

# VAULTING: Aerobics on Horseback

By Mary LaFleur Langdon



At the Renaissance Farm in Wilton, New Hampshire, owned by Pam Fleurant, you might be surprised to see the students standing, kneeling, or even doing a handstand on the horses. These students are practicing equestrian vaulting.

Equestrian vaulting is gymnastics or acrobatics performed on a horse moving in a circle on a lunge line. The three forms of vaulting include recreational, competitive, and therapeutic.

Pam learned the proper techniques to coach vaulting, and today, her team has 15 members aged nine to seventeen years, with skill levels from beginner to silver medalist. The team performs in demonstrations and competitions.

Vaulters first learn and practice skills on a vaulting barrel. They must stay in shape with flexibility and strengthening exercises.

The vaulting horse must have good self-control, a strong healthy back, and remain calm when surrounded by commotion. To aid the vaulters with movements, the horse is outfitted with a thick back pad and a surcingle, a special piece of equipment with handles and loops.

Why don't vaulters wear helmets? In vaulting, helmets are actually unsafe. They can block the vaulters' view, throw them off balance, and get caught on equipment. Vaulters learn how to jump down safely, if they do lose their balance. The footing is always soft. Vaulting is considered the safest of all equestrian sports. Helmets must be worn for all other equestrian sports!

This unique and interesting sport is enjoyed by people throughout the world and is gaining popularity in the United States.

## Do you want to learn more about the sport of Equestrian Vaulting?

Ask an adult if you can go online to check out these websites for more information:

Renaissance Farm, [www.renaissancefarminfo.org](http://www.renaissancefarminfo.org)

American Vaulting Association, [www.americanvaulting.org](http://www.americanvaulting.org)



### DID YOU KNOW?

- You can tell how old a horse is by counting his teeth.
- On average a horse's head weighs almost 12 lbs.
- Horses spend more energy lying down.