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## Pony Farm Horse Matching, Riding Group Assignments, and Lesson Levels

When it comes to campers and horses, our objectives are to:

- Match each camper with a suitable, safe mount
- Have the camper learn a lot and make great progress – while having a blast on horseback!

This document is intended to help Pony Farm campers and their parents better understand how we select mounts for riders and place riders into appropriate lesson groups.

We encourage you to read this document with your camper in mind. We also welcome having you share it with her current riding instructor. The more that we can all be on the same page, the better and more quickly your camper can get off the ground on the opening day of her session. We want to make every minute count as a 'teachable moment'!

Finally, we welcome your input. Together, we can make riding at Pony Farm a successful and fun experience for your child.



### Horse Matching Step 1: Camper's Riding Assessment Form

Before each camp session, our instructor team assigns a potential Pony Farm mount for each the camper who does not bring her own horse. Instructors work hard to match the riding assessment you send with the camp forms.

**Please note** that the assessment form is so important for your camper – please take time to complete it thoughtfully! The information you provide allows us to:

- Make an educated choice about the right mount for your camper
- Assign her to the appropriate riding group on the first morning ride

### Horse Matching Step 2: Opening Day Evaluation



On that first full day, our staff instructors and trainers evaluate each rider/horse pair. (This goes so much better if we know a lot about each rider!) They discuss their observations with the camper's assigned instructor and with the camper herself.

We spend great deal of time to make sure of each camper's horse match and riding group assignment. We encourage campers to let us know if they are not comfortable on their assigned horse.



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We do a number of 're-rides' each opening day so campers not satisfied with their initial mount can try other appropriate horses or ponies. We want campers to be happy and feel confident with their equine partner!



### **Horse Matching Step 3: Final Evaluation of Mount and Group Assignment**

On the second morning of camp, campers ride their selected horses in their assigned riding groups to make sure the matches of both mounts and abilities are correct. If needed, we make adjustments to get it just right.

We assign each group to the instructor who has the best knowledge of the skills necessary to make good solid progression in skill building. Campers are always welcome to speak with the Camp Directors or the Head of Riding to discuss their group placement.

Our experience and knowledge may determine group placement for reasons that initially may not seem obvious. We urge both parents and campers to please remember that, although a rider may be performing specific skills at home, she may find riding to be different and more challenging at camp with a new horse, new experiences, and a new instructor.

While safety is our top priority, we also want every camper to feel confident, appropriately challenged, and have a positive experience. Please be assured, our staff wants only what is best for each camper.

### **Pony Farm Riding Levels 1 - 6**

The following pages describe the six riding levels that we use at Pony Farm. Each level has a set of riding skills and horsemanship skills for riders to work on.





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## Level 1 Lessons

Riders in level 1 are generally beginners. They may require leaders or extra help until they are able to ride independently. Level 1 is also open to riders who need extra support to gain skill and confidence.

**Riding skills** to be developed at this level:

- Mounted safety rules
- Mounting and dismounting
- Emergency dismount at the halt
- Ability to halt the horse/pony at a specific point
- Ability to make the horse/pony walk on after the halt
- Basic position at the walk and trot
- Control of the pony at the walk as a whole group with safe spacing/steering
- Control of the pony at the trot one at a time
- Steering in a large circle with use of cones
- Right and Left turns
- Sitting the trot
- Balance standing in the stirrups at the halt and while being led at the walk
- Basic trail rules for going on a trail ride on a lead/with staff walking beside

**Horsemanship skills** to be developed at this level:

- How to safely approach a horse/pony in the stall
- Ability to give hay and water to a horse/pony
- Ability to clean stall with help from staff
- Ability to put on a halter and attach a lead (as height allows) with help
- Ability to lead a horse/pony to the field with help
- Basic grooming using brushes, curry, sponge, and hoof pick
- How to saddle a pony and tighten the girth three separate times
- How to bridle and unbridle with help
- Three parts of tack
- Five parts of the horse
- Three colors of the horse
- How to clean a saddle
- Three signs that a horse may be sick/injured
- How to safely give a treat to a pony



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## Level 2 Lessons

To move to Level 2 at Pony Farm, riders must be confident in the skills achieved in Level 1 as outlined above. Riders should have sufficient skills to ride safely in a group setting, without a leader/side walker.

