



*WELCOME TO
LAKE FORK
STABLES*

NEW RIDER INFORMATION

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to provide access to horses for all teaching safe horsemanship skills in and out of the saddle.

It is our mission to keep riders as safe as possible. Horseback riding is considered an extreme sport and unfortunately falls do happen. Horseback riding requires the rider to use a combination of skills, balance, strength, endurance and stamina. It's certainly not just sitting there.

At the same time, the horse is an animal and has its own emotions and fears. They are prey animals after all. It is our mission to create a safe environment where the horse and rider can become a team and work together.

It's important to understand this from the beginning.

IT'S A DIRTY SPORT

Horses are animals and they are dirty. It's our job to groom them and clean them, which means that dirt usually ends up back on us!



COMMUNICATION

Communication is important on both sides. If we ask a rider to do something outside of their comfort zone, we want to know if you feel uncertain and we need you to voice that. At the same time, part of learning is being pushed just enough to where you aren't comfortable but also aren't scared so that you can grow and learn.

If your child is scared of any animal - dogs and horses specifically - please let us know. We need to know about these types of fears beforehand so that we can plan.

IT'S HARD WORK

Horses are big and saddles are heavy. We tell you this not to scare you away, but so that you are aware. Some people/kids don't realize just how much work there is before you actually get in the saddle.

The benefits, however, is that you get stronger both physically and mentally. You do things you'd never thought you'd do before and grow as a person. There's a reason horses are a great way to teach responsibility and the value of hard work. All students are expected to put in the work and learn horsemanship.

We've seen little miracles happen in kids who put in the work. They get physically stronger, tougher and improve their fine motor skills.

RIDER LEVELS

We provide private lessons only at this time. This is to ensure every rider has a one on one learning experience and is able to grow without being inhibited by others in a group.

Beginner - A beginner may or may not have ridden a horse before. The student might know some things about horse care and tack, but can't do it alone. They may not hold their reins correctly or know how to properly steer. They may have trotted on a horse a couple of times in their life, but do not know how to post or control the horse with speed.

Intermediate - An intermediate student can tack up alone, walk, trot, post and is beginning to canter. They can ride in two-point/half seat. They understand trotting diagonals and can change when directed. They have an independent seat and rides with elasticity through their arms, wrists, hands, and seat.

Advanced - An advanced rider is confident in all gaits (walk, trot, canter, gallop), jumps, and has excellent control of their horse. They understand training principles and can apply them to their horse.

Please note: We are not a hippotherapy program. We are not set up for students with severe mobility issues. Students must be able to walk steady and confidently on the ground and around horses.

AGES

Ages 6 & Up - Our lessons for all other ages are based on a semester schedule. Therapeutic lessons are based on an 8-week schedule. Riding School lessons are weekly with scheduled breaks for holidays, instructor vacations, events, etc.

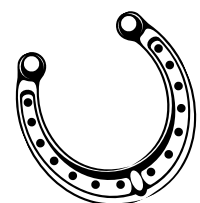
We offer both English and Western lessons.

WEIGHT

Riders come in all shapes and sizes, as do our horses. Because of this, we must follow some guidelines for the safety of the horse and rider.

- Any rider over 117 pounds may not ride a pony 12.2 hands or under.
- Any rider over 150 pounds may not ride a pony 13.2 hands or under.
- Any rider over 190 pounds may not ride a pony 14.2 hands or under.
- No riders exceeding 250 pounds may ride any horse.

Riders too heavy to ride are able to take horsemanship and groundwork lessons, provided the student has good mobility on the ground.



WHAT TO WEAR BARN RULES

Again, safety is first and foremost. This means that absolutely **NO** flip flops, Crocs or other flimsy type of footwear may be worn in the barn or around horses. We want you to keep your toes.

Boots - All riders must wear cowboy boots, paddock boots or tall English riding boots. No fashion boots. If you cannot afford to buy boots, let us know and we can help you find some.

Pants/Shirts - Jeans or breeches must be worn. No shorts or skirts - even in the summer. T-shirts, long sleeve or summer shirts are required. Tank-tops or bikin strap tops could result in sunburn and injury should a rider fall.

Helmets - ASTM/SEI Certified helmets must be worn at all times. We provide helmets, but recommend that riders purchase their own. They can be purchased at Tractor Supply or on Amazon.

Gloves - The more you advance the more you will want to wear gloves, particularly in the winter. There are a variety of affordable equestrian gloves available for all seasons.

Dress for the weather! Please bring a jacket or coat for winter lessons. Wear layers if in doubt.

Please do not wear dangly/loose jewelry.

Parents are allowed in the barn and grooming area and outside of the arena (unless invited in). Please do not coach over the instructor. You are also welcome to use our viewing area outside of the arena.

Siblings that are not part of the lesson will not be allowed in the barn/arena areas and will need to remain in the viewing area or parking area.

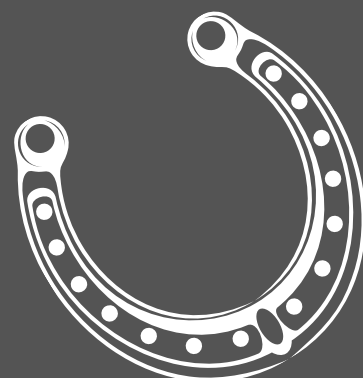
Please limit the number of guests brought to lessons. All visitors to the farm are required to sign liability waivers.

