

# Lander University Bearcat Therapeutic Riding Center



## Volunteer 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 Equine Assisted Activities/Therapy (EAAT)

The therapeutic value of riding was documented as early as 600 B.C. by Orbasis of ancient Lydia, but it was not until 1875 that the first systematic 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.

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!

In March 1992, the **American Hippotherapy Association (AHA)** was formed. The objective of AA is to promote research, education and communication among physical, occupational and speech therapists utilizing the horse in a treatment approach based on principles of classic hippotherapy.

Hippotherapy literally means “treatment with the help of a horse” from the Greek word, “hippos” meaning horse. Specially trained physical, occupational, and speech therapists use this treatment strategy for patients with movement dysfunction. Hippotherapy provides a controlled environment and graded sensory input designed to elicit appropriate adaptive responses from the patient/rider. Specific riding skills are not taught; however, the approach provides a foundation of improved neuromotor function and sensory processing that can be generalized to a wide range of activities outside of treatment. Hippotherapy is used primarily to achieve physical goals but may also affect psychological, cognitive, behavioral and communication outcomes.

The rewards are plentiful for those volunteers willing to give their time in a therapeutic riding/hippotherapy program. A sense of purpose can be found in the challenges of working in a demanding situation. There is satisfaction gained watching others grow and improve and being a part of those changes.

For many volunteers, the time spent with the horses coupled with being outdoors is a major source of enjoyment. Other volunteers come to hone skills necessary for their current, potential and future careers. There are as many reasons and as many rewards to volunteerism as there are volunteers.

## Benefits of Therapeutic Riding

**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.

## VOLUNTEERING POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

**Volunteer Training:** A volunteer must be at least 16 years old to assist with riding lessons. All volunteers who work with the riders as leaders and side walkers must be physically fit enough to walk approximately one hour and jog occasionally. Volunteers are required to attend a training session. Training sessions are held at the beginning of each session.



**Volunteer Paperwork:** Volunteer's paperwork must be completed prior to volunteering and it must be updated annually.

**Volunteer Sign-in:** It is important for you to sign in when you come to volunteer. Maintaining records of volunteer hours is a requirement of accreditation, helps with fund raising and provides an accurate record for those who need verification of hours. **REMEMBER** – sign in and out **every time** you volunteer.



**Arrival and Departure Times:** Please plan to arrive 15 – 30 minutes prior to the scheduled lesson time. Plan to stay 15 – 30 minutes after the conclusion of the lesson.

**Absences:** Please provide the staff at least twenty-four hours' notice if you will not be able to make it to any of your scheduled times.

**Cell Phones:** All cell phones should be left in your vehicle when volunteering if possible. The only exception would be an emergency in which case you may carry your phone on vibrate.



**Dogs:** No dogs are allowed while lessons are in session.

**In Case of an Emergency:** Please inform us of any accident, no matter how minor it may seem to you. A first aid kit is available on site.

**Feedback:** As a volunteer, your feedback is a valuable resource. Your ideas, comments and suggestions help us constantly improve the program. There is time set aside immediately following the riding lesson for your questions and input.

**Conduct of Personnel and Participants:** Each individual involved with the Lander University Therapeutic Riding Program is expected to show respect for the rights of all participants both human and equine. If you witness an act of abuse either physically or verbally, please report the incident and the circumstances immediately to an instructor or the Barn Manager.

**Substance:** The possession or use of drugs or alcohol on a premise of Lander University Bearcat Therapeutic Riding Center is strictly prohibited. Anyone found on the premises in possession of or using any illegal substances will be asked to leave immediately and may be barred from further participation in the program.

**Safety:** All personnel and participants are expected to follow the established safety procedures. If you observe an instance of unsafe practice, inform an instructor or the Barn Manager immediately.

**Behavior:** Volunteers are expected to lead by example and conduct themselves in a positive, cooperative, and appropriate manner while at the barn. Foul language, inappropriate, unproductive, or destructive behavior is unacceptable. Remember – Volunteers are a reflection of Bearcat Therapeutic Riding Program.

**Physical Fitness:** Volunteers should be aware of their own physical fitness levels. If you feel unable to safely participate in a lesson/session inform the instructor. If you feel that participation as a volunteer in the ring or barn is too physically demanding there are other volunteer opportunities available at BTR.

**Communication:** Volunteers are expected to be honest about their knowledge of horses and working with the Special Needs population. Volunteers are expected to complete tasks assigned to them to the best of their abilities. Be open and sympathetic to other suggestions. If you do not understand or feel uncomfortable with something asked to do, inform the instructor.

### Dress Code Guidelines:

- Hard-soled shoes with a low heel are preferred but sneakers with heavy tread are OK
- Shoes must be tied securely
- Open-toed shoes, sandals, and slip-on shoes are *not permitted*
- Dress appropriate for the Weather; dressing in layers is often a good choice
- No tops with spaghetti straps/shelf bras. Proper undergarments must be worn, and tank tops must have thick straps and cannot be too low in the front.
- Shirts must cover your stomach/back.
- No t-shirts with beer/alcohol/drug references or foul language.
- Shorts must be at mid-thigh or longer (No skirts please!)
- Please no perfume or colognes
- Please no dangling jewelry
- Supportive undergarments should be worn.

