Health and safety guidelines

For volunteers, schools participants and visitors

Horses and an outdoor environment bring particular risks. These guidelines explain how to prepare, follow staff instructions and raise a concern at The EARTH Centre. They support the Centre's operational procedures and do not replace individual suitability checks, instructor decisions or emergency instructions.

Before your visit

- Arrange your visit in advance and tell the team about access needs, relevant allergies, task limits or support requirements. Share sensitive information privately.
- Wear secure closed shoes and clothing suitable for outdoor activity. Bring sun protection and drinking water. Avoid loose jewellery or items that could catch on equipment.
- For riding, the instructor confirms suitability, required consent and relevant medical information before participation. Do not mount or start an activity without authorisation.
- Schools and visiting groups must agree supervision, transport, headcounts and handover arrangements in advance. Accompanying adults remain responsible for their agreed supervision duties.

Arriving and moving around EARTH

- Report to the designated arrival point, sign in and out as instructed, and follow the site briefing.
- Keep children with their responsible adult or allocated group. Keep access routes, gates and emergency vehicle access clear.
- Enter paddocks, stables, feed rooms, arenas and other restricted areas only with permission and supervision. Close gates as instructed.
- No running, shouting, sudden movements or unauthorised feeding near horses. Do not bring animals onto site without prior approval.
- Do not participate while impaired by alcohol, drugs or medication that affects safe participation. Smoking and vaping are restricted to designated areas away from horses, hay and other fire risks.

Working around horses

Approach and handle a horse only as directed by authorised staff. Do not walk directly behind a horse, wrap a lead rope around your hand or body, or stand where you could be trapped. Keep a safe distance between horses. If unsure, stop and ask for help rather than improvising.

During sessions and practical tasks

- The instructor controls each riding session, including horse allocation, equipment, mounting, side-walking support and decisions to pause or stop.
- Riders must wear a correctly fitted equestrian helmet approved by the instructor. Only trained authorised personnel may assist with mounting, transfers or physical support.
- Horse leaders and side walkers must complete training and work within their authorised roles. Do not change a learner's support or move away without the instructor's direction.
- Report discomfort, distress, fatigue or changes in a participant's condition immediately. Never force participation or promise a particular therapeutic outcome.

- Use tools, chemicals, machinery or maintenance equipment only when authorised, trained and equipped. Do not work at height or lift beyond your ability.
- Horse welfare is part of safe delivery. Report signs of pain, lameness, distress, damaged tack or unsuitable conditions. Staff may change or cancel activities for weather, welfare or safety.

If there is an accident or emergency

Stop the activity, alert the instructor or nearest staff member and keep others away from danger. Summon the designated first aider. Only provide assistance within your training; do not move an injured person unless immediate danger requires it. Staff must arrange emergency assistance and direct responders to the site when needed.

If a horse is loose, alert staff, keep people clear and follow instructions; do not attempt to catch it without authorisation. For fire or evacuation, leave by the instructed route and assemble at the designated point. Do not return for belongings or attempt to rescue horses unless authorised as part of the emergency plan.

Report and follow up

Report all injuries, rider falls, near misses, hazards and unsafe equipment immediately, even if no injury is apparent. Record the facts through EARTH's incident process. Safeguarding concerns and information breaches also require their own reporting routes. Staff must review corrective actions before activities resume where safety is affected.

Site briefing record assembly point and emergency lead

Kirsty Popplestone, Operations Manager

_____

On duty first aider and contact

Stanley Phiri, Centre Manager

_____

125 Peter Road, Ruimsig | info@earthcentre.org.za | www.earthcentre.org.za