



# **VOLUNTEER MANUAL**

Therapeutic Horsemanship of Hawaii  
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## Therapeutic Horsemanship of Hawaii's Mission

THH's goal is to improve the minds and bodies of its riders using our horses as therapy tools. Our riders build strength in their bodies by learning to groom, saddle and ride. They improve their attitude by learning from our horses and receive unconditional love that only animals can provide.

### Basic Volunteer Duties

Therapeutic Horsemanship of Hawaii is a volunteer driver organization. That means, we can't do it without you!! THH does it's best to serve all riders who wish to participate in our program. This takes a lot of help from volunteers. Volunteers can help the program in the following ways;

1. Daily feeding and mucking of the horses
2. Getting the horses from the paddocks before lessons
3. Grooming the horse when the rider is unable or assisting the rider if they need help grooming
4. Saddling the horse when the rider is unable or assisting the rider if they need help saddling
5. Leading the horse to the arena or through the lesson if the rider is unable to ride off a leadline
6. Sidewalking if the rider requires support to ride the horse
7. Assisting the rider with lesson activities
8. Unsaddling and grooming if the rider is unable or assisting the rider if they need help
9. Putting the horse back in the paddock



Other volunteer activities;

1. Mucking the paddocks
2. Periodic checks of water buckets, and cleaning or filling of water buckets
3. Taking horses out to graze on leadlines
4. Combing out manes and tails
5. Cleaning up of barn and surrounding areas
6. Oiling saddles, bridles, reins and other leather equipment
7. Grounds maintenance, mowing, weed wacking
8. Grooming horses that are not being used during the work day

Proper attire for volunteers is long pants and covered shoes, just like the riders. Shorts are ok, as long as they are appropriate, and take on the flies and mosquitoes at your own risk! Sunscreen is a must, especially during the summer months, but we have a drawer full of it at the barn. Please use ours if you don't have any. We also have some water bottles, but you may want to bring some cold drinks, it gets pretty hot.

The work is pretty demanding, however, it can be the most rewarding thing you ever do. Sooner or later, a rider will look you in the eye and give you a smile that comes straight from the soul and then all the hard work will be very worthwhile! It is also an extremely healthy workout, and you may find your body getting stronger along with the riders!

### Horse Behavior

Safety is absolutely THH's number one priority. Horses can be dangerous due to their prey instincts and monitoring their behavior is a very important part of a THH volunteers job. Volunteers also need to be sure that they don't put themselves, a horse or a rider into a dangerous situation.

It's important to remember that THH horses do NOT display typical horse behavior, however they are still horses! Waving objects, unusual noises or the thing you least expect can cause a horse to spook. If the horse you are handling spooks, it's very important that you stay calm. Horses are herd animals and their relationship with you is based on you being their herd leader. If you aren't scared, they won't be scared, but if they spook and it scares you too, they will think that there is definitely trouble and attempt to leave! In the case of a spook, keep a tight grip on your lead rope and speak sternly to your horse, requiring that they return their attention to you. **DO NOT LET THE HORSE GO!** Especially if there is a rider on board! Any horse can spook at any time. Always keep a firm grip on your lead rope.

THH horses should not ever bite or kick. A few may lay their ears back in an aggressive manner, but any behavior more than that needs to be reported to a THH Instructor immediately.

When approaching a horse, be sure that the horse sees you coming. Talk to them as you approach. You can walk right up and catch most of our horses. On occasion, if they don't feel like working, they will walk away from you. If that is the case, just keep walking after them, hold the halter down low to the ground and try not to look at them. They will eventually stand to be haltered.

Most of our horses are also very friendly with each other. However, it's not advisable to let them stand too long together with their noses touching, especially the female horses. When in the heat cycle, female horses will squeal and stomp their front feet if they are allowed to stand nose to nose with another horse.

## Haltering a Horse

Many times, volunteers can help by going to get the next horse needed for a lesson. The horse needs to be haltered and led to the tacking area.

