



# **Policy Manual**

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Therapeutic Horsemanship of Hawaii

[www.thwaimanalo.org](http://www.thwaimanalo.org)

PO Box 138, Waimanalo, HI 96795

(808) 342-9036

[dana@thwaimanalo.org](mailto:dana@thwaimanalo.org)

# Therapeutic Horsemanship of Hawaii

## Policy Manual

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# **Therapeutic Horsemanship of Hawaii**

## **Introduction and Background**

Therapeutic Horsemanship of Hawaii's goal is to improve the minds and bodies of our riders, using our horses as partners. Our riders build strength in their bodies by learning to groom, saddle and ride. They improve their confidence by learning from our horses and receiving unconditional love that only animals can provide. Therapeutic Horsemanship of Hawaii specializes in riding instruction for special needs individuals, but provides therapeutic riding to individuals of any ability.

The organization was founded in 1983 and has survived through many different locations and changes of leadership.

Dana Vennen has worked with THH since 2001, and has been the full-time Executive Director since 2006. All instructors with the program are at least Registered Level Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, International (PATH Intl.) Therapeutic Riding Instructors.

All activities at Therapeutic Horsemanship of Hawaii are run according to PATH Intl. standards, and safety is our primary goal. This policy booklet is meant to address some of the most frequent questions we receive and to establish guidelines to ensure our program continues to operate as safely as possible.

## **Participant Policies**

### **Attire and Safety Gear for Participants**

All individuals who participate in the activities of Therapeutic Horsemanship of Hawaii must wear an ASTM / SEI approved riding helmet during mounted activities. Participants must also wear long pants (unless they are unable) and covered shoes at all times.

The instructor or a qualified volunteer will perform safety checks on the tack and equipment at the beginning of the lesson.

### **Safety Stirrup Policy**

If a participant is not wearing riding boots or hard-soled shoes with heels, they must use a saddle with safety stirrups. Most of our English saddles already have peacock safety stirrups or "s" curve safety stirrups. In the case that the participant is in a Western saddle without covered stirrups, Velcro stirrup covers must be added to the stirrups. The facility also has a variety of boots that participants may borrow.

### **Guest Policy at Our Facility**

Family and friends of our participants are most welcome at our facility. We ask that only the participant enter the tacking area at their designated session time. We have several areas where guests can relax and observe the riding session.

NO DOGS or other pets are allowed at the facility at any time.

### **Acceptance of Participants into the Program**

Participants accepted into program activities must have no medical contraindications that prevent them from riding. In the case that they have a diagnosis that requires a physician's release that release must be obtained before any mounted activities may occur.

The *PATH Intl Standards of Precautions and Contraindications* will be consulted and followed. Individual medical history will be reviewed at least annually in the case of a participant with medical diagnoses.

Any participant with Down Syndrome must present a physician's clearance that includes a neurological exam, obtained within the last year clearing them of Atlantoaxial Instability.

Participants must be of a height and weight that can be accommodated by the program's equines. As the available equines vary from day to day, these limits may vary from day to day, depending on the health and scheduling of the equines.

## **Dismissal of a Participant from Program Activities**

In the case that a participant can no longer participate safely in the program's activities, the participant will be asked to leave the program. Situations in which this might occur include:

- Participant's health changes to the point that it prevents them from continuing
- Participant's behavior is dangerous to themselves, the equines, the staff, or volunteers in the program
- Participants cannot follow directions to the point that they become a danger to themselves, other participants, the equines, staff, or volunteers in the program
- Participants experience a change in height, weight, or other physical condition such that the program's equines can no longer accommodate them

## **Participants / Volunteer Required Forms and Updates**

All participants and volunteers are required to complete the Participant / Volunteer sign up packet, which includes a liability waiver, medical clearance forms, and general information. Individuals not willing to complete the forms may not participate in any activities at the facility.

Therapeutic Horsemanship of Hawaii will obtain updated participant and volunteer forms annually starting in January. The updated forms will be added to the participant's or volunteer's files. These updates will include physician's releases where applicable.

