



HorseSense Riding Academy

Progression of Horsekeeping Skills

-- It's not enough, in our view, to be able to ride a horse: truly effective horsemanship requires that riders understand and attend to their horse's basic needs. That means learning how horses are put together, what makes them behave in certain ways, and how to keep them happy and healthy. Horses are too often victims of "benign abuse" from well-meaning owners and riders. That's why we think it's important to offer horsekeeping instruction to both adults and children - even those that don't currently own a horse. We designed our progressive system of Learning Levels to give practical knowledge and hands-on experience - we want you ALL to be competent caretakers of happy, healthy horses! --

Level One - Red

Objectives: Student will learn basic safety practices for working around horses; simple identification of tack and grooming equipment; elementary equine anatomy; and basic needs of the horse.

- Know and discuss safety rules in barn, pasture and arena.
- Describe safe riding attire; demonstrate how to correctly fit a helmet.
- Catch horse in stall and pasture, with safe technique.
- Demonstrate safe leading from near side, both in barn and through doorways/gates.
- Tie horse safely, using an effective quick-release knot.
- Demonstrate basic grooming to prepare a horse for a ride.
- Know names and functions of basic grooming tools.
- Demonstrate picking out hooves safely, with knowledge of reasons for basic hoof care.
- Know parts of the horse, to include: withers, poll, croup, hock, fetlock, etc.
- Know parts and functions of saddle and bridle.
- Know how to store tack correctly, and give at least two reasons for cleaning tack and equipment.
- Know basic rules for feeding.
- Be able to identify good and bad hay, grain, and water.
- Demonstrate mucking and re-bedding a stall, cleaning stall thoroughly and efficiently.

Level Two - Yellow

Objectives: Student will refine leading and grooming skills; will learn to care for tack; to describe and measure horses; to apply protective boots and blankets; to identify elementary feeding principles and situations requiring veterinary care.

- Jog horse in hand, with safe technique, as though jogging for soundness.
- Blanket and remove blanket from horse safely.
- Correctly apply splint boots, bell boots, and shipping boots. Know what each is used for and which vital areas are protected.
- Clean and condition a saddle, bridle, and girth, knowing reasons for each step.
- Reassemble saddle and bridle without assistance.
- Care for a horse after a workout, to include: cooling out, thorough grooming and inspection, feeding and watering.
- Know normal TPR range for a horse, and discuss how to take TPR.
- Know basic colors and markings.
- Know basic types and breeds of the horse.
- Know how to measure a horse for height.
- Know reasons for basic feeding principles, to include discussion of roughage and concentrates.
- Know signs of colic and action to take.
- Know which injuries can be handled with minor treatment and which need veterinary attention.



Level Three - Green

Objectives: Student will be able to assess fit of tack; to identify basic first aid equipment; to understand concepts of conditioning for horse and rider; to apply simple bandages; to understand elementary stable management principles and routine horse care; to identify common breeds and riding disciplines.

- Fit a saddle, bridle (including bit), girth and halter to a horse.
- Identify items in equine first aid kit, giving reasons for each item's use.
- Take and record TPR.
- Measure a horse for weight and height.
- Administer a paste or gel dewormer safely.
- Apply a stable bandage.
- Describe ten riding disciplines (English or Western).
- Name five breeds in each of the following categories: sporthorse, draft, gaited, pony, color breeds.
- Discuss safe trail riding practices, including appropriate tack and equipment.
- Discuss basic conditioning for horse *and* rider.
- Know signs of a hoof needing trimming or shoeing.
- Know basic stall and pasture management practices to keep horse safe and happy, to include:
 - Provision for water, forage
 - Shelter and living arrangements
 - Fly and manure management
 - Seasonal considerations
- Create a simple calendar showing routine care needed for horse, to include: immunizations, shoeing or trimming, deworming, dental care and Coggins test.

Level Four - Blue

Objectives: Student will be able to perform thorough grooming; to understand action of bits and specialty tack; to identify farrier tools; to understand principles of horse gaits and movement; safe trailering practices, basic first aid and parasite control, and safe longeing practices.

- Groom a horse to turnout inspection quality (no braiding necessary).
- Perform a safety check on a younger rider under supervision.
- Know how to adjust different types of tack, including martingale, breastplate, curb chain, etc. Know how to cinch a Western saddle.
- Identify different types of bits, to include both snaffle and leverage bits.
- Apply a polo wrap and discuss its purpose.
- Know how the following injuries are treated: stone bruise, laceration, puncture wound, abscess, swollen tendon, injured eye.
- Discuss life cycle and prevention of internal and external parasites.
- Know names and functions of farrier tools used in trimming and shoeing.
- Know basic horse movement, to include number of beats in each gait, footfall pattern, faulty movement, and methods of detecting unsoundness.
- Discuss what conformation is and why it is important, to include basic faults of the leg, back, shoulder, neck and head.
- Name and locate five unsoundnesses.
- Perform a pre-trip safety check on a truck or trailer.
- Safely load and unload a quiet horse, with assistance.
- Discuss reasons for longeing, safe longeing practices and equipment. Demonstrate how to hold and give aids with a line and whip.