Each horse has a different halter. The halters are hanging inside the barn on the Kailua side of the front door. Many of our horses wear fly masks. Remove the fly mask before haltering. Follow the steps to successful haltering;

1. Unbuckle the halter
2. Hold the halter in both hands, left hand below the buckle, right hand on the strap that goes behind the horses ears about five inches from the ring.
3. Approach the horse from the left side holding the open halter below his chin
4. Raise the halter under the horses face with both hands, one hand on either side of the horses head, you should be standing facing forward to the left of his head
5. With your right hand, flip the strap behind the horses ears
6. Buckle the halter so that it fits the horses head



Hold the halter open



Bring it over the horses nose



Flip the far side of the halter behind the horses ears and buckle



When done properly, the buckle should be below the horses left ear and the lead rope should be positioned beneath his chin.

When removing the halter, be sure to buckle it back up for proper storage back in the barn.

## Tying a quick release knot

All horses need to be tied to the hitching rail with a quick-release knot. There should not be more than four horses on each side of the hitching rail. Consult an instructor when there are several horses out at once for the best place to tie. Follow the steps for a quick release knot;

1. Put the lead rope over the top of the railing
2. Bring the lead rope back under the railing
3. Holding the tail of the lead rope, cross it over and then under the end of the lead rope that is attached to the horse
4. Make a loop with the tail of the lead rope
5. Cross the rest of the tail of the lead rope under to the other side

6. Make another loop on the other side (you should have a loop on each side like a butterfly)
7. Put the second loop through the first loop
8. Pull tight



\*\* A great way to practice without a horse is to clip a lead rope to your belt loop



If you have tied correctly, you should be able to release the knot by pulling the end of the tail, but not by pulling the horse end.

You need to tie the horses as CLOSE to the railing as possible. If the horses have too much lead rope, they can get legs caught or start eating grass and stop paying attention.

## Grooming

Most riders at THH groom at least a little. If a rider does not groom, or needs assistance grooming, volunteers may help.

Proper grooming starts with the rubber curry comb. Use the curry comb in circles starting on the neck behind the head of the horse. The comb should be used to bring dirt and loose hair to the surface. The horse should actually look more dirty and messy if the curry comb is properly used.

The curry comb should be used on the horses body down to the top of their legs. Finish one side from head to tail and then the other side.

The next brush is the body brush or the soft brush. This brush is used in short strokes also starting behind the head and working back to the tail. This brush should remove all the loose dirt and hair that was worked loose by the curry comb. You can use this brush all the way down to the horses hooves.

Lastly is cleaning their hooves. The hoof pick should be held in your dominant hand, with the head of the pick coming out of the bottom of your hand, facing away from your body. Follow the steps to clean hooves;

1. Stand next to the horses leg, facing the tail end
2. Bend from the waist
3. Run the hand nearest the horse down the back of the leg



Curry Combs



Body or Soft brush

4. In some cases, you may need to shift the horse's weight off of the leg, using your shoulder or hip
5. When the horse shifts its weight, pick up the hoof and slide your hand down to his toe
6. Transfer the hoof to your non-dominant hand
7. In downward motions, remove all dirt and rocks starting from the heel of the hoof, clear all debris from the v-shaped frog area and from the edges of the shoe (or hoof wall if there is no shoe)
8. GENTLY release the horse's hoof back to the ground (try not to just drop it)
9. Move to the next leg

Some notes on good hoof cleaning

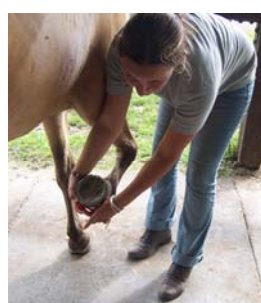


Hold the pick like this

Start removing dirt and rocks from the top, be alert to the shape of the "frog" which is the "V" shaped structure in the horse's hoof



Cleaning back hooves



Switching the hoof pick to the dominant hand after using it to pick up the hoof



What a clean hoof should look like—Also, the proper way to hold the hoof up

**\*\* Most of our horses have shoes, like this horse, but many do not.**

1. Some horses prefer their feet to be done in order, starting with front left, proceeding to back left, back right and then front right. Speedy, for example, will not pick up his feet any other way.
2. If a horse absolutely will not pick up his feet, you can apply a LOT of pressure on the back of their knee, pushing it forward. This forces them to bend their leg, be sure to be right there to pick up their hoof as soon as pressure is released.
3. MAKE SURE THAT YOU DO NOT PUT THEIR HOOVES DOWN ON TOP OF YOUR FEET!!! IT HURTS!!!!

Additional grooming may include baths and mane and tail combing.