**Dismissal of Volunteers:** Volunteers are subject to dismissal if they break any of the conduct guidelines provided in the Volunteer Manual, breach the Confidentiality Policy or fail their background check.

Volunteers are subject to dismissal if at any time they become disruptive at the center or pose a threat to others safety through their actions or comments or reflect negatively on the center by their actions.

## GENERAL RULES FOR BEARCAT THERAPEUTIC RIDING CENTER

- No running or shouting in and around the barn and riding areas.
- No chewing gum while volunteering in the barn or ring. There is no eating or drinking while riding, leading and/or sidewalking. Eating/drinking should be done in designated areas (kitchen area)
- No visitors should be on property unless approved by the Barn Manager. If you have a friend/family member that is interested in Volunteering or participating in some capacity at BTR please refrain from bringing them to the barn without arranging a scheduled time with the staff.
- No littering. The barn areas should always be kept clear of obstacles and potential hazards; equipment should always be put away after use. Please do not leave equipment on the ground outside stalls (including blankets, brushes/groom boxes, saddles, etc.)

**Confidentiality:** All information (written and verbal) regarding participants of the BTR program is confidential and is not to be shared with anyone without the expressed written consent of the parent/guardian of the participant. The use of rider information/photographic materials for the personal use especially on public forums (Facebook) is not acceptable. All publicized materials or information must come from BTR staff. Please keep in mind the below considerations when discussing the events at BTR with your family and friends.

1. Riders and their families have a right to privacy that gives them control over the dissemination of their medical and other sensitive information. If any information is to be released to the public, Bearcat Therapeutic Riding Center will be sure to have parents sign a form allowing that release of information.
2. BTR center shall preserve the right of confidentiality for all individuals in the program.
3. The staff and volunteers of BTR shall keep confidential all medical, social, referral, personal and financial information regarding a person and his/her family.
4. All staff and volunteers of BTR center shall be bound by this policy. This includes but is not limited to:
  - a. Full time staff
  - b. Part time staff
  - c. Temporary employees
  - d. Volunteers
  - e. The Board of Directors
  - f. Guests

We know you are excited about what we are a part of here at BTR Center and want to share your experiences with others but please respect the rider's privacy and do it in a way that does not identify them.

## VOLUNTEER POSITIONS

**Lesson Volunteers:** Many students need assistance to ride a horse. There may be as many as three volunteers with each student. During mounted instruction there are two primary volunteer positions: Leaders/Horse Handler and Side Walkers. Each has a specific role.

**LEADER - HORSE HANDER:** A leader's main concern is the proper control of the horse. This control is not a mastering of the horse but a act of patient and positive persuasion. Leading is generally done from the horse's left side.



It is the leader who must help in guideline, stopping and starting without making the rider feel that he is simply a passenger. The rider must be allowed to do as much as possible with the leader helping only when necessary. The instructor will inform the leader regarding how much assistance is required for each rider.

The leader must walk beside the horse at the point between the horse's head and the point of his shoulder - holding the lead rope about 6 - 8 " from the horse's head. **DO NOT** walk ahead of the horse dragging him behind you, or be so far back that you're in the way of the side walker or at the rider's knee. Either of these positions reduces your ability to control the horse. Avoid sharp or quick turns that may compromise the rider's balance.

It is the leader's responsibility to position the horse during mounting. Mounting will occur at the mounting ramp or block. The leader must place the horse as close as possible to the side of the ramp or block. The leader must keep the horse as quiet as possible. Stand in front and slightly off to one side of the horse with your hands on either side of the horses' halter. Do not hold too tightly as it will cause the horse to throw his head. After mounting and before the stirrups are adjusted, the leader will move the horse from the ramp or block under the direction of the instructor. Make sure that the horse is lead straight so the person on the ramp does not have to make an aerial leap. The stirrups will be adjusted once the team is clear of the mounting area.



Remember that there may be a side walker on the offside of the horse. It is sometimes easy to forget and lead the horse too close to the rail. Please allow enough room for your offside side walker. The leader must maintain safe spacing.

Riders are sometimes asked to trot during a lesson. The instructor will give directions concerning trotting. Remember trotting should not be a race; keep the horse at a slow steady pace. Consistent input is important to the rider. If the horse is reluctant to trot, do not get in front of the horse and pull on the lead. Maintain your position and use short tugs. The instructor will give direction for horses' that may be reluctant to trot. When the command is given to walk or stop, do so in a straight line so the rider will not be unseated.



***SIDE WALKER:*** A side walker's job is just as important as the leader's job, but for different reasons.

Some riders have very poor balance, some are very nervous, some have very little or no muscle power in their



legs, some simply require the mental support of having someone close by "in case", or as an extension of the instructor's requests. Side walkers walk beside the horse and riders, ready to steady the rider if necessary. They position themselves just behind the body line of the rider, taking care to avoid putting pressure on any of the major muscles. You can rest your hand on the saddle in front of the rider, but take care that you do not allow yourself to be dragged along by the horse.

Keep an active pace beside the horse. If you are the only side walker for the rider, it is easier for you to walk on the opposite side to the leader, especially at the trot. However, if there are two side walkers, you will have to work as a well-

coordinated team to avoid stepping on one another's heels. Take care not to rest your arm or hand on the horse's back behind the saddle; this can be very aggravating to the horse. Some riders require different support holds. Please feel free to ask the instructor if you are new to the rider which hold to use.

