

Code of Practice for Racehorse Welfare



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1 Introduction

Horses have been domesticated and selectively bred by humans for about 5000 years for transport and work but are now more commonly used as companion animals or in competitive sports, such as racing.

In the now largely urbanised and mechanised society of Australia, the art of horsemanship and the knowledge of husbandry necessary to select, sustain and educate horses are getting rarer.

Racehorses are kept under a variety of husbandry conditions from extensive grazing in paddocks to intensive housing in individual stables.

This Code of Practice sets out the basic needs that must be met to ensure a racehorse's physical and psychological wellbeing is assured, with reference to the Five Provisions (Mellor, 2016¹), irrespective of the husbandry system used, including:

- readily accessible food and water to maintain health and vigour;
- suitable living conditions, including *appropriate* shelter;
- regular exercise;
- the opportunity to express normal behaviour, including *appropriate* socialisation;
- routine preventative health care and *appropriate* husbandry;
- rapid identification and treatment of injury and disease;
- freedom from confusion and conflict in training; and
- a humane end to life.

Racehorse ownership is a long-term responsibility and owners must make provisions for the horse's eventual retirement from racing. Most horses will be suitable for a second career in a competitive discipline (e. g. dressage, show jumping, eventing, showing, endurance, carriage driving) following a period of re-training, while others will make good therapy horses or paddock companions. Where a horse's temperament or physical state preclude successful retraining and rehoming, a humane end to life in accordance with this Code of Practice and all applicable laws, regulations and rules as amended from time to time (where relevant) must be provided.

Scope and application

This document covers key aspects of the care, welfare and health of racehorses kept in Tasmania. The horse welfare Standards and Guidelines contained in this Code of Practice apply to all people with responsibility for the care and management of registered racehorses, in both private and commercial settings and apply equally to Standardbreds and Thoroughbreds.

The Standards and Guidelines contained in this Code of Practice are to be read and applied in conjunction with all applicable laws, regulations and rules, as amended from time to time. No Standards or Guidelines negate, over-ride or replace any person's responsibilities under the laws, regulations and rules. To the extent of any inconsistency between a Standard or Guideline contained in this Code of Practice any law, regulation or rule, the law regulation or rule shall prevail. Relevant laws regulations and rules include (but are not limited to):

¹ Mellor DJ. Moving beyond the "Five Freedoms" by Updating the "Five Provisions" and Introducing Aligned "Animal Welfare Aims". *Animals (Basel)*. 2016 Sep23;6(10):59

- *Animal Welfare Act 1993* (Tas)
- *Animal Welfare (Land Transport of Livestock) Regulations 2013* (Tas)
- *Biosecurity Act 2019* (Tas)
- *Biosecurity Regulations 2022* (Tas)
- *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1987* (Tas)
- *Veterinary Surgeons Regulations 2022* (Tas)
- *Australian Harness Racing Rules* and *Tasmanian Harness Racing Local Rules*
- *Australian Rules of Racing* and *Tasmanian Local Rules of Racing*

For the purposes of this Code of Practice, the *Australian Harness Racing Rules* (including the *Tasmanian Harness Racing Local Rules*) and the *Australian Rules of Racing* (including the *Tasmanian Local Rules of Racing*) are collectively referred to as the “**Rules of Racing**”.

This Code of Practice is comprised of Standards, Guidelines and Notes.

Standards are the minimum requirements to meet the basic welfare needs of racehorses. Standards that are enforceable (mandatory), are labelled ‘Minimum Standards’ and use the word ‘must’. Failure to meet Standards may be met with sanctions in accordance with the Rules of Racing, or may be referred to other relevant jurisdictions for further investigation.

Guidelines are recommended (non-mandatory) practices to achieve desirable animal welfare outcomes and use the word ‘should’. Guidelines complement the Standards and aim to encourage improved animal welfare outcomes.

Notes are intended to provide supplementary explanation and guidance.

Definition of a racehorse

For the purpose of this Code of Practice, a racehorse is defined as any Thoroughbred or Standardbred horse which is subject to either the *Australian Harness Racing Rules* or the *Australian Rules of Racing*, in addition to any other horse associated with that racehorse as a companion horse.

