

Volunteer Information Booklet



**Riding for the Disabled
- Brigadoon Centre
www.rdabrigadoon.com**

Mission

RDA Brigadoon enables people with disabilities and volunteers to experience enjoyment, challenge and a sense of achievement through participation in therapeutic, recreational, and educational equestrian activities to improve their quality of life, attain personal goals and develop life skills.

Vision

To be acknowledged in Western Australia as a leader in equine – assisted therapeutic, educational, recreational and sporting activities that expand the horizons of those with disabilities leading to the enrichment of their lives.

Introduction

Riding for the Disabled Brigadoon Centre aims to provide equestrian activities for children and adults living with disabilities, special needs or mental health issues.

RDA Brigadoon would not exist without the generous support of volunteers.

RDA Brigadoon is an Equal Opportunity organisation and will consider all people offering to perform volunteer work for the organisation solely on the basis of their skill, aptitude and relevant qualifications.

- Volunteers between the ages of 12 and 85 years must demonstrate that they are physically capable of performing the required duties allocated to them.
- Children under the age of 18 years must have parental permission to volunteer.
- Volunteers over the age of 18 years are required to undergo criminal history screening and hold/or obtain a Working with Children's Card.
- All volunteers must complete a Volunteer Registration Form prior to commencing.

What is a Volunteer?

A person who chooses, for many reasons to contribute their time, skills and experience without pay to benefit the community.

What are the benefits of volunteering?

- Have fun.
 - Learn new skills.
 - Make new friends.
 - Build self-confidence.
 - Explore career opportunities.
 - Gain a new direction in life.
 - Give something back.
 - Feel needed & appreciated
 - Fitness
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International Conventions

RDA Brigadoon supports and advocates the General Principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

These are:

- Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons.
- Non-discrimination
- Full and effective participation and inclusion in society
- Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
- Equality of opportunity
- Accessibility
- Equality between men and women; - Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

People with a disability have often been viewed as individuals who need protection and sympathy rather than respect. RDA Brigadoon supports the view that all people must be provided with the opportunity to reach their full potential, regardless of their situation or abilities.

For more information please visit:

<https://www.ag.gov.au/rights-and-protections/human-rights-and-anti-discrimination/human-rights-scrutiny/public-sector-guidance-sheets/rights-people-disability>



Disclaimer: Throughout this booklet the clients of RDAA and RDA Brigadoon are generally referred to as riders.

RDA Organisation

RIDERS

- Riders of RDA Brigadoon become a member of RDA Australia (RDAA)
- They are covered by RDAA Insurances
- They are the core of all RDA Brigadoon activities and decisions.

CENTRE

- RDA Brigadoon is managed by a Committee
- Provide quality lessons for riders
- Support and train volunteers
- Support coaches in training
- Provide horses
- Fundraise

NATIONAL BODY

- RDA Australia (RDAA) is run by a board of management.
- Development of policies
- Training and accreditation of coaches
- National member insurance

RDA Australia (RDAA) is part of a world-wide movement of therapeutic riding associations and is a member of HETI (Horses in Education and Therapy International).

At the national level, RDAA is responsible for the development of policies, training and accreditation of coaches and national member insurances.

RDA Centres are members of RDAA in accordance with policies and procedures. All RDA Centres in Australia must have a committee of management. The committee performs the functions of managing finance, fundraising, property management and governance of the Centre.

RDA Grievance Policy

Complaints & Grievances

RDA Brigadoon takes complaints of any nature seriously and focuses on managing each case in a sensitive and supportive manner with the help of an authorised personnel and a step-by-step mediation procedure. A complaint can be about an act, behaviour, omission, situation or decision that someone thinks is unfair, unjustified, unlawful and/or a breach of RDA Brigadoon policies and Codes of Conduct. The nature of the complaint will determine whether it will be dealt with formally or informally. All complaints will be dealt with promptly, sensitively and confidentially.

Step 1

The parties to a dispute must attempt to resolve the dispute between themselves within 14 days after the dispute has come to the attention of each party and before starting the grievance procedure.

Step 2

If the parties to a dispute are unable to resolve the dispute between themselves within the time required, any party to the dispute may start the grievance procedure by making contact with the Grievance Officer (either written or verbally) or request any other person to contact the Grievance Officer on their behalf.

The Grievance Officer will immediately start a confidential record of the dispute or allegation. If the mediation is successful and resolves the dispute the Grievance Officer will record the matter for later reporting and the matter will be considered finalised.

Step 3

If the mediation fails - the mediator will report the dispute to the Association Committee via the President no later than 14 days from the conclusion of the mediation, unless an extension for reporting time is requested by the Grievance Officer to the President.

A report, from the Grievance Officer, of the dispute and mediation outcome will be prepared for the Committee to consider. The Committee will convene and with a quorum will consider what action to take.

Step 4

If your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction you may choose to make a formal complaint in writing to a relevant external agency such as the Equal Opportunity Commission for advice.

The Role of the Volunteer

The volunteer is an integral part of the smooth running of an RDA program within RDA Brigadoon. There may be involvement with physiotherapists, occupational therapists,

speech therapists, doctors and special education teachers, as well as the RDA Brigadoon Coach and the Centre committee. Everyone must work as a team if the Centre is to run successfully.

The roles that volunteers may play are many and varied. Volunteers between the ages of 12-85 are able to assist. Previous experience working with children and adults with special needs and / or working with horses are desirable but not essential.

The following activities are available to volunteers, under supervision of a RDA Brigadoon Coach or the Centre management:

- Preparing horses prior to the arrival of clients
- Leading horses and ponies during the riding lesson
- Assisting the clients during riding lessons
- Helping with activities for unmounted clients e.g. tack cleaning, proficiency award tasks
- Assist the Coach with equipment during games and riding lessons
- Fitting and cleaning of helmets, boots and clothing for safety and hygiene
- Refreshment hosting
- Fundraising
- Committee work
- Assisting with School Holiday Day Camps
- Maintenance
- Gardening
- Cleaning

"Nobody can do everything, but everyone can do something"
- Author Unknown



Volunteer Code of Practice

In order to enhance the volunteers' experience and comply with legislation and duty of care, RDA Brigadoon will:

