

BENEFITS OF HORSE OWNERSHIP FOR TODAY'S YOUTH

Justification for school boards & administrations to accept equine sports by employing the same district-approved excused absence policies currently utilized for athletic and academic activities

Provision of off-campus physical activity approval request form examples which allow equine sports to count towards physical education credits required for high school graduation

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INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this document is to serve as justification for local school boards and administrations to encourage equine sports and student involvement by utilizing the same excused absence policies currently applicable to University Interscholastic League (UIL) athletic and academic activities.

This document also serves as a method for districts to submit an off-campus physical activity approval request to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) allowing students to obtain physical education credits applicable towards their graduation requirements through off-campus horseback riding and equine sports.

THE UNITED STATES HORSE INDUSTRY

The horse industry in the United States is a \$39 billion industry. It provides 460,000 jobs annually and has a \$101.5 billion effect on the United States Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The industry provides almost \$2 billion in taxes each year and contributes \$38 million to US goods and services. In other words, the horse industry in the United States is an enormous industry that provides today's youth a great place to be successful in their future ambitions.

-American Horse Council

THE AMERICAN PAINT HORSE ASSOCIATION

The American Paint Horse's combination of color and conformation has made the American Paint Horse Association (APHA) the second-largest breed registry in the United States based on the number of horses registered annually. Each Paint Horse has a particular combination of white and any color of the equine spectrum. Markings can be any shape or size, and located virtually anywhere on the Paint's body. These colors, markings, and patterns, combined with stock-type conformation, athletic ability, and agreeable disposition, make the American Paint Horse an investment in quality.

American Junior Paint Horse Association (AjPHA) members enjoy the same membership benefits as adult APHA members and can participate in APHA approved shows and programs. In addition, the AjPHA offers activities geared toward youth, including a youth leadership conference, art contest, photography contest, short story contest, and horse judging contest. AjPHA members are part of a huge family of friends sharing a common bond – a love for the American Paint Horse. AjPHA offers something for everyone; no matter how long they have been riding, where they live, or what disciplines they enjoy. AjPHA has members who show on a regular basis, members who ride for fun, and even members who do not own a horse.

BENEFITS

TODAY'S YOUTH RECEIVE FROM SHOWING HORSES

LIFELONG SKILLS

There is a variety of lifelong skills and characteristics that a horse owner gains from owning and caring for their horse. In a study published in "Professional Animal Scientist," the authors proved that "performance by youth in both horsemanship and life skills was above average." There are multiple things to learn and ways to grow by owning a horse.

Horse Ownership...

- Enhances decision-making capabilities
- Improves public presentation skills
- Teaches standards by which comparisons are drawn
- Develops good sportsmanship
- Develops self-confidence & self esteem
- Develops responsibility
- Enhances reading, math, critical thinking, & problem solving skills
- Maintains physical fitness
- Enhances leadership skills
- Provides scholarships & awards
- Teaches time management
- Offers an opportunity to be involved in an Olympic sport
- Provides a safe, time-consuming hobby
- Teaches financial responsibility & value of money
- Teaches sound decision-making skills
- Teaches goal setting
- Teaches compassion & friendship
- Teaches organizational skills & attention to detail
- Teaches commitment

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Multiple scholarships are available for students who show horses throughout their education. These scholarships are available from many different organizations and schools. They include entities such as the FFA and 4-H, various breed associations, stock shows and rodeos, state fairs, and many collegiate horse shows and horse judging programs. Often, students can receive scholarships for the majority of their college career from these organizations.

The American Paint Horse Foundation (APHF) also distributes scholarships annually to deserving youth, so they can continue their education and develop strong leadership skills. Over the past 25 years, the APHF has awarded more than \$530,000 in scholarships to students.

APHA YOUTH AWARDS AVAILABLE

- **Superior Youth Champion**- won by accumulating 270 points in youth competition, as well as Superior ratings in at least 4 of the 7 performance categories
- **Youth Champion**- won by accumulating 40 points in youth competition
- **Youth Honor Roll**- won by earning 6 points in youth competition during the course of one year
- **Youth Member of the Year**- give annually to a member chosen by the APHA Youth Committee through an extensive application process based on excellence in academics, volunteer activities, and horse show achievements
- **Youth Performance Versatility Award**- won by earning 5 Registers of Merit, as well as a Superior rating in 1 of these 5 events
- **Youth Register of Merit**- won by accumulating at least 10 points in any one event
- **Youth Superior Event**- won by accumulating 50 points in one event
- **Youth Top 20 Award**- given annually to the top 20 youth in each age group who earn the most points with one horse
- **Youth Zone Award**- given annually to the top 5 youth living in each of the zones on the APHA zone map based on total cumulative points earned within their zone during that year

