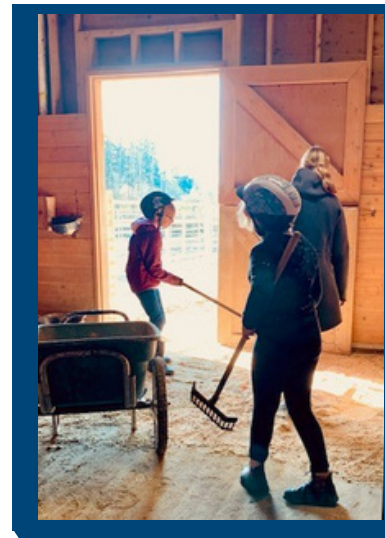
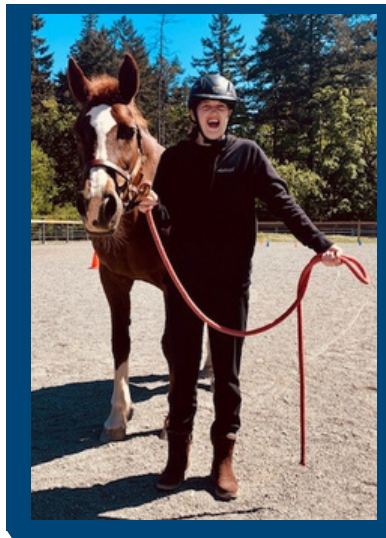




VTRA

VICTORIA THERAPEUTIC
RIDING ASSOCIATION



PARTICIPANT *handbook*

Victoria Therapeutic Riding Association (VTRA)

6917 Veyaness Road

Saanichton, BC V8M 1W1

778-426-0506 / www.vtra.ca

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Hours of operation

Monday 9am-5:30pm

Tuesday: 9am-5:30pm

Wednesday: 9am-5:30pm

Thursday: 9am- 7:30pm

Friday: 9am - noon

Saturday: Closed

Sunday: Closed

VTRA is closed on all stat holidays. In the event of inclement weather, participants will be notified by email.

2024/2025 Term:

Term 1 - September 16 - November 1 (7 weeks)

Term 2 - November 12 - December 20 (6 weeks)

Term 3 - January 13 - March 14 (9 weeks)

Term 4 - April 7 - June 12 (10 weeks)

2025 Spring Break Camps:

Kids' Camp: March 17-21

Teen Camp : March 24-28

2025 Summer Camps:

Adult Workshop: June 23-25

Kids' Camps: July 7-11 & August 11-15

Teen Camps: July 14-18 & August 18-22

2025 Special Events:

Deck the stalls - November 30

Annual Horse Show - June 14

And when nothing is happening we cuddle and rest!



About VTRA

The Victoria Therapeutic Riding Association (VTRA) was formed in 1982 to provide a therapeutic riding experience to children and adults with diverse abilities throughout the Greater Victoria area. VTRA is a non-profit organization that uses horseback riding and other equine-assisted activities as a recognized therapeutic aid for people with diverse abilities.

VTRA offers classes to more than 200 children, youth, and adults with cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism, intellectual challenges, hearing or vision impairment, mental health concerns, and more. We have a small number of paid staff including an Executive Director, Coordinator of Volunteers, Program Coordinator, and CanTRA (Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association)/PATH (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship) certified Therapeutic Riding Instructors.