- Interview and employ volunteer staff in accordance with anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation.
 - Provide volunteer staff with orientation and training and an opportunity for the development of skills and experience.
 - Provide volunteer staff with a healthy and safe workplace in accordance with current practice and legislation.
 - Provide appropriate insurance coverage for volunteers.
 - Define volunteer roles and develop clear job descriptions.
 - Provide appropriate levels of support and management for volunteers.
 - Make volunteers aware of and provide them with a copy of the RDA volunteers guide and other documents relating to RDA volunteer policies.
 - Provide all volunteers with information on grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures.
 - Acknowledge the rights of volunteers.
 - May reimburse volunteers for some out-of-pocket expenses incurred on RDA's behalf, providing prior approval has been given by the relevant RDA committee.
 - Acknowledge and respect the contribution of volunteers.
 - Provide volunteers with accurate and truthful information about RDA.
 - Have volunteers confidential and personal information dealt with in accordance with the National Privacy Act 2001.
 - Acknowledge that the relationship between RDA and volunteers is a reciprocal one.
 - Acknowledge that volunteers are of equal status and deserve the same treatment as paid employees and that RDA can expect the same standards of its volunteers as it expects of its paid employees.
 - Ensure that volunteers only work in the area of their choice and ability.
 - State and acknowledge the contribution of RDA volunteers in RDA documentation.
 - RDA Brigadoon reserves the right at any point, to cease the volunteer registration if there is a breach of the Volunteers Code of Conduct; inappropriate behaviour; illegal actions or lack of following the mission and values of the organisation.
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Volunteer Code of Conduct

RDA requires every volunteer bound by this policy to:

- Be ethical, fair and honest in all their dealings with other people and RDA.
- Treat all persons with respect and courtesy and have proper regard for their dignity, rights and obligations.
- Always place the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adults above other considerations.
- Comply with RDAA's constitution, rules and policies including the Volunteer Policy.
- Operate within the rules and spirit of the organisation.
- Comply with all relevant Australian laws (Federal and State) particularly antidiscrimination and child protection laws.
- Be responsible and accountable for your conduct.
- Make a commitment to providing quality service.
- Not to use your involvement with RDA to promote your own beliefs, behaviours and practises where these are inconsistent with those of RDAA, a Member State or Territory or Affiliated Centre.
- Demonstrate a high degree of individual responsibility when dealing with persons who are under 18 years of age or vulnerable non-consenting adults with a disability, as your words and actions are an example.
- Avoid unaccompanied and unobserved activities with persons who are under 18 years of age or vulnerable adults, wherever possible.
- Refrain from any form of harassment of others.
- Refrain from any behaviour that may bring RDAA, A Member State or Territory or an Affiliated Centre into disrepute.
- Show concern and caution towards others who may be sick or injured.
- Be a positive role model.
- Understand the repercussions if you breach, or are aware of any breaches of this Code of Conduct.

"Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart"
- Elizabeth Andrew



General Hints for Volunteers

Do:

- Be punctual and reliable (advise the office if you can't make it)
 - Reply to our YES/NO confirmation texts.
 - Do not forget that the person comes before the disability. For example Johnny who has Down Syndrome as opposed to the little Downs boy.
 - Talk to riders even if they can't verbalise a response. Listen and try to understand their form of communication when they speak to you. Never pretend to understand if you do not. They will not mind repeating themselves. Give the person time to respond.
 - Speak directly to the riders, not through their support workers or companions.
 - Talk to, and treat riders in a manner that is appropriate to their physical age, not their mental age.
 - Remember to use appropriate terminology such as "a person with a disability" instead of a "disabled person", "intellectual disability" instead of "mentally retarded" and so on.
 - Keep strictly confidential any information regarding a rider's condition. This means not discussing riders other than in a situation or meeting officially set up for this purpose.
 - Seek the help of the Coach if you are unable to handle a rider's behaviour or if the rider is distressed. Trying to touch them to soothe them may only make their condition worse.
 - Use physical contact only when it is appropriate to the activity they are involved in. For example, holding a rider's leg as support during mounting. If you need to adjust a rider's leg in the stirrup during a lesson, you should tell them that you are about to do so.
 - Use Hi-5's and shaking hands as forms of greetings and congratulations.
 - Hugging and kissing is a form of affection reserved for family members and should be discouraged in the RDA setting.
 - Consult both Coach and the rider about the way they prefer to perform a task.
 - Learn about what tasks the rider can perform by themselves and what tasks require assistance. This way you can support the development of independent skills. While every possible care must be taken to prevent accidents, do not be over-protective. Be ethical, fair and honest in all their dealings with other people and RDA.
 - Treat all persons with respect and courtesy and have proper regard for their dignity, rights and obligations.
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General Hints for Volunteers

Don't:

- Assume a rider can't hear or understand you.
- Move a rider suddenly or force a limb which is stiff as this can cause muscle strain.
- Take any images of children without a written consent by a Parent / Guardian.
- Disclose personal information about the child including names, disability, address, school, phone numbers etc. are not to be displayed.
- Give any food or drink to riders unless approved by a Parent / Guardian / Support Worker.
- Escort a rider to the toilet – this is the Parent / Guardian / Support Worker responsibility.
- Be alone with a rider under any circumstance.

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection

It is mandatory that all workers and volunteers around children and vulnerable adults have a police clearance and a working with Children's Check. We can supply you with the relevant form that you submit at Australia Post.

If any situation arises where you are concerned for the welfare (physical or otherwise) of any child or vulnerable adult at RDA Brigadoon please tell your Coach or Centre Management who will take the appropriate action (if necessary).

Appropriate Clothing for weather and safety

Most RDA Brigadoon activities occur during the day in the outdoors so for your safety and comfort, volunteers should follow these practices:

- Use plenty of sunscreen and insect repellents if necessary (supplied).
 - Use well-fitting hats (so they don't blow off).
 - For protection from the sun and accidental injuries such as scratches and abrasions, wear long sleeved shirts and long trousers.
 - Wear closed, flat, comfortable footwear. Elastic sided or lace up work/hiking boots are ideal. You can also use runners although they offer reduced foot protection if you are accidentally stepped on by a horse. Open foot-wear such as sandals, thongs or high heeled shoes are strictly forbidden around horses in the RDA setting.
 - At certain times of the year, a fly net is recommended.
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The Benefits of Riding

Physical Benefits

Improved balance and Coordination

As the horse moves the rider is constantly thrown off balance, requiring the rider's muscles to contract and relax in an attempt to re-balance. This exercising is similar to physiotherapy, reaching the deep muscles but making the therapy more enjoyable and even FUN! Riding a horse requires a great deal of coordination in order to get the desired response from the horse.

Strengthened muscles & stretching of tight or spastic muscles

By placing the rider in different positions on the horse (therapeutic riding), we can work different sets of muscles.

Increase range of motion of the joints

The three-dimensional rhythmic movement of the horse is similar to the motion of walking, teaching rhythmical patterns to the muscles of the legs and trunk. Stopping and starting the horse, changing the speed and direction increases the benefits.

