



## Activity: Virtual Horse Therapy



- This takes the form of a horse care session delivered virtually.
- It can be linked with the RDA Proficiency Tests, the National Curriculum, ASDAN or just aimed to be an informative and sensory experience for older people with dementia which may help reawaken memories.
- Liaise with schools and care homes to find out what level to pitch the session at and any problems that might arise with the content of the boxes.
- Discuss Covid protocols and how to keep the session safe for participants.

**Before any activity starts the group must complete and send in their covid-19 risk assessment and trustee checklist to National Office for sign-off to recommence RDA activities.**

### Benefits

- Expands knowledge.
- Encourages discussion / interaction.
- Participants can be rewarded (Endeavour awards).
- Can build evidence towards proficiency tests / ASDAN challenges.
- Can be sent to school or care home groups for participants to take part the in activity together.

### Do you have all the resources to run?

- Relevant information/video/pictures to share.
- Ability to produce videos.
- Participants.

### Set up

- Select topics and put together a lesson plan/goal.
- Produce an instruction sheet for the presenter to lead the session.
- Collect the relevant videos/pictures to support the topic.
- Put together the relevant packs to send participants.
- Produce a feedback sheet.



### Developing the session

- Take time to reflect on the session and consider ways to improve and engage with the participant.
- Utilise the Endeavour Awards as a completion certificate.
- Use the activities within the session to collect evidence towards the horse care proficiency tests and ASDAN\*
- *\*ASDAN evidence for participating in a virtual RDA session could be a short resume from the participant's helper identifying what has been learned or developed by engaging in the activity. It just needs to be dated and have the signature of the individual who is working with the participant, photographs should contain a brief bit of annotation e.g. James wearing his riding kit or handling the dandy brush.*

## Session ideas

- Feeding
  - Box with feed samples (mini tub trugs, small haynet).
  - Video describing the process of making up feeds, the texture, smell and sight.
  - Video of the equine eating the feed, the sound of chewing hard feed, grass, hay.
  - An instruction sheet for whoever is leading the session with the participant.
- Equine behaviour
  - Video group equines interacting with each other and on their own; Rolling, sleeping, mutual grooming.
  - A guide/crib sheet explaining the different behaviours for whoever is leading the session with the participant
- A day in the life of Patsy the pony
  - Video of the Patsy the pony going about her daily routine
  - Sensory box with things Patsy comes across, i.e. feed/hay samples pictures of grooming kit/tack etc.
  - A guide/crib sheet for whoever is leading the session with the participant.
- Farrier visit
  - Video the farrier trimming / shoeing the ponies.
  - Pictures of the tools that link to a video explanation of names and uses.
  - Audio of a pony walking/trotting with and with shoes on
  - A guide/crib sheet for whoever is leading the session with the participant.
- Tack
  - Video of the tack being cleaned and assembled
  - Pictures of the parts of the tack that link to a video explanation of names and uses.
  - A guide/crib sheet for whoever is leading the session with the participant.
- Virtual riding in an arena or out hacking in the countryside
  - Video from behind the ears including the audio of the coach giving direction or the sounds of the countryside.

\*pages 3 & 4 shows an example instruction page and an example session plan

## Remember:

- You must still do a risk assessment to cover the session.
- Provide clear instruction and guidance to whoever is leading the session with the participant.
- Be clear what is included in the packs and highlight what appropriate care needs to be taken (choking hazard, allergic reactions)
- Tailor the level of information to the audience

## Example instruction sheet for group participation on; Feeding Horses

For this session are 10 boxes of assorted colours with feed samples and a video. Watch the video and explore the contents of the box when prompted. The video will need pausing to allow time to participate.



The Box contains a small bucket, a mini hay net and four feed samples plus a card from all of us at \_\_\_\_\_ RDA group.

Does the participant have a  favourite colour?

The feed samples are:

**Hifi** - a blend of oat straw and alfalfa and has a rough texture.

**Mix** - a blend of pellets, barley flakes, linseed, molasses and smells sweet.

 Can you find any of the shiny brown linseeds?

**Herbs** - a blend of nettle, oregano, mint, thyme, red clover heads and smells fragrant.

 Can you find a red clover head?

**Sugar beet mash** – made from sugar beet with added oils and smells of apples.

 Put some in the bucket and add water, watch it expand!