Level Five - Orange

Objectives: Student will be able to demonstrate safe longeing and an understanding of gaits and distances, to apply more advanced bandaging techniques; to evaluate basic conformation points; to plan conditioning schedules and relate horse's work and condition to feed rations; to continue expanding knowledge of stable management and veterinary care; to begin relating equine behavior to human management practices.

- Know elementary concepts of equine behavior theory and relate them to 1) riding and training practices, and 2) stable management practices.
- Longe a quiet horse for exercise, showing safe technique and consideration of the horse.
- Set walk, trot, and canter poles for a selection of three different-sized horses.
- Build a simple gymnastic grid for an average 15.2 hh horse.
- Apply a shipping bandage.
- Wrap a hoof.
- Discuss different types and reasons for clipping.
- Evaluate a horse's conformation, listing both good and bad points.
- Know basic conformation traits specific to the following breeds: Arabian, Thoroughbred, Quarter Horse, Andalusian. Relate to suitability for specific disciplines.
- Know stable vices, causes and possible remedies.
- Know specific immunizations needed for this area and at what frequency.
- Identify different types of grains, hays, and supplements.
- Discuss correct measurement of feed and suitable feed rations for horses in light, moderate, and hard work; including considerations such as conditioning, injury and/or illness.
- Create an eight-week conditioning schedule to prepare a horse and rider for a strenuous activity (i.e., horse trial, show jumping competition, fox hunt, etc.).

Level Six - Purple

Objectives: Student will be able to understand and demonstrate show-quality grooming; to evaluate longeing performance; to understand more advanced concepts of equine farrier and veterinary care; to identify basic daily horse management practices; to understand the economic realities of horse ownership; to understand safety issues for trailers and tow vehicles.

- Groom a horse to turnout inspection quality, to include appropriate hunt or button braids in the mane.
- Longe a quiet horse and evaluate performance and movement.
- Fit side reins.
- Pull a mane.
- Wrap a tail for travel.
- Know how to select and maintain a trailer and tow vehicle.
- Identify parts of the horse's digestive system.
- Identify different types of shoes and their uses, to include traction devices such as borium and studs.
- Identify a minimum of five toxic plants native to this area.
- Know location, appearance and treatment of unsoundnesses: navicular, splints, strained or bowed tendon, ringbone, sidebone, curb, bone spavin, capped hock. Discuss blemishes such as windpuffs and bog spavin.
- Describe causes, signs, and treatment of laminitis/founder, tying up, choking, thrush, skin conditions.
- Name five diseases of the horse and describe symptoms and preventative measures.
- Estimate the age of a horse using teeth as a guide; discuss number of teeth, growth, and dental care.
- Discuss stable and pasture management, to include:
 - Turnout schedules
 - Parasite management
 - Grass management
 - Different options for fencing and bedding
 - Routine facility maintenance
 - Daily care of horses
- Create a budget for keeping a horse for a year, to include: feed and board, routine health care, emergency care, tack and equipment, and showing and training expenses.

Level Seven - Teal

Objectives: Student will be able to teach basic horsekeeping skills; to demonstrate understanding of jump course design; to evaluate a horse's dressage performance; to demonstrate advanced health care skills; to evaluate more complex concepts of conformation and movement; to understand functional equine anatomy and relate equine systems to feeding, diseases and their control; to incorporate stable management principles in facility design.

- Teach a new student Red Level horsekeeping skills.
- Judge an Intro to Training Level dressage test, demonstrating knowledge of basic dressage principles.
- Design a stadium jumping course, demonstrating knowledge of distances and types of fences.
- Wrap a knee and a hock.
- Give an intramuscular injection.
- Thoroughly clean an udder and a sheath.
- Know uses and dangers of common equine medications and sedatives.
- Evaluate conformation of a selection of horses, discussing relationship to soundness, movement, and athletic ability.
- Know basic equine anatomy, to include: musculoskeletal, circulatory, respiratory, and reproductive systems; know what diseases or health conditions affect each system.
- Discuss basic disease prevention practices, including management of infectious diseases.
- Draw a diagram showing the major bones, ligaments, and tendons in the lower leg.
- Discuss methods of conditioning for different activities, such as dressage, eventing, games, endurance riding, etc.
- Discuss methods of starting a young horse from the ground up, including ground exercises, longeing, backing, and progressive training.
- Using a tag from a commercially prepared feed mixture, analyze nutritional value of feed (to include hay and/or pasture) and balance a ration for a horse.
- Discuss equine disaster planning, to include: fire and storm emergency plans, supplies, and evacuation procedures.
- Draw a diagram of a stable and pasture setup for 1) private 2-horse farm on 5 acres; and 2) commercial boarding and training facility on 20 acres.