Improved respiration and circulation

Improved appetite and digestion

Sensory integration

Riding stimulates the tactile senses both through touch and environmental stimuli. The many sounds of our outdoor area helps to involve the auditory system.

Psychological Benefits

General Sense of Well-being

Exercise in fresh air away from hospitals and doctors, office and therapy rooms or home helps to promote a sense of well-being.

Increased interest in one's own life

The excitement of riding encourages the rider to speak and communicate about their activities.

Improved Self Confidence

Confidence is gained in mastering new skills normally performed by able-bodied people. The ability to control an animal much larger and stronger than oneself is a great confidence builder.

Emotional control and self discipline

The Benefits of Riding

Social Benefits

Developing friendships

Although riding can be a solitary activity, it is normally performed in groups. Riders share a common love of horses and a common experience of riding, a good foundation on which to build a friendship.

Learning respect for animals

Riders learn how to treat horses with respect and learn very quickly what they can and cannot do.

General Safety Hygiene

For people working around horses it is recommended to keep your Tetanus immunization current. It is also recommended to obtain immunization against Hepatitis B.

Wash hands thoroughly with hand sanitizer or pump pack soap and water:

- On arrival to the Centre
- After using the toilet.
- Before and after handling food.
- Before and after assisting riders.
- Before and after handling horses.

Wear disposable gloves when:

- Covering existing wounds or open sores.
- Contact with blood and body fluids is likely.
- Cleaning up spills of vomit, blood etc. As a cleaner, use bleach/water in a 1:9 ration (one part bleach to nine parts water).

Other recommended hygiene practices:

- Wash cups and other food utensils thoroughly in hot water and detergent.
- Where possible, use disposable equipment, e.g. paper towels, disposable cups.
- Wear protective spectacles when leading or side walking riders who may spit.



Safe Lifting Principles

Always protect your back by following these simple principles:

- Inform Coaches if you have any back issues.
- Do **NOT** lift any items if you have any concerns.
- Plan your lift.
- Get as close to the load as possible.
- Test the weight before lifting and get help if the load is too heavy.
- Place your feet further apart than normal.
- Bend your knees and stick your bottom out – keep your back straight.
- Tighten your stomach muscles without holding your breath.
- Lift using smooth movements – do not jerk.
- Use your legs to do the work and pivot your feet (not from your hips).

The strain on your back is increased 10 times when you lift a load away from your body and when you bend from the waist to lift.

The best way to make manual handling safer is to redesign the task or environment, to eliminate, or control the risk factors. There are a number of ways to do this:

- **Modify** workplace and workstation layout – for example, use hoists for mounting instead of lifting clients and have varying heights for mounting to avoid bending.
- **Change** the way things are moved- **eliminate** unnecessary handling Ensure that all heavy objects are at waist level e.g. saddles on racks.
- **Minimise** body movements and forces such as bending, lifting, twisting, reaching and holding.
- **Modify** the task – use mechanical aides such as trolleys and carts for moving heavy objects such as hay bales.
- **Modify** the object – change the shape, size and/or weight of bulky objects so that they are easier to hold or pack.
- **Evaluate** – check to ensure that any changes made to the workplace are working successfully. Changes need to be evaluated to make sure they are being used correctly, are not increasing the risk of injury and help to reduce manual handling injuries. A period of trialing improvements is often needed to find a good modification.

Workplace Health & Safety

The various National and State WHS/OH&S legislations aim to protect the health and safety of all workers, including volunteers.

Protecting the health and safety of volunteers demonstrates that their commitment is valued and recognises the vital role they play in the community.

RDA ensures, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of all workers, including volunteer workers.

RDA makes an assessment of the hazards and the risks volunteers are likely to encounter and takes reasonably practicable steps to eliminate or minimise those risks.

This includes:

- The workplace itself is safe and without risks to health and safety.
- Equipment and machinery provided for use is safe.
- There are adequate facilities at the workplace, such as first aid and toilet facilities.
- Necessary information, instruction and training is provided to allow volunteers and workers to perform their duties safely.

RDA also consults with its volunteer workers regarding the management of health and safety generally and ensures volunteers have a reasonable opportunity to contribute to the improvement of health and safety.



- Take reasonable care for your own health and safety.
- Take reasonable care that your conduct does not adversely affect the health and safety of others.
- Comply with any reasonable instruction that is given to you by a Coach or experienced volunteer.
- Cooperate with any reasonable policy or procedure relating to health and safety at the workplace.
- Use appropriate personal protection equipment for the task you are doing.

RDA Brigadoon has policies and procedures in place regarding work health and safety. These will be explained to you as part of your Induction and Volunteer Training. If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to ask a Coach. The Coach will allocate you roles and duties to perform. They will ensure that you have adequate training to ensure you are able to safely and effectively perform that duty.

Sometimes volunteers may be asked to perform a different role in the Centre. Please do not see this as a 'demotion'. The Coach will explain why this is necessary and will ensure that you are still a valued member of the team. It is important to ensure duty of care to all clients, volunteers and horses, by making sure all volunteers are fully capable of performing the roles they are asked to do

Insurance

Volunteers are covered by personal accident insurance when they are:

- Registered as an RDA Brigadoon volunteer
- Participating in an RDA Brigadoon activity
- Working with RDA Brigadoon accredited horses
- Under the supervision of a qualified RDA Coach and are following RDA procedures.

General Safety

Like most recreational activities, horse riding presents the participants with inherent risks, and as such safety is a key part of the RDA program. Each volunteer is responsible for their own safety, the safety of other volunteers, clients, visitors and horses. All volunteers must be aware of what to do in case of an emergency.

- Volunteers should familiarize themselves with the basic rules of safety, both for the horse and rider, by consultation with the coaches, attending training days and reading available literature.
- Be familiar with the Centre's Emergency Evacuation Plan and the location of the assembly areas.

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- Know where the First Aid Kit is located and who is trained to administer first Aid.
 - Ask for help when lifting heavy object. Use correct lifting techniques. To protect your back always bend your knees.

Pregnancy

If you become pregnant whilst volunteering with RDA, you must be aware of the risks involved and monitor your own health and well-being on a day-by-day basis. Obtain medical advice regarding your fitness and the risks involved in volunteering at RDA. Advise the Coach or Centre Management if there are tasks you are unable to perform.

Safety Around Horses

Horses demonstrate a broad range of emotional responses that their handler's need to learn to recognize for the safety of the RDA program. In their natural state, horses are herd animals. They form a social group, enjoying companionship and leadership from a more dominant horse in their group. Once domesticated, the horse relies on their human handlers to provide that leadership and reassurance. Horse handlers should demonstrate self-confidence when working around horses and know how to respond to the horse during stressful situations. Volunteers should practice their horse handling skills outside of the RDA lesson with another helper until they can confidently work with horses in a lesson. Please do not give food to horses and clients without permission – horses learn to nip and clients may be on a special diets or suffer from food allergies.