## **Policy on Confidentiality of Participant Information Forms**

Therapeutic Horsemanship of Hawaii keeps all required forms for each participant and volunteer in the office. Access to participant information is restricted to staff and board members only.

All staff, volunteers and participants of Therapeutic Horsemanship of Hawaii have signed the Confidentiality Agreement for the organization and will not discuss any information contained in the completed forms that are kept in the files. No personnel will access the files for anything other than information needed for contact, in case of an emergency, or to support riding sessions.

Centers may receive requests from outside sources for release of information. Such outside sources could include judicial officer, caseworkers, therapists/medical practitioners or other equine assisted activity centers. All client information is considered confidential and must be treated as such. If you wish for your participants information, such as contact information, instructor progress notes or equestrian skill goals to be released to an outside source, please complete the form in the sign up packet.

## **Riding Sessions General Information**

All riding sessions are conducted under the direct supervision of a PATH Intl. certified instructor.

Riding sessions are either an hour or a half hour. Grooming and tacking will take place both before and after riding for an hour long session and either before OR after for a half hour session. Hour sessions generally are about 40 – 45 minutes of ride time and half hour sessions are about 20 minutes of ride time. The physical and emotional capabilities of the participant may influence the amount of ride time in each lesson.

Riding sessions generally have one to five participants in them. Lessons occurring in the small arena will be limited to four riders. We will only allow one participant per horse. Our normal riding lessons are group sessions, mostly having between two and four participants per session. We believe that riding sessions are more fun, engaging and educational when there is more than one participant in the arena. If guaranteed individual sessions are desired, they may be arranged at certain times for additional fees.

For participants under the age of 7 and participants with limited physical abilities or limited attention span, we strongly recommend a half hour riding session. Horseback riding is incredibly physically strenuous and takes a great deal of strength and concentration. For participants over the age of 7 who are physically fit, we normally recommend an hour session.

## **Riding Session Fee Payment**

As of October 1, 2014 session fees are as follows:

One Hour Session: \$50

Half Hour Session: \$35

Payment may be made at the barn by cash or check or by credit card on the THH website. If the participant provides billing information, a billing statement will be sent electronically. A monthly pre pay rate is also available.

## **Ground Sessions**

On occasion, ground lessons may be conducted. These lessons include such topics as tack and equipment, horse behaviors, feed and health and lunging. All ground lessons will be conducted under the direct supervision of a PATH Intl Certified Instructor.

## **Scheduling**

Our program is very busy, and we will do our very best to schedule your session when it is convenient for you. Due to our volume and scheduling issues, we are not able to schedule alternating weeks or anything other than once weekly riding sessions. We depend on our income to keep our program running and can not afford scheduled down time when there are many participants out there who would use that time. In order to “reserve” a time slot, participants must come every week.

## **Cancellations**

Cancellations must be made at least 24 hours in advance except in the case of emergency or illness. We may be able to schedule alternate participants in the case of known cancellations and appreciate the ability to rearrange our staff and volunteers when we know that you are not able to make it. Cancellations made less than 24 hours prior to the lesson or no-shows may be billed for the entire cost of the lesson.

In the case that weather or an emergency causes us to cancel riding sessions, we will give you as much advance notice as possible. Please make sure that THH staff has a correct phone number and email address to reach you in case of weather or other emergent cancellations.

We cancel riding sessions on most holidays. Some holidays, like Easter or Memorial Day, we will hold riding sessions for participants who desire to attend. However, no-shows for those riding session will be billed at double the cost of the lesson. Our volunteers and staff have families as well and enjoy their time off.

## **Choosing Equines and Tack for Participants**

We have a variety of horses at our program and a huge range of saddles and tack. Our PATH Int. credentialed instructors will choose your participant’s horse and gear for their riding session. Decisions are made based on safety, physical ability, goals for the session and horse availability.

The instructor will also assign volunteer leaders or sidewalkers as needed.

