



## Rider Handbook

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Instructor \_\_\_\_\_

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# **Lenawee Therapeutic Riding**

## **Lenawee Therapeutic Riding Mission Statement**

Lenawee Therapeutic Riding provides horseback riding in a specially designed program involving the use of horses and ponies. Our mission is to enhance the lives of children and adults with physical, cognitive, emotional and behavioral impairments through therapeutic riding.

### **What is therapeutic riding?**

Therapeutic riding adapts horseback riding to the needs of individuals with disabilities so that they can experience riding's physical, cognitive, and emotional benefits. The synchronized movement of horse and rider is used as a therapeutic tool to improve strength, balance, coordination and self-confidence.

Instructors and volunteers work as a team with horses and ponies. These animals are specifically evaluated and trained to work with riders with disabilities as well as with assistive devices such as mounting lifts, wheelchairs, etc.

Lenawee Therapeutic Riding (LTR) is a Premier Accredited Center by Path, Intl., the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, and International. We are also a Michigan State University Proud Equestrians Program (PEP).

LTR offers two, seven week sessions per year. Classes are currently offered weekday evenings. There are generally four or five riders in each class. We also offer ground lessons on a limited basis. Instructors assign leaders and sidewalkers to riders based on their abilities and needs.

For general information about therapeutic riding programs, go to <http://www.pathintl.org>.

## How Do I Register For Riding Classes?

### Prospective New Riders

- Prospective new riders should call the Head Instructor at \_\_\_\_\_.
- As spaces become available, applicants at the top of the Wait List will be contacted to schedule an intake evaluation meeting to assess their appropriateness for the program.
- Instructors make the final determination as to a potential rider's eligibility for participation in riding lessons. Safety is our top priority. If we do not feel we can safely mount, dismount or teach goal oriented lessons and provide the appropriate horses and volunteers for their safety, we will not accept that person into our program. Potential riders must be medically safe to ride; LTR uses the PATH Intl. Precautions and Contraindications as a guide.

### Active Riders

- Active riders register separately for each session. Materials must be received by each session's due date or a rider risks losing his or her spot in that session.
- Current riders can download registration materials from the link provided or request a packet to be sent via the mail.
- Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis.
  - Active Riders are registered before returning Inactive Riders and new riders.
- Class assignments are made by the Head Instructor taking into account each rider's riding ability, age, schedule restrictions and horse and volunteer needs.
  - Confirmations are emailed or sent via the mail if requested.
- Rider forms are required to be updated annually under guidelines established by Path, Intl. and Michigan 4-H PEP.
  - No rider will be allowed to ride until all these forms are completed and on file at LTR.
  - These forms will be available from the instructor via the 4-H website link or can be mailed, if requested, after January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.

## **Rider Status Policy**

### **Active Status**

- A rider is considered to have Active Status if he/she submits annual paperwork by the deadline and rides on a consistent basis as determined by the Head Instructor.
- The rider remains medically safe to ride.

### **Inactive Status**

- If annual paperwork is not submitted by the deadline and/or the rider does not ride consistently as determined by the Head Instructor, the rider will be placed on Inactive Status.
  - One email or phone call will be sent to alert the rider that this is about to take place to give him/her a chance to rectify the situation.
- A rider can also request to be placed on Inactive Status for medical or other reasons. This status change would be at the discretion of the Program Director and/or Head Instructor.
  - Rider paperwork would need to be updated prior to the rider being returned to Active Status.

### **Removal from Program**

- If a rider does not rectify the situation which resulted in their Inactive Status, one email will be sent to alert the rider that he/she is no longer an Active Rider in the program and that, if he/she wishes to return to LTR, he/she will need to apply to the Wait List.

The Head Instructor has the discretion to make exceptions to this policy.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Inactive Riders do not take up spaces that could otherwise be filled by Wait List applicants. The emails are a courtesy to the riders to ensure that they are aware of the consequences of missing paperwork and/or sessions and are not surprised when they are removed from Active Status.

## **Weight Limit Policy**

The first priority of Lenawee Therapeutic Riding is to ensure the safety of our riders, volunteers and horses. In order to achieve this goal, we have established the following weight limit policy in regards to riding in this program.

Weight Limit Policy: 190 pounds dependent upon ambulatory status, range of motion and discretion of instructor.