**Riding skills** to be developed at this level:

- Emergency dismount at the walk with spotting by staff
- Ability to perform walk, halt, and trot transitions without a lead
- Confidence at the posting and sitting trot
- Ability to post the trot
- Ability to change diagonals to the correct one with prompting
- Ability to perform two point (jumping position) at halt and walk while holding mane
- Ability to walk in two point over ground poles
- Steering skills that enable the rider to make circles and pass other horses safely at the walk and trot
- Steering through a series of cones to do linked turns at the walk
- Safe spacing at the walk and trot in a group
- Ability to negotiate an obstacle course of five elements at the walk and trot
- Ability to go on a walking trail ride off the lead (on a suitable mount)
- Ability to ride bareback at the walk

**Horsemanship skills** to be developed at this level:

- Safely approach a pony in the field
- Ability to give grain to a pony
- Ability to clean an empty stall independently
- Ability to put on a halter and lead independently
- Ability to lead a pony to a field and turn out independently (with staff present)
- Grooming of a pony using the appropriate grooming tools and in the correct order
- How to bath a horse/pony
- How to bridle and unbridle, how to clean bridle and bit
- Five parts of the tack
- How to tell if a horse is lame, sick or injured (four signs)
- Understanding horse behavior to include the horse's signals



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### Level 3 Lessons

To move to Level 3 at Pony Farm, riders must be confident in the skills achieved in Level 1-2 as outlined above. Riders should have sufficient skills to ride at the trot without stirrups (sitting and posting); have a solid two-point position; be solidly able to post at the trot and have the ability to post on the correct diagonal most of the time; and be ready to begin to canter with a strong enough position to begin jumping a cross rail.

Level 3 is also suitable for riders who are well skilled on the flat, but do not wish to jump.

**Riding skills** to be developed at this level:

- Ability to adjust stirrup length and tighten a girth while mounted
- Ability to drop and retrieve a stirrup iron at the walk
- Ability to back a horse for three steps
- Ability to have gentle contact with the horse's mouth
- Ability to do sitting and posting trot as a group with safe spacing
- Ability to prompt a horse to canter one at a time down the long side, building toward cantering around the ring
- Ability to identify a correct lead when watching another rider/horse
- Ability to perform the two-point position at the trot
- Ability to trot a cross rail and canter away
- Ability to trot a cross rail and canter to a second jump in the line
- Ability to trail ride in a group safely
- Ability to ride bareback at the walk and trot

**Horsemanship skills** to be developed at this level:

- Ability to tie a quick release knot
- Identify ten common horse terms (i.e. terms for gender, height, etc.)
- Identify eight parts of the tack
- Identify eight parts of the horse
- Identify six colors of the horse
- Identify four breeds with characteristics
- Identify ways to tell if a horse is shod correctly
- Identify how to determine if a horse is lame
- Identify three types of leg markings
- Identify three kinds of bits and what they are used for
- Identify a standing martingale and why it may be used
- Identify two kinds of grain and why each may be used
- Explain how to tell if hay is dusty or should not be fed
- Demonstrate how to tell if a horse is cool enough to be put away



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## Level 4 Lessons

To move to Level 4 at Pony Farm, riders must be confident in the skills listed in Levels 1-3 as outlined above. Riders should have sufficient skills to safely ride independently at the walk, trot, and canter, and with confidence in a group. They must know and consistently post on the correct diagonal. They should know if they are on the correct lead at the canter and know how to perform a simple lead change if on the wrong lead. They should be able to ride a serpentine at the trot with appropriate bending. They should feel confident and eager to learn jumping basics and begin courses.