The tack and equipment are inspected by an instructor before each use to make sure it is safe and in good repair. The tack must be an appropriate fit for both the equine and the participant. The instructor will also be responsible for ensuring the correct fit of the participant’s helmet prior to mounting.

Equines have different personalities and ways of moving, and they each react differently to people. They are able to teach participants different things. We will do our best to choose the most appropriate horse for each participant, but be aware that we will frequently change horses as goals and abilities change. Requests for a particular horse will be taken into consideration.

## **Documentation of Occurrences**

In the case where there is an incident that results or nearly results in injury or danger to any individual an Occurrence Report needs to be completed and submitted to the Executive Director. These occurrences may be falls, behavior of a participant, volunteer or a guest, a natural disaster, or documentation of a “near miss”.

# **Volunteer Policies**

## **Ability of Volunteers to Perform Activities**

Volunteering with Therapeutic Horsemanship of Hawaii can be a very wonderful experience; however, it is a physically and mentally challenging job. Volunteer duties must be performed in a safe and competent manner. Volunteers must be able to perform to a certain standard to participate in the following activities:

### **Leading a horse**

Volunteers must be capable of walking and jogging for an hour while maintaining vigilance and control of the equine in the lesson. They must be able to participate for the duration of a lesson without water or bathroom breaks. They must be able to exercise safe control of the equine in the case of unexpected behavior from either the equine or the participant. They must be able to follow directions of the PATH Intl. Instructor in control of the lesson at all times. They must be able to lead the equine in a manner that maintains the training of the equine and exhibits good ground manners.

### **Side walking**

Volunteers must be capable of walking and jogging for an hour while maintaining vigilance and often using upper body strength to assist the participant. They must be able to assist the participant with the activities and follow the directions of the PATH Intl. Instructor in control of the lesson. They must be able to participate in this activity for the duration of a lesson with no water or bathroom breaks. They must be able to maintain safe control of the participant in all situations, including incidence of unexpected behavior of the equine or participant.

## **Volunteer Conduct**

Volunteers of Therapeutic Horsemanship of Hawaii will conduct themselves at all times as role models and good citizens. The mission of our program is to improve the lives of our participants, and they must be treated with respect at all times. Some of our participants may look differently or act differently; however, it is never acceptable to treat them in a manner that could be viewed as inappropriate or rude.

We expect our volunteer to be honest, helpful, friendly and mature.

## **Volunteer Attire**

Volunteers must wear covered shoes at all times and avoid flapping clothing such as jackets tied around the waist or loose jackets that are not zipped or buttoned. Sunscreen and hats are advisable. Please avoid shirts with inappropriate wording or logos. Shorts are fine and even preferable due to the heat and humidity at certain times of the year. Volunteers are encouraged to drink lots of water during breaks and have snacks handy.

## **Mounting and Dismounting of Participants**

All mounting and dismounting must be done by either a PATH Intl. instructor or the barn manager under the direction of a PATH Intl. Instructor. A list of qualified individuals is posted in the barn tack area.

Individuals may undergo training to be qualified to mount and dismount participants by PATH Intl. Instructors.

## **Dismissal of Volunteers or Guests from the Facility**

THH is a therapeutic facility, and as such requires a particularly calm and inviting atmosphere to achieve its goals and maintain a safe environment. An instructor or board member may ask a volunteer or guest to leave the premises for reasons including:

- Behavior that is dangerous to themselves, others, the equines, or staff of the program
- Behavior that directly interferes with program activities or creates distractions that impede the ability to conduct program activities
- Apparent intoxication or illegal behavior
- A breach of confidentiality of a participant in the program
- Behavior that is insulting or unharmonious to others, the equines, or staff of the program
- Inappropriate behavior or actions that cause a participant, staff member or volunteer to feel uncomfortable
- A demonstrated inability to follow direction which puts themselves, others, the equines, or staff of the program in danger

Volunteers or guests who are asked to leave for any reason will be treated with respect but must leave the premises immediately. The Executive Director will be informed of any such incident as soon as practicable.

