

STABLE MANAGER JOB DESCRIPTION

Stable Managers are Team Members, Not Grooms!

by Peggy Entrekin

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As we gear up for Regional Rallies and Championships, I am concerned about a problem that has become more and more common in the last few years: *the misunderstanding about and misuse of Stable Managers*. It is becoming common for Regions to send in Championships entries for teams that do not contain a Stable Manager. In some cases, the Regional Supervisors tell us that they can no longer find any Pony Club members who are willing to take on the responsibilities of Stable Managers.

When an issue like this comes up, I like to conduct a little unscientific research: *I talk to the Pony Club members themselves*. My conversations have netted some very disturbing information, which concerns me greatly. I asked a number of members who had been Stable Managers at rallies these questions:

- What was it like to be a Stable Manager?
- Did they have a good time?
- What did they learn?
- Would they be a Stable Manager again?
- Why did they think it was hard to fill these team positions?

I received some very interesting responses. A few who had been Stable Managers said they liked being organized and trying to make sure that their team did not receive any Horse Management penalty points. Their perception of the Stable Manager experience was for the most part positive. Others said that they did not like it because they were expected to do all of the grunt work and be ordered around by their teammates. Nearly all said that they did not want to be a Stable Manager again and that it did not surprise them that other kids also did not want to be Stable Managers either. They did not want to be treated like a groom.

These conversations made me sad because I think that we are missing out on some very important life skill learning opportunities for our USPC members. There are grooms in the equine industry and their duties are generally as Webster's Dictionary defines "One whose work is tending horses."

In Pony Club, we have much different expectations of our Stable Managers. Our Rallies create an opportunity for our members to demonstrate what they have learned in their Pony Club lessons as they are progressing through the Standards of Proficiency. Our members study their manuals and educational materials and learn Horse Management skills from hands-on experience – we expect a lot more than from them than just "tending to horses." They learn the science of horses, they learn to be responsible, to care for and appreciate horses, they learn to be organized and manage their time and their teammates' time. And, in addition, the Stable Manager for a team learns a lot about managing people.

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Horse Management is important in Pony Club; we make it a requirement at all Pony Club mounted Rallies, and we also make it a requirement that teams have Stable Managers. What we are not doing is communicating the importance of this position and the respect it deserves. The Stable Manager has the most important job on the team! Pony Club members and their parents should appreciate the skill and knowledge it requires to do this job.

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PRIOR TO RALLY:

1. Work closely with team Captain to plan ahead for all required equipment, both team and individual. Assist the Captain as may be requested.
2. Be sure that all team members have copy of stall card and assist in filling in the required information. Plan on some sort of protection for the stall cards against weather exposure.
3. Bring any equipment as indicated in planning with Captain and be sure that all team equipment is properly labeled with the team name (*club/team name/region if Championships team*)
4. Prepare a feed chart for use by team members at rally and ask all team members to provide you with the required information in advance of rally so that the feed chart can be prepared ahead of time.

AT RALLY:

1. Upon arrival, assist teammates in setting up stalls for horses as first priority – care of horses should take precedence over setting up tack room.
2. Supervise the set up of the team tack room, making certain that it is set up in an organized manner. Make sure all teammates know where equipment can be found so that they can locate it if needed and you are not present. Make sure all items are properly labeled (hopefully this was done at home prior to arrival at rally)
 - a) Be present when Stable Manager Judges come to check required equipment, if possible, and be able to explain the intended use for each piece of equipment.
3. Assist in stable areas as may be necessary or indicated throughout the rally. (picking out stalls, refilling water buckets, grooming teammate's horse or tacking up as may be requested by teammates or team captain. Generally each team member is responsible for the care of his/her own horse, stall and personal equipment; the Stable Manager provides an extra set of hands and should never be expected to take on the total care of team horses.
4. Be familiar with the team schedule as posted in tack room and assist team members in keeping to that schedule. Check this schedule frequently and help keep team members stay on time.
5. Assist team members in preparing for turnout inspections and accompany team members to their assigned station, if possible, unless it is necessary to stay in stable area to help another team member prepare for turnout inspection.

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6. Try to be at ringside to cheer teammates on and to be available to assist when ride is done. Consider what equipment or supplies should be brought to the ringside that will be useful at the end of teammate's ride. (at an Eventing rally, be prepared to help in the vet box with cooling out of teammates' mounts).
7. Make periodic checks in stable area to ensure that:
 - a) Tack room area is neat and clean. Tack room door is left closed unless team member(s) are in the tack room
 - b) Area in front of all stalls is kept clean and "raked or swept"
 - c) Stall cards stay in place on all team stalls
 - d) Stalls are picked out as needed – you do not have to be obsessive about this, but do not allow manure to pile up and there to be obvious wet spots.
 - e) Lead lines are properly hung outside of stalls when not in use.
 - f) Haynets, if used, are properly hung and stay at proper height at all times even when empty.

AT RALLY END:

1. Supervise the break down of the team tack room (competitors are sometimes allowed to start break down of tack room prior to award ceremony).
2. Assist teammates in stripping of stalls as indicated or instructed at overall briefing (most often the stalls have to be completely stripped and checked by Stable Manager).
3. Be sure that the team tack room is swept/raked after all items are removed
4. Be sure that the area in front of each stall is swept/raked after the stall is stripped and horse has left the stable area.
5. Assist the team captain as indicated or delegated.
6. Upon arrival at home, check all club-owned equipment and restock as instructed by the DC. Return the equipment to the proper storage location
7. Together with the team captain, prepare a report to present to the DC. Be sure to include in this report:
 - a. What went well for the team, what did not go well – keep personal criticism out of this report and stick with specifics such as "lacked time management skills" or club utility kit was missing _____
 - b. Suggestions for preparing teams before rally/making the team better prepared for rally