



# Stable Support Volunteer Manual

## Mission:

To provide children, youth, and adults the opportunity to grow and develop through therapeutic, educational, and recreational activities with horses.

## Role Overview

Stable support volunteers play a vital role in the daily care of our horses and the overall safety and function of the barn. By helping maintain clean, organized, and healthy environments, stable support volunteers directly impact the well-being of the herd and the success of our therapeutic and educational programs even though they are not directly involved with lessons. Stable Support volunteers work under the direction of staff and complete assigned tasks relating to horse comfort, health, and safety.

## Stable Support

**Minimum Age:** 14

**Requirements:** Complete all paperwork (application, waivers, background check, compliance agreements); attend all orientation and stable support trainings and pass all skills checklist(s); follow verbal and visual instructions and communicate effectively with staff and fellow volunteers.

## Required Knowledge & Skills

- Safety
  - Entering Stalls
  - Calm Confidence and Energy/Emotional Awareness
  - Moving Around a Loose Horse
  - Moving the Horse
  - Where to Best Position Self in Various Situations (e.g., stall, paddock, holding area, pasture)
- Horse Behavior
  - Body Language
- Emergency Procedures
  - Loose Horse
  - Fire
  - Weather Conditions
  - Injury (Horse or Human)
- Mucking
  - Stalls With and Without Shavings
  - Paddocks
  - Doorways
  - Holding Area
- Waste Management



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## ***Benefits of being Stable Support***

### **Sense of Productivity &**

**Accomplishment:** There is deep satisfaction in beginning with a mess and leaving behind a clean, orderly, and welcoming environment.

**Mindfulness & Presence:** The steady rhythm of barn chores encourages mindfulness, calm, and being fully present in the moment.

**Ability to Serve:** Stable support is a meaningful way to serve behind the scenes, helping make every lesson and every rider's experience possible.

### **Supporting Herd Health:**

Consistent cleaning and barn upkeep promote herd health while helping reduce flies, rodents, and other pests.

**Full-Body Movement:** Stable support provides a functional, full-body workout through lifting, pushing, pulling, carrying, and twisting in purposeful, real-world tasks.

- Distributing Prepared Hay Nets and Feed Pans
- Cleaning Automatic Waterers/Water Troughs

### **Time Commitment**

- Flexible commitment based on personal schedule
  - Schedule with Director of Equine Wellness and Volunteer Operations
- Chore shifts are offered in the morning and afternoon during the lesson season and during the afternoon in the off season.
- Chore times vary throughout the year and are adjusted based on seasonal changes in daylight.
  - Morning chores historically have a start time between 6:45 and 7:30 a.m.
  - Evening chores historically have a start time between 3:00 and 5:00 p.m.
- Stable chores typically require 1–2 hours to complete. Additional cleaning tasks (such as water troughs, feed pans, counters, and work surfaces) may extend this time.

### **Physical Requirements**

- Stand and walk for extended periods on uneven or potentially slippery surfaces (rubber, dirt, mud, concrete, gravel, and grass).
- Maintain balance and awareness while working around horses and equipment
- Bend, squat, kneel, and reach repeatedly while performing tasks such as mucking stalls and cleaning water troughs.
- Lift, carry, push, or pull equipment and materials weighing up to **60 pounds** (e.g., hay bales, filled muck buckets, feed pans, water troughs, hay nets, etc.).
- Use manual tools such as pitchforks, manure forks, brooms, wheelbarrows, and hoses safely and effectively.
- Work in varying weather conditions, temperatures, dust levels, and typical barn environments.

### **Training & Supervision**

- Complete all orientation and stable support trainings
- Report to Director of Equine Wellness and Volunteer Operations

Note: This section of the manual assumes you have arrived, signed in, checked the posted lesson schedules, understand your assigned role, and are ready to carry out the following responsibilities. If at any time you are unsure of expectations, procedures, or priorities, ask an instructor or director for clarification.