## Facility Policies

### Tack Area Guidelines

The concrete pad under the roof and immediate surrounding area, including the mounting ramp, are generally referred to as the tack area. This area is frequently the center of a lot of activity, and everyone's cooperation is needed to ensure this area remains as safe as possible. Horses are very sensitive to loud noises and sudden movements. Due to the proximity of many people and horses there is significant potential for people or horses to get injured very quickly if an unsafe activity occurs. All participants, volunteers and guests are asked to help us maintain a safe atmosphere by following these basic guidelines:

- Only instructors, volunteers and participants are allowed in the tacking area. Parents, siblings, and participants who are early are welcome to wait in the designated areas or in the petting zoo area.
- Do not allow a child participant to enter the tack area unless there is a staff member present who is able to oversee their activities.
- Do not place chairs or loiter in the alleyways immediately in front of or behind the cross ties or in the pathway to the wash rack.
- If you are in an alleyway, remain alert for horses being moved, and stand well clear to allow horses to pass.
- Do not run, make loud noises, throw things or make other sudden movements (e.g., flapping out a wet jacket) in the vicinity of any horses, and particularly in the tack area.
- No umbrellas please.
- Maintain close control of children who are not participating in riding.
- Do not approach horses in the tack area without direction from a staff member.

**In any event, if a staff member directs you to do something, particularly if there is apparent urgency to the request, please do your best to comply as quickly as possible.** There may be times when a staff member sees the potential for an unsafe situation and must act very quickly and forcefully to prevent the unsafe situation from developing further. While it may not be apparent why the staff member felt the situation was unsafe, please comply with the direction first and wait until the situation stabilizes before discussing it with the staff member.

### Off Limits Areas

- Office – volunteers may use the refrigerator, but may not enter the Executive Director's office unless given permission. Participants or parents may not enter the office container.
- Horse paddocks – volunteers may access the horse paddocks to bring out and return horses for riding sessions. Participants may not access horse paddocks unless directed by an instructor. Parents and visitors may not access paddocks.

- Polo Field and Polo Horse paddocks – no one may go anywhere near the polo pony paddocks or the polo field, unless the exercise track is used for a field ride during lessons.

## **Emergencies and Emergency Plans**

### **Natural Hazards or Disasters**

#### **Flooding**

Flooding is the most likely emergency, as the facility is located on a flood plain. Floods occur every year to varying degrees. The following actions are to be taken in case of a flood:

- All riding or other activities must be canceled.
- All non-critical staff and volunteers must evacuate.
- All vehicles must be evacuated from the facility.
- Small animals may be moved to the Polo Clubhouse.

If the flood waters reach the top of the drainage ditch fronting the facility and have reached within a foot of the top of the bridge on the Kailua end of the field, the horses must be haltered and left in their paddocks.

In the case that water tops the ditch and the bridge, the horses will be let loose from their paddocks. Attempts may be made to get them to the top of the hill close to the Polo Clubhouse, but experience has shown that they will make their way to high ground within the enclosure of the polo field on their own.

#### **Falling Trees**

Our facility has many aging ironwood trees that occasionally come down or lose branches. We have been removing the trees as they become dangerous and as our budget allows, but sometimes they fall without warning. In the case of a falling tree, the following procedure must be followed;

- Get out of the way if possible
- Secure any horses that are in use or otherwise not in their paddocks
- Make sure all participants and personnel are safe and out of danger
- Assess any damage the fallen tree may have caused
- Contact ambulance or fire department if anyone is injured
- Repair any damage to paddocks or move horses to another paddock if needed

#### **High Winds**

Because of the ironwood trees at the facility, high winds are very dangerous. In the case of high winds, the following procedures must be followed.

- All riding or other activities must be canceled.
- All non-critical staff and volunteers must evacuate.

- Area and equipment must be secured as much as possible.
- Horses will remain in their paddocks unless a tree comes down and damages them.
- Small animals may remain in their enclosures unless there is another safe place for them to go.
- Any staff staying on premises must stay in the tack area, as it has been cleared of most possible falling trees.

