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Established 1960

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT LESSONS

What is the difference between group and private lessons?

Group lessons at BHS are ideal for the casual student who is at the level of absolute beginner up through intermediate ability and are more economically priced. Group lessons are also suited to the more ambitious student who may then switch to private lessons based on their preference or our recommendation. Group lessons are geared toward general horsemanship rather than specialized disciplines. Private lessons are obviously more intense and personal and are ideal for the ambitious student, the student who may have a disability, and those who learn better in one-on-one situations with a teacher or instructor. Private lessons are also necessary for those who interested in specializing in a particular discipline rather than general horsemanship. Private lessons are generally half an hour in length and are higher in cost which varies depending on the instructor.

How will I know if it is time to switch from group to private lessons?

Our instructors will let you know if they think its time for you to move onto private lessons, though you are under no obligation to do so. Many people stay in group lessons for years because they simply enjoy the social aspect of our lessons and have no further ambitions. You yourself may find it is time to switch if you are feeling bored, or are beginning to desire to specialize in a certain discipline such as jumping or Dressage.

Can I jump?

BHS does not offer a group jumping program. We also strictly limit how much jumping is done with our horses in private lessons. Jumping is an athletic talent and ability for a horse and not all horses are suited for it. Jumping or any strenuous athletic discipline raises the risk of injury for the horse, and can reduce the length of a horse's career. We strive to keep all of our horses healthy and available for our very popular group lesson program. There may come a time in the future when we are able to bring in horses capable of jumping and offer private jumping lessons, but at this time BHS is not considered a jumping or hunter barn. We do of course offer lessons to private horse owners who wish to jump and have a great deal of jumping equipment available.

Can I lease a horse?

BHS does not offer a formal leasing program. We simply cannot afford to limit how often we can use a horse since we have so many lessons weekly. We do have a few exceptions, usually with horses not suited to group lessons that we allow private leases on. We also have boarded private horses that are sometimes available for lease but Black Horse takes no responsibility for these arrangements.

Is riding dangerous?

The short answer is, yes. But so is driving a car every day. Being around horses carries an inherent risk because they are large animals whose first reaction to fear or surprise is to run. Risks can be minimized by being educated about horses in general and always using caution when working around them or riding them. It is an inherent part of our lesson program to educate people about horse behavior and teach them how to prevent injury and how to react in crisis situations. It is important to understand that horseback riding is similar to skiing in that you are taking part in an inherently risky recreational activity, though BHS does its best to minimize such risks.

How old do you have to be to take lessons?

Our group lesson program has a minimum starting age of 8 years old. We find this is the youngest average age that children are capable of handling a horse on their own in a group. Our private lessons are dependent on the instructor. I personally have taught children as young as 4. It is important to note that giving regular lessons to children that young can often be an exercise in futility. Many children six and under simply aren't capable of the learning curve required and the only benefit can be giving the child a sense of comfort being around the horse. Those who grow up with horses are of course able to assimilate information faster because of their intense exposure, but that is a different situation than paying someone to basically give your child a pony ride once a week till they are old enough to really learn. I would recommend starting a child on regular lessons no earlier than 6.

Is it better to own your own horse for lessons?

Not necessarily. Owning a horse has its advantages as it will always be available to ride, and you can get used to its behavior and movement. But taking lessons on various horses gives you a broader understanding of the differences between horses and establishes a flexible, fluid seat capable of sitting any type of horse movement. There is also an enormous difference in cost between owning your own horse and simply taking lessons or leasing. I always recommend taking lessons for at least a year before considering the purchase of a horse. Once you decide you are ready, we can aid you through the entire process of selecting and purchasing a horse.