

**RIDING FOR THE DISABLED ASSOC. (NSW)
"TALL TIMBERS" CENTRE
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With the assistance of service organisations, constant fundraising and the help of volunteers, Riding for the Disabled, "Tall Timbers" Centre provides horse riding and associated equestrian activities for people with disabilities.

Horse riding, as well as being enjoyable, has many benefits.

These include

- * improved balance and posture
- * assisting with the development of fine and gross motor skills
- * promotes decision making and thinking ahead
- * motivation and learning - encourages reading and speech through games
- * develops hand and eye co-ordination
- * development of language and communication skills
- * memory improvement and concentration
- * person challenge leading to achievement
- * new mobility and access to new areas
- * social integration
- * mental stimulation
- * increased self esteem
- * learn the value of rules
- * promotes a general feeling of well-being

For many of those with physical disabilities, the benefits from riding in terms of exercise and improving posture are obvious. There may, however, be a strong motivational factor, which can also be used to good purpose. Exercise that may usually be tedious, if performed on horseback, may be performed with renewed vigour and interest. The coach can also work closely with the rider's teacher or carer to reinforce their literacy, numeracy or social skills. This is simply using the motivational factor of the horse and riding in the learning process.

The benefits of riding combine both physical and psychological aspects. It is a valuable segment of rehabilitation programs because, as well as having a therapeutic value, it is a stimulating and enjoyable activity. It can also be used to provide sporting and recreational programs for those whose opportunities for these may be limited.

Language skills are developed by bringing language into games and exercises. Also, in many cases, being with the horses seems to unleash some riders' inhibition about talking.

Individual programs are developed for each rider and progress is monitored. The classes are varied and include the use of games, music, co-ordination exercises and trail rides.

All coaches with RDA are qualified. They have skills in horsemastership, safety, medical knowledge, first aid, teaching and the selection and training of horses.