## **Hurricane**

In the case of a hurricane warning:

- All activities must be canceled.
- Horses must be haltered with phone number (342-9036) written on halter and set loose on the field.
- Perimeter of the polo field enclosure must be checked and verified intact (gates closed, etc.).
- Area and equipment must be secured as much as possible.
- All staff and volunteers must evacuate.
- Small animals must go to the clubhouse or another safe place.

## **Tsunami**

In the case of a tsunami warning:

- All activities must be canceled
- All non-critical staff and volunteers must be evacuated.
- All vehicles and equipment must be moved as far inland as possible.
- If horses can not be moved inland, they must be haltered and let loose on the field.

## **Earthquake**

Earthquakes have a variety of effects. In most cases, earthquakes don't affect the facility, but in the case that one does, evacuation of personnel, horses, animals and equipment must take place as safely as possible.

## **Man Made Hazards**

### **Construction or Heavy Equipment Use**

Our facility requires constant maintenance, and often it must take place during activity times. In the case that construction or equipment is in use (tractor, lawn mower, Kubota, weed whacker, etc.) precautions must be taken to ensure the safety of all. Many times, our horses are accustomed to these activities, but in the case that an equine is responding negatively to an activity, the lesson may need to be ended or changed to a ground lesson.

## **Facility Hazards**

### **Water System Break**

Due to the construction of our water system, there are occasionally breaks or leaks in the system. If you see a break or leak, and know where the nearest shut-off valve is, shut off water to the area and contact polo field or THH staff as soon as possible. If you do not know where the nearest shut-off is, alert THH staff or polo field staff as soon as possible.

In the event that there is a water shut down, attempt to find out for how long the water will be shut down. If it is for an extended amount of time, water must be trucked in from the nearest location for the horses.

### **Loss of Power**

We don't use power for most of our activities, so lessons should be able to proceed without difficulty. In the case that the facility loses power, the facility manager should be notified and steps taken to restore it.

## **Equine Hazards**

### **Participant falls from horse**

Falls occur from time to time. It is the duty of the Instructor to manage the situation when a fall occurs, but it is beneficial if the other personnel in the lesson are aware of the procedure. The following actions must occur in the event of a fall;

- Assess the condition of the participant. If the participant is injured, seek immediate first aid or contact emergency personnel
- Secure the equine involved in the fall and ensure the safety of all other participants and personnel
- Inform the parent or caretaker of the participant
- If the participant is not injured and it is appropriate to continue the lesson, do so in a safe manner
- Complete an Occurrence Report and file

### **Loose horses**

From time to time, our horses or other polo field horses get loose. Horses by nature will run around when they get loose and other horses want to join them. If a horse or horses get loose, please take the following actions;

- Secure any horses that are in use, are in the tacking area or being led in between.
- If horses being used in a riding session are reacting to the loose horses, dismount the participants safely to the ground, if possible
- If participants do not have a leader, designate personnel to assist the participants
- Once all other horses, participants and personnel are secured, attempt to catch the loose horse or horses safely and without causing further ruckus

- Remember that if a horse is running straight at you, stand still and they will go around you

### **Biting or Kicking**

Our horses do not usually bite or kick, but they are horses, and these behaviors are possible. If you see a horse bite or kick, please report it immediately to the instructor in charge of the activity. If the instructor gives you directions on how to manage the horse in case it happens again, please follow the directions immediately, or let the instructor know if you are not comfortable with the directions.

### **Inappropriate Conduct of Personnel, Participants or Guests**

In the case that the behavior of personnel, participants or guests includes inappropriate actions, failure to follow safety rules, abusive actions or use of drugs or alcohol, mistreatment of animals on the site, please inform the program staff immediately and appropriate actions will be taken.