RDA volunteers come from many and varied backgrounds, some with little or no horse experience. For this reason, all horse handlers must model safe horse handling practices including:

ALWAYS – tie horses using a quick release knot.

ALWAYS – speak to a horse as you approach it.

ALWAYS – keep at least one horse distance apart when leading, standing with or tying up horses.

NEVER – mount a horse that is tied up.

NEVER – bend under the necks or lead ropes of horses tied up.

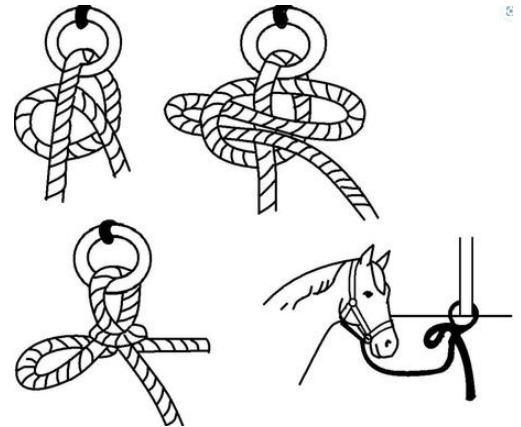
NEVER – wrap the lead rope around your hand, carry it with large loops.

NEVER – walk behind a horse or allow another person to do so unless shown how to do so in a stall.

Tying up a horse

Never tie a horse to a gate or moveable objects such as a chair or jump wing. You can attach binder twine to a ring or fixed post. The loop should be at a height of about 1.2 metres (four feet), low enough for children to reach but not so low that the horse can put its foot over the rope. There are various quick release knots that are used for securing horses. It is up to the centre to decide which one they want to use so that everyone is doing the same thing and students and volunteers do not become muddled by different methods

A quick release knot



Horse Behaviour & Moods

You may work with a huge variety of horses at RDA Brigadoon. Whichever horse you are working with, take time to get to know him, his personality and his likes and dislikes. Your Coach will be a good source of information about this. Being alert to his body language and facial expressions can help you to react quickly in an emergency. Knowing what to expect can keep everyone safe and ensure an enjoyable rider for all.

It is important to recognize when a horse is tired, stressed or in pain. Unhappy horses can react in sudden, unexpected ways. Horse handlers should advise Coaches of any changes in a horse's normal behaviour

Ears

Ears laid back means unhappy, frightened or feeling threatened.

Ears moving back and forwards means the horse is listening to his rider/handler.

Ears that are forward with tense body means the horse's attention is elsewhere and he may spook.

Tail

Unless the horse is swatting flies, excessive swishing of the tail indicates the horse is annoyed, uncomfortable or stressed.

Eyes

The desirable eye in the RDA horse is attentive, calm and relaxed.

Horses with eyes half-shut are "switched off", inattentive and may be suddenly frightened because they are not paying attention.

Horses' eyes also show worry, stress, fear and in tolerant horses, is the best indicator that the horse needs a break or is in pain.

READING HIS EARS

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



Ears forward but relaxed interested in what's in front of him.



Ears turned back but relaxed listening to his rider or what's behind him.



Ears pointed stiffly forward alarmed or nervous about what's ahead. Looking for danger.



Ears pointed left and right relaxed, paying attention to the scenery on both sides.



Ears stiffly back annoyed or worried about what's behind him; might kick if annoyed.



Droopy ears calm and resting, horse may be dozing.



Ears flattened against neck violently angry, in a fighting mood. May fight, bite or kick.

OTHER SIGNS YOU SHOULD NOTICE ARE:

- **Tucking the tail down tightly.**
Danger to the rear.
Horse may bolt, buck or kick.
Watch out if ears are flattened, too!
- **Switching the tail.**
Annoyance and irritation:
at biting flies, stinging insects or tickling bothersome actions of a rider or another horse.
- **Droopy ears and resting one hind leg on toe.**
Calm and resting, horse may be dozing.
Don't wake him up by startling him!
- **Wrinkling up the face and swinging the head.**
Threatening gesture of an angry or bossy horse.
Watch out for biting or kicking.

Signs of Stress

- Grinding the teeth.
- Excessive tail swishing.
- Ears laid back
- Biting / kicking horses or handlers.
- Pawing the ground.
- Listlessness or lack of energy.
- Fidgeting

Horse Preparation

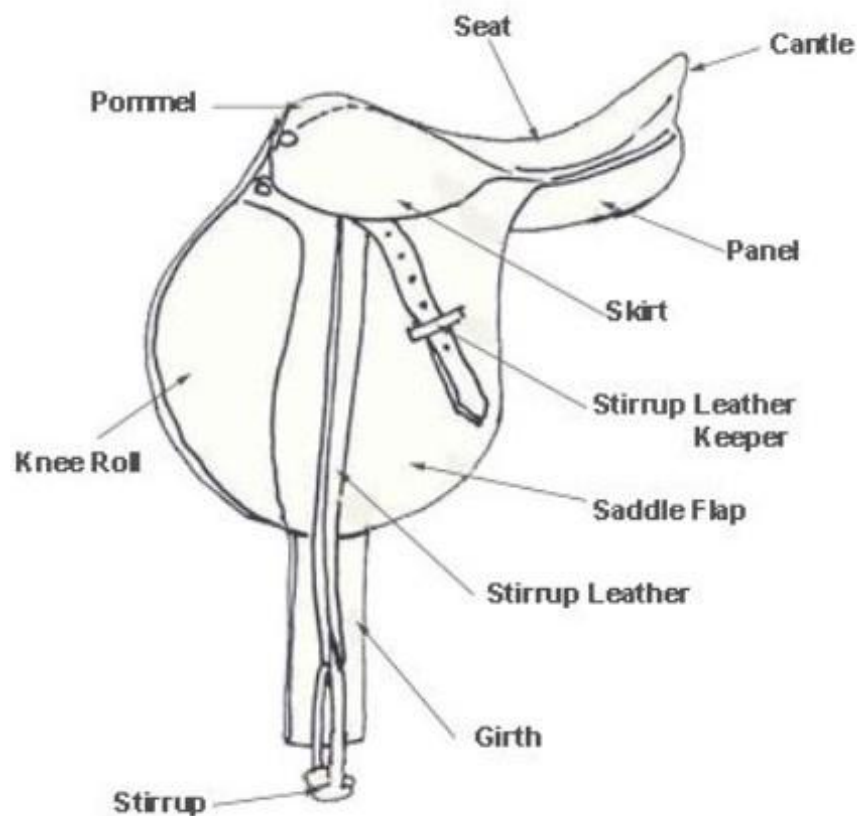
Horse preparation involves the following tasks:

- Catching, leading and releasing horses.
- Tying up using a quick release knot.
- Rugging and un-rugging horses.
- Grooming and cleaning hooves.
- Fitting equipment.
- Preparing feeds and feeding horses.