***Support Positions:*** **Thigh Hold** - Sidewalker holds arm over the rider's thigh, be careful not to rest your arm on the rider's thigh, this can result in loss of circulation.



**Ankle Hold** - Sidewalker holds the back of the rider's ankle

**Thigh and Ankle Hold** - this hold can be used together for even more security in the saddle.

**Spotting** - sidewalker will hold on to the saddle pad to stay in the correct position next to the rider's leg.



Side walkers give support both physical and mental. They are there to help the rider carry out the instructions to the best of his/her ability, keeping the right position on the horse, without losing his/her balance. If the rider starts to slip to one side, alert the leader, and take the horse in off the track for adjustments.

Side walkers may be requested to help the student with right and left orientation, basic control, or spatial awareness. Side walkers should give praise and encouragement when appropriate. Give the students' time to process the directions. Help the rider focus attention on the instructor. If the student does not hear or was not paying attention to the instructor, then the side walker can reinforce the directions.



***Changing sides:*** When the need arises for sidewalkers to switch sides, the horse leader will assume the halt position. Sidewalkers will notify each other that they are changing sides. The first sidewalker will remain stationary until relieved by other sidewalker. Lesson will proceed only when sidewalkers notify the horse leader that they are ready to continue.

***BARN WORKER VOLUNTEERS:*** Assist with barn maintenance tasks under the supervision of staff. Clean BTR stall, help return horses to the pastures, and clean wash bays. After each lesson tack must be cleaned.

***OFFICE HELP VOLUNTEER:*** Assist with administrative work in the office under the supervision of staff.

## Helmet Fitting

At Bearcat Therapeutic Riding Center, we use only the ASTM/SEI Certified Helmets that is required by PATH International. We have a HELMET List for all riders in the helmet cabinet just outside of the arena. If it is not listed, please follow the helmet fitting instructions below.

Always let the rider place the helmet on their head or give them the option to do so, before placing the helmet on their head. We would like to foster independence as well as the fact that some riders do not like individuals placing the helmet on and clipping. The instructor will check the helmet before the rider is mounted, but this is a good list to follow to ensure it fits before the instructor checks it:

- Helmet should rest about two fingers above the eyebrows.
- It should be centered correctly.

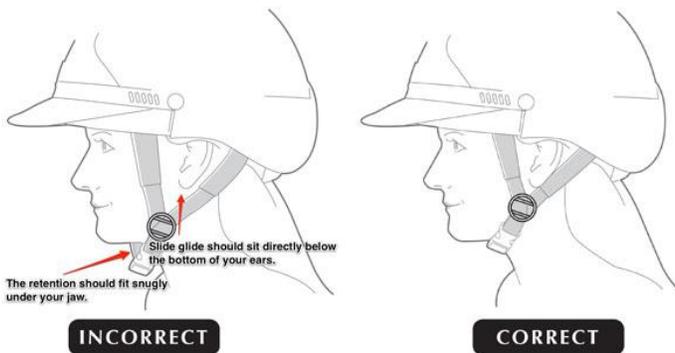


It should be snug.  
It should sit securely.  
No rocking  
No moving



To check, have the rider should move their head side to side and up and down.

Chin strap should be fastened tightly enough so that the helmet will not slip-off in a fall.



All personnel and volunteers must wear an ASTM-SEI helmet while mounted on Lander University Equestrian Center owned/leased horses. Any helmet bought and used by the BTR program will be ASTM-SEI certified. Helmets will be checked annually for expiration dates and for impact or use damage. Helmets deemed unfit for use will be turned into the Barn Manager to be written off and disposed of. Helmets must fit snugly and harness straps be adjusted correctly, and should not interfere with vision.

## When you meet a person with a Disability

- Have fun! Talk about the same things you would with any person. A disability does not limit or dampen a person's sense of humor.
- Remember that a person with a disability is a person like everyone else.
- Be yourself! Don't be sickly sweet. Don't offer pity or charity. Be honest and genuine at all times.
- Don't make up your mind about the person ahead of time. You may be surprised at how wrong you are at prejudging the person.
- Avoid asking embarrassing questions. If a rider wants to tell you about his disability, he/she will bring up the subject themselves.
- HELP only if requested by the rider. When in doubt ask - May I help you?
- Don't separate the rider from his wheelchair or crutches unless the rider asks you to remove them.
- Be patient, let the rider set his own pace in walking or talking.
- Self-satisfaction is important for the rider. Use help sparingly because it is important that the individual experience the satisfaction of accomplishing a task by himself.
- Respect the confidentiality rights, dignity and privacy of the rider.



Be optimistic about life in general and the rider's outlook, however, don't encourage unrealistic goals or attitudes.

Be supportive and encouraging.

Please use proper terminology when you are on the premises

## Working with the Specials Needs Population

### Wheelchair Etiquette

- Always ask if they would like assistance before you help.
- Do not hang or lean on their wheelchair.
- When speaking to someone in a wheelchair be aware of their personal space: if the conversation lasts more than a few minutes sit or kneel so that you are speaking to them at the level of the chair.
- When assisting Instructor with transfer of an individual from the chair keep an open communication between all parties to assure that everyone included is moving cohesively to avoid any incident or injury.

