PLEASE REVIEW THIS WHOLE PAGE WITH YOUR CHILD and DISCUSS THE "IMPORTANT PREREQUISITES" TO CONFIRM READINESS FOR HORSE FOCUS and A VALUABLE HORSE FOCUS EXPERIENCE

EXPERIENCE Previous experience with some independent riding is necessary to participate in the Horse! Focus Program. Campers must feel ready to walk, trot and canter.

DESIRE Choosing the best program for a particular child can sometimes be a challenge. Horse Focus is an intensive program for riders who already have experience as well as a desire to "really get out and ride."

COMFORT As in all our programs for children, our goal is for each child to succeed and to have a positive camp experience which is safe and enjoyable for the participant. Campers need to be at ease and open with the animals. Horses can sense when a rider is tense or fearful. The development of a safe partnership between horse and rider is only successful when the child feels comfortable. Only sign up a child who understands and wants to participate in this program, who meets the grade requirement, and who understands and commits independently to all the prerequisites.

OPEN RANGE RIDING What we do is "open-range riding." Not usually in a line, the group walks and trots on and off trails through forests and meadows. Each rider turns and moves the horse independently. Our horses are trained to be responsive to the rider, and each rider must learn to partner with a horse that is alert to the rider's signals. Every rider needs to be able to focus on the horse's signals in various situations. Safety is paramount for your child, his/her horse, the other children, and the other horses. Many other children's riding programs may be in a riding ring where the fence defines the outside boundary of the horse's space to move within. Riding at The Colorado Mountain Ranch does not include this containment. Riding at CMR is NOT riding horses that have learned specific habits such as going around and around the ring or doing mainly just one or two specific moves. The attention, focus, and determination of the rider is of greatest importance in order to just "get out and ride" in the spirit of riding the open range in the old West.

GOOD LISTENER AND LEARNER The rider MUST listen well, pay close attention, and respond to the teaching, suggestions, and coaching from the instructor. Each child must be able to learn to manage self, the horse, and their personal horse-rider combination without compromising the safety of self, horse, or others.

PARTNERING WITH THE HORSE In our style of Western riding, the rider must partner with the horse to support the horse's own natural alertness, while also staying confident. Learning to communicate with the horse through a variety of cues simultaneously - using thoughts, eyes, voice, legs, balance, pressure, and reins. Reining needs to be lighter and less controlling, especially when compared to English style. There needs to be conscious rein management in order to use minimal pressure on the bit or bosal. These techniques require constant attention, clear understanding, and effort.

DOES MY CHILD ANSWER "YES" TO THESE QUESTIONS:

1. Do you have some independent horse experience riding on your own?
2. Are you comfortable and not scared around big strong animals?
3. Are you determined to be alert to "listening" and communicating closely with the horse?
4. Are you ready for a mental partnering with the horse?
5. Are you able to focus and attend to the communications from the horse, as well as directions and pointers from the instructors?
6. Are you interested and willing to put learning to ride as first priority, above social and other distractions?
7. Do you have the tenacity and strength - especially in the arms - for turning and pulling up a horse with a strong head?
8. Do you have no hesitation to trot during open range riding?
9. Are you confident in your riding ability?

PLEASE NOTE: If there is a safety concern or if it is in your child's and/or the Horse Focus group's best interest, we might ask your child to do trail rides with the Mountain Adventure groups so they can gain riding experience and become more comfortable.