

Adapted Equestrian Vaulting at the Cowichan Therapeutic Riding Association

Equestrian vaulting is a gymnastic-type performance on a moving horse set to music, blending the traditions of dance and gymnastics with equestrian sport. Developed in postwar Germany as a means of introducing children to equestrian sport, vaulting has a well-established history in Europe and a strong following in the United States. Canada is beginning to grow the sport under VaultCanada – a discipline committee of Equine Canada (the national governing association for horse sport). Provincially, equestrian vaulting is managed by the Equestrian Vaulting Association of BC (EVA of BC). While not yet recognized as an Olympic sport, vaulting has been demonstrated at the 1984 and 1996 games and has been a component of the World Equestrian Games since 1990. The first full vaulting squad to represent Canada competed at the WEG in 2014.



Unlike most riding in which the rider exerts primary influence on the horse's "way of going" (speed, direction of travel, cadence, etc.), vaulting requires the horse to travel in a consistent circle (approximately 15-20 meters in diameter) controlled by a "lunger" (a trained equestrian positioned at the centre of the circle). A bridle or special lunging "cavesson" (headstall) and "lunge line" (long rope from headstall to handler) is used to communicate with the horse, replacing the action of reins. A specialized back pad and "surcingle" (a belly strap with hand grips and stirrup-like loops for the vaulter's feet) is used instead of a saddle. Unlike traditional, independent equestrian disciplines, vaulters work in teams, assisting each other with maneuvers and creating a seamless multi-player aesthetic. Instruction is provided by certified coaches. In British Columbia, these instructors are accredited under EVA of BC. CTRA's vaulting instructor staff are dually certified by the Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association (the national governing body for therapeutic riding).

Vaulters progress from unmounted exercises using barrels, gym mats, trampolines, and other stationary equipment to work with horses. As skills advance, the pace of the horse moves from the walk to the canter. Vaulting horses possess sturdy conformation; move with a balanced, rhythmic gait; and demonstrate exceptional sense and patience. They are rigorously trained for this specific job, usually over many years.

Adapted equestrian vaulting (a.k.a. therapeutic vaulting) is a modification of the equestrian vaulting discipline. Adapted equestrian vaulting/therapeutic vaulting provides many of the same benefits as therapeutic riding in a format that offers existing clients a supplementary service option and new clients a highly engaging "first-contact" experience. In addition to the myriad positive outcomes common to CTRA's core services, adaptive equestrian vaulting program participants develop strength, flexibility, balance, poise, and self-confidence while benefitting from the responsibility, trust, and teamwork inherent to the group-based structure.



To learn more about this program please contact the CTRA office at:

Cowichan Therapeutic Riding Association

1843 Tzhoualem Road

Duncan BC V9L 5L6

info@ctra.ca

250-746-1028