### Visual Impairment Etiquette

- When escorting individuals with visual impairments ask if they need assistance before you help
- If physical assistance is needed allow the individual to hold your arm or elbow and walk one step ahead or ask if there is a specific way they prefer to be assisted.
- Be aware to communicate potential hazards, terrain changes, and movements.
- Be sure to verbalize/repeat information/instructions or that are posted/written.
- If you are unclear of what to do, ask the instructor for further instructions.

### Hearing/Language Impairment Etiquette

- Try to maintain good eye contact. While you are speaking to them be sure to look at the individual.
- Speak clearly; avoid talking too slow/too quick or over emphasize words. Keep directions/conversation concise.
- Become familiar with hand gestures/body positions that the rider may be using to represent words and concepts.
- Ask the Instructor for instruction/communication aides specific to the participant.

### Non-Verbal or Limited Verbal Etiquette

- Become familiar with communication aides specific to the participant.
- Ask the Instructor for instruction/reinforcement needs (physical/verbal prompts).
- Become familiar with hand gestures/body positions that the rider may be using to represent words and concepts.
- Keep directions/instructions clear and direct; less conversation utilizing uncomplicated wording is always best.

## Horse and Rider Hints

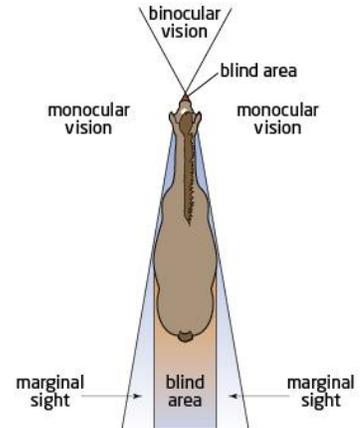
- The safety of the rider, other volunteers and yourself should always be your first consideration.

- No smoking in the barn.

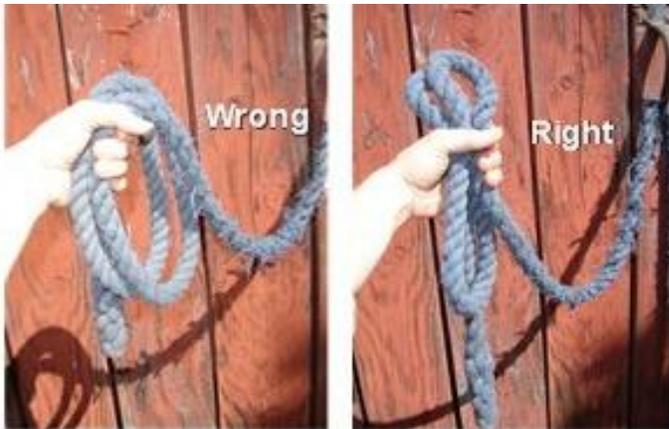


- Please make sure **all stalls and gates** are securely latched. Take care that the stall doors are fully open when bringing horses in or out.

- Horses may be tied only as directed by the instructor. Never tie the horse by his bridle or to a fence board. Remember that a horse cannot see directly behind him, when you approach from behind so approach with caution, so he knows you are there.



- Never wrap the lead rope or reins around your hand, wrist or body.



- Never run, make sudden movements, shout or scream around horses. Remember, Horses can be scared by the smallest things.



volunteer | handbook

When moving from one side of the horse to the other around the hindquarters, keep a hand on the rump and talk to him quietly.

Always re-check the girth for tightness before the rider mounts.

Always ask the instructor if in doubt about anything.

# 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.

Volunteers should not 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.



### *The Language of the Ears*



Alert And interested



Relaxed, bored or unwell



Sleepy, Unwell, or Submissive



Angry and Aggressive

*Drawn By:*

*Amber Mills*

“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.

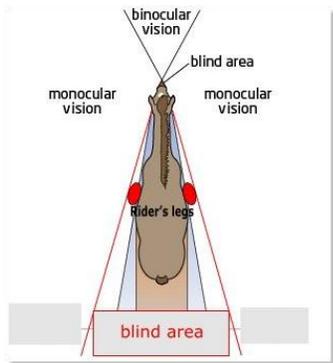
Horses are wary when they hear something but do not see it. If your horse is acting nervous, talk to him in a quiet and calm voice for reassurance.

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.

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

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.



### Expressions of the Eyes



Relaxed



Content



Dread or Irritation



Concerned



Surprised

The horse has better peripheral vision; consider a slightly looser rein, enabling him to move his head when taking a look at objects.

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

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

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 the sense of smell and helps the horse to distinguish palatable foods and other objects.

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.

# Emergencies

## Mounted Emergencies Dismounts

An emergency dismount is performed when an instructor announces that it is necessary. An instructor may ask the sidewalkers to do an emergency dismount, if there is a sudden change in horse behavior, where the rider cannot be safely secured on the horse.

- When an instructor calls for an emergency dismount, the horse leaders halt and turn to face their horse.
- Sidewalkers inform the rider that they will be dismounting them. If there are two sidewalkers, the rider dismounts towards the inside of the arena.
- Make sure the rider's feet are free from the stirrups and hands are free from the reins. Place arms around the rider's waist and gently guide rider off as you step away from the horse, the rider will remain in front of you.
- Move the rider safely away from the horse.
- The horse leader moves the horse safely away from the rider, making sure to keep hindquarters facing away from the rider and volunteer pair.
- Leader remains with the horse.
- The off-side-walker moves out of the way of the horse, and then returns to the rider.