OUR VISION

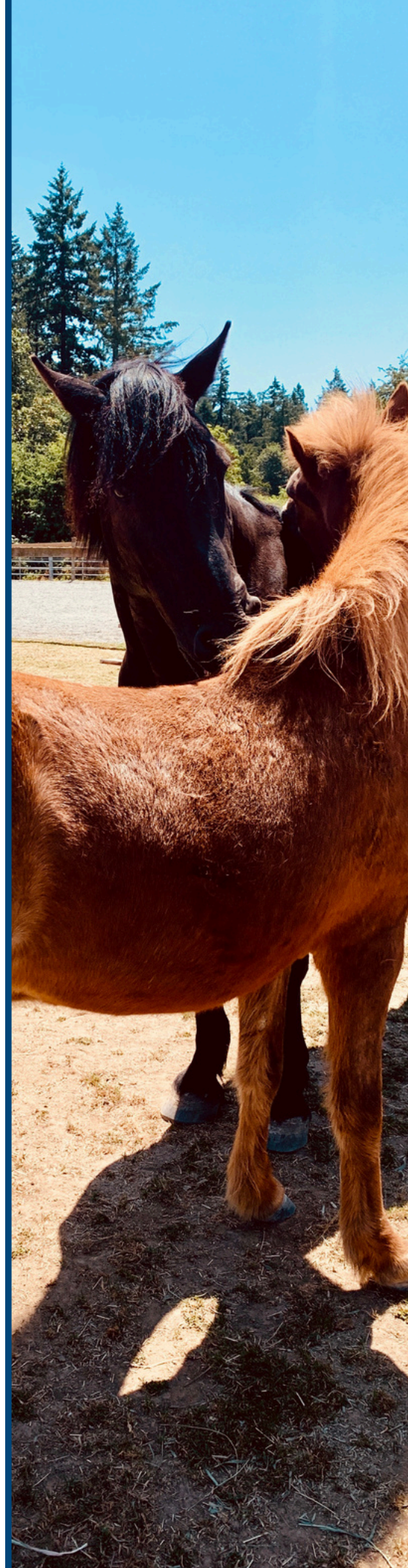
Learning, connection, and joy through the power of horses.

OUR MISSION

Build individual capacity through human and horse teamwork.

OUR COMMITMENT

The VTRA is committed to inclusivity, diversity, equity and equine welfare—we value difference and individuality and a proactive and adaptive approach to meeting our members needs. Our mission is to serve others. We provide opportunities for people of all abilities to connect, learn, grow and thrive. This is at the heart of everything we do.



OUR INSTRUCTORS

VTRA has a dedicated team of seven instructors with a strong equine background, as well as an understanding of various abilities. Our instructors are certified by CanTRA (Canada Therapeutic Riding Association) and have levels of First Aids.

OUR VOLUNTEERS

Our programs thrive thanks to the dedication of over **200 volunteers**. These individuals play essential roles, including grooming and tacking up horses, walking beside horses during classes, leading horses, and welcoming participants and visitors in the clubhouse. Volunteers also help maintain our facility and assist in running our fundraising events. Additionally, our Board of Directors is composed entirely of volunteers. All volunteers at VTRA undergo thorough training and a criminal record check before participating in classes. Every year, our volunteers have to take our Emergency Training to stay up to date with our safety procedures.

OUR HORSES

Each of our therapy horses is an important member of our team. We have **13 horses** in our program, of all different heights, widths, and temperaments. We try to match each participant with the most suitable horse and keep them on that horse for the full term. Despite the goal of horse consistency in a term, sometimes participants will be asked to switch horses mid-term, at the instructors' discretion, due to changes in abilities or suitability of the horse. Participants are not guaranteed the same horse for on-going terms of riding, as the schedule and participants change every term.



Benefits of Equine Assisted Activities

PHYSICAL



- Improving muscle control and strength
- Improving balance
- Stretching tight or spastic muscles
- Increasing range of motion
- Improving fine and gross motor skills
- Developing sensory integration skills



SOCIAL

- Encouraging friendships with fellow horse lovers
- Including people of all abilities
- Improving communication skills through group activities



COGNITIVE

- Developing problem solving skills
- Working on focusing on instructions and activities
- Vocalizing commands to guide horse
- Improving motor planning and sequencing to complete activities



EMOTIONAL

- Developing confidence and improving self-esteem
- Gaining a sense of purpose
- Overcoming fear and anxiety

VTRA programs

ADAPTIVE RIDING

Adaptive Riding is a mounted program emphasizing the development of riding skills, client-centered goals, and social interaction. This program offers participants of virtually all ages (4 and up) and all abilities the chance to ride a horse. Lessons are 45 minutes long and can accommodate up to four riders.