EDUCATION

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS & SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

PHYSICAL EDUCATION CREDITS

Due to the increase by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) in physical education credits necessary for Texas high school students to meet graduation requirements, other forms of physical education courses must be offered. Many Texas school districts began offering students the opportunity to meet their physical education requirements by logging the hours they spend riding and taking care of their horse. Owning a horse is an enormous responsibility. It requires numerous hours each day to groom, feed, and exercise a horse, as well as to tend to the horse's stall. Due to the degree of accountability and physical efforts required to meet a horse's needs, some school districts provide students with a plan to log their hours at the barn caring for their horses. These students must meet a predetermined number of hours to qualify for their school credits by turning in logged hours they spend with their horses.

Texas school districts can submit an off-campus physical activity approval request to enable their students to gain physical education credits through horseback riding and equine sports. Students, in turn, must apply to their respective schools to get the appropriate credits for their horseback riding. Other states offer these programs, as well; however, each state and district has their own verbiage for them. California refers to their program as a physical education independent study, while New Jersey refers to it as a physical education off-campus program. Please contact your local school district to find more information about qualifying for off-campus physical education credits. If your district does not currently allow off-campus credits, contact your state department of education. They often have short applications for each district to submit, allowing students to earn off-campus credits. Some examples of district applications to the state and student applications to the school are included in the appendix of this document.

PHYSICAL BENEFITS OF HORSEBACK RIDING

Beyond the lifelong skills and dependability that young people learn from owning horses, they also receive physical benefits from riding and caring for them. Horseback riding is an aerobic exercise. It increases respiratory and cardiovascular rates in the rider and engages muscles throughout the entire body. Grooming the horse and tending to its stall are other forms of physical activity that accompany horse ownership. Horseback riding burns calories for an average-sized person similar to the rate burned by jogging or cycling. Increasing the speed of the horse's gait or the length of the ride increases the number of calories burned. Exercising and caring for a horse is just as much a physical activity for the rider as it is for the horse.

Horseback Riding...

- Increases balance
- Improves respiratory & circulatory systems
- Improves coordination
- Stimulates muscles in the legs, arms, and core
- Reduces stress
- Burns calories & helps with weight loss
- Increases muscle strength

-Charles Stuart Platkin, Ph.D.

BENEFITS OF HORSE OWNERSHIP

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PHYSICAL BENEFITS OF HORSE OWNERSHIP



There are many benefits to involvement with horses, for people of all ages. Equine activities may encourage physical activity, for people of varying abilities. For example, simply walking out to a barn, grooming a horse, lifting a saddle and riding may provide more physical activity than many people typically get, especially in our era of computers, television and more sedentary lifestyles. For those who don't want to ride, grooming a horse, cleaning stalls or feeding may also encourage physical activity. When people decide that they'd like to improve their riding skills, they may be inspired to begin a non-horse related conditioning program as well.

When supervised by certified instructors, riders with disabilities may have the chance to safely perform physical activities with the horse as a tool. Early research is showing that riding a horse may provide physical benefits for people with disabilities. At the same time, interacting with horses may provide mental benefits as well.

MENTAL/EMOTIONAL/SOCIAL BENEFITS OF HORSE OWNERSHIP

There are a variety of mental benefits to equine activities, and we are at the edge of a frontier of scientific research to actually quantify those benefits. In the past several years, professional organizations have formed to share the advantages of equine assisted activities with regard to mental health. At first glance, however, most people involved with horse are instinctively aware that there are social benefits, and that horses provide an outlet for stress reduction, mood improvement and that equine activities may provide a type of therapy much different from traditional means.

SOCIAL BENEFITS

For people living alone, simply interacting with another living thing provides a tremendous motivator and social benefit. Often, as people get involved with equine activities, they gravitate toward people with similar interests. There are literally thousands of clubs across the country that allow people to come together to enjoy their animals and preferred activities. For more information on these groups which serve the interests of people of all ages, contact your state Horse Council.

STRESS REDUCTION

Recent studies utilizing dogs and dolphins have shown that even limited interaction with the animals may provide a decrease in blood pressure and in the hormones associated with stress reactions. In our busy world, having an outlet to manage day-to-day stress can only be beneficial and for many, horses provide that outlet. Physical exercise is a scientifically recognized mediator of stress and it is clear that equine activities may provide exercise, again highlighting the potential for equine activities to reduce stress. Research has also shown that regular meditation may reduce stress indicators such as blood pressure, heart rate and stress hormone levels. While research investigating the role of horses in stress reduction still needs to be done, there is a meditative quality to grooming or working with a horse that may provide a similar benefit to meditation.

