

Carriage Driving

In the Carriage Driving Program the Carriage Driving Coach is in charge of the lesson and volunteers work in a team with the Coach to provide safe, quality activities. Volunteers can assist with:

- Grooming and preparing the horses.
- Harnessing up and putting the horse to the Carriage.
- Meeting and greeting the drivers and assisting with helmet fitting and special equipment.
- Assisting with loading and unloading under supervision of the Carriage Driving Coach.

Loading an Ambulant Driver:

1. The **Carriage Driving Coach** controls the horse from the carriage.
2. The **groom**, with lead rope attached to the horse's head collar stands at the horse's head on the nearside.
3. The **driver** takes up the reins and steps into the carriage, turns, sits down and tucks the spare rein under their leg.
4. Groom releases horse on command.

For drivers who cannot lift their legs high enough to step into or out of the carriage, they may use a mounting block of one or two low steps.

For drivers with poor balance and spatial awareness a waist transfer belt worn by the driver and held by helpers may give the driver additional support when entering and exiting the vehicle.

Unloading an Ambulant Driver:

Follow Steps 1 & 2 in the Loading procedure. The driver then holds the reins and steps **backwards** out of the carriage. A helper stands nearby to offer assistance if needed.

If a driver is not confident to step backwards the Coach may modify the unloading procedure. The driver may step out forwards with assistance from helpers.

If a driver cannot coordinate exiting and holding the reins, reins may be tied to dash rail or tucked under back strap.

Loading a Wheelchair Driver:

1. The **Carriage Driving Coach** controls the horse from the carriage.
2. The **groom**, with lead rope attached to the horse's head collar stands at the horse's head on the nearside.
3. Place the wheel chocks in position.
4. Two **volunteers** put the carriage ramp down.
5. Driver is wheeled up the ramp and wheelchair brakes applied (groom may be asked to hold down the shaft to stabilise the carriage).
6. **Volunteers** close the ramp.
7. Wheelchair is moved into position to balance the carriage, wheelchair restraints are secured.
8. Wheel chocks removed on command.
9. Groom releases horse on command.

Unloading a Wheelchair Driver:

Follow Steps 1-3 in the Wheelchair Loading procedure.

4. The volunteer takes the reins from the driver and tucks them through the back strap.
5. Unfasten the wheelchair restraints.
6. Two volunteers lower the ramp.
7. Brakes on the wheelchair are released and the driver is wheeled down the ramp and moved away.
8. Ramp put up and fastened or next driver is loaded.
9. Wheel chocks removed.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

During the Carriage Driving lesson, there should always be three or more "spotters" on the ground in the case of an emergency. Each spotter must carry a lead rope in the event of an emergency. It is important that volunteers are prepared for emergency situations and that drills are practiced regularly. For more information about emergency drills, refer to the RDA Volunteer Information Book.



Harnessing the Carriage Driving horse

For volunteers working in RDA Carriage Driving programs, the following tips and hints will assist with preparing the horses for the driving session.

Harnessing:

- Start from the front of the horse fit the breast plate first.
- Work your way to the back of the horse.
- The bridle is the last piece of harness to put on and the first piece of harness to take off.
- In depth instruction for harnessing will be taught to new volunteers by the Carriage Driving Coach.

Putting to:

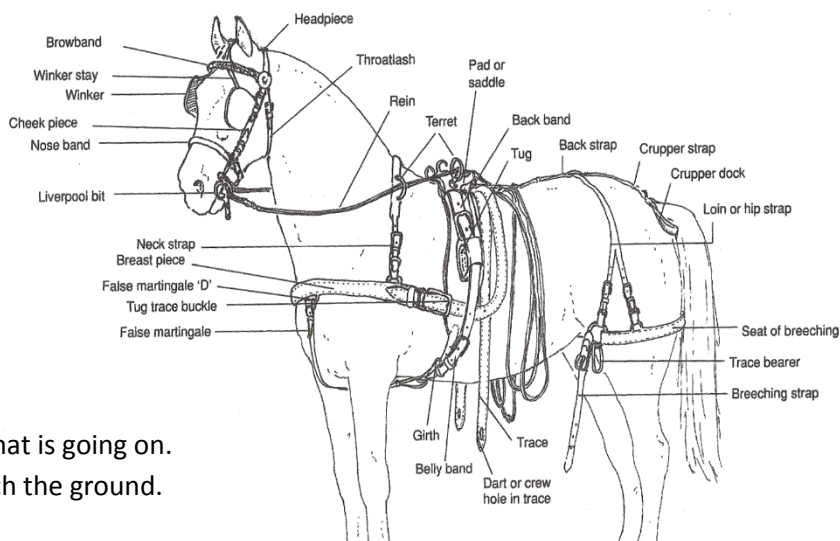
- The role of the **groom** is to stand at the head of the horse and hold the horse while the carriage is put to.
- **NEVER** back a horse into the carriage for putting to.
- **NEVER** leave a horse tied up unsupervised with the carriage attached.

Taking the horse out of the Carriage:

- Loosen the belly band.
- Unclip the breeching.
- Unclip the traces.
- Guide the vehicle back,
- Lifting the shafts up over the horse's hips,
- Move the Carriage well away.

Unharnessing:

- Undo the reins.
- Hook the buckles into the saddle terrets.
- Remove the bridle, now the horse can see what is going on.
- Coil or take off the traces so they do not touch the ground.
- Undo the crupper.
- Lift the crupper and breeching straps forward onto the horse's back, just behind the saddle.
- Remove the reins, undo the girth, remove the saddle and backband with breeching and crupper attached.
- Undo the neck strap and remove the breast plate with traces attached.
- Cool down and groom the horse.



RECOGNISING THE SIGNS OF STRESS IN THE RDA HORSE:

Horses demonstrate a broad range of emotional responses that horse handlers need to learn to recognise for the safety of the RDA program. It is important to recognise when a horse is tired, stressed or in pain. Unhappy horses can react in sudden, unexpected ways. Advise the coach of any changes you notice in a horse's normal behaviour.

Signs of stress can include:

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| - Grinding the teeth | - Pawing the ground | - Fidgeting |
| - Excessive tail swishing | - Listlessness or lack of energy | - Ears laid back |
| - Biting/kicking horses or handlers | - Failing to stand still during putting to or loading | |



For more information refer to the RDA Volunteer Information book.