Assisted rider's emergency dismount



Independent rider's emergency dismount

## Fallen Rider or Medical Emergency Dismounts

Should a rider fall from a horse, become injured, or have a medical emergency during a lesson; all activity will stop. The instructor is responsible for managing the incident, including applying any first aid needed.

### **In The Event of a Fall:**

1. The side-walker opposite the falling rider moves quickly away, allowing the horse to move away from the rider.
2. The side-walker on the side of the fall may be able to assist the rider to the ground, or support and calm the fallen rider.
3. Side-walkers remain with the rider until directed.
4. The horse leader must remain with the horse. **Follow directions from the instructor.**

*All instructors are certified in CPR and First Aid.*

*Designated volunteers may be asked to assist by retrieving a first aid kit or calling for emergency medical assistance (911). An Occurrence Report must be completed by staff and any involved individuals for every incident.*

## Spooked Horse



Should a horse become frightened or overly nervous, side-walkers are to apply the “Arm Over Thigh” hold to stabilize the rider on the horse. The horse leader should attempt to halt the horse and “Face Off”. The horse leader must always stay with the horse and be aware that the horse may move quickly forward or side step in either direction. As the horse moves, side-walkers need to continue their support to the rider by moving towards the horse, not away. Follow any continued direction from the instructor.

## Loose Horse

If a horse gets loose in a lesson, due to a fall or any other reason, the lesson will be stopped and have everyone standing still until the horse is caught . DO NOT chase after the horse. At no time should anyone run or yell, this will excite and scare the loose horse. Await further directions from the instructor.



## Unmounted Emergencies

If a horse becomes agitated during grooming, tacking or other unmounted activities, attempt to push the horse away from the rider and assist the rider in moving quickly away from the horse. Advise the instructor/therapist of the incident before resuming the activity.



## Guarding Unmounted Activities



One volunteer should stand ready to block each rider from sudden movements by the horse. This blocking is particularly important when working with a rider who uses a wheelchair or assistive ambulation device as the horse could become entangled the device.

Everyone should remain on the same side of the horse when working or watching. If everyone is on the same side, the horse will feel more comfortable and if the horse has to be pushed away, it won't be pushed into anyone.



**NEVER** leave the rider unsupervised even for a second when working around the horse.

## Horse Verbal Cues:

Note we want these to be used on a consistent basis by all participants. Please help us help our horses!

“Walk on”

“Trot”

“Whoa”

“Back”

## Risk Management:

The Lander University Bearcat Therapeutic Center (BTR) 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 call 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 task 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:

**Lightning/Thunder:** At the first sign of thunder and/or lightning, volunteers are to assist instructors in dismounting riders off the horse and bring horses back to their stalls in a safe/orderly fashion. Riders, volunteers, and guests will exit the arena immediately and escorted to the BTR office. Lessons/Sessions can continue after 20 minutes from the last experience of thunder/lightning.

**Extreme Wind Conditions:** In the case of extreme/gusts of wind keep a good handle on the horse and rider. Communicate to the instructor/therapist if you feel the horse is sensitiveto the wind.

**Extreme Heat Conditions:** In the case of extreme heat/humidity be sure to keep yourselfhydrated. If you see horses, riders and/or Volunteers showing signs of overheating, communicate to instructor

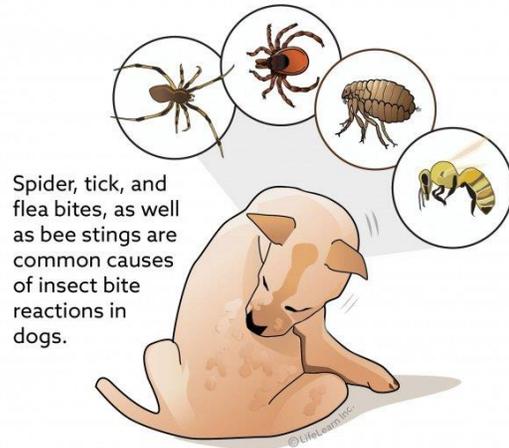
or staff member from Bearcat Therapeutic Riding. For humans ~ red or pale face, moist skin, profuse sweating, muscles cramps/pain, headache/dizziness or fainting, and/or nausea. For horses ~ may become overly sweaty, become lethargic, have rapid, shallow breathing and/or attempt to roll.

**Extreme Cold Conditions:** In the case of extreme cold temperatures be aware of hazards to humans if unprepared for the weather. Proper attire including hats, gloves, jackets, layers or clothing etc. should be worn. Horses should be wearing appropriate layers/coolers/quartersheets as indicated by their stall/tack signs.



**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, if 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 inside the helmet cabinet at the arena. 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.

All participants, volunteers, visitors, and staff will meet at the location of the tree next to the door to the Burton Center warehouse.