## **Equine Policy**

### **Screening Process for Prospective Equines**

In the case that the program is looking at an equine for purchase or to accept as a donation, the following things need to be considered:

- Does the equine have any dangerous vices, such as biting or kicking?
- Does the equine have suitable background in schooling and training?
- Does the equine have behavioral traits that would make it unsuitable for use in lessons, such as frequent or obstinate refusal to obey proper cues?
- Is the nature of the equine calm, reliable and obedient?
- Are there any medical or nutritional issues to consider?
- Is the equine sound and gaited to participate in a variety of activities?
- Does the equine have the mental capability to deal with inexperienced and physically disabled participants?
- Is the equine of a suitable size and conformation for our participants?
- Does the program have a need for an additional equine?
- Given our shared paddock arrangement, is the equine able to share a living space with another equine?
- What is the age of the equine?

In addition, the equine must be willing to do the following:

- Stand quietly when being groomed, tacked, and during mounting and dismounting and other activities

- Not be aggressive towards other horses or animals
- Behave appropriately with personnel, volunteers, and participants
- Be accepting of the mounting ramp
- Be calm around wheelchairs and other assistive devices
- Be led from either side at the walk and trot
- Have sidewalkers on both sides
- Be accepting of games and special equipment
- Accept loud noises and erratic behavior
- Accept mane tugging, hair plucking and hugging

All things taken into consideration, including, first and foremost, the immediate needs of the program, if the above questions are answered favorably, then the equine may join the staff of the program. The Executive Director and program director are the only staff members who may make decisions regarding the suitability of an equine for the program. No other personnel are authorized to make any statements that could be construed as an agreement to accept an equine.

### **Removal of an Equine from the Program**

From time to time, an equine becomes unsuitable for work in the program. The Executive Director or the Board of Directors may decide to remove an equine from the program.

Reasons that an equine might be removed from the program include:

- Unacceptable behavior, such as biting, kicking or bucking
- Health or soundness issues that make the equine unable to participate in activities
- Lease or borrow situation comes to an end
- Equine is unable to emotionally handle the program's activities and responds inappropriately with behaviors such as spooking, bucking, bolting or other unsafe responses.
- The program has too many equines

If an equine must be removed from the program, the following are possible results:

- In the case of chronic or minor health issues, the equine may be retired to an appropriate home or pasture situation.
- In the case of dire health issues, the equine will be euthanized humanely.
- In the case of a lease or borrow situation, the equine may be returned to its owner.
- In the case of inappropriate behaviors or too many horses, the equine may be sold or given to a different situation.
- In all situations, the best possible solution for the equine must be the result of the decision!

## **Lease or Borrowing of Equines**

Therapeutic Horsemanship of Hawaii may lease or borrow equines for use in the program. The following may apply in a lease or borrow situation, but agreements with the program may vary depending on the requirements of the program, equine or owner.

The program may agree to take over the responsibility of the equine's care, including feed, vet, shoeing, board and maintenance in exchange for unlimited use of the equine. Owners may use the equine on the facility premises, but only with the permission of the program personnel and on a not-to-interfere basis with the lesson schedule. When owners intend to use the equine during the lease, the owner may be asked to help defray board and feed costs.

A lease or borrow situation may be terminated by either the program or the owner at any time unless there is an agreement that stipulates an amount of time.

The program may borrow horses that are still in the care of their owners, for example, horses kept at the polo field by other owners, for use in riding sessions or camps, if the owners are in agreement.

The program may also lease its equines to individuals. These agreements may vary depending on the needs of the program, the equine and the individual.

## **Equine Health**

Therapeutic Horsemanship of Hawaii maintains records on the health of our equines, including worming, shoeing and health issues. Our herd maintenance program includes active assessment of feed and behavior, a regular worming and shoeing schedule and vet visits in case of injury or illness.

All equines are evaluated at the start of the work day by the instructor on duty. Any horse that appears to be unsound in mind or body will be excused from sessions for the day and appropriate actions taken to rectify the issue.

No equine in the program will be used for more than six hour of lessons or more than three continuously. Horses with age or soundness issues may have lower time limits. Records will be kept on horse use to ensure this policy is followed.

## **Equine Conditioning and Training Program**

THH staff will provide conditioning and training specific to the needs of our equines. Every week, horses will be scheduled for appropriate riding, lunging or turn out. The schedule will be kept on a pen board in the barn.