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### Locate and Check In With Staff

Before beginning **any** stable support tasks, volunteers must check in with staff. Stable operations change frequently based on horse health, herd dynamics, lesson schedules, weather, and facility needs. Staff direction ensures the safety of both horses and people.

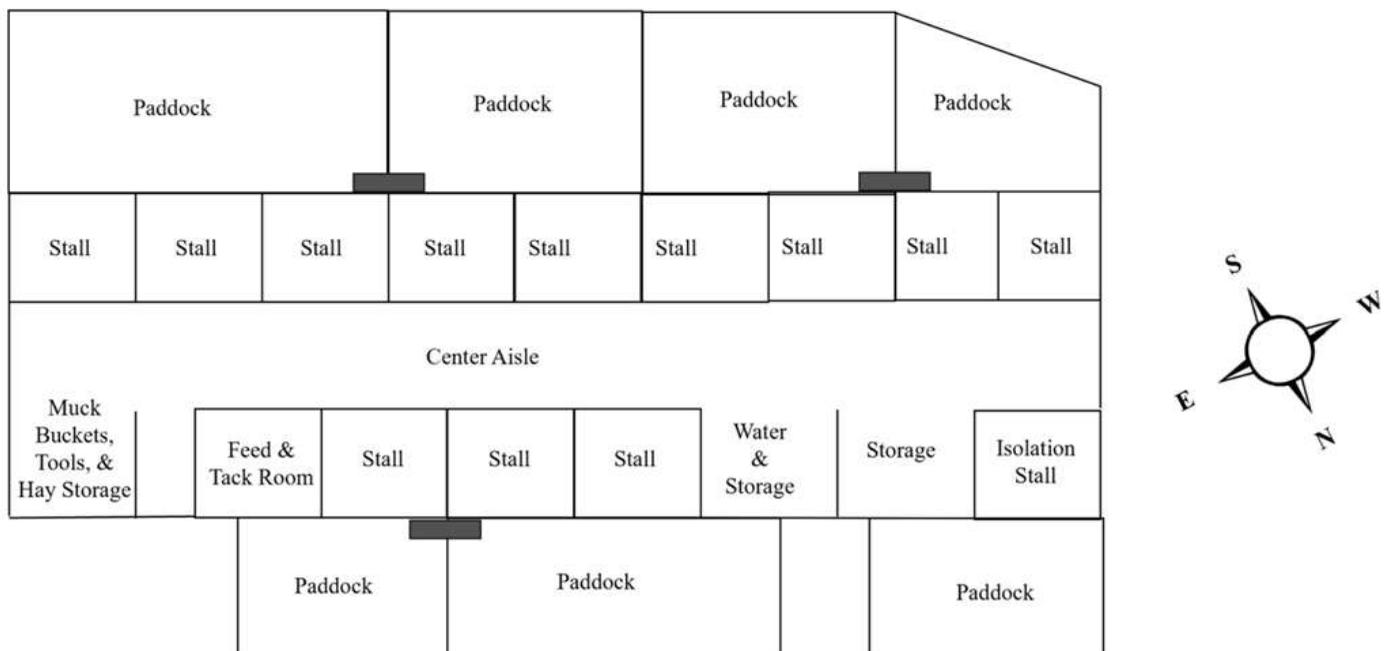
**Do not initiate chores enter horse spaces, feed, or handle equipment until you have staff approval for the task.**

- Locate the staff in charge of chores
  - Staff can be found in the main building (office, tack room, arena), stable, paddocks, or pasture.
  - Enter the stable using the service door (announce your presence by saying “**Door**” if it is closed; a horse may be tied in the aisle)

### Understanding the Layout of the Stable & Paddocks

The stable features 7 – 12’ X 12’ stalls and 2 – 10’ X 12’ stalls on the south side. These nine stalls are divided into 4 paddocks. Note: Horses are assigned to specific stalls that run into each of the paddocks; however, they share the stall and paddock space and are free to enter and exit the stalls into their paddock areas at liberty.