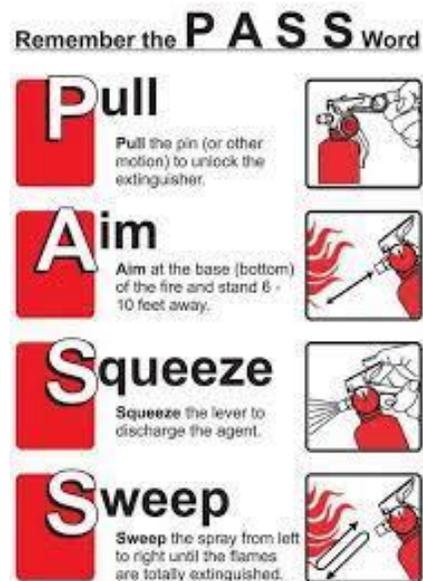
During a fire, remember to follow **RACE** guidelines:

**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.**



**Risk Management Plan is located in the Barn Managers Office.**

## Hazards specific to the use of equines:



The BTR staff is responsible for directing volunteers and participants on how to handle horses. The Barn Manager (if on staff), instructors and Horse Leaders have experience dealing with various horses and may be directed to approach, secure, groom, tack and otherwise prepare a horse for a riding session.

Assigned side walkers may assist with tack, grooming, etc., at the direction of a more-experienced volunteer. Generally, BTR requires that spectators remain in the

designated spectator area and not approach, attempt to feed, or otherwise interact with any of our horses.

While this may seem overly strict, it is the spectator's welfare that is of utmost concern to us. Horses can frighten easily, and because of their sheer size alone can cause severe injury.

During a riding session, side walkers are designated and trained in supporting riders. Activities are selected to minimize the possibility of any injury to our participants; however, accidents may occur.

## Conduct of personnel, participants and guests:

- Although we like to have fun while working, please understand that visitors, parents and children could be on site at any given time, and we want to leave the impression of a professional, well-run organization.
- Spectators may choose to wear open-toed shoes or sandals (although we don't recommend it). If they choose to do so, you are not permitted to be anywhere near the horses. While you may not be in direct contact with a horse there are other factors including insects like fire ants that make it more appropriate to wear closed toed shoes.
- No participant, spectator or volunteer shall approach, attempt to feed, or mount a horse without the express direction and approval of the Instructor.
- Inappropriate and/or abusive behavior toward our horses will not be tolerated. Inappropriate and/or abusive language and behavior in general will not be tolerated. Inappropriate behavior such as loud music, loud, boisterous conversation and/or obscene gestures or language will not be tolerated. Horses spook easily which may result in injury.
- All cell phones, pagers, radios, walkie talkies, and similar devices should be turned off or switched to vibrate while onsite.
- No one is to bring drugs or alcohol on-site, and anyone thought to be under the influence, or any drugs or alcohol will be asked to leave the site immediately. Failure to comply will result in the police being contacted to assist with removal of the offending party. Safety is our primary concern.

## Commitment to our Volunteers

Lander University Therapeutic riding program would not exist without volunteers. To each of you that agrees to commit time, energy and talent, **we promise** to:

- Train you; your safety is very important.
- Listen to you; your feedback on how the riders did and how the lesson went in your view is important.
- Value you, and do our best to let you know that.
- Provide appropriate liability insurance coverage for your work with Lander University Therapeutic Riding Program
- Respect the confidentiality of your medical/health information as we would our riders.
- Adhere to all program policies and procedures.
- Be sensitive and understanding to the individual riders.

### In return, we ask that you:

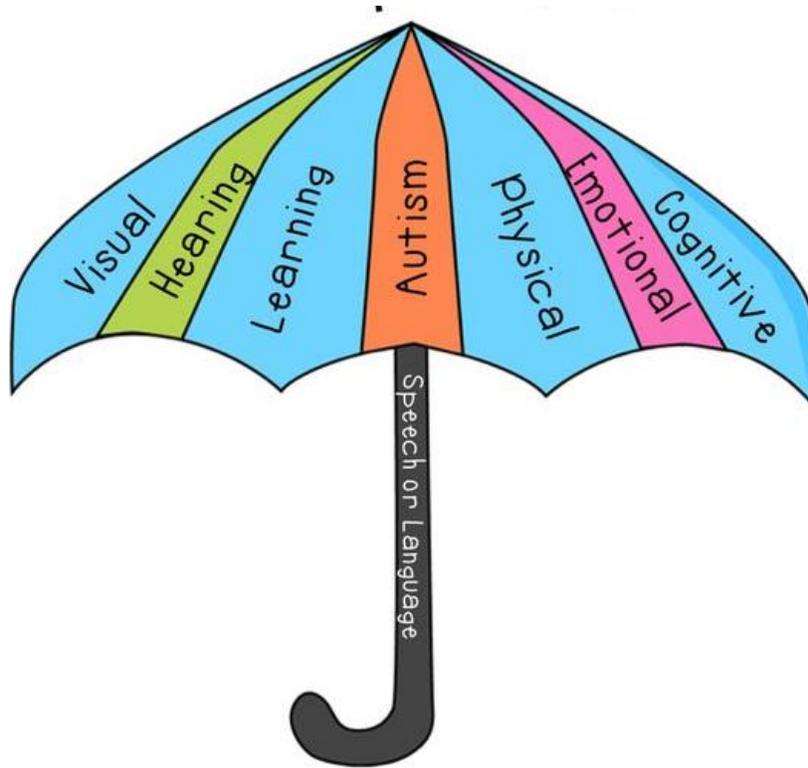
- Keep your commitment and show up when and where you are expected.
- Listen to us and understand that the instructor/therapist is in charge in the lesson environment. You accept feedback from the instructor/therapist regarding your work and understand that the goal is to offer the best riding/therapy experience for each rider.
- Give your best effort, always maintain enthusiasm and goodwill.

