



Criteria for Horse Selection

Horses are the backbone of our program and their well-being is our top priority. We have criteria we look for when evaluating prospective horses that help us select horses that are ideally suited to their job at our program. In general, we prefer potential therapeutic horsemanship horses to be:

Between 6-20 years old.

We accept horses older and younger than this depending on their training and condition.

Between 14-16 hands and built sturdy enough to carry an adult.

We accept horses shorter and taller than this depending on their training and condition.

Sound in all four limbs at all gaits, sane and healthy.

Unsound horses aren't safe – an uncomfortable horse may display unpredictable behavior. Soundness is extremely important in order to provide rhythmical, cadenced and free-moving gaits. Any unevenness in a horse's gait can be magnified for a rider with a disability and can actually cause a negative effect. A horse with an unbalanced stride can cause rider discomfort and/or threaten rider balance. Horses with limited abilities (i.e. that they can only be ridden by children, or only at the walk, with limited trotting, or can only be worked with on the ground) aren't able to best serve the diversity of our riders. Horses should have good vision and should be free from respiratory problems or other on-going health issues that require additional expenses and/or limit their ability to provide a safe activity for our riders.

People-friendly.

Our horses are exposed to and handled by a wide variety of people - volunteers, participants and staff. During classes a horse may have a leader and up to two people walking alongside the horse, in addition to a rider.

Well-trained and consistently worked with.

The discipline they are trained in does not matter, but consistent work and a "take it all in stride" attitude are key.

If you have a horse that you think may be suitable for our program, please contact us either by phone or email to discuss. Horses that live at our farm are either leased (meaning that the horse's owner lends their horse to the program but maintains ownership of the horse) or donated directly to the program. Since we are a non-profit, the donation of a horse can be tax-deductible.

Once we speak with you, if we determine that your horse seems appropriate for our program, we schedule a time to come and visit you & your horse. If appropriate we then arrange for the horse to be transported to our farm for further evaluation during a 30 - 90 day trial period. During the trial period, we expose the horse to the many toys, games and activities that they will encounter during classes. We also look at whether they seem to adapt to the lifestyle of working with many different people each day and are comfortable in our herd.

Thank you for considering your horse as a potential mount for our riders. We appreciate your consideration and are touched that you thought of us as a potential home for your horse.