## **CONDUCT REVIEW POLICY**

Allegations of misconduct by riders/volunteers/staff including, but not limited to, inappropriate and/or abusive behavior toward others, failure to follow established safety procedures, incidents due to the use of drugs or alcohol and mistreatment/abuse of equines and other animals at Lenawee Therapeutic Riding will be evaluated. Decisions will be made on appropriate action to be taken by (in this order):

- A. Instructor relevant to occurrence
- B. Volunteer Coordinator
- C. Executive Committee

## Important Things to Know

1. Riders are required to wear long pants and appropriate shoes.
  - a. Even in hot weather riders will be more comfortable in long pants as their skin will be protected from being rubbed or pinched by saddle leathers.
  - b. Shoes should be closed toe and hard soled. Ideally, shoes should have a smooth sole with a small heel, but tennis shoes are acceptable if necessary.
  - c. Expect riders to get dirty and choose clothing accordingly.
  - d. The barn is often hotter or colder than the outside temperatures so we recommend that riders dress in layers
  
2. Riders are required to wear riding helmets in the arena, mounting area and stall barn.
  - a. LTR will provide helmets for each rider.
  - b. Riders may wear their own helmets if approved by the Instructor in advance. All helmets must be ASTM/SEI certified.
  
3. Riders should arrive 10 - 15 minutes before their class begins.
  - a. Riders should put on their helmets and wait quietly in the observation area until the Instructor is ready to begin class.
  
4. Riders, siblings, friends and parents are expected to follow all barn and safety rules.
  
5. Family members, guardians, caregivers and friends must remain on the property during their rider's class time.
  - a. All family members, caregivers and friends must remain in the observation area or remain on the property in the parking lot during the riding lesson time unless otherwise directed by an Instructor.
  - b. Siblings and young guests must be closely supervised at all times.
  
6. Always notify LTR if you/your rider will be late or absent.
  - a. Call the LTR instructor at \_\_\_\_\_ and leave a message. If you know that you are going to be absent more than 24 hours in advance email your instructor at\_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. Absences must be called in, NOT emailed, as Instructors do not have access to email at the barn and email is not checked as often as voice mail.
  - c. Volunteers are waiting to assist each rider. As a courtesy to them, we need to know in advance if a rider will be absent.
  - d. Riders arriving more than fifteen minutes late may be unable to ride during that class.
  - e. Three unexcused absences may result in a rider being changed to Inactive Status and may potentially result in a rider being removed from the program.
  
7. Classes are held during most inclement weather except in cases of tornado warnings or severe winter weather that negatively affects the road conditions.
  - a. We will make every effort to contact riders by email and/or telephone to inform them of a cancellation.
  - b. If you have any question as to whether classes will be held, please call your instructor. We will make every effort to contact you.

- c. To ensure that we can reach you during an emergency, please make sure we have up to date contact numbers for you at all times.
8. At times, unexpected events disrupt our schedule and cause classes to run late or be cancelled. We apologize in advance for any inconvenience this may cause you. We strive to have these incidents as infrequently as possible.
9. The Instructors want each rider to have a positive experience. If you have any questions or wish to share information with your Instructor, please feel free to do so either before or after class.

### **Lenawee Therapeutic Riding Confidentiality Policy**

Lenawee Therapeutic Riding shall preserve the right of confidentiality for all individuals (volunteers, riders and staff) in its program. As a volunteer, you must maintain the confidentiality of sensitive information regardless of how it is obtained. Information which must be kept confidential should include, but not be limited to: all medical, social, referral, personal and financial information regarding a person and his/her family. Breach of this confidentiality may result in either reprimand and/or the loss of staff job and/or volunteer position.

## **Lenawee Therapeutic Riding Horses and Ponies**

LTR borrows the horses and ponies used by the program. All have been selected for their quiet temperaments and have been trained to be comfortable working in the mounting ramp area, around wheelchairs and other assistive devices, as well as with leaders and sidewalkers. However, no matter how calm the horses may seem, they may occasionally spook at sudden noises or movement or for reasons unknown. For this reason, it is imperative to follow all barn and safety rules.

The horses and ponies used in LTR classes are wonderful animals and they deserve the utmost respect for their tolerance of tight leg muscles, bouncing riders, and hands which may pull too much or too often.

No one – leader, sidewalker, rider, staff or anyone else may tease, taunt, harass or purposely annoy, scare or irritate any horse for the purpose of exercises or games solely for the client's benefit. All horses will be treated with respect, understanding and in a humane manner at all times.

### **WARNING**

Under the Michigan Equine Activity Liability Act, an equine professional is not liable for an injury to or the death of a participant in an equine activity resulting from an inherent risk of the equine activity.



