

Frequently Asked Questions

Philosophy

Sharkey Farm is designed on a co-op horse boarding and training model. We are not full care and training and we are not self-care, but somewhere in the middle. We strive to develop riders into both good equestrians and good humans. We do a wide variety of activities with riders and their horses from horse shows, trail rides, beach trips, and camping trips. Riders participate in training, riding, and caring for their horses. The care spans the needs for horse care from routine cleaning paddocks, feeding grain, and caring for their horse when sick or injured. It is impractical for kids to be here every day taking care of their horse's daily care needs. By using the co-op model we try to have all the kids help with the care of other horses on the days they are here, and have others care for their horse on the days they are not.

This model is not the best for everyone. Some owners find that they prefer to have the trainer handle all of their horse's care and decisions, and for that a full training and full care board situation is a better fit. Others find that they want to manage every aspect of their horse's training and care themselves. In these instances self-care or buying horse property is a better fit. We want everyone to find a program which meets their needs and will recommend other barns and programs in the area if our model doesn't work for your needs.

Lessons

Lessons are generally mounted, approximately 30-60 minutes in length including warm up and cool down, and in groups of 2-4. Typically, riders will have one flat (non-jumping) lesson per week and one jumping lesson per week. Sometimes lessons will be shorter, particularly if they are 1:1 or if horse and rider are working on a specific goal. It is far better to end a lesson early on a particularly good note than push for the full time and over tire or overtax a horse or rider.

Sometimes lessons will be held unmounted, where riders are working on skills like bandaging, vet care, tack care, or horse management. This might occur due to weather, timing, injury to horse or rider, or safety.

Additionally, lessons might be held as ground lessons or trail rides. It is important for horsemen to learn how to handle horses from the ground including lunging, leading, and leadership. Similarly, good riders learn how to handle their horses in varied terrain and with unexpected obstacles as found on the trail.

It is up to the instructor's discretion to know what the best lesson is for the horse and rider pair at that moment in time. At every lesson each rider is expected to clean their horse's paddock, groom and tack up their own horse, groom and clean tack after riding, and sweep and tidy the barn aisle before leaving. Horsemanship is the process of taking care of the whole horse, not just riding.

A monthly lesson package on a school horse is four lessons per month - if the month happens to have five lessons in it you get a bonus lesson! These extra lessons help cover the weeks where you or your instructor has to cancel lessons due to unforeseen

circumstances. Monthly lesson packages ensure that we have adequate horse resources available and accounts for the care of the horse even if you cannot make your allotted ride time.

Missed Lessons

Packages are designed with up to four weeks of bonus lessons built in over the course of a full year. This is to factor in timing for your trainer to take vacations, be sick, attend out of town events, and have emergencies come up. Your trainer will do her best to have an assistant trainer come in for extended absences, but occasionally situations will come up where she will not be available.

Riding school students on lesson horses are unlikely to be able to reschedule missed lessons due our desire to maintain an appropriate workload for each horse and not overtax them. *Unlike most riding school programs, our lesson horses only give a maximum of one lesson per day.*

When an owner is unable to attend a lesson, the trainer MAY be able to replace this ride with a trainer ride with prior notice. Trainer rides may not occur on the same day as the missed lesson due to timing constraints.

Horses occasionally are sore or need time off. During these periods, your trainer will do her best to find another horse for the rider, but it is not always possible. You should view the opportunity to lesson on a different horse as a bonus, not the norm.

Weather

We live in the PNW, which means inclement weather is something we must deal with seasonally. We will host mounted lessons in nearly all conditions with the exception of high winds (typically gusting over 35mph), thunder/lightning, frozen ground, or unsafe air quality due to smoke. When it snows, horses can certainly still go on trail rides, be played with, and can come out for rides.

During inclement weather, we will transition to unmounted lessons, learning about nutrition, equine health, tack, farm management, conditioning, farriery, veterinary care and other varied topics. Horsekeeping is a complex task, and these unmounted lessons are as imperative to becoming a well rounded horse person as time in the saddle.

