



VTRA
**VICTORIA THERAPEUTIC
RIDING ASSOCIATION**

Horse Handler Duties

Training Requirements: Horse Handler Training. To pass Horse Handler Training, volunteers must have a high level of horsemanship skills practiced within the past 5 years.

Training Recommendations: We strongly advise horse handlers to attend Horse Handler Training refreshers and Emergency Procedures Training yearly. As well as attending at least one Sidewalker Training. Our practices and policies will change over time and attending these sessions is the only sure way to ensure proper communication of these changes.

Before Class Begins:

- Arrive 30 minutes before the start of the first lesson.
- Sign-in at the Clubhouse and put on your name tag.
- Check the barn board to see what horse you have been assigned.
- Bring in your assigned horses from paddock/field if necessary.
- Groom and tack-up your assigned horses at the beginning of your shift.
- Bring horses into the ring to warm up no less than 10 minutes before the beginning of the class; horses should be walked and/or trotted around the ring to warm up.
- Line up and listen for mounting order of horse and rider.

Grooming:

- Groom and tack-up your horse in their stall. Ensure the paddock door is closed and the horse is tied in their stall while grooming and tacking.
 - Horses may be left tacked up and untied in their stall if both the front and back door of the stall are latched shut and all grooming tools are removed from the stall.
 - Use the rubber curry comb and dandy brush for the body. The plastic curry comb is used only for cleaning other brushes.
- Pick hooves
- The saddle should have the rider's handle attached in front of the pommel and 'quick release' stirrups (release facing forward).
- Adjust stirrups to the assigned number written on the clipboard
- Leave the girth secure but not tight. The instructor will check all tack and tighten girths before the classes begin.
- Instructor will put on bridles and reins.

The primary responsibility of the horse handler is the control and care of the horse.

This includes ensuring the safety of the rider and sidewalkers.



- Always ensure that the aisle is safe and clear of people before bringing horses out of their stall.
- Notify the instructor or assistant instructor if there are any unusual conditions or behaviours from the horse.

Mounting:

- ***It is crucial that the horse handler is focused on the horse during both mounting and dismounting. This is a potentially dangerous time as the riders and horses are sometimes very tense and/or nervous.***
- The horse handler should give the horse enough room to come through the ramp in a straight line. The horse must be standing straight and square in preparation for the rider to mount. The horse handler must ensure that the horse walks out of the ramp in a slow and straight line.

During Classes:

- All transitions and turns must be executed slowly and carefully so that sidewalkers can keep up with the riders and the horses.
- The sidewalkers need enough room to walk comfortably beside the horse.
- The horse handler is to follow the rider's lead so that the horse is responding to the rider's lead.
 - Work as team with sidewalkers and riders to relay information such as when a non verbal rider indicates "walk on".
 - Allow riders to make "safe" mistakes (e.g., if they are working on stopping and they don't say "whoa" or pull the reins, carry on walking until rider makes attempt to stop, if it is safe to do so).
- During trail rides, pay extra close attention to the horse's reactions.
- Maintain a distance of 1 to 2 horse lengths between horses at all times.

Dismounting:

- During dismounting, stand to the side of the horse in "parked position."
- Ensure that the horse stands quietly while rider is dismounting or on the ground. Riders and sidewalker are only to pet the horse on the shoulder after dismount.
- Wait until all riders have left the ring and the instructor has removed the reins before leaving to return the horse to the stall.

After the Class:

- At the end your shift shift, untack and groom the horse.
 - Pick hooves,
 - Brush saddle area, and turn loose;
 - During the winter, blankets may also need to be put on.
- Return tack to the appropriate tack room. Saddles and girths are mixed and matched for the rider so check the tags to ensure the saddle is put away in the correct location.
- Sign-out in the Clubhouse.

**Thank you to all the
VTRA Volunteers!**

**Our Vision: Learning,
connection, and joy
through the power of
horses.**

