



Michigan 4-H Proud Equestrian Program Reopening Plan

Michigan State University Extension is grateful for the opportunity to resume limited in-person programming during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic through adherence to protocols and guidelines that protect participant and public health. These guidelines are set forth by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), [Michigan Department of Health and Human Services](#) and the [MSU Community Compact](#). **Adherence to all MSU Extension guidelines for in-person engagements is required.** Modifications to these guidelines are available for therapeutic horseback riding offered through the Michigan 4-H Proud Equestrian Program (PEP), which offers youth with disabilities an opportunity to improve their balance, posture, coordination, confidence, self-esteem and social growth. In addition, the instructors and volunteers benefit from engaging with PEP 4-H'ers while helping them reach personal goals during their riding sessions.

GENERAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- Volunteers will be required to assist PEP 4-H'ers at close proximity, particularly when assisting 4-H'ers to mount and dismount, get in and out of a driving cart, or when sitting beside a 4-H'er driving a cart. As a result, face coverings that cover the mouth and nose will be required in each of these scenarios.
- Individuals may choose to wear face coverings beyond the minimum requirements. Participants are encouraged to have conversations in advance of their sessions to determine if they would feel more comfortable with a more expansive mask policy.
- Individuals accompanying PEP riders/drivers to their sessions may remain at the session but must practice social distancing by remaining in designated areas or their vehicle while not escorting the PEP rider/driver.

ELIBIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

Instructors – Must be current in their PATH International Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor and Michigan 4-H PEP certification, be an active Gold MSU Extension volunteer, enrolled in 4-H Online and have completed the Communicating through Conflict training.

Volunteers – Must be an active Gold MSU Extension volunteer, enrolled in 4-H Online and have completed the Communicating through Conflict training.

PROCEDURES DURING REOPENING

- Outside sessions are recommended whenever possible as this scenario offers more fresh air turnover. Face coverings should be worn when volunteers and 4-H'ers are in close proximity, including mounting, dismounting and driving.
- If conducting sessions indoors, arena doors and windows should be open to allow for natural air flow. The perimeter fencing/walls of the arena should remain fully enclosed, leaving no opening for the horse to exit while session is ongoing. Face coverings must be worn by all individuals, including 4-H'ers who are driving. Once mounted to ride, 4-H'ers are permitted to remove their mask until the time of dismount.

To contact an expert in your area, visit extension.msu.edu/experts or call 888-MSUE4MI (888-678-3464)

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- Horses should be groomed, tacked and untacked by a single volunteer whenever possible to limit shared surface contact and practice social distancing. Shared equipment between horses (tack, grooming and feeding equipment) should be limited as much as possible to reduce shared surface contact exposure among people and reduce disease transmission between horses.
- Volunteers should disinfect tack between sessions using a soap cleaner appropriate for the material (leather, nylon, cotton). Spray soap onto a paper towel and wipe off high touch surfaces including the reins, front (horn/pommel) and rear (cantle) of the saddle, and riding helmet.
- Knobs, latches, switches and other shared spaces that are touched during sessions should be disinfected by volunteers between sessions. Session scheduling should allow for a 15-minute period between participants to disinfect all shared surfaces before the next session.
- All parties must wash or sanitize their hands upon arrival and exit. Volunteers and instructors should disinfect their hands between riding sessions.
- All rider/driver teams (PEP 4-H'er and volunteers consisting of horse leader, sidewalker(s) or sidedriver(s)) should remain at least 12 feet away from other rider/driver teams. Instructors should remain six feet away from rider/driver teams unless they need to assist for safety purposes.
- Volunteers working with riders who drool, have hands in mouth or nose or have other involuntary saliva secretions should wear aprons with supplies to help mitigate contamination of bodily fluids including masks, sanitizer, resealable plastic bags (for soiled tissues) and gloves.
- Each PEP program is encouraged to have a designated flow of traffic to limit cross traffic and promote social distancing. This includes designated parking, one-way entry and exit points, grooming, mounting and dismounting areas, sanitation stations and escort waiting areas.
- Riders are encouraged to bring their own horse-riding helmets that have current certification by the [American Society for Testing and Materials](https://www.astm.org/) (ASTM) or [Safety Equipment Institute](https://www.sei.com/) (SEI).

QUESTIONS?

Contact Christine Skelly, Associate Professor and Equine Extension Specialist, Department of Animal Science at skellych@msu.edu.