After inclement weather closures, owners may add in any extra mounted lessons they are able to to make up missed days if they wish. There is no refund or credit for weather-related cancellations.

Co-op Boarding

Our boarding style is different from many other facilities. We believe in sharing in the work of caring for horses in order to keep costs down and to make better horsemen. We operate under the assumption that each owner comes to the barn approximately 4-5x per week, assisting in their horse's care those days. There are no additional charges when you are gone on vacation, are sick, or when you are unable to come to the barn, as other riders pitch in to help each other out. We do not formally track how much each person is working,

but instead trust that each person does what they can and are doing their best to be part of the barn community. Riders who know they will be gone or unable to come to the farm as frequently are encouraged to find a friend who can help care for and exercise their horse.

Vet Scheduling/Visits

The trainer will schedule with the vet any regular vet visits (yearly dentals, shots, health papers) and can advise on when/who to call for specific injuries as well. The decision to call and schedule a vet is the owner's unless the trainer feels there is a danger to the horse if a vet is not out immediately in which case, per the boarding contract, the trainer will contact the vet. Owners are expected to be present for vet visits and to use these as opportunities to learn more about horse care.

Medications/Bandaging/Layups

Owners are responsible for their own horse's care. If a medication is able to be added to a feed, that will be done for the owner. Injections, oral pastes, wrapping, bandaging, hand walking, and specialized care is the responsibility of the owner. How an owner gets this done is their responsibility. Similarly, owners are responsible for purchasing any needed medications, bandages, etc. For a short layup of under a month, the rider may be able to ride a school horse for lessons if one is available. There is no discount on lessons/training for this time. For a layup of a month or more a horse may opt out of a lesson/training program until the vet clears them to go back to work. During a layup, the owner is expected to be the point person for horse care, although the trainer and vet will help teach a rider how to manage the injury.

Farrier Scheduling/Visits

Farrier visits are scheduled at approximately 6 week increments. Owners should attend farrier appointments. It is the owner's responsibility to provide a check for the farrier in advance of this visit (please pin to the cork board). Please attend farrier visits if you have questions or concerns with your billing, invoices, or horse's needs. Upcoming farrier dates are always on the whiteboard in the barn, check here to stay apprised of the schedule.

Insurance

We recommend you do your own cost/benefit analysis on whether or not insurance on your privately owned horse is worth it to you. Injuries and diagnostics for a horse can range in the hundreds of dollars for something simple up to tens of thousands of dollars for surgical intervention. Horses are able to be insured for mortality and major medical. Unlike human insurance companies, horse insurance companies can deny coverage for pre-existing conditions and can even exclude entire parts of a horse from a policy. It is extremely important to talk about the ins and outs of insurance coverage with your agent, to know what is covered, and to understand how to make a claim.

Borrowing Gear

Often when you start out riding or owning a horse you will borrow tack or riding gear. We ask that all riders have their own helmets, boots, and half chaps for riding. When you first purchase your horse, you may end up borrowing bits or tack from the trainer, but we ask that once you have settled on the tack you will use that you purchase your own. Riders who lease or own are permitted to have a trunk in the barn and can use this to contain their riding gear. Weekly lesson students will be assigned a cubby in the tack room. All gear should remain tidy while at the barn. Any lost and found items may be donated.

Payments

Board, lesson, and training fees are due in advance, either upon arrival of the horse or on the first of the month, whichever comes first. Fees must be paid directly to the trainer via check, cash, Venmo (@sharkey-farm) or PayPal (kjsharkey1@gmail.com). Checks and cash can be placed in the mailbox in the grain room. A late fee of \$25 will be charged when the balance owed is outstanding for 10 days and will be charged again in 10 day increments while the balance remains outstanding. All farriers, vets, shows, clinics, and specialists will be paid directly by the owner.