Participants are generally organized based on the following goals:

- **Physical movement and mobility:** overall posture, flexibility, and muscle tone through exercises on the horse.
- **Recreational and social riding:** social skills, communication, building self-esteem and reducing anxiety through riding activities and games.
- **Progressive skills and adult skills:** coordination of riding aids, positional alignment and effectiveness, and independent control of the horse through their own body awareness.
- **Early participants (from 4 to 6 years old):** balance and fine and gross motor skills through games and activities on the horse

Adaptive Driving is designed to teach horse-drawn cart-driving skills. Lessons focus on the development of driving skills and are tailored to individual goals. This program offers participants of virtually all ages and all abilities the chance to learn to drive a cart pulled by a horse. This program is a great choice for those interested in driving and/or unsuitable for mounted lessons. Lessons are 30 minutes long and are private.



ADAPTIVE DRIVING



STABLE MANAGEMENT

Stable Management is an unmounted program designed to teach about horse care and safety in a barn setting. These classes are levelled as Beginner or Intermediate, organized by group age (kids and teen/adult) and are available to participants of all abilities. Lessons are 45 minutes long and can accommodate up to four participants.



Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) is an unmounted program ran by certified facilitators working with participants of all abilities. Classes promote confidence, empathy, body and behavioral awareness, critical thinking, sequencing and problem solving around horses and teamwork.

EAL



Early Intervention/Hippotherapy is a mounted program tailored for children under the age of 6 with diverse abilities. Lessons, conducted by a physiotherapist, incorporate games to enhance reaching, balance reactions, postural control, coordination, communication, and confidence. Each lesson is 30 minutes long and private. We currently collaborate with the Queen Alexandra Centre for Children's Health, and participants are referred through this school.

EARLY INTERVENTION / HIPPO THERAPY



VTRA program details

- All programs are held at our facility located at **6917 Veyaness Rd** in Central Saanich.
- We offer group lessons of up to four participants, and semi-private lessons for two participants at a time.
- VTRA offers classes between September and June. Our program year is divided into 4 terms, which vary in length from 6-10 weeks. Due to the volume of participants we serve at VTRA, we are able offer each participant TWO semesters per year – either semesters 1 and 3 or 2 and 4. Depending on the availability of the participants there may be an opportunity for additional terms, but this is not guaranteed.
- Please note that certain lesson times and terms are popular and fill up quickly so do not delay registering.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
<p>9:30am Physical Mobility - all ages</p> <p>10:45am Physical Mobility - all ages</p> <p>12pm Progressive Skills - Adults</p> <p>2:30pm Early Participants</p> <p>3:30pm Recreational - Kids</p> <p>4:45pm Recreational - Teens</p>	<p>9:30am Recreational - Kids & Teens</p> <p>10:45am Physical Mobility - all ages</p> <p>12pm Progressive Skills - Adults</p> <p>2:30pm Early Participants</p> <p>3:30pm Recreational - Kids</p> <p>4:45pm Recreational - Teens & Kids</p>	<p>9:00am - 12pm Equine Assisted Learning</p> <p>2:30pm Early Participants</p> <p>3:30pm Recreational - Kids</p> <p>4:45pm Progressive Skills - Teens</p> <p>2:30pm Kids</p> <p>3:30pm Kids</p> <p>4:30pm Teens & Adults</p>	<p>9:30am Adaptive Driving</p> <p>10:15am Adaptive Driving</p> <p>9:30am Kids</p> <p>10:30am Teens & Adults</p> <p>11:30am Teens & Adults</p> <p>11:15am Physical Mobility - Level 2 Adults</p> <p>4:15pm Recreational - Kids & Teens</p> <p>5:30pm Progressive skills - Teens</p> <p>6:45pm Progressive skills - Teens</p>	<p>9:00am - 12:30pm Early Intervention / Hippotherapy</p>

 Adaptive Riding Lesson

 Stable Management Lesson

**Please note that the schedule may change due to various circumstances.*

VTRA fee details

The cost per lesson is \$40, so the cost per term fees vary from **\$240 to \$400** depending on the number of lessons. In addition, all participants must be members of VTRA in order to attend the lessons. An annual participant membership fee of **\$20** is due annually. This membership provides CANTRA membership for participants and gives of-age clients voting rights at VTRA's AGM in November.

