



North Okanagan Therapeutic Riding Association

NEW Rider Information

Box 58, Armstrong, BC V0E 1B0 Phone/Text: (250) 549-0105 ~ notra@telus.net ~ www.notra.info

Thank you for your interest in the North Okanagan Therapeutic Riding Program. NOTRA was incorporated as a society in 1984 and has been serving mentally and physically challenged children and adults of the North Okanagan since that time. The program was initiated on the recommendation of a physician in Kelowna who had seen the benefits of therapeutic riding in a program in his area, and recognized the need in Vernon and surrounding communities.

The benefits of therapeutic horseback riding are well documented and include psychological, physical, and social forms of therapy. The program benefits include improved attention and balance, stretching of muscles and tendons, and improved self-esteem. Social interaction with trained instructors and volunteers in this unique outdoor setting undoubtedly brings smiles to our riders' faces. Horseback riding benefits individuals suffering from cerebral palsy, spina bifida, autism, impaired vision, paraplegia, mental retardation and many other mental and physical challenges. Riders can continue in the program on an ongoing basis and progress to riding independently if capable.

Please read the list of medical precautions and contraindications and provide them to your physician when having the Physician's Referral completed. Riders with physical disabilities must have a physician's referral completed as part of the registration process. If a potential client does not have a physical disability, we just need a note of referral from whoever they may be seeing whether it is their GP, OT, therapist, etc. Deciding to accept a rider into the therapeutic riding program is an important step. Effective decision-making depends on several factors. Our primary concern is to provide a safe, productive experience for all clients. Included in this is the wish to "do no harm". Recognizing that horse-related activities do hold inherent risks, we need to assess client participation with a "Risk/Benefit" analysis. The essential question for all riders is, "Will the benefit of the therapeutic riding activity outweigh the risk?" This question must be answered with consensus by the entire therapeutic riding team – client, parent/guardian, riding instructor, therapist(s), educator, and physician. There may be others involved, depending on the individual situation. All individuals must be comfortable with the decision to ride or not to ride, by being familiar with all pertinent information. Other factors that may determine whether we accept a rider into the program include whether we can provide a horse of appropriate size and temperament or whether we have the specialized equipment needed to make riding safe for both the rider and the volunteers.

Spring and fall sessions take place in an easily accessible and comfortable location at the Historic O'Keefe Ranch. We are located on a plateau up in behind the main historical buildings. You do not need to park down in the main parking lot, to find us follow the driveway beside restaurant toward the animal pens and the barn. Please make sure to close the gate behind you if it was closed when you arrived. Follow the road up as it curves to the right, there are little white signs that say "NOTRA" that point the way. You can park anywhere on the plateau as long as you are not blocking the mounting ramp.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact our Program Coordinator, Dani Goldenthal at 250-549-0105. We hope to see you or your client / child / student at our next riding session!

Program Participation Guidelines

- **Paperwork and payment (or payment arrangements) must be in place in order for the rider to begin riding with NOTRA.** We ask that you do not put us in the awkward position of having to not allow a rider to get on their horse the first week(s) because this hasn't been done.
- In the interest of the well-being & safety of our horses, riders & staff there is a **MAXIMUM WEIGHT LIMIT OF 210lbs for all NOTRA riders.** We ask that this limit be respected so our instructors are not put in the difficult position of questioning and possibly needing to weigh riders that appear to be over this limit. We have the highest weight limit of the programs in BC due to a couple of horses we have acquired specifically for heavier riders; if for some reason we don't have / can't use those horses, this weight limit may be further reduced.
- **It is recommended that riders wear long pants to prevent pinching & chaffing and it is REQUIRED that ALL persons (including parents, care-aids, siblings, etc.) wear closed-toe shoes while on the NOTRA facility ...** being stepped on by horse with bare feet can cause horrible injury.

