

# Safely Hosting a Clinic

By Armand Leone and Jessica E. Choper

Hosting a clinic at your facility can be beneficial for a number of reasons. It can provide marketing opportunities for your farm, generate revenue and offer a fun learning experience for everyone involved. However, before you officially kick off your clinic, there are a few safety considerations to keep in mind.

## LIABILITY

After you've lined up your clinician and have the date picked out, make sure basic legal considerations are in place.

If your clinician teaches or gives clinics regularly, they likely have their own liability insurance, but be sure to confirm this with them well before the clinic date.

Since you're hosting the clinic at your property and likely have boarders, you should already have commercial liability insurance in place. If you don't, it's also vital that you obtain your own liability coverage in advance of the clinic. You should also contact your insurance provider before the clinic to confirm that your policy covers this particular activity.

Make certain that all clinic participants sign a liability waiver, even if the clinician also requires riders to sign liability waivers for his or her benefit. Almost all states within the U.S. now also have Equine Activity Liability Acts, so make sure the mandated liability warning signs contain the requisite language and are displayed on your property in a clearly visible location.

## EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

In any equine activity, there's almost always risk involved. Injuries can happen and it's



Nicole Butchko and Corsair taking part in a clinic.  
Photo by Jump Media

essential to be prepared to handle an emergency situation. Even though 911 is usually the first call you'll make in a medical emergency, make certain that the contact information for the local EMS ambulance corps and hospital are readily available for you and staff as well. You can also contact your local ambulance service before the clinic to alert them of your upcoming event. At the time the riders register for the clinic, have them provide emergency contact information so that it's easily accessed.

## DOGS

Where there are horse owners, you'll often find dogs so you need to decide if you should allow dogs at your clinic. Having dogs at an event like this can present liability issues for both dog owners and for you as the property owner.

Dogs can cause a horse to spook and a rider to fall off, resulting in injuries to both horse and rider. Even if dogs are allowed on the premises with a leash, they can get loose and interfere with the smooth operation of the clinic. Plus, the possibility of a dog biting an attendee is also a major liability concern.

Whether you decide to disallow dogs at the clinic or strictly enforce a "leashed-only" rule, include this information in any pre-clinic materials sent out to the potential participants and other attendees. Also, be sure to post signs about dog rules on-site at the clinic.



Armand Leone, Jr., MD, JD, MBA, and attorney Jessica E. Choper of Leone Equestrian Law provide legal services and consultation for equestrians, ranging from riders and trainers to owners and show managers in the FEI disciplines on a wide variety of issues. Learn more by visiting [www.equestriancounsel.com](http://www.equestriancounsel.com).

Do you have a question you want Armand and Jessica to answer?  
Send questions to [editor@sidelinesmagazine.com](mailto:editor@sidelinesmagazine.com).

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## UNATTENDED MINORS

Clinics offer a great opportunity for children to learn from a top professional in a relaxed, educational environment. However, it's a good idea to set some guidelines in order to keep children safe when they're not riding during a session.


Even though they may not intend to cause any harm, kids who are playing near the barn or arena could be a potentially hazardous distraction. Running, yelling or other types of behavior can startle a horse, causing a rider to fall off. Curious children may also explore your facility, opening stall doors, leaving gates open, interacting with dangerous horses or unintentionally causing property damage.

One way to help avoid these scenarios is to designate clearly marked areas for clinic participants and auditors. You can also post "No Admittance" signs in areas of the barn, rings or any other area that you would like to have off-limits. Include these on-site rules when attendees sign release forms, and make sure that parents relay this information to their children.

## HORSE AND RIDER SAFETY

Before each group begins their session, have the clinician perform a tack safety check for every participant. This should include the bridle, saddle and all accessories. This is a good way to avoid any tack malfunctions during a ride and hopefully prevent riders from falling, and subsequently, horses running loose on the property. Always check girths at the beginning of each session and again before jumping.

Again, before the start of each group, the clinician should brief the riders on what to do in the event that a rider does fall off. Loose horses can quickly become frightened, especially in a new environment. The best way to ensure a quick and safe recovery of the horse is to have all riders remain calm, dismount, go to the center of the ring and allow experienced staff to retrieve the loose horse.

Once you've lined up the appropriate liability coverage for your event, set clear rules about dogs and unattended children, posted on-site signage in clear language and visible locations, and have safety plans set in place for riding sessions, you're all set to host your clinic. Best of luck! 

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