**WELCOME!! WE APPRECIATE YOU AND THANK YOU FOR JOINING OUR TEAM.**

*volunteer*



# OUR RIDERS



Working with individuals with Special Needs may be a new experience for some of our Volunteers. Our staff here at Bearcat Therapeutic Riding Center is available to answer questions you may have. The following are brief, non-medical descriptions of some disabilities and conditions of participants one might encounter in a therapeutic riding setting. This is not intended as a comprehensive explanation of a specific disability. Rather it is a general overview with an explanation of how therapeutic riding can be beneficial.

## Arthritis

Inflammatory disease of the joints.

**Types:** Osteon, rheumatoid, and juvenile rheumatoid

**Characteristics:** Pain, Lack of mobility, loss of strength

**Benefits:** Simulator exercise and balance



## Autism



A broad spectrum of disorders ranging from mild to severe, which affects thought, perceptions and attention.

**Characteristics:** Impairments in social interactions and communication; restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior, interests and activities; impairments in the use of nonverbal behaviors such as eye to eye gaze and facial expressions; lack of social or emotional reciprocity; delays in, or lack of the development of spoken language; impairments in ability to initiate or sustain conversations with other; abnormal responses to senses such as sight, hearing, touch, balance, smell, taste, reaction to pain; deficits in gross and fine motor skills. Promotes socialization.

**Benefits:** Provides sensory input and promotes sensory integration. Promotes communication skills (expressive and receptive). Develops strength, coordination, muscle tone and gross and fine motor skills.

## Cerebral Palsy



Brain damage occurring before, at or shortly after birth. It is a non-progressive motor disorder.

**Types and characteristics:**

**Spastic:** increased muscle tone, muscle imbalances and equilibrium. Increased startle reflex and other pathological reflexes.

**Athetoid:** extensor muscle tension, involuntary movements, difficulty maintaining upright posture.

**Ataxic:** weakened muscles, poor balance, difficulty with quick, fine movements.

**Benefits:** Normalization of muscle tone, muscle strengthening, development of posture, balance, and motor coordination. Promotes socialization and confidence.

## Developmental Disabilities (DD)



A diverse group of physical, cognitive, psychological, sensory and speech impairments that begin anytime during development up to 18 years of age.

**Characteristics:** Varied, but can include processing delays, and delays in physical, motor and social development.

**Benefits:** Increased confidence and self-esteem, stimulates processing, speech and body awareness, provides opportunity for sport and recreation, promotes socialization.

## Down Syndrome



A genetic disorder in which a person is born with an extra chromosome (chromosome 21).

**Characteristics:** Mild to severe learning disabilities, low muscle tone, speech impairments.

**Benefits:** Promotes expressive and receptive language skills. Increases gross and fine motor skills, balance, coordination, posture, and muscle tone. Promotes social skills. Increases confidence and self-esteem.

## Emotional Disabilities

Social, emotional or behavioral function which is not age appropriate and affects a child's academics, social relationships and self-care.

**Characteristics:** difficulty coping with everyday life situations and interpersonal relations, inappropriate affect or behavior responses, depression, anxiety, physical symptoms, difficulty learning, withdrawal, and aggressiveness.

**Benefits:** Increase confidence and self-esteem, provide opportunities for accomplishments, promotes positive socialization.



## Hearing Impairment



Congenital or acquired hearing loss varying from mild to profound.

**Characteristics:** difficulties in communication or communication through sign language, lip reading or finger spelling.

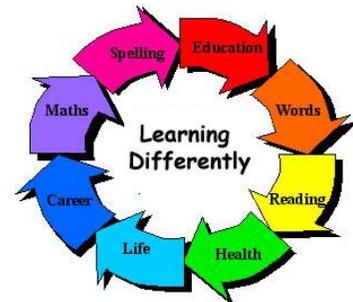
**Benefits:** Increases confidence, self-esteem, and sense of accomplishment. Provides recreational activity with opportunity for socialization Stimulates balance, posture, and coordination.

## Learning Disabilities

Neurological disorders that interfere with a person's ability to store, process, or produce information.

**Characteristics:** Difficulties with reading, writing, speech, computing math. May affect development and social skills,

**Benefits:** Promotes processing, language skills and attending skills, increases confidence and self-esteem, provides opportunity for success, increases balance, coordination, and posture, provides opportunity for socialization.



## Mental Impairment or Mental Retardation (MR)

A disorder in which a person's overall intellectual functioning is below average with an IQ of 70 or less. Impaired ability to cope with common life demands and daily living skills.

**Characteristic:** Impairments in learning, communication, social interaction, self-care.

**Benefits:** Increased balance, coordination, strength and posture, improves gross and fine motor skills, promotes socialization, increases confidence, reinforce life and vocational skills.



## Multiple Sclerosis (MS)



Progressive neurological disease with degeneration of spinal column tracts, resulting in scar formation.

**Characteristics:** Most commonly occurs in the 20 to 40 year old range. It is progressive with periods of exacerbation and remissions. Fatigues easily. Symptoms include weakness, visual impairment, fatigue, loss of coordination and emotional sensitivity.