Horses should not be prepared until a qualified Coach is on site. New volunteers may perform the above tasks under supervision until the Coach decides they are competent in the tasks.

Volunteers will be taught

- The correct technique for approaching, catching, leading and tying up a horse using a quick release knot.
- How to rug a horse, how to remove a rug and the reasons for rugging an RDA horse.
- To identify the parts of a horse.
- The correct grooming and hoof cleaning procedure, the reason for grooming a horse and the name of items commonly found in a grooming kit.
- To name parts of the saddle.
- Correct saddling & bridling techniques.
- To identify the different feeds used at RDA Brigadoon and how to prepare feeds for horses.
- How to safety release a horse into a yard or paddock with another horse (one horse per handler).



Fitting of Equipment

Putting on a saddle

When putting on a saddle make sure that:

- The area under the saddle and girth area is clean.
- The saddlecloth is clean and the correct way up.
- The saddlecloth ends behind the saddle and not under the back of it.
- The front of the saddlecloth is raised up under the pommel and off the withers.
- The girth is clean; done up loosely to start with.
- The pommel is clear of the top and sides of the withers.

Fitting the Saddle

When fitting a saddle, be aware that a horse may change shape. If it gains or loses muscle either side of the withers, the saddle may no longer fit. Often a saddle looks as if it fits but when the rider's weight is in the saddle the pommel touches the top of the withers. When checking the saddle fit, put a hand about 10 centimetres down the channel of the saddle and check that there is no pressure. Also feel to see if the saddle is pinching the sides of the withers.

A horse may have an ill-fitting saddle if it:

- Is sore or tender in the back.
- Has its ears back.
- Turns around to nip or bite when tacked up.
- Moves around when being saddled.
- Cow-kicks when the girth is being done up.
- Is reluctant to move.
- Swishes its tail when standing or moving.
- Does not stand confidently when being mounted.
- Goes sideways instead of forwards.
- Bucks or rears.

Such signs of an ill-fitting saddle may develop slowly and not be immediately noticed. If a horse is starting to react differently, tell the stable manager or coach. A horse with a sore back is unsafe for a rider. A rider is better off missing a ride than riding a horse that is unreliable due to pain.

Care of Tack

Keep tack in a clean and dry environment. Leather becomes mouldy in damp conditions. Return equipment clean and dry to the pegs and racks they came from. Please ensure bits are washed after each use.

Mounting (Riding)

Mounting is the time when the rider is most vulnerable. Mounting should be carried out in an orderly, calm and quiet way and undertaken only with a coach of experienced volunteer in charge. The Coach is responsible for selecting the most appropriate mounting method for each rider.

- The **leader** stands facing the horse or slightly to the side and must show appropriate control of the horse. The Coach will give direction on the correct method for controlling each horse in the ramp.
- The **nearside volunteer** (usually the Coach) directs the procedure. They help the rider greet the horse, place the hands in the correct position, place the left foot in the stirrup and support the rider's leg as it swings over the horse's rump.
- The **offside volunteer** counterbalances the saddle by pulling down on the stirrup leather, positioning the rider's hands and assisting the rider's right leg over the saddle, placing their foot into the stirrup.
- When mounting from a wheelchair, extra volunteers are needed. The Coach will direct and train the volunteers for the specific method to use.
- More independent riders can mount from the mounting block or step.
- When a horse is resisting at the ramp, turn its head away from the ramp and let it approach a step at a time in order to prevent the quarters swinging out away from the ramp.

Never mount a rider when a horse is tied up.
Never mount or dismount a rider without the permission of the Coach.

Dismounting (Riding)

Assisting an ambulant rider to dismount to the ground

- Position the horse away from fences and other obstacles. If the ground is not level, turn the horse so that the rider will dismount on the uphill side.
- The rider must have both feet out of the stirrups for safety.
- The rider holds the reins in their left hand in front of the pommel and leans forward.
- The rider leans forward and wings their right leg over the back of the saddle and horse's rump, landing with feet together and knees slightly bent, facing the horse's head.
- If they are able, help them to run the stirrups up on each side, changing sides in front of the horse.
- Encourage them to thank the horse with a pat and to thank their helpers and Coach before being safely escorted back to the rider waiting area.



Leading

During the lesson the leader is responsible for the horse. The leader works in a team with the Coach and the side walker(s).

Role of the Leader

- Warm up the horse prior to the lesson.
- Ensure gear is correctly fitted to the horse prior to the lesson, check the tightness of the girth.
- Position and control the horse during mounting, dismounting and during ridden activities.
- Where there is no side walker, the leader's job may also involve verbal support to the rider to relay the coach's instructions and explain how to give a command to the horse (see role of the side walker).
- Always listen to the Coach's instructions.
- Complete some basic paperwork as instructed by the Coach.

Volunteers will be Taught

- Correct techniques for leading a horse into and out of the mounting ramp, holding and positioning the horse in the ramp.
- Correct techniques for warming up a horse prior to the lesson.
- Correct techniques for side leading a horse when side-walkers are not required.

Important Tips

- **NEVER** try a new method training/disciplining a horse during a lesson unless instructed by the Coach.
 - **DO** offer as little assistance with guiding the horse as is necessary for the rider to develop their skills.
 - **DO** keep the horse still when the rider is performing exercises at the halt.
 - **DO** keep the horse in a straight line when trotting. Keep an even pace and don't go too fast.
 - **DO** keep the horse moving an even pace and avoid sudden changes of direction to prevent unbalancing the rider. Take wide turns.
 - **DO** stay aware of what is happening in the lesson.
 - **ALWAYS** keep one horse's length between your horse and the horse in the front at all times.
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Correct Leading Techniques

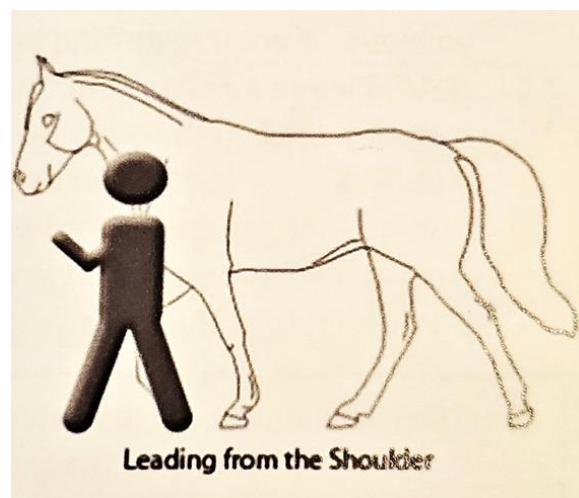
Warming Up Procedure

The warm up session prior to lessons should include

- The horse walking forward actively.
- Transitions between walk and halt, slow walk and fast walk, walk and trot.
- Rein back for 3-5 steps (assists the positioning of the horse in the ramp)
- Walk and trot in both directions.
- Walk the horse for 5-10 minutes before the rider mounts, particularly if they have been standing for any length of time.