### Stable layout diagram:



The north wall houses several storage areas, along with a feed and tack room, 3 – 12’ X 12’ stalls, and another 12’ X 12’ stall used as an “isolation stall.” Automatic waters are shared between paddocks to ensure all horses have access to fresh water, apart from the isolation stall.

As illustrated in the orientation training materials, the paddocks along the south side of the stable tie into a holding area that is connected to pastures 3 and 4. Pastures 1 and 2 lie to the west and horses are haltered and lead between them and the stables.

## **Stable Support Responsibilities**

### **Cleaning the Stable**

Maintaining a clean environment is essential for horse health, safety, and comfort. Proper cleaning reduces the risk of illness and injury, supports good hoof and respiratory health, helps control flies, and prevents other issues such as colic.

Stable support volunteers assist with cleaning horse stalls, paddocks, holding area, and the barn aisle. Therefore, protective footwear is required. We recommend waterproof boots or rubber boots.

All cleaning tasks are completed using approved tools and methods under staff direction.

### **Mucking**

Stalls are cleaned twice a day during the warmer seasons and once a day during the winter.

### **Tools Commonly Used**

- **Manure Fork**
  - Use with care, control, and minimal force
  - Designed to lift manure, not to pry, stab, or dig
  - Do not use manure forks to:
    - Dig into hard ground
    - Pry against stall mats or packed footing
    - Break up frozen manure
  - Aggressive use can cause forks to bend or break, creating a safety hazard
  - If manure is frozen or stuck, switch to a shovel
- **Shovel**
- **Broom**
- **Muck Bucket or Wheel Barrow**

### **Entering the Stall**

Entering a horse's stall places a volunteer directly in the horse's personal space and requires additional awareness, skill, and training. For this reason, only volunteers who have successfully demonstrated required skills may enter horse stalls, paddocks, and the holding area when horses are present.

Check the stall surroundings. Is there more than one horse in the stall? Keep in mind that while our horses do have good ground manners and respect, they are horses. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

### **Approaching and Moving around the Horse**

- Before approaching the horse do a quick check-in with yourself. Center yourself, take a deep breath, and be present in the moment to ensure your energy is calm and confident.
- Horses read body language and can detect the slightest difference in your physical and emotional states.
- Be aware of your surroundings and the location of other volunteers and horses.
- Make sure the horse knows you are coming into the stall – don't be so quiet that you surprise the horse. Before you even enter use your voice to get the horse's attention. Greet him using his name.
- Open the stall door. If the horse's hindquarters are towards you, try to get the horse to turn in your direction. If this is not possible, make sure you have his attention and place your hand on his

hindquarters gently before stepping into the stall or enter from another stall. It is always best to walk toward the horse's **shoulder**, not straight at the face or hindquarters.

- Talk to the horse while holding your hand out towards him and offer him the chance to smell it and acknowledge your presence.

### **Some signs that the horse is not comfortable with you approaching:**

- Pinned ears (held flat against the head) = fear or aggression
- Raised tail = discomfort or tension
- Wide eyes (whites showing) and high head = anxiety or fear
- Tense body posture = fear (ready to bolt or flee)
- Wide nostrils or blowing = excitement, curiosity, or a state of alertness. It can also indicate stress or fear.
- Turning or walking away = "Leave me alone." or "I don't know you."
- Swishing tail, tense neck, turning rump towards you = anxiety, threatening or fear

If you notice any of these signs, STOP, back away and give the horse time and space. Go to another stall to clean or ask for help.

### **General Mucking Procedures**

Note: All stall floors have thick rubber mats. Occasionally, pine shavings may be spread in the stalls.