**Riding skills** to be developed at this level:

- Ability to count footfalls (strides) at the walk, trot and canter while watching another horse
- Ability to drop and retrieve stirrup irons at the trot
- Ability to ride at the walk and trot without stirrups and cross stirrups
- Ability to ride at the walk, trot and canter with consistent contact
- Demonstrate bending through the corners at the walk and trot
- Ability to canter from the walk
- Knowledge of ring figures and how they help with training
- Ability to ride bareback at the walk, trot, and canter
- Demonstrate basics of lengthening and shortening the stride
- Demonstrate and explain the use of the half halt
- Demonstrate and explain leg yielding
- Jump a simple course with related distances and simple changes
- Ride through a gymnastic grid while holding mane
- Ride with control in an open field at the walk and trot

**Horsemanship skills** to be developed at this level:

- Know how to pull a mane
- Braid a mane with elastic bands
- Take a bridle apart, clean it, and put it back together again
- Identify four kinds of bits and their uses
- Identify three types of lameness and where they are found
- Explain how to take a horse's temperature
- Demonstrate how to take a horse's breathing rate
- Show how to correctly fit a standing martingale
- Identify three parts of the hoof
- Explain signs of a horse needing to be re shod
- Identify one way to tell a horse's approximate age



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## Level 5 Lessons

To move to Level 5 at Pony Farm, riders must be confident in the skills listed in Levels 1-4 as outlined above. Riders should have sufficient skills to safely and confidently jump simple courses; execute proper and balanced transitions at all gaits; have the ability to problem solve minor disobediences of the horse or environmental obstacles; maintain proper position throughout flatwork and jumping; and have the maturity to listen to and follow instructions while being challenged in their riding ability.

**Riding skills** to be developed at this level:

- Ability to count footfalls (strides) while mounted
- Ability to ride without stirrups at the canter in two point position
- Ability to put a horse on the bit with moderate contact and “tracking up”
- Ability to correctly bend a horse at the walk, trot, and canter
- Confidence to ride at the hand gallop in the arena
- Learn to lengthen and shorten the horse’s stride while approaching a jump
- Demonstrate leg yielding into a corner
- Begin counting strides in lines for a course
- Jump a course across the diagonal
- Jump a course with a bending line
- Set up a course of fences with appropriate striding
- Ride through a gymnastic grid without stirrups
- Ride in an open field with control at the canter
- Jump single fences with control in a field

**Horsemanship skills** to be developed at this level:

- Reasonably identify a horse’s possible breed, size, age, color and markings
- Braid a mane with yarn
- Fit a bridle and bit correctly
- Identify areas where tack commonly shows wear and might need repair
- How to look for correct saddle fit
- Identify two types shots given in the spring and where they are administered
- Explain why a horse needs his or her teeth floated
- Demonstrate putting on a stable bandage
- Explain symptoms of colic and what can be done before calling the vet
- Discuss a type of worm sometimes found in horses
- Identify five items that should be in an equine first aid kit
- Explain how to bring a horse back to work after injury or illness



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## Level 6 Lessons

To move to Level 6 at Pony Farm, riders must be confident in the skills listed in Levels 1-5 as outlined above. Riders should have sufficient skills to safely ride at the walk, trot, canter, and jump without stirrups; have solid confidence over fences at least 2'3" high; have a strong ability to problem solve and take initiative while riding and in the barn; be willing to stretch to learn new things; and have the depth of riding skills to safely and effectively work with greener horses or horses needing more advanced schooling.

**Riding skills** to be developed at this level:

- Ability to ride bareback at the walk, trot and canter in the ring
- Ability to put a horse on the bit or explain how to do so
- Ability to explain the counter canter and how to pick it up
- Demonstrate a simple change, or a flying change if the horse is capable/schooled for them
- Explain how a pole can help teach the flying change
- Ability to use ring figures (such as figure 8 and serpentine)
- Demonstrate lengthening and shortening stride at the canter
- Demonstrate riding a bending line
- Demonstrate a roll back turn over fences
- Ride through a gymnastic grid without reins
- Ride a course of jumps in an open field (on an appropriate mount)

**Horsemanship skills** to be developed at this level:

- Demonstrate how to apply horse boots for work
- Demonstrate how to lunge a horse at the walk and trot
- Explain some characteristics of a good "hunter" type horse
- Explain three exercises that are productive for young/green horses
- Identify two bones or joints in the horse's leg
- Explain two benefits of jumping grids for horse and rider
- Explain considerations for how much grain to feed a horse
- Explain how to control parasite infestation of a horse
- Identify a type of specialty shoe and why it might be us