



North American Riding for the Handicapped Association, Inc.

## Donating Your Horse to a NARHA Center

*"From the very first time she got up on the horse, there was a bubble of laughter and joy. It is something I will never forget."*

This is just one example of the many ways horses are contributing to the lives of thousands of children and adults with disabilities across North America.

NARHA Member Centers depend on the generosity of horse owners to acquire horses and ponies for therapeutic riding programs. Today, more than 4,500 caring and devoted horses of many different breeds, ages and sizes are serving individuals with disabilities.

Many horses are donated to NARHA Centers because owners outgrow them. Some are retired competitors whose owners want them to lead less strenuous lives. And some horses are donated because the owner's tax credit is more of a benefit than selling the horse. Whatever the reason for the donation, each horse must meet a NARHA Center's needs and pass a trial testing and training period before he is main-streamed into the program.

### **Considerations**

Horses are selected based on specific needs of a center's students and the types of services the center offers. No single type of horse can fill all the possible roles in therapeutic riding. The most talented horse's skills are lost if his abilities do not fit a center's present needs.

When contacting a NARHA Center regarding the donation of a horse, be prepared to share the

horse's background and health records. The following are important factors in deciding if a horse is suitable for therapeutic riding:

**Size** - In general, mounts averaging 14 to 15 hands in height are the most useful for the majority of riders. However, there are also times when a horse of 16 hands or more is needed to carry tall or heavy riders.

**Age** - The age range of mounts may vary from five or six years to 20 or more. The most likely prospects are between eight and 16 years.

**Health** - Centers will want to check the health of the horse. No center has the time or money to spend nursing a sick or lame horse. A full health and soundness examination is usually requested.

**Soundness** - This is a major consideration upon which the safety of the rider depends. Centers are very cautious in accepting a horse with any history of major lameness (navicular, ring bone, arthritis, etc.). A rider with a disability does not need a horse with a disability.

**Gaits and Manner of Going** - A good mount for riders with disabilities is one that moves forward easily and freely, picking up it's feet and responding readily to voice commands. In therapeutic terms, the horse's movement gives direct input to the rider's body.

**Attitude and Manners** - The attitude and manners of a horse are the most important considerations. For the safety of riders, the horse must be gentle and indifferent toward objects moving nearby or

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touching him. The horse should also accept new experiences calmly and get along with other horses. He should be able to reside peacefully in a pasture or paddock.

### **Trial Period**

Once the preliminary selection is made, centers almost always request a trial period. Working with a horse during this period allows the center time to determine whether the horse will fit into a therapeutic riding program. Since each center has different needs, trial periods will vary from center to center in terms of length and evaluation procedures. When a horse is accepted for trial, a full written health record will be requested. The record should include current and past shots, deworming schedule, dental care and shoeing needs.

Throughout the trial period, the prospective mount is closely watched for any habits that may cause problems in or out of work. The trial period also allows the horse time to understand his new surroundings and work while building a bond of trust and confidence with his riders and instructors.

### **Tax Deductions**

Please refer to your State and Federal Laws for available tax deductions.

### **Contacting A NARHA Center**

A list of NARHA Member Centers, including contact name, address and phone number of each state is available from NARHA by logging on to our web site at [www.narha.org](http://www.narha.org) or use our Fax-On-Demand system, (303) 457-8596.

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