MOOD IMPROVEMENT

Most parents of teenage girls recognize that if their daughters are in a bad mood, interaction with a horse will often improve that mood. While research investigating the interaction between horses and mood improvement is ongoing at Michigan State University, early indicators are that there is in fact an improvement in Mood Inventory Scores of teenage girls after 15 minutes of quiet interaction with a horse. There is no reason to believe that the same would not be true in adults as well.



THE IMPACT OF HORSES ON YOUTH

Recent (2005-2006) surveys conducted by both the American Youth Horse Council and Penn State University have found that equine activities develop life skills such as decision making, communicating, problem solving, goal setting and empathy. In the AYHC Study, a significant positive relationship was found between total horsemanship skills development and life skills development.

-http://www.extension.org/pages/Benefits_of_Horse_Ownership

HORSE OWNERSHIP

RESPONSIBILITY & REQUIREMENTS OF HORSE OWNERSHIP

HORSE OWNERSHIP AT HOME

Owning a horse is an enormous commitment. The owner is accountable for the upkeep and care of a living animal that relies solely on him or her for survival. This involves basics such as providing food, water, and shelter, as well as more advanced tasks such as maintaining vet work, proper nutrition, and training programs. Horses must be cared for and exercised daily despite the weather or any other events that may arise. The responsibility and time management skills that youth horse owners learn are invaluable. They must balance the care of their horses with their school loads, and often their work schedules. The ability to create and maintain a stable, yet busy, lifestyle often results in successful young leaders.

PREPARING FOR THE SHOW RING

Shows are offered for every breed of horse, as well as for different disciplines of riding. Each show involves a variety of classes for the horse and rider. Some classes are judged on the horse's composition and athletic ability, while others are judged on the rider's ability to communicate with his or her horse and maneuver it through a course.

When youth decide to show their horses, a whole new set of tasks and responsibilities is created. Preparation for a show begins several weeks ahead of time. It involves registering for the appropriate classes by the registration deadline, reserving stalls for the duration of the show, ordering hay and shavings for the duration of the show, and making sure that all of the horse's health certificates are current.

Preparing for a show takes a lot of time and effort. The owner must groom and clip his or her horse and make sure that everything needed for the show is packed. This includes all of the horse's tack, leg wraps, grooming supplies, and food. It also includes the rider's show clothes, casual clothes, hats, boots, and exhibitor cards. With such a large set of tasks, organization is crucial to preparing for a successful show.

PARTICIPATING IN HORSE SHOWS

Participating in horse shows teaches young horse owners yet another set of critical skills. They learn good sportsmanship, friendship, attention to detail, critical thinking, problem solving, and many other skills during their time at the show. It takes physical and mental effort to prepare a horse for the show ring. Owners must make sure their horses are comfortable and relaxed in the new environment. They must be aware of anything new that could cause the horse to spook in the arena or in the stalls. A good relationship built on trust between horse and rider ensures that both are comfortable and safe at the show.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

YOUTH RECEIVE THROUGH HORSEBACK RIDING

HIGHER EDUCATION

Many colleges offer equine-specific degree programs for youth who are interested in pursuing equine interests further into their careers. Today, students can earn a degree in everything from large animal veterinary medicine to equine business. These degrees are offered from many universities across the nation at the associate, bachelor, master, and doctoral levels.

Equine Degrees & Certificates

- Degree in Equine Science
Orthopedics
 - Farrier Program
 - Equine Disease Management
 - Equine Sales Management
 - Horse Handling
 - Equine Management
 - Equine Event Management
 - Foaling Management
 - Therapeutic Riding
 - Equine Nutrition
 - Equine Behavior
 - Equine Production and Industry
 - Equine Reproductive Management
 - Packing and Outfitting
- Degree in Equine Industries
- Degree in Racetrack Industries
- Degree in Agricultural Communications
- Degree in Agricultural Journalism
- Equine Business Certification
- Horse Training Certification
- Riding Instructor Training Certification
- Horse Judging Certification
- Western or English Equestrian Studies
- Equine Massage Certification
- Teaching Certification

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES IN THE HORSE INDUSTRY

Many colleges and universities also offer opportunities for students to be involved in equine research. There are multiple programs across the nation to meet the interests of these students and to benefit the equine industry by expanding and improving on its goods and services. These student researchers help shape the future of the equine world by discovering and inventing new methods of treatment, new training methods, new pharmaceuticals, and a multitude of other breakthroughs.

