



*WELCOME TO
LAKE FORK
STABLES*

NEW RIDER INFORMATION
FOR FREE & DISCOUNTED LESSONS

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

Pony Lessons - Available for children 4-6. These are short 30 minute lessons tailored to the attention span and abilities of the child.

Ages 6 & Up - Our lessons for all other ages are based on a semester schedule. Semesters are based on a timeframe with scheduled breaks for holidays, instructor vacation, events, etc.

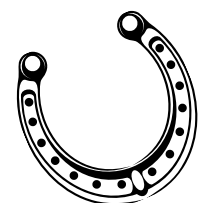
We offer both English and western. We provide the horses and the helmets.

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 lesson provide the student has good mobility on the ground.



WHAT TO WEAR

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.

BARN RULES

Only the instructor and the student will be allowed in the barn with two exceptions:

1. The parent has participated in our parent class so that they can assist their child in grooming and tacking.
2. The parent is using the time to fulfill their monthly volunteer duties.

Parents may watch lessons from the bench outside the arena.

Siblings that are not part of the lesson will not be allowed in the barn.

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

Parents will not be allowed inside the arena and no commentary or co-teaching over the instructor will be permitted.

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 semester basis and then broken down into a monthly fee, but we do have the option of a first single lesson "to see if you/they like it." We have structured our pricing in this manner so that we can have a dependable income as a nonprofit.

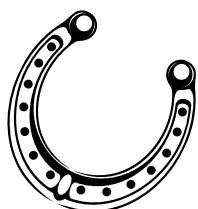
We prefer online payment via Vagaro, Venmo or Paypal. Cash or check must be left in the payment box in the barn.

Payment for discounted lessons is based on the family or the program they are participating in and will be discussed prior to scheduling.

VOLUNTEER POLICY

1 hour of volunteer time per month is required as well as volunteering at the Farm Fall Festival. Your child is receiving a premium service that would otherwise cost anywhere from \$50-\$100 per hour.

WEATHER POLICY



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. Free lessons will not be rescheduled, the week will simply be skipped.

If you need to reschedule a lesson, please contact Valerie and she will let you know availability. Discounted paid lessons must be canceled at least 24 hours in advance to have the option of rescheduling.

No Call/No Show - No Call/No shows on free lessons get one chance. Additional "no shows" will result in removal from the program. An excessive number of cancellations, particularly last minute cancellations, will result in the 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.

Lessons will no longer be canceled for rain unless the weather is severe and dangerous. Indoor ground lessons will be substituted for riding. The same is true for the heat. Indoor lessons may be substituted for days with extreme heat and humidity. Again, safety for the rider and the horse is our utmost concern. There will be no riding in freezing temperatures.

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. You will also meet the horses and the instructor will use this time to determine which horse is a good fit for the rider.

If the student is a child, please allow the child and instructor to make their riding discipline together. This ensures that the child enjoys their time and continues to want to learn. We want to avoid parental expectations and pressure, as the child will lose interest if they want to learn English but the parent is set on barrel racing. A child who doesn't want to learn barrel racing and wants to one day learn how to jump, will not enjoy their lessons.

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 free and reduced rate lessons and equine therapy.

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

As of January 2022, we are a Pony Club Riding Center. Kids and adults will be able to become Pony Club members and take advantage of the various horse showing opportunities available as well as group meetings and field trips.



AUDREY TRIPP
INSTRUCTOR/PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Audrey is our riding instructor and program director. She is responsible for teaching and facilitating all lessons and camps. She is also responsible for managing the horses.

Audrey has over 20 years of equine experience having taught at a variety of facilities, working as a professional groom and trainer.

She has experience competing in eventing and a variety of western events.



VALERIE MELLEMA
FOUNDER/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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.

She has over 30 years of equine experience. She has worked for the American Quarter Horse Association and is the Editor in Chief for HorseRacingRadar.com. Valerie handles all lesson scheduling, events, and fundraising.