place (paddock or stall) far away from the fire.
- Leaders and sidewalkers will then go to the meeting place and wait for further instructions.

During a fire, remember to follow **RACE** guidelines:

RESCUE - Make sure everyone is accounted for and out of immediate danger.

ALARM - Fire Department will be called. All participants and volunteers will be notified of the danger.

CONFINE - Secure any doors that might help keep the fire from spreading.

EXTINGUISH - Put out the fire with an extinguisher, if possible,

BUT NEVER PUT YOURSELF IN DANGER TO DO SO.

Our Risk Management Plan is
located in the

Barn Managers Office.



Commitment to our Equines

Horses working in programs at the Lander University Bearcat Therapeutic Riding Center are selected by the professional staff. Once a horse is in residence at Lander University, it becomes a reflection of the program in its entirety. The care of each horse is given with professional expertise and management. The Lander University Bearcat Therapeutic Riding Center staff considers the comfort and well-being of each rider, volunteer, and horse their highest priority. Horses are scheduled to work in a manner consistent with their physical ability. The needs of the herd are met regarding workload, feeding, and general care. Prior to working in the program, each horse is inspected for injury, illness, or discomfort. Horses are not asked to work when they are uncomfortable or unfit. Horses no longer able to serve in the Lander University Bearcat Therapeutic Riding Center programs are given every consideration when placed elsewhere.



WELCOME!!

THANK YOU FOR JOINING OUR TEAM.

Bearcat Therapeutic Riding Program
Lander University Equestrian Center



I _____, hereby acknowledge that I have received and reviewed a copy of the Bearcat Therapeutic Riding (BTR) Program Riders Handbook. I understand that this Handbook is not intended and should not be construed as a contractual agreement by BTR.

Rider Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian/Caregiver Signature

Date