## **Barn Rules and Safety Guidelines**

### **Barn Rules**

1. There is no smoking anywhere on the property – inside or outside.
2. Stay in the Observation Room unless otherwise directed by an Instructor.
3. Only touch horses with permission and under supervision.
4. Do not feed horses unless directed and supervised by an Instructor. They are on specially supervised diets and extra food items could cause them to become ill.
5. Always use quiet voices and calm behavior while on the property.
6. Only riders, Instructors and trained personnel are allowed on ramps and mounting blocks.
7. Stay away from fences and paddocks – these are not leased by LTR and must be avoided.
8. All children must be closely supervised and remain with an adult in the Observation Room.
9. No dogs are allowed on the property or in vehicles parked on the property.
10. Cell phones are the only available phones for LTR. Instructor and volunteer coordinator have cell phones. There is always a cell phone on the white boards..
11. If you have any questions about ANYTHING, please ask. There is no such thing as a stupid question!

### **Safety Guidelines**

- 1. Always walk around horses and in the barn. No running.**
2. Always speak to a horse when approaching it and before touching it. Never approach any horse directly from the rear.
3. Pet a horse on its shoulder or neck, not on its face, nose, or mouth.
4. Always be quiet and calm around horses. They may become frightened by loud noises or sudden movements.
5. Control your temper when working with horses and never mistreat them. A horse will respond best when you are kind and gentle.
6. Wear appropriate clothing when working with a horse. Sturdy shoes or boots and long pants are required.

7. Keep your feet clear of the horse's feet. Do not kneel or squat around horse's feet. They outweigh you.
8. Never wrap a lead line around your hand or body. Hold lead line with two hands.
9. When riding or leading a horse, always maintain at least one horse length between you and the horse in front of you.
- 10.No matter what you are doing, the safety of rider, volunteer and horse is the main priority.

## **Lenawee Therapeutic Riding Team Members**

In addition to our equine team members, LTR relies on the dedication of many different people to bring the joy of horseback riding to our participants.

There are many people critical to the success of Lenawee Therapeutic Riding (LTR) - from the volunteers who arrive early to groom the horses, to the sidewalkers and leaders who work with the riders in the arena, to our Board of Directors who work hard raising the funds to operate the program. Many “behind the scenes” hours are put in to ensure that each and every rider has a safe and progressive riding experience.

### **Head Instructor**

Supervises Instructors, volunteers, barn staff and horses and overall operations of program.

### **Instructors**

All are Path, Intl., (The Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, International) certified and MSU PEP certified and Cheff Therapeutic Riding Center certified.

### **Volunteer Coordinator**

Works with the Head Instructor and Board of Directors to recruit and train new volunteers, schedule and supervise volunteers during classes and coordinates special training sessions and other volunteer related events.

### **Leaders**

Volunteers with significant horse experience. They are trained in leading techniques appropriate to a therapeutic riding class through LTR's orientation process.

### **Sidewalkers**

Assist riders during their riding lessons, following the directions provided by the Instructor. They have received training through LTR's orientation process.

### **Board of Directors**

Develops the program budget, establishes long-term goals and fund raising strategies and works closely with the Instructors to ensure the quality of our program. Board members are elected to two year terms.

### **4-H Representative – ex officio Board Member**

Serves as a liaison to the Michigan State University Proud Equestrian Program (PEP).

## **Lenawee Therapeutic Riding Budget**

Rider fees account for only about 26% of the actual cost of operating the program. The rest of the funds are raised through donations from individuals, corporations, foundations, grants and fund-raising events.

Here are some ways you can help support our program:

- Make a personal donation.
- Make a Memorial or Tribute donation to LTR.
- Investigate matching gift programs offered by your employer.
- Donate to our restricted scholarship fund.
- Tell friends, co-workers and others about LTR.

If you have personal or professional connections with foundations, corporations, or individuals that might assist us in our fundraising efforts, please contact your instructor, volunteer coordinator or any board member. You may also call the Extension office at 517-264-5300 and ask for Janelle Stewart.

## **Emergency Procedures**

All persons should know the location of the following items:

- Telephones and listings of emergency numbers and directions to the barn
  - Only cell phones are available at LTR; a cell phone is in the arena on the white boards.
  - Listings of emergency numbers and directions are located by the phones in the Observation Room.
- All exits from the stable will be pointed out during Emergency Drills during lessons.
- Fire extinguishers are located in the observation room and in the tack trailer.
- First Aid Kits (Human and Equine) are kept in the observation room.
- Fuse box is located in the observation room.
- Cold water is available from the hydrants at both ends of the stall aisle.