## Saddling

Like grooming, if the rider is capable of saddling, they will do it on their own, but may need assistance. The instructor will decide which saddle or alternative equipment to use. Mostly we use western saddles and English saddles or some type of bareback pad.

Follow the steps to saddling;

English

1. Place pad on horse's back, the pad should be placed high on the horse's withers
2. Place saddle on horse's back on top of the pad. The saddle should be positioned so that the girth sits five inches behind the horse's front leg
3. If you need to adjust the saddle, be sure to move it in the head-to-tail direction only so that the horse's back hair

does not ride up. If you need to move the saddle forward, pick it up, move it forward of the proper position and slide back into position.

4. Pull the pad that is resting on the withers up into the saddle gullet.
5. Attach the girth on the right side of the saddle using the first and third billet straps, if the girth has elastic on only one side, the elastic buckles onto the left side
6. Bring the girth under the horse from the left side and buckle it onto the first and third billets straps as tight as you can make it
7. Be sure the girth is sitting about five inches behind the front leg

Make sure that there are no folds or twists in saddle accessories that could rub the horse and cause injury.

Western



Push the pad up into the saddle gullet



Always start putting the girth on the saddle on the right side of the horse

Nice job, Dana, but the girth is a little bit too close to the front leg

1. Place the square western pad on the horse high on the withers
2. Place the saddle on the pad so that the girth sits five inches behind the horses front leg
3. Push the pad that is resting on the withers up into the gullet of the saddle
4. Attach the girth onto the billet on the right side of the saddle
5. Bring the girth under the horse from the right side
6. Pull the girth strap out of the D ring
7. Put the girth strap through the girth D ring from back to front
8. Put the girth strap through the saddle D ring from front to back
9. Put the girth strap through the girth D ring from back to front
10. Put the girth strap through the saddle D ring to the left side from front to back
11. Bring girth strap across the front of the saddle D ring and through the right side of the saddle D ring from back to front and down through the leather loop in front of the saddle D ring
12. Tighten the girth strap by pulling the top strap below the saddle D ring knot and work the slack through the knot
13. Have an instructor or experienced volunteer check the saddle if you are unsure



Pushing the western saddle pad into the gullet

Nice gear, gang, but this girth is WAY too small!



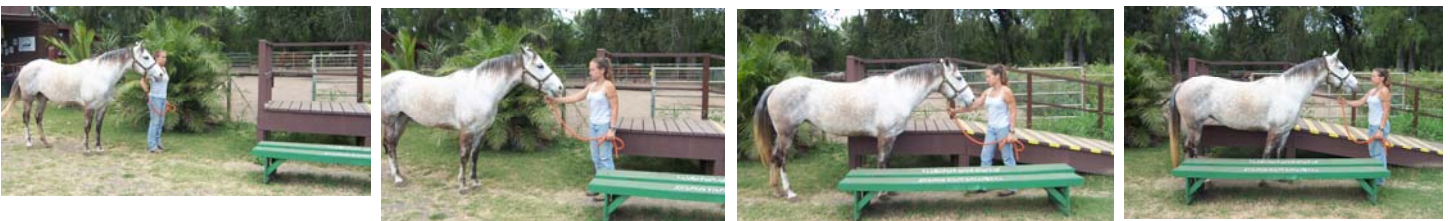
← Tighten the western girth by pulling up on the top strap with your right hand and pull the slack through the knot at the top

### Bringing a horse to the mounting ramp

ONLY THH INSTRUCTORS MAY MOUNT RIDERS FROM THE RAMP! When leading a horse to the mounting ramp follow the steps;

1. Make sure the rider is already at the top of the ramp before entering with the horse
2. Before entering the ramp, turn to face your horse, and walk backwards into the ramp leading him
3. Try to encourage him to step as close to the ramp platform as possible by pulling the lead rope in that direction or using your left hand on his neck to urge him
4. Be sure that your horse clears the offside barrier with his front and back legs
5. Stop the horse when he is next to the platform in proper position (sometimes an instructor will indicate placing the horse at a lower position on the ramp but otherwise, stop next to the flat platform, making sure the riders leg has enough room to clear the railing at the end of the platform)
6. Stand facing the horse, but do not crowd his head or put pressure on the bit or bridle, he may become anxious. The horse should be relaxed and attentive.
7. **MAKE SURE HE DOES NOT MOVE OR TAKE A STEP DURING THE MOUNTING PROCESS** A horse will shift his weight before he take a step, watch for signs that he is thinking about moving or that he is not paying attention
8. If the horse shows any signs of nervousness or discomfort, alert the other crew and remove him from the ramp
9. Wait for the signal from the instructor before asking the horse to move from the ramp.
10. Walk the horse out of the ramp area, paying attention to your riders feet not dragging along the platform
11. Once out of the ramp area, stop and wait for the instructor to adjust the rider's stirrups—if there is another horse coming through the ramp, be sure to stop far enough away to allow that horse to exit as well.
12. Do not keep the horse in the mounting ramp area any longer than necessary. It's a particularly dangerous time and place for the horse, rider and crew, so work to make it as smooth as possible.