CLOTHING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ✓ Riders should - when at all possible - have shoes / boots with a heel as it prevents the foot from slipping through the stirrups. Light canvas shoes with slippery soles should be avoided.
 - ✓ Try to avoid track pants made of slippery fabric, it makes it difficult for the rider to keep their balance in the saddle.
 - ✓ Try to avoid pants that are too tight as it makes it difficult for riders to straddle their horse comfortably.
 - ✓ It is a good idea to bring sunscreen, sunglasses and bottled water in the spring and gloves, hats, etc. and several layers of clothes in the fall
- **Please arrive at least 5 minutes before the scheduled class time** with the client dressed and ready to ride. **If you know you will be late or absent, PLEASE call 250-549-0176.** There are usually four riders to a class and the planned activities for a particular class can be quite disrupted if the instructor and other riders are waiting on someone before they can start. If we haven't heard from you, **the horse will only stay tacked up for 15 minutes after the start of the class** at which time they will be put away and won't be brought out again. It is not fair to anyone, especially the horses, to be brought out again and tacked up in a rush right after they have just been put away.
 - **"No Shows" are particularly disruptive to our program. PLEASE make every effort to attend your scheduled class.** It is extremely difficult at the best of times to make sure we have enough volunteers to run a class. There is nothing worse than scheduling volunteers and then not having riders show up. More often than not volunteers feel they are wasting their time and are reluctant to return if they end up standing around for an hour. **If a rider or group of riders consistently misses their lessons, NOTRA reserves the right to refund their riders fees and give their spot to a rider who will be able to attend more regularly.**
 - **Please drive VERY SLOWLY while on the Ranch EVEN IF YOU ARE RUNNING LATE.** The management of the O'Keefe Ranch gets quite upset with NOTRA when cars speed up the hill kicking up dust for the ranch visitors or possibly endangering ranch guests walking on the ranch.
 - **CANCELLED CLASSES DUE TO WEATHER: Please call 250-549-0176 if you are concerned a class may be cancelled.**
 - ✓ Because the weather in the Okanagan can change so quickly, we wait until the last possible moment to make the decision whether to cancel or not (Unless it is absolutely soaked in and the forecast doesn't offer any hope).
 - ✓ As our volunteers are scheduled by blocks of 2 classes, when we cancel for weather, the classes are cancelled by block as well, ie: if we cancel the 3:30 class, the 4:45 class needs to be cancelled too.
 - ✓ If we do in fact cancel classes, we will first put the message on our phone(s) in case the line is in use when you call. At that point we will make every effort to contact all riders and volunteers.

Please be sure to mark the registration form with your preferred short-notice contact method.

- ✓ If a class is cancelled due to weather, we try to provide make-up lessons at the end of the session or a credit will be provided for the next session. Make-up lessons are only for classes cancelled by weather; we can't make up lessons that are missed for personal reasons.

- **We ask that parents, guardians or caregivers come prepared by wearing closed toe, comfortable shoes should they possibly be needed to assist their rider.** Our program is run nearly entirely on the generosity of volunteers. There are times despite careful planning that we are short of volunteers to assist the riders. Experience with horses isn't necessary, as you would most likely be asked to assist as a sidewalker. Cooperation on everyone's part allows things to run smoothly and without interruption for our riders.

- **For the safety of everyone involved**, we ask that riders are supervised while at the NOTRA facility. Staff & volunteers are busy preparing the horses for the next class and can't be expected to supervise riders.

We ask there be:

- ✓ No running
- ✓ No throwing things
- ✓ No climbing on things
- ✓ No kicking up dust

Of extreme importance is making sure that the riders aren't under the pole barn unsupervised where the horses are being tacked up. As carefully as we screen our horses for temperament, they are capable of being startled by a sudden noise or movement or from being touched or hit when not expecting it.

- **If siblings or non-riding children come out to watch**, it is extremely important that they be quiet and not run around while the classes are in session. Running up and down the ramp or rodeo arena bleachers, waving blankets, coats or umbrellas, etc. or climbing on the fencing around the arena have the potential to startle a horse and possibly cause a rider to fall off and/or a volunteer to be stepped on. Thank you in advance for your understanding.