Full payment is due by the first day of the term. If payment has not been received or alternative arrangements have not been made (such as external funding), the participant will not be able to be part of the second week of lessons. After two weeks of nonpayment the participant's spot may be forfeited.

Participant's receiving financial assistance from the Ministry AFU must supply us with a confirmation of 'release of funds' letter no later than the first week of the riding term. Please note that the ministry will not cover membership fees or missed lessons. They are the participant's responsibility, and missed lessons will be invoiced to the family.

Participant's receiving financial assistance from another outside organization must also supply confirmation of funding to the Program Coordinator no later than the first week of the riding term. Please note that some agencies will not cover membership fees or missed lessons.

Please note it is the family's responsibility to arrange and manage external funding for participant's fee payment.



VTRA is entirely dependent on donations, fundraising, and participant fees. Each lesson costs the organization approximately \$100 per participant, per lesson. In order to keep the program accessible, we charge participants only \$40 per lesson and fundraise for the remaining costs. For this reason, we have a variety of fundraisers and events throughout the year. Our participants and their families are invited to attend these events, though participation is always voluntary.



Application process

1. Inquiring

Go to vtra.ca/apply-for-our-programs and submit your form.

2. Receiving

Check your email (and spam folder) for our Intake Package.

3. Completing your intake package

Fill out the intake package including the physician's form and send it back to admin@vtra.ca.

4. Booking your assessment session

Once we receive all completed forms and your application has been reviewed, we will send you a link to book your assessment session via the platform amilia.com. Assessments with one of the VTRA instructors must be completed prior to being offered a spot in any of our programs.

The objective of this assessment is to determine the right program and lessons' fit for each individual participant, as well as establish short and long term goals. Assessments are scheduled within our calendar of lessons, and times will be dependent on instructors' availability.

5. Registering online on amilia.com

Depending on the time of year, you may have to wait until the next term for potential space. Registration details will be released by email to participants in advance of each program year and as needed throughout the year as we move through the terms.

Registration is processed online on the platform: [Amilia.com](https://amilia.com). Make sure to activate your account and add account's members (yourself as a participant or a parent/guardian and any other member).

VTRA program policies

- **ABSENCES AND MISSED CLASSES**

If you cancel a class, there is no refund or rescheduling. VTRA cannot accommodate makeup lessons. **IMPORTANT:** Please make sure you give notice if your participant is going to miss a scheduled lesson.