After exiting the ramp area and waiting for the instructor to check stirrups is a good time to do a quick tack check. Make sure that everything is in proper position and the horse seems comfortable and relaxed. If you see anything like a twisted bridle part or a hanging loose girth, be sure to mention it to the instructor.



Stop and wait for the instructor to adjust the stirrups

\*\* It's best if the horse is standing "square" for mounting, which means that his feet are lined up with each other.



## Leading the horse

Horses and volunteers alike can develop very bad leading habits. One of the most common complaints about volunteers is their leading habits. The horses quickly learn to take advantage of poor leaders and our horses learn bad behavior very quickly! The horse leader is also the horse handler and can affect the horses overall behavior during the lesson.

Follow the steps to good horse leading;

1. Stand to the left of the horses head, keeping his head even with your shoulder. You should not be dragging him and he should not be dragging you.
2. Put your right hand on the lead rope under his chin about five inches down from the clip. You should keep your hand below his chin, and not pull UP on the lead rope.
3. Your left hand should hold the tail of the rope, folded (NOT LOOPED!!!) and not dragging on the ground.
4. The horse should follow your shoulder, not your lead hand. You can gently urge your horse with that hand.

A well-trained horse with good ground manners should not require any pressure on his halter. He should stop when you stop, walk when you walk and turn when you turn, keeping his head next to your right shoulder. In order to maintain this training, all leaders need to be consistent with their technique.

Bad behavior and how to correct it;

1. **Eating grass** is the most common bad behavior that our horses have learned. Do not let the horse drop his head to eat grass at ANY TIME. The motion of the horse dropping his head could unseat the rider! Correction includes a good yank to the horses head when he tries to drop and a sharp word like "NO!" but not loud enough or strong enough to upset the rider. If you are unable to pick up a horses head while he is eating grass, it is ok to wedge your shoe under his mouth and that should motivate him to raise it.
2. **Dragging you around** Try to keep the horses head even with your shoulder. If the horse is getting too far ahead of you and you can't keep him back, alert your team and circle the horse. If the horse is consistently dragging you, you can wrap the lead rope around the horses nose to give you more control. Do NOT grab the horses head or neck to try to stop them.
3. **Making you drag them** Again, the horses head should be even with your shoulder. If the horse is dragging, employ the help of your rider to kick them and urge them to speed up. You can also speak to the horse using words like "walk on" or "git up"
4. **Spooking** Always, always, always be prepared for a spook. In general it will come out of nowhere. Keep a tight grip on the lead rope and plant your feet. DO NOT let go of the horse! That will be the end of the rider! Above all, stay calm and talk to your horse in a soothing voice. It is guaranteed that whatever he is spooking at is NOT deadly and you need to convince him of that.
5. **Jerking his head at flies** is just rude. A light jerk on the lead rope and a sharp word "no!" should put an end to it. If the horse persists, increase the power of the jerk and the tone of your voice until he stops. Horses may shake their head from side to side if a fly is bugging it's ears or eyes. As long as they are not jerking your arm around, the behavior is acceptable.



Proper leading from the front. Note the position of the hand



Proper leading from the side. The horses head is near Dana's shoulder



Dana dragging Soona with a looped lead rope



Soona dragging Dana, and her hand is too high

Oh man! How many things wrong in this picture? →



If all volunteers work together consistently at proper leading, the horses will improve rapidly in their behavior and become a pleasure to lead! If you are ever uncomfortable leading a horse or do not feel totally in control, let the instructor know. There is no shame in being safe!

## Sidewalking

A sidewalker goes along side the horse to assist the rider. A rider can have none, one or two side walkers. There are many correct methods of sidewalking and if you are new to a rider, the instructor will probably brief you at the mounting ramp as to what is required.

