

## **About The Red Barn's Waiting List**

First and foremost, we promise that we are doing all that we can to serve as many children as possible. Our waiting list is necessary so that we can provide as high of quality of programs as possible. This is especially true in our riding program since we provide individualized riding lessons.

Coming off the waiting list is based on several variables that aren't always obvious. It isn't a matter of favoritism or based on ability to pay. We don't even consider whether or not a child can pay until after we have already offered them a lesson time. But lack of money is the #1 reason that we can't see more students (see below about resource limitations).

Below are other considerations/factors that weigh into our waiting list.

### **The waitlist is not linear.**

The most complicated part of our waiting list process is that it is not a linear list. This means that it is not as simple a line based on when a student joined the waiting list. We have to match student availability with instructor experience and horse availability. We also take into consideration how well we know the student (see below about classes). For example, suppose we have this student who is leaving our riding program:

Name: Bobby

Age: 9

Weight 45 pounds

Diagnosis: mild CP, developmental delay

Lesson: Wednesdays at 3:30

Rides: Waffle - the smallest pony we have

Instructor: Mary - our newest instructor who has been teaching for less than one year.

If Bobby decides to stop riding, we can only offer that lesson time to a student weighing less than 60 pounds (Waffle's weight limit). Since Mary is a new instructor, we would not want to give her a very involved student until she has more experience. Even if someone has been on the waitlist for two years, if they weigh over 60 pounds, we would not be able to offer them that lesson time. Additionally, we could not offer it to someone with an involved diagnosis who only weighed 30 pounds. Safety is incredibly important to us so we always are careful about making sure the student, instructor, and horse are a good fit together.

Then, to further complicate it, we have to consider the child's unique circumstances. For example, suppose a child is triggered by screaming or crying. So, if we have another student riding on Wednesdays at 3:30 who cries loudly when he dismounts because he doesn't want to leave (transitions are hard), then we wouldn't want to schedule a student triggered by crying at that time because it wouldn't be setting them up for success.

**High student retention prevents us from adding many new students.**

We have greater than an 80% riding student retention from term to term, largely because of our focus on providing high-quality lessons. This means that we have few riding slots that open after each term, which means only a handful of students come off the waiting list each fall and spring.

**Camp or class attendance helps us to know the child.**

As we are trying to find the best fit for the available lesson time, horse, and instructor, it helps us to know the student if they have attended a previous class. This helps us to make a better choice about matching him or her with the correct horse and instructor. When we do have open lessons, the students who have attended classes are easier to schedule because we have less guesswork in knowing where they will be a good fit.

**The waiting time will be longer for lessons during peak times.**

The vast majority of the students on our waiting list can only attend after school. Since after-school times are the busiest part of our lesson schedule, they can expect to have the longest wait times. Students with morning or mid-day availability can generally come off the list sooner.

**Resource limitations keep us from serving everyone we want to serve.**

All of our instructors and horses are currently working at their max workload. Unless a student leaves (see retention above), the only way we can see more students is to hire another instructor. The process to become a certified therapeutic riding instructor takes at least one year, but usually two years. Even if you wrote a check for us to hire a brand new instructor, I don't know of a single person locally that we could hire. And, we'd also have to get at least two new horses. We can't grow incrementally since all of our resources are already maxed out. We can only grow by a large jump to afford another instructor, two new horses, and another admin staff for scheduling and training the volunteers who would assist the instructor in the lessons.

Thank you for your patience, and we can't wait for the day we can serve your child.