Recent Equine Research Breakthroughs

- *Breakthrough in Equine Reproduction Announced in Lexington – February 2010*
Horse breeders can now directly test embryos for genetic traits including gender, coat color, genetic diseases, etc., and select desirable genetics from stallion and mare combinations.
-University of Kentucky
- *Development of the Equine Genome Map – May 2009*
Published studies by various research centers use gene map information to investigate skin diseases..., muscle diseases, developmental bone disease, allergies, immunity to viral and bacterial diseases, as well as coat color and physiological processes related to performance in horses.
-University of Minnesota
- *Does Combined Treatment with Acupuncture & Herbal Medicine Cure Anhidrosis? – June 2009*
The results of this study showed that Acupuncture and Chinese herbal therapy significantly reduced the clinical signs associated with non-sweating.
-University of Florida
- *Obesity and Insulin Resistance – July 2007*
Equine obesity is a growing problem in horses used for pleasure purposes, with many of them becoming insulin resistant and developing the life threatening hoof disorder known as laminitis. The link between obesity, insulin resistance and laminitis is being examined by our laboratory using the minimal model of glucose dynamics, a powerful diagnostic tool that quantifies the degree of insulin sensitivity both in the tissues and at the level of the pancreas.
-University of Maryland

EMPLOYMENT IN THE HORSE INDUSTRY

With the industry providing 460,000 jobs annually in the United States, today's youth can find any job they may be interested in within the equine industry.

SELECTED JOBS IN THE HORSE INDUSTRY

Prepared by Dr. Amy Ordakowski
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Animal Health

- Veterinarian
- Chiropractic Medicine
- Acupuncture
- Magnetic Therapy
- Homeopathy
- Research Scientist
- Nutritionist
- Cooperative Extension/Outreach
- Physical Therapist
- Equine Dentist
- Farrier
- Professor/Lecturer

Breed Registries and Associations

- Executive Positions
- Administrative Personnel
- Judges
- Youth Program Staff
- Technical and Licensing Staff
- Marketing and Promotions

Entertainment/Vacationing

- Dude/Guest Ranch, Wagon Trains, Trail Rides, Outfitting, Camps
- Counselor
- Recreation Director
- Trail Guide
- Wrangler/Stable Hand

Government and Law Enforcement Opportunities

- Research (health/disease)
- USDA
 - Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)
- Animal Care Investigator
- U.S. Department of the Interior
 - Bureau of Land Management Contractor for Wild Horse and Burro Program
- Mounted Police Patrol

Horse Sales

- Auctioneer
- Agent
- Appraiser
- Sales Manager

Manufacturing, Distribution, and Sales

- Tack Manufacturer/Distribution
- Feed Manufacturer/Distribution
- Co-ops
- Veterinary Products
- Bookkeeper
- Administration/Operating Staff
- Data Entry Staff
- Marketing Specialist
- Researcher
- Human Resources Staff
- Salespeople, Retail and Wholesale
- Trailer Manufacturer/Distributor

Publishing Industry

- Publisher
- Writer
- Editor
- Marketing/Promotions
- Art Director/Artists
- Researchers
- Advertising
- Support Staff

Racing

- Administrative
- Judges
- Video Race Patrol
- Track Announcer
- Simulcast Director
- Clerk of Course/Sales
- Track Stable Superintendent
- Handicapper
- Television Announcer
- Training Center Manager
- Wagering Personnel
- Pedigree Evaluations
- Trainers
- Grooms/Hot Walkers
- Exercise Riders
- Jockeys/Harness Driver
- Pari-mutuel Manager
- Pari-mutuel Clerk
- Money Room Personnel
- Telephone, Interacting, Internet
- Wagering Staff

Show/Board/Breeding/Lesson Farm

- Farm Owner/Manager
- Sales Manager
- Administrative Staff
- Trainer/Exercise Rider
- Riding Instructor
- Ground and Stable Maintenance
- Veterinarian

Sporting/Competition/Trade Show Organizations

- Event Manager
- Announcers
- Judges
- Photographers
- Media Relations

Supports to the Horse Industry

- Attorney at Law
- Equine Consultants
- Expert Witness
- Insurance Agents
- Bookkeepers
- Accountants
- Real Estate Agent
- Photographer
- General Contractor/Builder