Above all, you need to be alert in case of a spook. If the horse spooks, either hold the rider to the horse, or remove the rider from the horse. We also have some riders who will jump off the horse, or flop forwards or backwards on the horse, usually without warning. Instructors will alert you to those riders.



In some cases, the sidewalkers will need to be in constant contact with the rider to help them to sit up straight. Sometimes they need minimal support and sometimes they just need occasional support.

Riders with poor trunk strength will sway at a turn, a start or stop. You may need to support them if they start to sway too far off the side of the horse. Not enough support is not good, but also, too much support can interfere with the benefits of the horse's motion, so be sure to listen to cues from the instructor as to what is needed.

Always, your focus should be on the rider first and the horse second. Everything else is third, including watching for things that might spook the horse.

Sidewalkers may also be needed to assist the rider with the tasks of the lesson, such as stretching, reaching or throwing balls or rings. We play a variety of games in the arena, and while the riders need to do as much as they can on their own, they may need assistance.

While sidewalking, it is ok to talk to other crew members or to the rider, but please be sure to keep the topic of discussion work-related, and to stay on task. While in the arena, most times it is necessary to be concentrating on the tasks or activities, but if the rider is out for a walk on the field, it can be appropriate to engage in casual conversation. If anything concerning comes up during conversation, please be sure to inform the instructor.



## Dealing with our riders

All of our riders need to be treated with courtesy and respect. Their abilities and disabilities need to be acknowledged but not made a big deal of. They should have a chance to do things themselves, but be helped quickly if they are unable to complete the task. Many of our riders start off not being able to complete a task but are able to gain enough strength and confidence to do it eventually, so they need to be given that chance.

Always ask the rider if they need help before you help, even if it is obvious that they do. Try not to "talk down" to the rider, many of them may have physical difficulties or speech impediments that make them seem mentally slow, but they may be sharper than you or !!!



When assisting a rider to complete a task, avoid touching sensitive areas, and try to minimize physical contact overall. Nobody likes to be manhandled! Again, allow the rider to complete as much as they can on their own.

Please be sensitive to using offensive language around riders of all ages. It's ok to talk about horses "making doo doo" or "poo poo" or going "pee pee" or "shee shee" but also try to use the proper words like "urine" and "manure".

Inevitably, you will get a question regarding horses gender or reproductive equipment. Answer honestly, use words like "penis" and "vagina". If you are uncomfortable discussing it, refer to an instructor. If the rider's parent is present, do a quick visual check to see if they would rather

handle the situation.

Overall, we are very dedicated to creating an environment of peace and support for our riders. We need to correct bad



behavior in our riders as well, but in a positive way, with an explanation as to why the behavior is not acceptable and what behavior would be better. Always with kindness and respect. Always refer to an instructor if you feel a rider is out of control or behaving in a manner that is dangerous.

## **Back to the barn**

When leading back to the barn, the horse needs to stop between the mounting ramp and the tacking area. Very, very few riders are dismounted to the ramp. Leaders need to hold the horse still while the rider is being dismounted, be very careful not to let the horse try to eat grass during this time. Dropping his head could cause the rider to fall!

If you are sidewalking, the instructor may require your assistance to dismount. Usually this means removing the riders foot from the stirrup and maybe helping them to lift their leg over the horse.

## **Learning about horses**

Many of our volunteers express interest in learning about horses. Feel free to ask questions of instructors or the more experienced volunteers at any time, being careful not to interrupt the lesson for the rider. THH does offer one free hour per week of horsemanship training. The Community Horsemanship class provides an opportunity for anyone to come and learn about horses. The class does not include riding and it is an open format guided by the attendees. The Community Horsemanship class is on Saturday afternoon between 4:00 and 5:00 PM. Riding lessons are also available to volunteers at a discount.

Books are also a great resource. If you have free time at the barn, we have a couple of books available to read and some magazines. Books are a great resource and can provide different perspectives on horses.

## **Emergency Procedures**

In case of an emergency, call 911. Each instructor has a cell phone on them at all times.

There are two first aid kits in the tack room, one in a bag, one in a white box, both labeled. Both are directly inside the door, straight ahead.

Safety is the number one priority at THH. Please be sure that safety procedures are followed at all times!

