

Equine Management Standards & Horse Care Philosophy



Forward Stride is certified through the therapeutic riding industry's professional organization - the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) which is based in Denver. Forward Stride is the largest therapeutic center in the state and the Portland metropolitan area's only Premier Accredited center. This status ensures that we are in compliance with NARHA's high safety and equine standards. The NARHA standards encompass:

- **Administrative Standards** which include emergency procedures, safety regulations, and written policies and procedures;
- **Program Standards** which include equine management, equipment, volunteers, participants, and instruction; and
- **Facility Standards** which include safety and maintenance of buildings, pastures and grounds.

Our entire organization is centered on a commitment to excellence encompassing not only service to our clientele, but also to our horses. Our horses are closely monitored for physical health and well being, and their needs are addressed on a daily basis by our Equine and Program Coordinators. We also have an onsite tenant that provides nighttime supervision. We enjoy comprehensive pro bono horse care services including numerous veterinarians (please see our website for names), Bald Peak Foaling & Rehabilitation Center, an equine chiropractic and acupuncture practitioner and equine massage therapists. Additionally, we purchase the services of an excellent farrier.

In many cases, Forward Stride's own horse care standards exceed the standards outlined by NARHA as our philosophy is to give the best possible care to our horses while keeping them in their most natural environment.

In the wild, horses live in a free-roaming herd and graze almost constantly throughout the day. At Forward Stride, all the horses are turned out into large paddocks with their herdmates daily. We view turnout as one of nature's best forms of exercise for horses. We have thirteen separate, permanently fenced paddocks (with larger rotated pastures planned). For safety, we limit our paddock herd size to a maximum of four, and rarely move horses into different herd groups. For protection against the elements, the horses wear warm blankets and rain sheets in the winter, and fly masks, fly sheets and/or fly spray in the summer months.

Forward Stride maintains the herd atmosphere in the evening when horses return to their stalls by leaving stall doors open and secured with stall guards. With the stall doors opened, the horses are free to hang their heads out of their stalls, watch the activity in the aisle way and watch their fellow herd mates in neighboring stalls.

The feeding regiment for Forward Stride horses consists of hay in the morning, limited grazing throughout the day, and hay and grain with supplements in the evening. Each horse has their own personalized diet that is developed by our experienced Equine Coordinator and our pro-bono Vets. The horses always have access to water and have salt licks in their paddocks. We feed only high quality hay, and closely monitor our horses' weights and coat patterns to ensure our horses are receiving the best possible nutrition.

Forward Stride handles each therapy horse daily to check for any physical or behavioral issues. Horses are regularly exercised by approved experienced handlers as a supplement to the exercise they get in lessons and turnout. All horses are also afforded one "day off" to prevent against mental burnout where the only exercise they receive is turnout. This practice keeps their bodies fit and their minds fresh. When used in therapeutic riding classes, each horse is limited to no more than three consecutive hours (per NARHA Standards). Horse usage is planned and tracked daily, and is examined on a weekly basis by our Equine and Program Coordinators, who work together to make certain no horse is being overused.

Forward Stride would like to extend a very cordial welcome to those who would like to visit our facility and see a piece of horse heaven in progress. Our horses are very happy, and we believe if they could speak, they would tell you all about our wonderful facility and care program we have arranged for them.

Veterinarian references are available upon request.