### **General Emergency Procedures**

The most important things to remember in any emergency are to remain calm and to help the riders remain calm and feel safe.

**In all emergencies, the Instructor is responsible for making decisions on actions to be taken and for designating persons to assist them.**

If an emergency of any kind (e.g. illness, injury, fall, seizure, storms, or fire) should occur, please listen carefully to the Instructor's directions. All riding will STOP until the Instructor gives further directions. No one, including parents, will be permitted to enter the arena during an emergency unless authorized by the Instructor. There should be no excessive talking or noise. Sidewalkers will position themselves to protect and support their riders and will explain the situation calmly and quietly. Leaders will position themselves in front of their horse and maintain control of it at all times.

If the arena or stable must be evacuated for an emergency situation, all persons should meet in the north parking lot nearest M-50 in the grass by the paddocks, keeping roads and parking areas clear for emergency vehicles.

All riders must sign the attendance book inside the observation room - either by themselves, their parents/caregivers/assistants - to allow for a head count during emergencies.

If any person is injured at Lenawee Therapeutic Riding an incident form will be completed at the time of the injury. If this is not possible, one will be completed as soon as possible thereafter. Even seemingly minor injuries must be reported and documented.

## **Loss of Electricity**

In the event that the loss of power results in the loss of lights in the arena, riders will be dismounted and returned to the Observation Room.

## **Inclement Weather**

Class may not be held during inclement weather including thunderstorms, lightning and high winds. A tornado, hail storm or severe thunderstorm warning, lightning, rain or strong winds or power outages are all conditions that may warrant canceling classes. We will make every effort to contact you if classes are canceled. **Please make sure that we always have accurate and up-to-date contact information for you.**

We will make every effort to contact you by phone.

If weather conditions deteriorate while classes are in progress and include any of the conditions listed above, classes may be dismissed and subsequent classes may be canceled. Periods of severe weather may cause classes to be temporarily suspended while waiting to see if conditions improve. If classes are canceled, all riders will be returned to their parents or caregivers. Therefore, it is crucial that these persons remain on the premises at all times.

## **Fire**

In case of fire, all persons would proceed quietly and calmly to the nearest exit. Any person holding a horse would take that horse out of the barn if possible and release them into the nearest paddock. The Instructor will designate an individual to call 911 and report the fire. Barn staff or persons designated by the Instructor will release any remaining horses to a paddock if possible. Some horses may become so panicked that it may not be possible to lead them safely and they must remain in their stalls or in the arena.

**The barn is to remain evacuated until given the “all clear” by emergency personnel. All humans are to go to the north side of the parking lot in the grassy area by the pastures nearest M-50.**

## **Medical Emergency**

Lenawee Therapeutic Riding's Instructors are certified in CPR and First Aid. The Instructor will designate individuals to get the first aid kit and/or call 911 if needed. There is a sign in the Observation Room with the barn address and directions so that emergency personnel can locate us. Do not hang up the phone until the 911 operator tells you to do so. Medical forms for all riders, volunteers, and staff are kept in the LTR tack trailer at the south end of the barn.

Both human and equine first aid kits are located in the Observation Room. Latex gloves are kept inside the first aid kits. Everyone should be aware that there is a risk of transmission of disease whenever anyone comes into contact with human bodily fluids. If you are assisting during an injury where such exposure is possible, please wear gloves.

## **Arena Accident**

If an accident occurs during class, all leaders must take their horses to the opposite end of the arena and await further directions from the Instructor. Some horses are calm at the halt while others do better walking around quietly.

Sidewalkers will remain in position with their rider until otherwise instructed. Sidewalkers will place an arm over the rider's thigh to secure them. If necessary, the Instructor will ask sidewalkers to perform an emergency dismount.

## **Emergency Dismount**

If an emergency dismount is needed, the sidewalker to the inside of the arena will notify the rider that he/she is going to dismount. That sidewalker will wrap an arm around the rider's waist and the rider will be asked to remove his/her feet from the stirrups (with assistance from sidewalker on the other side as needed). When the rider's feet are clear, he/she will be taken off the horse and will remain with the sidewalkers until directions are received from the Instructor. This procedure has been taught to volunteers during their orientation. If necessary, the Instructor will designate someone to call emergency medical services. The Instructor will notify all people if class can continue or if all riders must dismount and leave the arena.



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