- Gather your cleaning tools.
- Enter stall, pull muck bucket/wheel barrow from behind you, turn and close stall door.
- Remove **all manure** from the stall; place in muck bucket/wheel barrow.
  - People develop personal tool preference: manure fork, shovel, or broom.
- After manure removal, sweep the stall floor to remove excess waste, sand, and hay chaff by sweeping it out the door (especially in the warmer months).
  - This reduces attraction of pests and minimizes sand colic.

### **Stalls With Shavings**

- Use a manure fork to pick up manure. Gently shake the fork to allow clean shavings to fall back into the stall. Place manure into muck bucket/wheel barrow.
  - Wet/soiled shavings should be removed with a shovel.
- Keep as much of the clean, dry shavings in place as possible.
- Pull shavings away from the walls and doorways.
- Do not strip stalls (remove all shavings) unless directed by staff.

### **Exterior Stall Doorways**

All stalls open to the outside. It is important to be able to open and close the exterior doors properly. This reduces wear on the doors and hardware and allows for horses to be confined to their stalls in the event of inclement weather, the need for stall rest, individual feeding, and so forth.

- Keep doorways clear of:
  - Built-up dirt
  - Manure
  - Mud
  - Snow and ice (seasonally)

### **Cleaning Paddocks**

- Remove manure only
- Leave dirt, screenings and mud in place
  - Avoid creating holes or uneven footing
- Use manure forks and appropriate tools to lift waste cleanly from the surface

### **While Cleaning Paddocks**

- **Observe automatic waterers** for:
  - Cleanliness
  - Proper function
  - Signs of freezing during winter months
- Report any concerns to staff.  
(Detailed cleaning and maintenance of automatic waterers is covered in a later section.)

### **Cleaning the Holding Area**

- The holding area is not cleaned daily.
- It is cleaned as needed 2 – 3 times per week.
- Follow the same principles as paddock cleaning:
  - Remove manure
  - Do not dig or disturb footing
- Staff will advise when holding area cleaning is required.

### **Cleaning the Barn Aisle**

- Use manure fork to remove excess hay from outside horse stalls and place back into the horse's stall.
  - If using the blower, try to blow in the direction of the breeze flowing through the stable.
  - Blow dirt, hay, and debris to the end of the stable. Pick up with manure fork or broom/shovel as best as possible. Place in muck bucket/wheel barrow.
  - Blow remaining debris out the door.
- Keep walkways clear to reduce slip and trip hazards.
- Return tools to their designated storage areas after use.

If at any point you are unsure how thoroughly an area should be cleaned or which tools to use, ask staff for guidance. Proper technique protects the horses, the facility, and you.

### **Waste Disposal**

- Empty muck bucket/wheel barrow as needed while cleaning.
- Dispose of waste in designated areas. This area changes with the season and removal of waste from the property.
- Do not leave muck buckets/wheel barrows in the barn that contain waste – especially in the warmer season.

### **Distributing Prepared Hay Nets and Feed Pans**

To maintain safety and consistency, stable support volunteers limit time spent inside horse spaces. Hay and feed pans are distributed using methods that allow volunteers to remain outside the stall whenever possible.

#### **General Guidelines**

- Begin feeding tasks only under direction of director.
- Distribute prepared hay nets and feed pans as directed.
- Do not alter amounts, swap feed, or make substitutions.

- If something does not look correct, ask staff.

### **Distributing Prepared Hay Nets**

- Remain outside the stall.
- Each stall has a ring mounted in the corner for hay net attachment.
- Hay nets are equipped with a carabineer for quick, secure hanging.
- Each carabineer is marked with color-coded duct tape:
  - The color identifies the specific horse the hay net belongs to.
- Attach the hay net to the ring, push the hay net into the stall through the opening, and ensure the carabineer is fully closed.

### **Distributing Feed Pans**

- Remain outside the stall.
- Slide the stall door open just enough to safely place the feed pan inside.
- Set the feed pan fully on the stall floor, then close the door securely.
- Ensure the pan is placed where the horse can easily access it.