Leading in the Lesson

- Hold the lead ropes in loops in your hand (do not wrap around your hand)
- Walk at the horse's shoulder on the left or on the inside track so you can see and hear the coach's instructions.
- When passing by or under obstacles or going through openings, sufficient clearance should be left for the horse, the rider's legs and head, and the helpers who may be side walking.
- At all times, but particularly when trotting and during games do not become carried away by enthusiasm.
- Be ready to overtake or stop if the horse ahead stops suddenly. If the rider needs to stop, move off the track.
- When the rider no longer requires side walkers and is learning to steer, the lead rein should gradually be lengthened so the rider can control the horse. The leader walks behind the horse's shoulder and acts as a 'safety net' only.



Side Walking

During lessons the **side walker** is responsible for the **rider**. The side walker works in a team with the Coach and the leader. When there is more than one side walker, work as a team with only one person giving verbal instructions.

Role of the Side Walker

- Greet the rider and assist them to correctly fit their riding helmet.
- Check the rider is correctly attired for riding (jackets to be buttoned / zipped and not flapping closed-in shoes are worn etc). Alert the Coach if clothing is not appropriate.
- Escort the rider from/to the mounting area. and head, and the helpers who may be side walking.
- Some riders require special equipment to be fitted to their horse. Ensure that special equipment is available and correctly fitted.
- Assist the rider to carry out the Coach's instructions.
- Walk level with the rider's body, do not drop behind.
- Monitor your rider for fatigue or discomfort and alert the Coach.
- Complete some basic paperwork as instructed by the Coach.

Volunteers will be Taught

- How to fit helmets, adjust stirrups and other equipment.
- How to assist a rider at the mounting ramp or when using a hoist.
- Safe transfer techniques.
- Appropriate handholds for supporting a rider e.g. open hand, changing position frequently.
- To recognize common signs of fatigue, illness and onset of seizure activity.

Important Tips

- **NEVER** hold onto the horse or rider or gear as a means of support for yourself. If you are getting tired, inform the Coach immediately.
 - When giving instructions to a rider, ensure you use their name.
 - Allow time for riders to process instructions (this can be between 2-30 seconds)
 - **NEVER** leave a rider. You must stay with the rider at all times, this includes walking through puddles on trail rides.
 - **ALWAYS** relay the instructions as given by the Coach. Changing instructions can cause confusion and can delay the rider's response.
 - **ALWAYS** show respect for your rider and use language that is appropriate for their age.
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If a rider should slip, do not take their weight on yourself. Just guide them safely to the ground bending your knees.

Working with high support riders

Riders with poor balance and/or impaired muscle tone may require additional support throughout the lesson. When using handholds you should:

- Change the positions of your handholds frequently to avoid loss of sensation in the rider's leg.
- Only physically support the rider if instructed by the Coach; likewise you must not remove physical support without prior consent of the Coach.
- Let the Coach know (or your team members) if they are getting tired.

Hand-over-thigh hold



This is most commonly used for unbalanced riders. It provides a feeling of security whilst allowing the rider to develop core strength and balance. When using this hold take care to walk forwards parallel to the horse without twisting your body. Look where you are going!

Knee and Ankle Support



Keeps the knee in position as well as the lower leg. Provides stability and balance. This position should not be held for very long as it is uncomfortable for volunteers to maintain. Swap sides regularly. You can also just hold across the knee and not the ankle. Or visa versa.

Heel hold



Best used for beginner riders learning to trot. Can also be used in progression from the hand-over-thigh hold as the rider's balance improves. Keeps the rider's heels down and the lower leg in the correct position and prevents the lower leg from slipping forward.

Working as a team

- The RDA environment contains many distractions which can affect a rider's concentration. Where there are two side walkers, decide who will give instructions to the rider. Keep verbal instructions to a minimum.
- Riders work hard both emotionally and physically. Try to make the riding sessions fun for everyone. Use positive encouragement where appropriate.

Using Transfer belts in the RDA environment

Transfer Belts play a specific role in the RDA environment for:

- Transferring riders from wheelchair to horse, or into an RDA carriage.
- Adjusting a rider's position in the saddle.
- A management strategy for behaviourally challenged children to provide support during transitions or during an emergency dismount.
- For safety, when a rider's sitting balance is compromised.
- Riders should be regularly assessed and use of the belt discontinued when their condition improves

Fitting the Transfer Belt

- Belts are to be fitted around the waist, not around the chest.
- Place the belt around the waist and fasten snugly without being tight.
- Ensure that the belt does not compromise pegs, abdominal feeding tubes or drainage devices.

Incorrect use of the Belt

- The handles of the belt are not to be used to support, hold or drag a rider into position when mounted. Refer to the appropriate hand holds for supporting riders.
- You must not use the handles of the belt to restrain a rider.
- Do not lean your weight onto the handles of the belt or loop your hand through the handles. This will result in your elbow digging into the horse's rump and can cause unpredictable behaviour from the horse



Emergency Drills

Occasionally events occur in the RDA setting that require participants to be dismounted quickly for safety reasons. Such events may include:

- A rider becoming unwell or over-excited.
- A horse stumbling or becoming excited.
- Sudden weather changes such as lightening or squalling winds.
- A foreign object in the arena (a plastic bag)
- Centre needs to be evacuated (for fire etc).

Practice Drills Regularly

It is important that volunteers are prepared for emergency dismount situations and that they are regularly practiced. At least twice a year all volunteers should practice emergency drills using light, able-bodied “practice’ clients if physically able to do so. If you are not able, you must tell the Coach in charge this information.

Evaluation

Following any emergency procedures, you should debrief with the Coach. Some incidents will require completion of an Incident/Accident Report.

