

Whistle Pig Farm FAQ



I. General

1. *What is Whistle Pig Farm?*

- a. Whistle Pig Animal Welfare Service Corporation (d/b/a Whistle Pig Farm) is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit entity dedicated to equine rescue, rehabilitation, and placement to qualified homes.

2. *What does the name mean?*

- a. "Whistle Pig" is another common name for the ground hog or woodchuck. Various families of whistle pigs have been present on the farm over the years.

II. Equine Rescue

1. *Why rescue horses?*

- a. Horses are large (up to 2,200 lbs), long-lived (up to 30 years), and expensive to own and maintain (approximately \$5,000 per year per animal for basic care and maintenance). As a result, horses are at greater risk than almost any other domesticated animal for neglect.
- b. With limited "retirement" options, and a racing industry which remains highly focused on breeding, over 100,000 equines go to slaughter each year. While the last slaughter plants in the US closed in 2007, active slaughter auctions / "kill pens" remain, sending animals to slaughter in Canada and Mexico.

2. *How does a rescue occur?*

- a. Whistle Pig Farm performs several types of rescue:
 - i. Adoption or purchase of horses from owners who are no longer able to afford proper care;
 - ii. Partnership with other rescue farms in the region to purchase "qualified" horses from kill pens. "Qualified" horses are those which have been confirmed to have the physical and psychological characteristics which make them suitable for permanent placement following rehabilitation. This includes an evaluation of "manners" within the herd (no biting or kicking above and beyond normal assertion of dominance), willingness to accept a rider and respond to basic walk / trot commands, i.e., existing novice level skillset, and ability to perform during groundwork (without a rider), responding to verbal commands regarding gait, direction, etc.

3. *What types of horses does Whistle Pig Farm rescue?*

- a. Only mares and geldings are kept on the farm; no stallions are permitted.
- b. Most horses are from 7-10 years old, in a calm phase of life and without material physical issues.

4. *How does Whistle Pig Farm know when a rescue horse is ready to be ridden?*

- a. In addition to pre-qualification prior to purchase at auction, all horses are subject to further evaluation by multiple riders, both on-site and off, prior to final intake / adoption by Whistle Pig.
- b. Several Camp Beech Cliff campers have taken multiple private lessons at Whistle Pig Farm on one or more of the above horses during the 2018 season.

III. Horses of Whistle Pig Farm

1. *What horses do you expect to have at Whistle Pig Farm for 2019?*

- “Pearl” – a palomino mare owned by one of our senior instructors and ridden competitively by the University of Maine Dressage Team. While Pearl has advanced skills, she is calm, compliant, considered “bomb proof” (she generally does not spook) and lovely beginner horse during the 2018 season.
- “Addie” – a bay mare purchased at slaughter auction, Addie comes from a champion bloodline, but has “more whoa than go”. When her owner (a breeder of thoroughbred racing quarter horses) died, Addie lost her “champion” and was sent to auction, which in most cases means she was headed for slaughter. Used successfully for lessons during the 2018 season, Addie is spending the winter at East Ridge Stable for continued training to help unlock her potential. She is well-mannered, very comfortable with walk / trot, and a good beginner mount.
- Forrest “Gump” – a bay gelding, Gump clearly had a hard life prior to coming to Whistle Pig Farm; however, despite his visible scars, he has a big heart and is gentle by nature. Gump is considered a beginner mount.
- “Charlie” – a chestnut gelding, Charlie is owned by the farm’s farrier and serves as a companion to two recent mini rescues. We believe he was previously used as a camp horse. He is calm, very gentle / affectionate, and well-suited to beginner instruction.
- “Cinnamon” – a smaller Morgan horse, Cinnamon is a bit of a “boss bag” in the herd, but a wonderful horse for beginning riders interested in moving beyond walk and trot to both the canter and / or low jumps.
- “Eddie” - a chestnut gelding, who is not yet under saddle. “Eddie” is handsome, powerful, fast, and smart. Initially wary, but proven to form strong bonds with select individuals, he was our first rescue and will always have a place with us. Requiring a special / highly skilled rider, Eddie is a “one rider” horse and is not suitable for use in a camp / group program. He is off site this winter being trained by a highly experienced trainer. When people visit the farm and see him, the response is always, “Wow!”.

IV. Farm Safety

1. *What safety requirements exist?*

- a. All riders must wear ASTM/SEI certified helmets, appropriate footwear (closed toe shoes with a heel that provide both a stable base for walking on potentially uneven terrain and something that provides protection should you inadvertently be stepped on by a horse)), and long pants. Loose clothing should be avoided.
- b. Participants must follow Barn Rules at all times and listen to their Riding Instructor(s) and other Farm employees/leadership.

2. What level of supervision exists?

- a. An instructor, assistant or other Farm personal supervise all interactions between Participants and the horses based on the level of experience of the Participant.
- b. A primary instructor and an assistant (“Instructors”) are present during group lessons.
 - i. Group lessons are limited to no more than X Participants at one time.
 - ii. While Instructors supervise leading horses to the arena and mounting/dismounting Participants are responsible for asking for additional help if they need it.
 - iii. Participants should always check their own equipment to ensure that the bridle and saddle are secure.
 - iv. Once mounted, Participants are supervised by at least one instructor in the ring/arena at all times.

V.

Learning at the Farm

1. What horse related skills will Participants learn at Whistle Pig Farm?

- a. Beyond learning the basics of horseback riding Participants will also receive instruction regarding:
 - i. Understanding of horse “body language” as well as herd and prey behaviors; both of the latter inform all of our interaction with horses and need to be understood.
 - ii. Safe interactions with horses such as approaching the horse, touching, grooming, hand feeding, awareness of the location of the horse’s hooves and related guidance.

2. What “life lessons” will Participants learn?

- a. The self-confidence which can be built through working closely with a large, powerful animal
- b. The ongoing importance and place for horses in our lives
- c. The significant commitment required for horse ownership
- d. The joy of horseback riding
- e. The value of rescue and rehabilitation work
- f. The ongoing place for the working farm on Mount Desert Island

3. For Camp Beech Cliff Participants:

- a. The basic curriculum may include the following areas:
 - i. History / Uses of the horse Q & A
 - ii. Physiology of the horse
 - iii. Psychology of the horse
 - iv. Interaction with the horse
 - v. Care and maintenance
 - vi. Feeding requirements
 - vii. Farrier demonstration / hoof care
 - viii. Dental care
 - ix. Grooming, leading and handling a horse from the ground
 - x. Overview of tack and equipment

