



## **HARNESS RACING AUSTRALIA**

### **EQUINE HEALTH & WELFARE CODE OF CONDUCT**

Harness Racing Australia expects those involved in harness racing to act responsibly towards all horses engaged in the sport. HRA firmly believes that the health and welfare of the horse must be recognized as a fundamental concern for all industry participants and that all clubs and state controlling bodies should have appropriate measures in place to ensure neither of these are compromised.

As such the below Code of Conduct must be read in conjunction with the Australian Rules of Harness Racing and participants must foremost acknowledge and accept that;

*At all times the welfare of the horse must be paramount and must never be subordinate to competitive or commercial influences.*

#### **1. At all stages during the horse's preparation and presentation for racing, the horses' welfare should take precedence over all other demands.**

##### **a) Good horse management**

Stabling, feeding and training must be compatible with good horse management and must not compromise their welfare. Horses must be accommodated in safe, secure lodgings with adequate shelter and ventilation, high levels of hygiene and with ready access to clean, fresh water and feed. Any practices which could cause physical or mental suffering, whether in stables, training, transport, breeding or racing, should not be tolerated. Practices should aim to fulfil the horse's physiological as

well as psychological needs as much as possible, with ample opportunity for the expression of normal behaviors.

#### **b) Training methods**

Training methods which cause fear or impose undue restrictions on the normal behavior of racehorses should not be used. Horses should only be given training schedules which match their physical capabilities and level of maturity. They should not be subjected to programs for which they have not been adequately prepared.

#### **c) Hoof care and shoeing**

Hoof care and shoeing must be of a professional standard and be maintained regularly at all times. Shoes should be designed and fitted to minimize the risk of injury.

#### **d) Transport**

During transportation, horses must be protected against injuries and other health risks. Vehicles must be safe, well ventilated, maintained to a high standard, disinfected regularly and driven by competent persons. Competent handlers must be available to manage the horses.

All journeys must be carefully planned, and on long journeys the horses must be provided rest periods with access to food and water in accordance with Australian livestock transport regulations.

#### **e) Gear and equipment**

A person shall not by use of harness, gear, equipment, device, substance or any other thing inflict suffering on a horse nor have in their possession any harness, gear, equipment, device, substance or any other thing capable of inflicting suffering on a horse.

## **2. Horses should be in a fit and healthy condition before being allowed to race.**

#### **a) Health status and veterinary inspections**

No horse showing symptoms of disease, lameness or other ailment or pre-existing clinical conditions should be raced.

Whenever there is any doubt, a veterinary inspection should be requested and this should be undertaken before the horse is allowed to race.

Horses with severe or recurrent clinical conditions, e.g. "bleeders" should on veterinary advice, be temporarily or permanently excluded from racing.

## **b) Doping and medication**

Abuse of medication or doping is a serious welfare issue and will not be tolerated. All medications/therapies used must be registered, age and gender appropriate and administered in strict accordance with veterinary and/or manufacturers recommendation.

HRA defines the use of medication and therapeutic treatments into two key areas;

### **1 - Practices that have no place in the treatment or management of a racehorse:**

The use of any object, device or chemical to achieve an inappropriate response, conditioned or otherwise, or to modify performance in any way by causing suffering and / or anxiety to the horse at any time during training or racing.

Subjecting horses to medical or surgical procedures that have not been supervised by a licensed veterinarian and are not consistent with providing medical and/or welfare benefits to the horse.

Practices that are fraudulent, potentially fraudulent or may have adverse consequences for the integrity of the breed or the industry.

Tampering by means of any physical, chemical or physiological interference with a racehorse intended to artificially modify its athletic performance in any way.

### **2 - Practices that may have legitimate therapeutic value, but should be controlled or otherwise restricted prior to racing:**

HRA recognises that there are certain products, procedures and treatment modalities that may have therapeutic benefits when applied appropriately under veterinary supervision. Such practices should be monitored and regulated as deemed appropriate by the regulatory veterinary authority of individual state controlling bodies to ensure adequate control and compliance. Regulation may include the recommendation and enforcement of withdrawal times.

After any veterinary treatment, sufficient time must be allowed for full recovery before racing.

One of the main goals of rules controlling the use of drugs and other therapies is to protect the welfare of the horse and the safety of the drivers. Additionally, these rules should prevent unfair competition and the masking of defects which might be passed on at stud.

## **c) Immaturity**

Horses mature at widely different rates. Training and racing schedules should be carefully planned to suit the individual horse and minimize the risk of musculo-skeletal injuries.

#### **d) Prohibited Practices**

Any surgical procedures which threaten the horse's welfare and/or the safety of other horses or drivers should not be allowed in racing. Thus, it is forbidden to race:

- Any horse which has undergone a limb neurectomy, defined as the surgical excision of part of a nerve in one or more of its limbs.
- Any horse which has undergone a tracheostomy.
- Any horse which has undergone pin firing or bar firing (thermacautery)
- Inappropriate use of extracorporeal shock wave therapy in a manner that may desensitize any limb structures is forbidden.
- Blood doping
- Mares must not be raced beyond 120 days of pregnancy. Moreover, a mare that gave birth cannot take part in a race for 150 days from the date of birth of its foal. In the case of a mare losing its foal during gestation application can be made for a return to racing 90 days after the loss.

### **3. Conditions at race meetings should not jeopardize horses' welfare**

#### **a) Surface conditions**

Race tracks should be designed and maintained to reduce risk factors which lead to injuries. Particular attention should be paid to uneven racing surfaces and extremes of surface quality.

#### **b) Extreme weather**

Common sense should be used when racing in extreme weather. Provision should be made to cool horses quickly after racing in hot and/or humid conditions. Horses which have raced in cold weather should be moved inside as soon as possible.

#### **c) Misuse of the whip**

Drivers must abstain from any brutality, kicking, boxing, extreme goading or excessive use of the whip. Horses must not be whipped if they are tired, out of contention or past the finish line. The whip cannot be used in quick succession without allowing the horse adequate time to respond.

All corrections and prompting must be affected with a rein in each hand and the whip pointed forward and within the confines of the sulky.

**d) Racecourse stabling**

Racecourse stabling should be safe, hygienic, comfortable and well-ventilated. Fresh drinking water and running water for hosing the horse after racing should be available.

**4. Every effort should be made to ensure that horses receive proper care after they have raced, and that every effort is made to suitably rehome them when their racing careers are over.**

**a) Veterinary treatment**

Veterinary expertise should always be available at race meetings. If required the horse should be transported to the nearest referral centre for further assessment and treatment. Injured horses should be given full supportive treatment by the on-course veterinarian before transport which should also be officially documented.

**b) Racing injuries**

The incidence of injuries sustained in racing should be monitored. Track conditions, frequency of racing, immaturity, and any other risk factors, should be carefully examined to indicate ways to minimize severe injuries.

**c) Euthanasia**

If injuries are sufficiently severe, the horse may need to be euthanised on humane grounds. Euthanasia should be undertaken as soon as possible, in an appropriate manner, with the sole aim of minimizing suffering. Connections must inform the controlling body of their horse's death within the specified time periods allowed.

**d) Retirement**

Owners should make every effort to ensure that their horses are sympathetically and humanely treated when they leave racing. Connections must inform the controlling body of their horse's retirement (including reasons for the horse's retirement and its destination) within the specified time periods allowed.

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Adopted: \_\_\_\_\_