



Program Horse Suitability and Policy Guidelines

Hello! Thanks for considering Special Equestrians as a possible home to place your horse or pony. We rely on donors like you to build our herd, and we could not function without your support.

Would your horse would be happy as a therapy horse?

- ✓ Therapy horses must be reasonably sound at the walk, trot, and canter. A horse's walk mimics the movement of the human gait and so is beneficial for physically and cognitively challenged riders.
- ✓ Being a therapy horse is a physically, emotionally, and mentally challenging job! It can be a great "retirement job" for horses with performance, show, or lesson experience. It is NOT a job for young, untrained, or green horses. Horses in their teens are the ideal for entering a therapy program.
- ✓ One of the aims of therapeutic riding is to increase a student's confidence and independence by gaining riding skills, so therapy horses need to be quiet at the trot and willing to help riders learn how to canter. They need to well broke, ideally with some basic dressage training.
- ✓ They should be curious about new things and people rather than nervous about unfamiliar people, and places, and situations.
- ✓ They need to be comfortable with a leader, one or two sideaides (a person on each side of the horse assisting the rider), and an instructor while being ridden by students with a wide variety of behaviors and skill levels.
- ✓ They should be people-oriented, very gentle, bombproof, have excellent ground manners, and be relatively easy keepers.
- ✓ They should not mind being handled and approached by different individuals.
- ✓ They should be able to stay sound in turnouts with uneven terrain.

- ✓ They should tolerate the many activities going on throughout a lesson, including tossing toys, playing wind chimes, passing balls and hoops, and working in close proximity with other riders.
- ✓ Therapy horses are ridden by riders of all sizes (though we do have weight limits), many with balance and coordination issues. We are NOT ABLE to accept any horse with behavior issues, chronic health or back problems, chronic unsoundness, or vision problems. We are also NOT ABLE to accept green or untrained horses.

The Evaluation Process

- ✓ Fill out Program Horse Application and fax or send to the address below, or scan and email to Catie Tukdarian, Barn Manager, ctukdarian@specialequestrians.org.
- ✓ Send pictures (at least one headshot and one profile) of the horse and, ideally, a short video of the horse being longed and ridden at the walk, trot, and canter. If the pictures and video are available online (via YouTube, for example), then indicate on the donation form where we can locate them.

Horse Visit

- ✓ If the horse fits our current needs and facility space, we will contact you and set up a time to come interview the horse on site if he/she is located in our area.
- ✓ If the horse seems to meet the program's needs after the interview, we will bring the horse in for a minimum 60-day Evaluation period, and the owner will enter into a Program Horse Evaluation Agreement. During the Evaluation period, we will continue to evaluate him/her for suitability for therapeutic riding and hippotherapy (a therapy session conducted by a PT, OT, or Speech Language Pathologist).

60-Day Evaluation Period and Financial Responsibility

- ✓ Our 60-day Evaluation period has been developed to best determine that the right horses are accepted into our program. This time frame may be reduced if a horse progresses quickly. Special Equestrians will accept financial responsibility for the board, feed, shoeing, and any necessary veterinary care up to \$300.00. The owner/donor will accept and pay for any additional veterinarian fees incurred by the horse over the initial \$300.00 and also accepts responsibility to ship the horse to and from Special Equestrians as required. Owners/donors are always welcome to come by and visit their horse during our regular hours by making an appointment.
- ✓ During the Evaluation, the horse will be exposed to all common facets of a therapeutic riding program, which include toys, balls, music, loud noises, sudden movements, wheelchairs, walkers, mounting blocks, mounting ramps, various mounting techniques, balanced and unbalanced riders, and other desensitizing. The horse's body language and reactions will be noted.

- ✓ The 60-day Evaluation period may be terminated by either party, for any reason, by giving 24-hour notice to cancel the agreement and by scheduling an appointment with a Special Equestrians staff member for the removal of the horse during our regular hours.

Completion of the Evaluation

After a successful completion of the 60-day Evaluation, the horse will be accepted into the program and the lender will complete the Free-Lease Agreement.

Free Lease vs. Donation

Special Equestrians prefers a free-lease situation, in which the owner agrees to having the horse returned to the owner when the horse is retired or removed from the program, rather than a donation of the horse to Special Equestrians. Horse donations are handled on a case-by-case basis.

Tax Deductions

Special Equestrians is not qualified to place a value on your horse for a tax deduction or able to provide owner/donors with the required tax forms. The owner/donor is responsible to locate their own equine appraiser, make their own arrangements for a tax deduction, and complete their own tax paperwork. If the value of the horse is more than \$5,000, donors are to support their claim with a written appraisal by a qualified independent expert that must be accompanied by the IRS form 8283. Special Equestrians is responsible only to acknowledge the donation by signing the completed 8283 form and issuing a donation receipt.

Horse Retirement/Removal from the Program

To remain in our program, horses must be able to perform the jobs SE requires. Under the Free-Lease agreement, horses who are no longer suitable for the program are returned to their owner/lender; donated horses are offered back to their owner/donor. If the owner/donor is unable or unwilling to take back the ownership of the horse, the horse may be given to a loving home or transferred to another facility. If seriously unsound, ill, or injured, the horse may be euthanized humanely ONLY at the recommendation of a veterinarian. NO HORSE WILL EVER BE SOLD AT AUCTION. All decisions are made with the horses' best interest at heart. Possible reasons for removal from the program would be:

- Health, injury, or soundness issues rendering the horse unable to perform as a therapy horse.
- Inappropriate, unsafe behaviors such as bucking, rearing, biting, or kicking.
- The horse is emotionally unable to cope with the pressures of the job.
- The program disperses all or part of the herd.

The information above is not intended as legal or financial advice; it is to assist you in your decision to determine whether or not your horse is a good candidate in becoming a therapy horse. Please feel free to contact us if you have further questions; we look forward to meeting you and your horse.