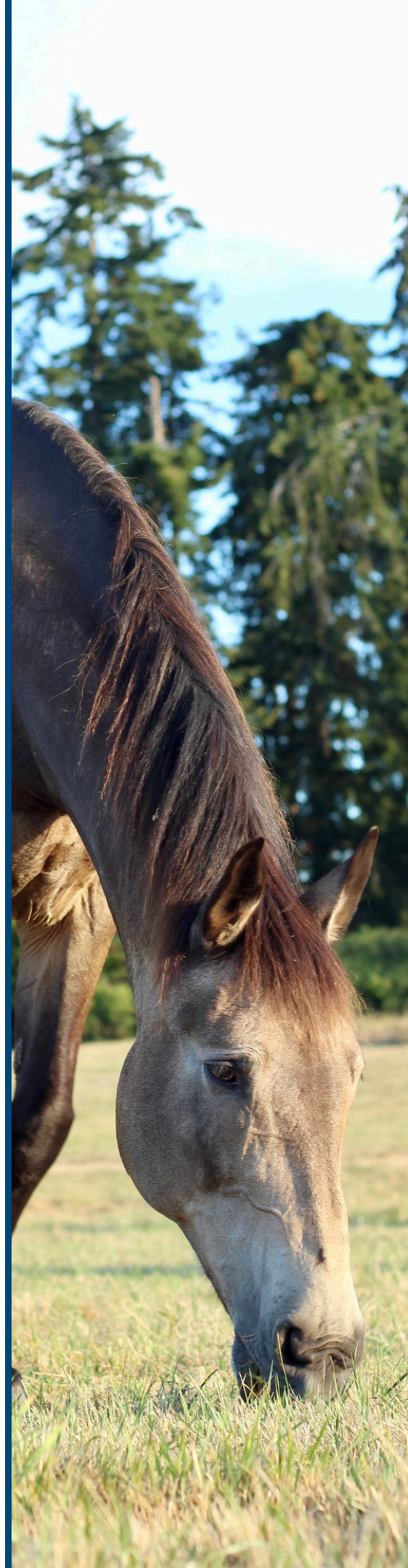
REMINDER – our policy for all participants on missed classes (without notice) is: If a participant misses three classes in a term, without prior notice, it will be recommended to the Board that the rider forgo their lesson spot for the remaining riding year, without a refund of fees.

Given the significant contribution of our volunteers, we kindly request that participants provide as much notice as possible if they are unable to attend a lesson. This consideration is important as up to three volunteers may be working with each participant.

- **PUNCTUALITY**

Participants should arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the start of their lesson time in order to get properly attired and ready for their lesson (i.e. using the bathroom, put on helmet, boots and safety belt). Any participant who is expected to arrive late must call the office to give notice.

For the Adaptive Riding & Driving lesson, the participant must be ready to mount within 15 minutes of the lesson start time or the horse will go back to the barn. If no notice is given and the participant arrives after the class has commenced, they may not be permitted to ride.



- **VTRA CLASS CANCELLATIONS- EXTREME WEATHER AND OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES**

If VTRA must cancel classes due to extreme weather conditions or other circumstances, VTRA will offer credit for the missed class towards a future term of program activity. No refunds will be given. In rare situations, VTRA may also have to cancel a class due to a lack of staff and or volunteers to safely run the class.

- **TERM REGISTRATION/ LAST MINUTE CANCELLATIONS**

If you have confirmed a spot offered for a term and cancel WITHIN TWO WEEKS of the lesson start date you will have to:

Pay a cancellation fee: the cost of 2 lessons (this will ensure that you stay on the current participants' list and will be considered for any appropriate spots the next time lessons are scheduled). If you do not pay the fee you will not be given priority for future lesson spots. Medical or other mitigating circumstances will be taken into consideration on an individual basis.

- **SWITCHING LESSON POLICY**

Participants will NOT be permitted to switch lesson times once the term has commenced. Exceptions may be made in extreme situations but will be evaluated on a case by case basis. This due to the administrative time and costs incurred that goes in to re-arranged class schedules, volunteers' schedules and horse/equipment schedules.

- **WEIGHT POLICY FOR RIDING**

Participation in riding at VTRA is subject to the availability of a suitable horse, volunteers and is at the discretion of the VTRA Assessment Committee. VTRA reserves the right to weigh all riders at any time during their participation in the program. Riders who surpass the weight limit for their assigned horse may not be permitted to continue riding until an alternative option is available.

General guideline: Weight limit of 150lbs. This is so that the rider is manageable for instructors and volunteers. The weight limit of 150lbs includes the weight of the rider + the weight of the tack + the adjusted weight for listed characteristics, which can be as much as an additional 10% of the rider's weight. Independent riders: May be given an extended weight limit at the discretion of the VTRA Assessment Committee. This decision is based on the availability of a suitable horse, volunteers and equipment.

- **SEIZURE POLICY FOR RIDING**

Existing Participants: Participants with a history of seizures must be seizure free for 6 months on medication OR for one year without medication while participating in the program.