**Haynet** – Hay is dried grass, has a rough texture and smells sweet.

Are  there any grass flowering heads in the net?

**Note: The session must be supervised to prevent residents from tasting or eating the products. The hay net may not be suitable for anyone who suffers from hay fever.**

**Whilst we washed our hands before assembling the boxes and left them for 72 hours before bringing them over to you, we recommend you leave the boxes another 72 hours before delivering the session to prevent the transfer of Covid-19.**

## Example planning sheet for Equine Behaviour

For this session there are some picture cards and a video.

Watch the video and use the picture cards when prompted.

### Video introduction;

*The ancestors of today's horse breeds are wild horses who lived in extreme conditions with scarce food supplies. Even now their body and the way it functions is based on a lifestyle as a prey animal where a large part of the day is spent exercising, foraging for food and the speed of reactions can mean the difference between life and death.*

Video clips of the RDA equines mooching round the paddock.

Clip of a pony having a spook to show quick reactions.

Clip of one of the ponies being exercised.

Clip of a pony eating his hay.

*Wild horses are on the move for more than 16 hours a day! Most of the movement is slow and steady. Enough exercise and a correct balanced diet are important to keep the horses healthy.*

### Resting;

Picture cards ideally using the group ponies;

One of the ponies dozing stood up

One lying down on its chest with legs tucked in

One lying flat out on its side

Video clips of the same.

*Adult horses often rest between 7 and 8 hours a day depending on how busy they have been, where they are and how old. They can rest in the following ways.*

*A horse can doze while standing, alternately resting a hind leg. This enables them to be able to move off again quickly if needed.*

*A horse can rest whilst lying on its chest with legs tucked in. It would take longer to move off if something was to frighten the horse so they only lie down like this when feeling comfortable with its surroundings.*

*Horses can also rest while lying flat on their side. This form of resting is only used when the horse is feeling very secure in its surroundings, for example in the stable.*

**Activity** - Pause the video and match the picture card with the description

### The herd;

Video clips of groups of horses out in the field. Clips of horses interacting with each other and pulling face (ears back, whinnying etc.)

*In the wild horses live in family groups of up to 20 horses, this is called a herd.*

*Horses communicate with each other through expressive social behaviour and body language. Horses communicate with each other and with humans in their surroundings continuously, but sometimes the signals are too subtle for humans to pick up.*

### Communication;

Picture cards (not necessarily using the group ponies for bad behaviour);

Relaxed horses stood together

Horses with heads high and ears pricked – alert

A horse with an unwelcoming expression - warning  
A horse threatening to bite – aggressive  
A horse looking tense with head up, nostrils tight and ears back – frightened

Video talk through the picture cards with other examples if can find some.

*Horses can use facial expressions to show how they are feeling....*

*Relaxed*

*Head high and ears pricked shows they are alert and interested*

*A warning to stay away with ears laid back and flared nostrils*

*Angry threatening to bite with ears laid flat back and teeth bared*

**Activity** – match the emotion with the picture; Relaxed, Aggressive, Frightened, Alert/interested

Video to show;

*Physical contact also takes place between horses.*

- *Nose to nose contact as a greeting*
- *Social grooming*
- *Insect control, standing nose to tail to help flick flies away*
- *Aggression towards another individual*

*Horses also use vocal communication.*

- *Whinnying*
- *Neighing*
- *Squealing*
- *Snorting*

*Horse can also respond by curling the upper lip (Flehman), this allows them to hold on to a smell and often do this after smelling something they are not used to.*

### **Grooming behaviour**

Video clip of horses rubbing, grooming each other and rolling.

*Horses look after their skin and coat by rubbing themselves against objects, rolling and scratching. They like roll around and get muddy especially when moulting.*

*Horses are surprisingly agile when scratching an itch (video/pictures of group ponies scratching)*

*Body parts such as the withers and croup, which the horse cannot reach by itself are groomed by other members of the herd, this known as social grooming. Through facial expression and by nibbling the withers and croup of fellow group members, horses can invite them to engage in mutual grooming, standing side by side with heads on each other's backs or flanks.*

*It is a type of behaviour that can be provoked by humans; scratching a horse's withers will often lead to the horse attempting to groom its handler in return! (Video clip showing this)*

*Vigorous scratching of a horse's croup can induce the grooming reflex, in which the horse extends his upper lip or makes rhythmic nibbling movements.*