If a stall setup prevents safe placement from outside, stop and notify staff.

### **Cleaning Automatic Waterers and Water Troughs**

Automatic waterers require frequent cleaning due to algae buildup. Clean water is essential for horse health, and waterers may need attention as often as one to two times per week, depending on conditions.

#### **Before You Begin**

- Confirm with staff which waterers should be cleaned.
- Observe the waterer for:
  - Cleanliness
  - Proper water flow
  - Seasonal concerns (freezing in winter)
- Report any damage or malfunction to staff immediately.

#### **Cleaning Automatic Waterers – Step by Step**

1. Locate the rubber stopper on the outside wall of the waterer.
2. Push the stopper outward from inside the basin to allow water to drain from the basin.
3. Place the stopper into the drain hole inside the basin to prevent refilling.
4. Once drained, use a sponge and/or brush to scrub algae and residue from:
  - The basin
  - Interior surfaces
5. Remove the stopper from the basin drain to allow the waterer to refill enough to use as rinse water.
6. Let the basin fill and rinse; repeat only as necessary to reduce amount of water in paddock.
7. Once clean, return the stopper to the outside wall of the waterer.

#### **Important Note:**

- Do not push the stopper in completely flush with the wall.
- Leave it slightly protruded so it can be easily removed.

#### **Final Checks**

- Ensure the waterer refills properly

- Report any concerns to staff

### **Safety Reminder**

Volunteers should not enter stalls, paddocks, or pastures to clean or adjust waterers unless specifically directed and trained. When in doubt, stop and ask staff.

### **Cleaning Pasture Water Troughs**

In addition to automatic waterers, the facility has two pasture water troughs, which are located near the gates in pastures 1 and 2. These troughs require regular monitoring and cleaning during the warmer months to prevent algae buildup and ensure horses have access to clean, fresh water.

### **Monitoring Pasture Water Troughs**

- Check troughs as assigned by staff
- Observe for:
  - Algae growth
  - Debris or contamination
  - Dead insects or other creatures
  - Water level and clarity
- Report any concerns to staff before beginning work

### **Cleaning Pasture Water Troughs – Step by Step**

1. Confirm with staff that the trough should be cleaned (no horses should be in that pasture).
2. Dump the trough, leaving enough water to mix with soap and use to scrub.
3. Scrub the interior using:
  - A sponge and/or brush
  - A small amount of cleaning agent as indicated.
4. Rinse thoroughly until no cleaning residue remains.
5. Refill the trough with fresh water.
6. Close the gate behind you.

### **Hose Use and Storage**

- Use the hose from the outside hydrant to refill troughs.
- When finished:
  - Carefully drag the hose back to the hydrant area on the grass
  - Wind or drape the hose securely on the designated hose hanger
- Proper hose storage prevents:
  - Tripping hazards
  - Equipment damage

### **Role Boundaries**

Prior to checking in, volunteers should not:

- Enter stalls, paddocks, holding areas, or pastures
- Handle or move horses
- Feed hay, grain, or supplements
- Clean waterers, troughs, or feed pans
- Begin mucking or housekeeping tasks

Once you have checked in, staff will:

- Assign tasks and priorities

- Identify which horses and areas are approved for work
- Review any safety concerns or special instructions for the day

If you are done for the day, make sure to return your nametag and sign out!

Thank you for fulfilling this important role and for being part of the Bluff & Ridge Team!

## **PROGRAM INFORMATION**

Site/Mailing Address: 23797 County Highway CM,  
Tomah, WI 54660

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Web Site: [www.bluffandridge.org](http://www.bluffandridge.org)

Facebook: [@bluffandridge.org](https://www.facebook.com/bluffandridge.org)

Volunteer Coordinator: Renee Stroh: (608) 387-9248  
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## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

EMERGENCY: 911

VETERINARY: Cranberry Country Equine Vet: (608) 351-3040

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