- If the participant has a history of seizures, and one occurs while a participant is registered in a term, the participant will be required to discontinue their participation until they have been cleared by a Medical Doctor and approved by the Assessment Committee and Head Instructor to re-enter the program.
- If the participant can no longer be part of the program, a refund will be issued on medical grounds for lessons not attended.
- Participants that experience 'absence' seizures (seizures that do not affect balance, posture or tone) may be permitted to ride if they always have a leader to control the horse and a side walker to ensure safety in the case of an absence seizure while riding. Riders with absence seizures may not ride independently. In all circumstances, this is up to the discretion of the Instructor and Assessment Committee.

Incoming Applicants: New clients with a prior history of seizures who are applying for admission to VTRA must, at the time of application, have been seizure-free for 6 months on medication OR for one year without medication.

- **ON-GOING SUITABILITY**

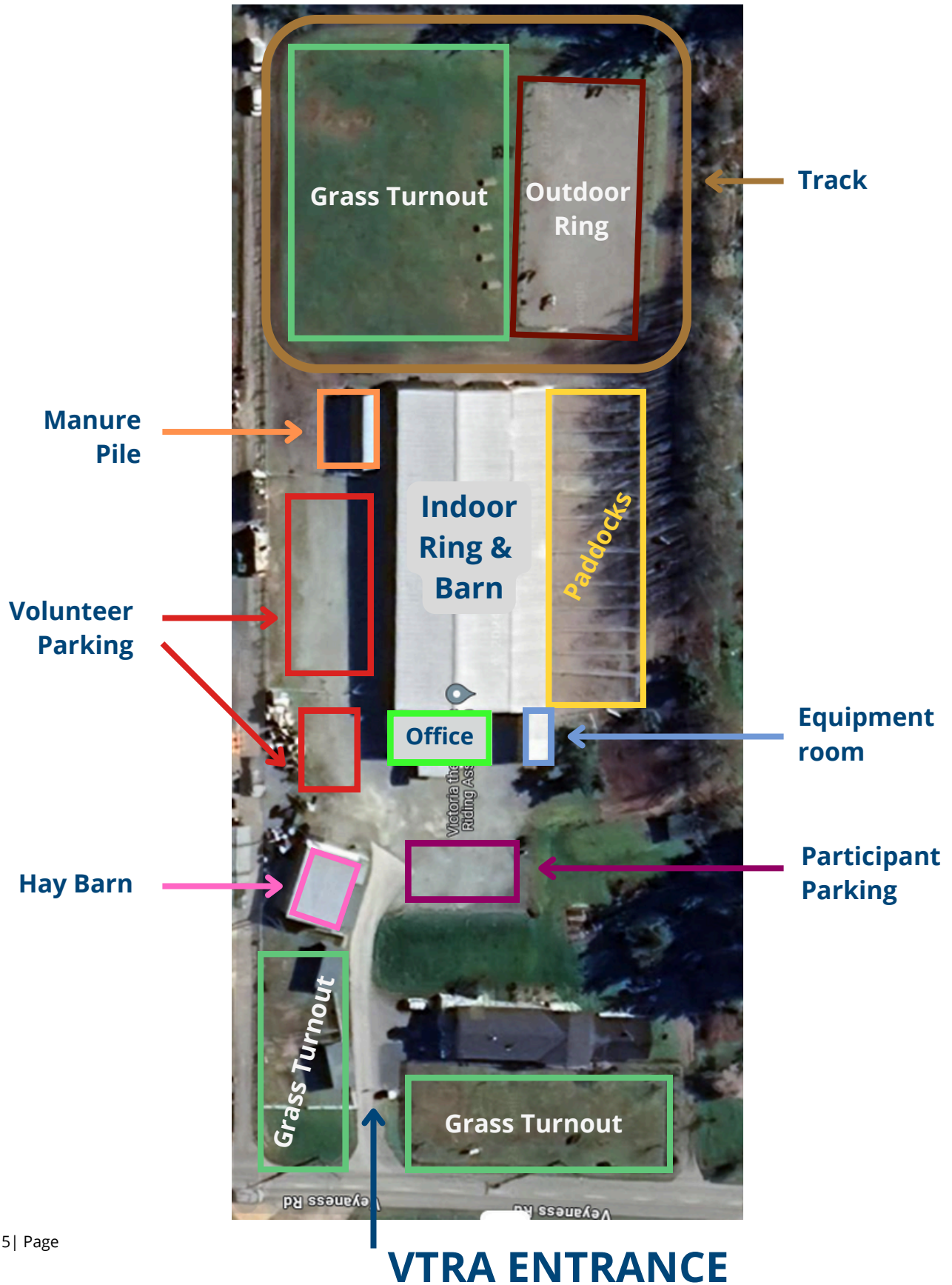
Behavior, height, weight and balance are factors affecting the suitability of the program for a participant. If the participant and the program are deemed incompatible, the participant will be asked to withdraw. This is at the discretion of the VTRA Instructors and the Assessment Committee.



