



DISABILITY FACT SHEET

CEREBRAL PALSY

What is Cerebral Palsy?

- Cerebral Palsy (CP) is most commonly caused by a lack of oxygen just before, during or after birth. It can also be caused by premature birth, exposure to infections and accidents such as near drowning, and so on, generally up to two years of age.
- CP refers to weakness, paralysis or lack of muscle control originating in the brain. It is a disorder of muscle control resulting in weakness, stiffness, awkwardness, slowness, shakiness and difficulty with balance ranging from mild to severe forms.
- There are three main types of CP:
 - Most Common: Spastic – damage is located in the cortex of the brain which controls thought, movement and sensation.
 - Less Common: Athetoid – damage is located in the basal ganglia of the brain which is responsible for organised, graceful and economical movement.
 - Least Common: Ataxic – damage is located in the cerebellum which coordinates posture and balance.

Benefits from working with RDA

- **Weakness, paralysis or lack of muscle control**
 - Muscles are strengthened by increase use involved in riding.
- **Poor Balance**
 - The three-dimensional rhythmic movement of the horse is similar to the motion of walking, teaching rhythmical patterns to the muscles of the legs and trunk. Placing the client in different positions on the horse works different sets of muscles.
- **Poor Coordination**
 - Riding a horse requires a great deal of coordination in order to get the desired response from the horse. Repetition of patterned movements required in controlling a horse quickens reflexes and aids in motor planning.
Eye and hand coordination is taught in grooming and preparing the horse, among other activities.
- **Easily Fatigues**
 - Even though riding is exercise, it is perceived as enjoyment, therefore the rider has increased tolerance and motivation to lengthen the period of exercise.
- **High Muscle Tone**
 - The warmth of the horse and the gentle movement of riding relaxes tight muscles and allows for stretching.
- **Concentration**
 - Programs include educational concepts, learning numbers, colours, shapes, patterns and sequencing. Memory and concentration can be improved through playing games.
- **Social Isolation**
 - Group lessons provide riders with the opportunity to join in with their peers and develop friendships.
- **Psychological Benefits**
 - Adaptive equipment helps riders to participate in a sport to the best of their ability. This includes competition opportunities.

DISABILITY FACT SHEET

CEREBRAL PALSY

Taj's Story



After being born premature at 33 weeks in 2006, Taj weighed only 1560gm. He endured 4.5 long months in hospital until he reached 4kgs, the desired weight for open heart surgery. After his VSD repair he finally got to go home with his mum, Amanda. After his discharge from hospital, Taj attended weekly appointments for many different physical and neurological therapies – and still does today.

Taj began RDA when Amanda had exhausted all other avenues to enable Taj to walk. Taj has Cerebral Palsy and doctors predicted that he would never walk. One week after starting at RDA he took his first steps. Today he is walking well and falling over rarely, his physiotherapist and teachers are confident he will also run soon.

In August, Taj, aged 5 years old was the youngest rider in the RDA WA Dressage Championships at Brookleigh Equestrian Estate and won two 2nd and two 3rd places out of the four events he competed in. It was truly inspiring to see the effort and achievement of Taj. His family are extremely proud of him and his personal success.

Amanda says RDA is the best thing she could have done for Taj. She says she and Taj have made many wonderful lifelong friends and RDA is like family to them. Amanda would like to acknowledge and thank all the tremendous volunteers that help Taj every week to reach new goals.

Cerebral Palsy in RDA

- Riders with Cerebral Palsy make up 7% of all riders in RDA.
 - Male: 115 (52%)
 - Female: 108 (48%)
- Cerebral Palsy is most predominant in the 4-17 year age bracket
- Cerebral Palsy is the most common disability in clients aged 0-3 years.