Please do not bring your pets.

Do not enter horse pastures without a barn staff member or explicit permission from a staff member.

Abuse to our animals or staff will not be tolerated.

Should a child have behavior issues, refuse to follow instructions or abandon a horse, the lesson will be ended and child returned to their parents. Repeat offenses will result in removal from program.



PAYMENT POLICY

Lessons are scheduled on a weekly basis with payment due at each lesson.

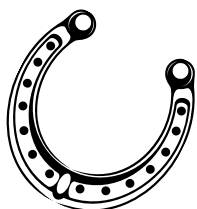
We prefer online payment via Vagaro, Venmo, CashApp or Paypal. Cash or check must be left in the payment box in the barn.

WORK & OUTREACH PROGRAM

For students taking therapeutic riding lessons, all lessons are now \$25 per. We do offer the option to earn credit towards the student's "account."

Students and/or parents may work off their lesson fees by participating in Volunteer Events and Work Days. Work Days are held almost monthly depending on the weather and will often coincide with Volunteer Orientations. We have a variety of tasks that need to be completed on a regular basis as well as on a "project basis."

In addition to these tasks, outreach opportunities such as spreading awareness of Lake Fork Stables at events and Big Bass Bingo will also be available.



CANCELLATION POLICY

If lessons are canceled by the instructor/barn, they will be canceled in the Vagaro booking system and also posted on our Facebook Page and LFS Family Group.

If you need to reschedule a lesson, please contact Valerie and she will let you know availability. Lessons must be canceled at least 24 hours in advance. We understand that illnesses do come on suddenly. Please contact us as soon as you know your child is sick and will not be able to attend due to illness.

No Call/No Show - No Call/No shows on get two strikes. A third No Call/No Show will result in removal from the program.

Our instructor still gets paid for her time if you do not show up, please be respectful of this fact as we are a nonprofit and do not have the funding to pay for no-shows.

WEATHER POLICY

We will do our best to not cancel due to the weather, but some rain storms create dangerous conditions around the barn and ruin our parking area. We will post on Facebook and cancel lessons via Vagaro should the weather become unsafe. Indoor lessons may be substituted.

The heat is another issue that will be handled on a case-by-case basis as some of our horses overheat easily.

THE FIRST LESSON

The first lesson is a Meet and Greet or experience evaluation. It is vital that you are upfront and honest about your prior horse experience. Refer to the riding levels on page 3 to determine your experience level.

New riders with no experience will have a Meet and Greet for the first lesson. This allows our instructor to get to know you, discuss your goals, explain the different disciplines we offer, and allow you to choose what type of riding you want to do.

If the student is a child, please allow the child and instructor to choose their riding discipline together. This ensures that the child enjoys their time and continues to want to learn.

Every person learns to ride at their own pace and lessons are tailored to the rider's interests.

Riders who have some experience will be evaluated at the first lesson to determine what riding level they are at. This allows the instructor to develop a lesson plan suited to that rider.

HORSEMANSHIP

Every student will learn horsemanship in our program. Saddle time is not guaranteed in every lesson, as there is much more to horseback riding than being on the back of the horse.

Every student will learn to groom, tack and care for the horse before and after the lesson. They will learn about feeds and feeding, bandaging, lunging, and training, etc.

If the goal is to one day have a horse or pony of their own, these are invaluable lessons.

We follow the Pony Club curriculum for all riding students, whether child or adult, and whether they join our Pony Club or not. We utilize a variety of different materials to teach horsemanship and riding.

The longterm goal is that our riders will advance through the levels and become competent horsemen/women who can catch, groom and tack their own horse prior to their lesson.



ABOUT LAKE FORK STABLES

Lake Fork Stables is a 501c3 nonprofit. Our paid riding lesson program supports our Riders Up! program that provides the local underprivileged, autistic, military, and foster kids with discounted lessons and equine therapy.

Lesson fees help us to support our lesson and therapy horses and to provide our services to the community.



VALERIE MELLEMA
EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR/INSTRUCTOR

Valerie founded Lake Fork Stables in 2017 and the facility became a nonprofit in 2019. She has a BS in Agribusiness/Equine Industry from West Texas A&M University. She is certified in the Horse Boy Method and Horse Powered Reading.

She has over 30 years of equine experience. She has worked for the American Quarter Horse Association and multiple equine publications. Valerie competes in dressage. She handles all communications, scheduling, events, and fundraising.



ALLYSHA CARROLL
ASST. TRAINER/INSTRUCTOR

Allysha has been riding and showing American Quarter Horses since she was 7 years old. She was the Supreme Champion in 2017.

Allysha grew up in the Rio Grand Valley and moved to East Texas in 2022. She was a working student for Lake Fork Stables in the summer of 2022 and has been an integral part of our team ever since helping to keep horses exercised and trained.

In her free time, she enjoys photography and volunteering at a local horse rescue.