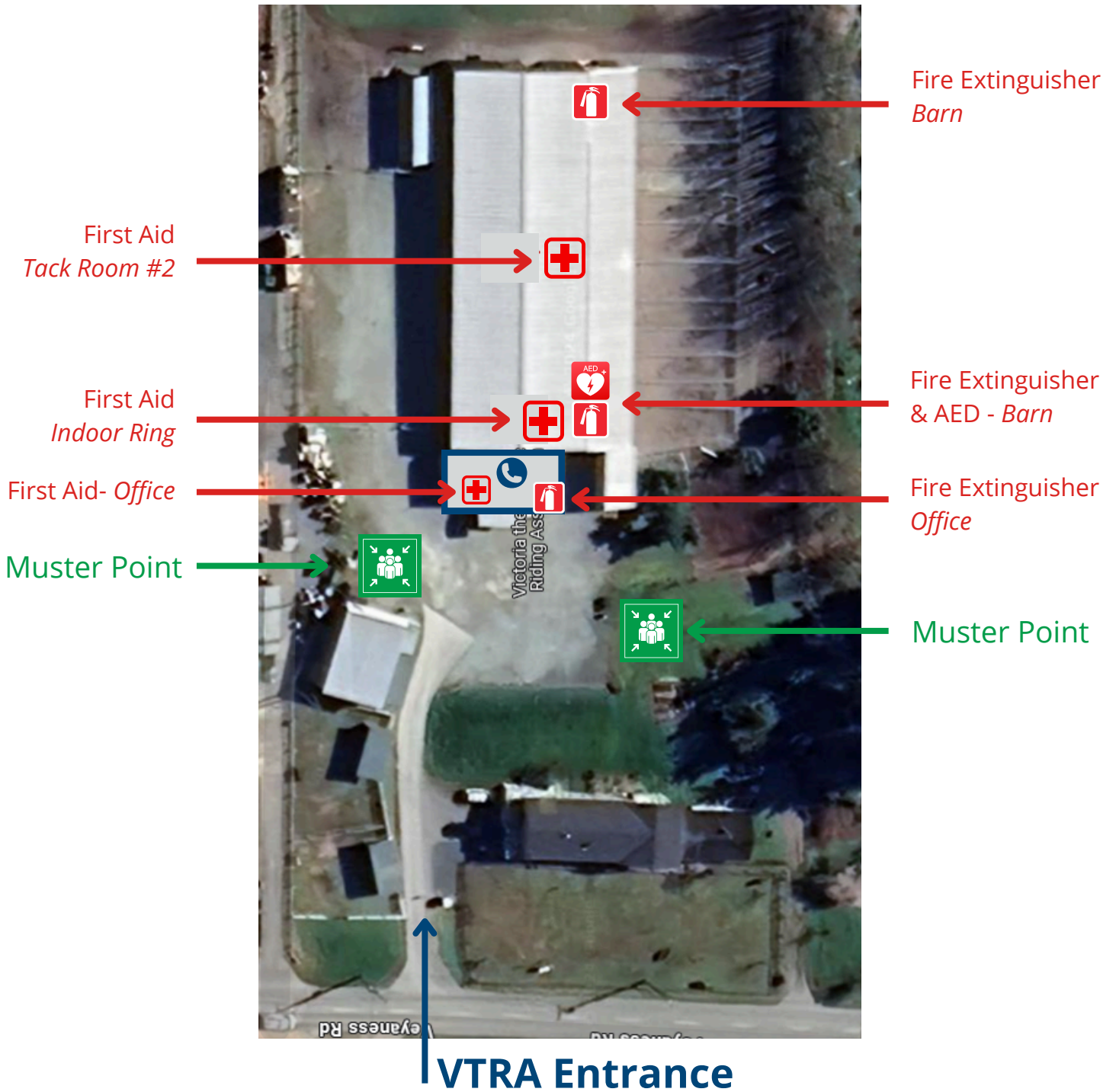
Contraindications and cautions to therapeutic riding