**Benefits:** Maintains and strengthens weak muscles, maintains balance, increases confidence and self-esteem.

## Muscular Dystrophy (MD)

Deficiency in muscle nutrition with degeneration of skeletal muscle. Hereditary disease that mainly affects males.

**Characteristic:** Progressive muscular weakness, fatigues easily, sensitive to temperature extremes.

**Benefits:** Provides opportunity for recreational, physical, and social activity. May help slow progressive loss of strength, stimulates postural and trunk alignment, allows for movement free of assistive devices.



## Polio (post)



Infectious viral disease.

**Characteristics:** Flaccid paralysis, atrophy skeletal muscle, deformity.

**Benefits:** Strengthens non-paralyzed muscles, stimulates posture, increases confidence.

## Scoliosis

Lateral curve of the spine with a C or S shape with rotary component.

**Characteristics:** Shoulder, trunk and waistline asymmetry. May have back pain and postural fatigue. (Curvature over 30 degrees is contraindicated)

**Benefits:** Stimulates postural symmetry, strengthens trunk muscles.



## Spina Bifida

Congenital failure of vertebral arch closure which results in spinal cord damage.

**Characteristics:** Paralysis of muscles below the level of injury-can be flaccid or spastic. Fatigue, sensory loss and pressure sores.

**Benefits:** Stimulates posture and balance, strengthens trunk muscles, provides opportunity for recreational and social activity.



## Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)



Accidental injury to the head resulting in impairment of cognitive, emotional, and/or physical functioning.

**Characteristics:** May include deficits in gross and fine motor skills, balance, coordination, and strength. May have deficits in language, communication, processing, memory, and perceptual skills.

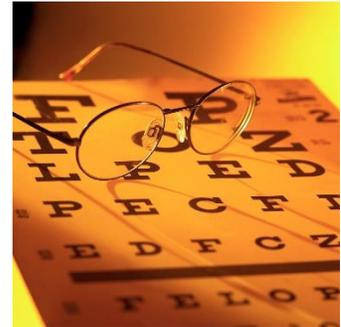
**Benefits:** Stimulates balance, posture, coordination, and gross and fine motor skills. Stimulates speech and perceptual skills. Increases confidence.

## Visual Impairment

Moderate to total loss of sight.

**Characteristics:** May include insecure posture, lack of visual memory, anterior center of gravity and fearfulness.

**Benefits:** Stimulates spatial awareness, proprioception, posture, balance, and coordination. Provides opportunity for socialization, structured risk-taking and freedom of movement.



## *Horse Glossary*

**Arena-** An enclosed area for training horses and riders

**Bit-** A piece of metal which goes into the horse's mouth and attaches to the reins

**Canter-** The second fastest gait of a horse- Characterized by three beats to each stride

**Caveletti-** Ground poles. Can be suspended on two crossbars or blocks to create a very small jump

**Chewing on the Bit-** A sign of relaxation and acceptance of the bit when other signs of the horse's behavior also indicates relaxation.

**Cinch-** A strap that secures an Western saddle

**Conformation-** The physical structure of a horse. Conformation impacts the quality of movement of the horse and therefore influences the movement imparted to the rider in a therapeutic setting

**Downward Transition-** Changing to a slower gait when riding.

**Driving with Long Lines-** Guiding the horse from the ground by walking at the rear or side of the horse, using long reins attached to the bit

**Equine-** Pertaining to a horse

**Far Side-** The right side of the horse

**Figure Eight-** Riding two connecting circles

**Fly Mask-** A protective mask with see-through mesh used during the summer months to protect the horse's eyes.

**Gelding-** A castrated male horse

**Girth-** A strap that secures an English saddle

**Half-Circle Reverse-** Reversing the horse by turning a half-circle toward the center of the arena

**Hand-** A unit of measure (four inches to one hand) used to measure a horse from the withers to the ground

**Horsemanship-** The art of riding and understanding the needs and care of the horse

**Independent Seat-** When a rider uses his arms, legs, hands, and seat independent of each other to direct the horse.

**Impulsion-** The energy generated by the hindquarters of the horse as it moves. Used to describe the quality of the horse's forward movement

**Inside Leg-** The leg on the inside of the arena or ring

**Jog-** A slow trot, used in western riding

**Lead Line-** A rope with which to lead the horse

**Leg Yielding-** Moving the horse sideways and forward with one's leg

**Lunge-** A means of exercising the horse in which the horse moves on a circle around the person lunging him with the horse controlled by a long lunging-rein.

**Mare-** A female horse over four years old

**Near Side-** The left side of the horse.

**Pony-** Any horse that stands under 14.2 hands (58 inches)

**Posting-** Same as the "rising trot" in which the rider rises and descends with the rhythm of the trot

**Seat-** The position the rider takes on the horse

**Sitting Trot-** The rider sits deep in the saddle and maintains contact with the saddle while trotting

**Stride-** One complete circuit of the stepping of all four feet

**Transition-** To change from one gait to another.

**Trot-** A two beat gait with the horse's legs moving in alternate diagonal pairs

**Walk-** The horse's slowest gait. Characterized by four beats to each stride



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 Volunteer Handbook. I understand that this Handbook is not intended and should not be construed as a contractual agreement by BTR.

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Volunteer Signature

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Date