Emergency Drill for Riding

A standard emergency dismount to the nearside (left) is as follows:

1. The leader stops the horse, turning its head towards the nearside (where the rider will be dismounted)
2. Side-walkers remove the rider’s feet from the stirrups and reins from their hands.
3. The near-side walker holds the rider’s hips and pulls the rider sideways and lowers them gently to the ground.
4. The off-side walker can assist the rider’s leg over the saddle.
5. The leader moves the horse away from where the rider has landed. The rider is assisted from the arena to a safe waiting area or is attended by a First Aid Officer.
6. Fill out an incident report and accident report if appropriate and follow up



Tips for Assisting Clients

- All riders benefit from regular rules, routines and consistent instructions.
 - Break complex tasks into simple steps, offer one task at a time and wait until it is completed before giving them the next task. As riders become more competent you can string more tasks together.
 - To avoid confusion, speak very literally, telling riders exactly what you want them to do. For example, if you ask a rider to touch their head, they may remove their helmet in order to comply!
 - Always keep instructions simple, repeat instructions using the same words where possible, and give the rider time to respond. Some riders take longer to respond than others.
 - Keep verbal communication and physical assistance to a minimum.
 - Remind riders of appropriate behaviours, use social greetings, “please” and “thank you’s”.
 - Reassure riders, as nerves can make muscles tight and posture stiff.
 - Check that riders are sitting in a correct upright position so they get the most exercise from the movement of the horse.
 - Handle arms and legs with care as muscle tendons and ligaments can be strained if limbs are not correctly supported. For some riders it is important that their feet are kept in the stirrups at all times.
 - Watch for riders who show signs of fatigue or illness and report these immediately to the Coach.
 - Many riders are susceptible to temperature and should be dressed according to weather conditions. Report any signs of cold or overheating to the Coach.
 - Make sure you face riders with vision and hearing impairments when speaking to them.
 - Regularly participate in emergency drills for dismounting riders.
 - Learn some simple sign language to assist your riders.
 - Watch for “bunched-up” clothing or lumps in the seat/saddle which may cause pressure sores for riders with low sensation.
 - Make sure you do not use a heavy or tight hold when supporting riders as this can impair their circulation.
 - Allow time to process instructions, many clients take about 20-30 seconds to do this.
 - Address clients using their names before you give instructions.
 - Encourage the riders to have FUN!!
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Volunteer Training

As part of your commitment to RDA Brigadoon, you are required to complete at least one volunteer training course per year. These training courses are usually held during the school holiday breaks.

Training to become an RDA Coach

Volunteers interested in training to become an RDA qualified Coach must meet the following pre-requisites:

- Volunteer for at least 6 months at RDA Brigadoon.
- Be at least 15 years of age when you start training and no younger than 16 years of age before completing training (Assistant Coach Course)
- Be able to ride and control a horse in walk, trot and canter.
- Complete an Application to Train and have the support of a coach educator and your RDA Centre Management Committee.



Medical Conditions at RDA

Within RDA, volunteers are encouraged to focus on enhancing and developing the **abilities** of clients. After all, their disability is only one aspect of their life, and the challenges of riding can provide great building blocks for developing confidence and self-esteem. The following information is intended only as an introduction to general medical conditions and some tips on how you, as a volunteer can assist those clients.

Acquired brain injury - or "ABI"

Refers to any damage to the brain that occurs after birth. That damage can be caused by an accident or trauma, by a stroke, a brain infection, by alcohol or other drugs or by disease of the brain like Parkinson's disease. Their balance and co-ordination are usually affected, and they fatigue easily. They may use inappropriate language as their inhibitions are reduced. They have problems with concentration, memory and problem solving and may need reminding/prompting.

Tips: Watch for signs of fatigue and alert the Coach if you notice any. Repeat instructions when necessary. For more information visit: www.braininjuryaustralia.org.au

Attention-deficity/hyeractivity disorder (ADHD)

is a chronic condition that affects millions of children and often persists into adulthood. ADHD includes a combination of problems, such as difficulty sustaining attention, hyperactivity and impulsive behaviour.

Tips: Encourage them by pointing out what they are doing well and ignore or re-direct unwanted behaviours. Give them empowering choices but limit them to only two. For more information visit: www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Amputation

is the surgical removal of part of the body, usually an arm or leg. After the amputation, it may be possible to fit a prosthetic (artificial) limb onto the remaining stump. Prosthetic limbs have become increasingly sophisticated and can reproduce many functions of the hands, arms and legs. The rider may be unbalanced, and their stump or prosthesis will need to be watched for signs of rubbing.

Tips: Special adaptive equipment may be useful. Make sure their equipment is available and fitted. Riders are seeking independence so allow them to undertake activities with a minimum of assistance. For more information visit: www.limbs4life.org.au

Autism

Is a complex disorder which affects a person's ability to interact with the world around them. Commonly referred to as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), autism has wide ranging levels of severity. Signs of autism include poor language development, unusual or repetitive behaviours and a diminished interest in other people. The areas most likely to be affected include communication, social interaction and difficulty with flexibility of thought and play. People with autism often have a restricted range of interest, and repetitive or stereotyped behaviours.

Tips: Changes to their routine will usually upset them. Try to keep the same team working with them and introduce new people gradually. They prefer not to be touched so give simple instructions or demonstrations, repeat, and limit the amount of physical contact. When they become stressed, they may start rocking, hitting out or self-harming. Stay calm and call for the Coach. Practice your emergency dismounts. For more information visit:

www.autismspectrum.org.au

Cerebral Palsy

Is an umbrella term that refers to a group of disorders affecting a person's ability to move. It is a permanent life-long condition, but generally does not worsen over time. It is due to damage to the developing brain either during pregnancy or shortly after birth. Cerebral Palsy affects people in different ways and can affect body movement, muscle control, muscle coordination, muscle tone, reflex, posture and balance. People who have cerebral palsy may also have visual, learning, hearing, speech, epilepsy and intellectual impairments.

- Spastic Cerebral Palsy is characterised by stiff or tight muscles.
- Athetoid Cerebral Palsy is characterised by fluctuations of muscle tone and uncontrolled movements.
- Ataxic Cerebral Palsy occurs in 5 to 10 per cent of cases. It is characterised by an unsteady gait, balance difficulties and shaky movements.
- Mixed Cerebral Palsy - some individuals also have a mixture of these conditions.