- **Weight in excess of 150 lbs in most circumstances** (with an exception for Stable Management and Adaptive Driving programs)
- Degree of physical assistance required by participant – mounting, riding and dismounting
- Unable to sit independently OR if unable to sit independently be small enough for side walkers
- Unmanaged, aggressive behaviours (i.e. biting, kicking, hair pulling, hitting).
- Inability to listen or follow simple instruction through verbal or other means of communication
- Severe agitation (confusion or excitement)
- Severe osteoporosis (involves brittleness of bones with the possibility of fractures)
- Seizures which are not controlled by medication
- Spinal Immobility (for example fusions or insertion of rods).
- Individual is taking anticoagulant medications (blood thinners) or other meds that make riding risky and/or inappropriate
- Pathological fractures arising from a condition i.e.: osteogenesis imperfecta (brittle bones)
- Acute stages of arthritis and Coxarthrosis (arthritis in the hip)
- Acute herniated disc(s)
- Spondylolisthesis
- Atlanto-axial instability - should have a neurological assessment by a Neurologist
- CVA (cerebral vascular accident) secondary to an unclipped aneurysm
- Structural scoliosis > 30 degrees.
- Excessive kyphosis (increased rearward curvature of the thoracic spine)
- Excessive lordosis (increased forward curvature of the thoracic spine)
- Abnormal fatigue levels
- Diabetes
- Pelvic asymmetry
- Hip subluxation or dislocation
- Hip abduction < 45 degrees R and L
- Post rhizotomy – must wait 6 months
- Sensory deficit
- Tethered cord in Spina Bifida
- Allergies
- Cardiac conditions
- Hydrocephalus, presence of shunts
- Myringotomies
- Incontinence
- Peripheral vascular disease – results in poor circulation in extremities
- Substance Abuse

VTRA map



VTRA Emergency Equipment and Muster Point Locations



6917 Veyaness Road, Saanichton, BC V8M 1W1

Contact

- Our MAILING address is: Victoria Therapeutic Riding Association, P.O. Box 412, Brentwood Bay, BC, V8M 1R3
- Our facility LOCATION is: 6917 Veyaness Road, Keating X Road
- The email address is admin@vtra.ca
- Our facility TELEPHONE number is: 778-426-0506
- Please use the MAILING address when sending items through the post.
- Handy Dart will do pick up and drop off at the facility location.
- There is a BC Transit Bus Stop at the end of Veyaness Road (approximately ½ kilometer from the facility).



From left to right: Haley (Instructor), Sara, (Instructor), Mary (Instructor), Audrey (Finance Manager), Jess (Instructor), Annie (Board Chair), Liz (Acting Executive Director), Shannon (Instructor), Alicia (Head Instructor), Katleen (Volunteer & Participant Coordinator).



VTRA

**VICTORIA THERAPEUTIC
RIDING ASSOCIATION**

Connection. Teamwork. Achievement.