Tips: Take care when handling affected parts of the body. Never pull or force a limb as this can tear muscles fibres or ligaments. Check with the Coach about the best handholds to use to support the rider. They may have special equipment to be fitted to the saddle/reins. Make sure their equipment is available and fitted before mounting. They will also tire easily so watch for signs of fatigue and alert the Coach if necessary. For more information visit:

www.cpaustralia.com.au

Down Syndrome

Is a genetic condition in which the person has an extra copy of chromosome 21 which results in a number of physical and developmental characteristics and some level of intellectual disability. Everyone with Down Syndrome will experience some delay in their development and some level of learning disability, but the extent and specific areas of delay vary from one individual to another. People with Down Syndrome generally need more support than most other people in order to achieve their potential - some will need very little support, while others may require a high level of support. People with Down Syndrome often have their abilities and potential underestimated. A person with this condition will achieve in many areas when offered the opportunity and encouraged to do so.

Tips: Use clear, simple instructions, repeat as necessary. Help them to concentrate on the lesson by re-directing them to the activities. They can become anxious at heights due to a depth perception condition so take mounting and dismounting slowly to build confidence.

They can tire easily so watch for signs of fatigue and alert the Coach if necessary. Use lots of positive encouragement and make lessons fun! For more information visit:

www.downsyndrome.org.au

Epilepsy

Is a disorder of the brain which takes the form of recurring seizures. Common triggers for epileptic fits can include forgetting to take prescribed medication; an illness with a high temperature; fatigue or over-excitement; stress or fear; loud noises or bright lights. During an epileptic seizure a person may display the following symptoms:

- confusion or disorientation
- unusual or sudden body movements and jerking
- a convulsion with total loss of unconsciousness
- staring and blinking
- a frightened look
- strange feelings or an unusual taste in their mouth
- lip smacking or chewing movements
- unintelligible speech.

Tips: Most absence seizures pass unnoticed in the RDA setting but be aware that a rider may have missed an instruction because of an absence seizure. Be patient in repeating information for such clients. Practice emergency dismount drills - important for working with a client with epilepsy. For more information visit: www.epilepsyaustralia.net

Hearing Impairment

Is a communication disorder as a result of total or partial deafness. Clients with hearing impairments may suffer from a lack of rhythm and impaired balance. The rider's speech is usually altered and may be absent altogether. They may have a hearing aid or rely on alternate forms of communication including lip reading or sign language.

Tips: It is important that the riding helmet does not interfere with the hearing aid. Wind can also interfere with hearing aids and make it difficult to follow instruction. Speak naturally and clearly. Do not shout or "go slow". Encourage the rider to speak to you and always face the rider when speaking to them. For more information visit: www.deafau.org.au

Intellectual Disability

Is a condition where a person's level of intellectual functioning is determined to be 70 or below on the IQ (Intelligence Quota) scale. There are four degrees of severity: mild, moderate, severe and profound. Many clients with mild and moderate levels of ID are capable of developing independent riding abilities.

Tips: Use clear, simple language and demonstration activities to assist learning. They require constant supervision as most have reduced problem-solving skills.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

Multiple Sclerosis means "many scars". It is a disease of the central nervous system (relating to the brain and spinal cord). The nerves cannot properly transmit electrical impulses to and from the brain. This disruption produces the various movement symptoms of MS. Symptoms vary widely from person to person but can include blurred or double vision; speech difficulties; weakness in arms and/or legs; loss of coordination; numbness or "pins and needles" in arms and legs; extreme tiredness and memory lapses.

Tips: Many require special equipment. Make sure it is available and filled prior to the lesson. Generally, clients are adults with full intelligence so speak to them as adults and provide appropriate activities. They will have good days and bad days so their programmed activities may vary each week. Watch for signs of fatigue and alert the Coach if necessary. For more information visit: www.msaustralia.org.au

Muscular Dystrophy (MD)

Muscular Dystrophy is a general term used to describe a range of conditions resulting in the degeneration of muscular tissue. Destroyed tissue is replaced by fat or fibrous tissue.

Muscular Dystrophy is a degenerative condition that progresses at various rates depending on the type of MD and the individual.

Tips: Provide support to arms and legs during mounting and dismounting and always make sure feet stay in the stirrups as riding without stirrups can strain ligaments. Check with the Coach about the best handholds to use to support the rider. They may have special equipment to be fitted to the saddle/reins. Make sure their equipment is available and fitted before mounting. They will also tire easily so watch for signs of fatigue and alert the Coach if necessary. For more information visit: www.mda.org.au

Paraplegia

Both paraplegia and quadriplegia are conditions that result from injury or trauma to the spinal cord. The amount of function lost tends to correspond to the level in the spinal cord where the damage takes place. A break near the top of the neck can mean that even breathing is difficult and that people must use a respirator. People with an injury in the lower neck, however, usually have arm movement but perhaps not finger movement. However, they can often drive, work, write etc with the help of specialised equipment. People with damage to the upper part of the spinal cord are called quadriplegics or tetraplegics. People with damage below this level are called paraplegic. People with injuries in the lower back can have sensation and movement right to the hips. They can usually live totally independently with a minimum of help, as long as they can use a wheelchair and have the necessary alterations to their home, their bathroom and car.

Tips: Special equipment and mounting will be required (for example may use a hoist). The rider will have little or no sensation in their legs and may use whips to give commands to the horse. Ensure that clothing or equipment is not rubbing and take care with handholds to reduce pressure sores. Their balance may be poor. Follow directions from the Coach about the appropriate amount of support required. Check that saddles sitting in the sun are not too hot before mounting. For more information visit: www.paraquad.org.au

Spina Bifida

Spinal Bifida is characterised by a defective closure of the vertebral (spinal) column.

Sometimes the spinal cord protrudes in a hernial sac. The damage to the spinal cord may cause weakness or paralysis of lower limbs; poor or no bladder control; curvature (scoliosis) of the spine; deformities of lower limbs; poor circulation; impaired balance and coordination and loss of sensation.

Tips: Many need additional assistance mounting at the ramp. May use special equipment so make sure that their equipment is available and fitted before mounting. Usually, clients will have a shunt fitted at the base of the skull behind the ear to remove fluid from the brain. Take care when fitting helmets that there is no pressure on the shunt. If the client indicates dizziness, headache or nausea report this to the Coach as there may be pressure on the shunt. For more information visit: www.spinabifida.asn.au

Vision Impairment

Vision Impairment involves partial or total lack of sight. People with vision impairment have difficulties with spatial awareness, impaired balance, impaired sense of direction.

Tips: Always address a person with vision impairment by name so they know you are speaking to them and introduce yourself so they know who they are talking to. Ensure clients with vision impairment are appropriately oriented to their surroundings at the RDA Centre. Make them familiar with the location of toilets, telephone, emergency exits etc. To help the rider to feel included and to become more independent in the RDA setting, describe what is going on around them. Ask how they like to be guided when moving around. For example, they might choose to hold your elbow or prefer to use their cane or guide dog. It is vital that the rider feels confident with their guide. For more information visit: www.rsb.org.au