Person responsible for a racehorse

A ‘person responsible for a racehorse’ includes:

- a) the owner of the racehorse;
- b) a person who has control of the racehorse; or
- c) the owner of the place where the racehorse is at the relevant time.

In accordance with Section 3A of the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* (Tas), there may be more than one person responsible for the racehorse at any one time.

Elements of responsibility for each person in charge of racehorse welfare include:

- a) obtaining knowledge and understanding of relevant animal welfare laws, policies and the Rules of Racing;
- b) understanding racehorse behaviour, including handling techniques that minimise stress and reduce the risk of injury to animals and handlers;
- c) identifying and providing *appropriate* housing conditions;

- d) identifying and providing *appropriate* husbandry practices; and
- e) identifying signs of ill health and abnormality and facilitating rapid diagnosis and providing *appropriate* treatment.

Monitoring and Compliance

This Code of Practice is, without limitation, a Code of Practice for the purposes of *Tasmanian Local Rules of Racing* and *Tasmanian Harness Local Racing Rules*.

The Standards contained within this Code of Practice are adopted and enforceable under Rule 27 of the *Tasmanian Local Rules of Racing* and Rule 1 of the *Tasmanian Harness Local Racing Rules*.

Compliance with the Standards within this Code of Practice will be the subject of regulatory activities and monitoring. The Stewards, through the Rules of Racing, may investigate allegations of non-compliance and persons found guilty of breaching the Standards within the Code of Practice may be the subject of sanctions.

2 Behavioural Needs

Minimum Standards

- S2.1** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure the racehorse is able to express *appropriate* behaviour by:
- a) providing sufficient space through managing design of facilities and the stocking density;
 - b) managing the composition of groups of racehorses to ensure compatibility and actively altering the composition of a group of racehorses if required; and
 - c) minimising threats and restrictions to allow each racehorse to have an area of its own, *appropriately* sized for subordinate racehorses to have sufficient access to resources including water, feed and grazing and shelter, and enable them to escape from bullying by dominant animals in the group.
- S2.2** A person responsible for a racehorse displaying stereotypic behaviour such as weaving, crib-biting, windsucking, self-mutilation, excessive pawing, kicking or pacing must provide the racehorse with *appropriate* intervention therapy based on veterinary advice or *accepted industry practice*.
- S2.3** A person responsible for a racehorse must keep records of behaviours identified and adjustments made with regards to meeting the requirements of S2.1 and S2.2.

Guidelines

- G2.1** Horses are social animals that establish a group hierarchy. They may form social bonds with other animals, including humans. For these reasons, racehorses should not be kept in isolation. Prior to providing additional animals for companionship, the person in charge of the racehorse should consider whether they have the means to provide adequate care for more than one animal.
- G2.2** Colts, stallions, weanlings, pregnant and sick racehorses, or those in advanced age, may require segregation from other groups of horses, to reduce the risk of injury and disease.
- G2.3** Introduction of a new racehorse or reintroduction of a segregated racehorse into a group should be supervised.
- G2.4** Strategies should be in place to prevent stereotypic behaviour, and for racehorses that display stereotypic behaviour, to reduce their incidence.
- G2.5** Where a racehorse is displaying stereotypic behaviour, effort should be made to reduce or eliminate the cause of the behaviour as much as possible. Research suggests the most likely cause of stereotypic behaviour in horses is chronic stress resulting from boredom, frustration, confinement, social isolation, limited access to roughage or inadequate exercise.
- G2.6** A racehorse should be provided with opportunities to engage in rewarding activities that are safe and *appropriate* to the characteristics of the individual racehorse.

3 Water

Minimum Standards

- S3.1** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure the horse is provided with *ad lib* drinking water of a sufficient quality to maintain good health and meet its physiological requirements.²
- S3.2** A person responsible for a racehorse must not deliberately withhold water from the racehorse for a period that poses a risk to the welfare of the racehorse, unless under veterinary advice.
- S3.3** Water containers provided for racehorses must be:
- a) of a design that does not pose an unreasonable risk to the welfare of the racehorse;
 - b) safe and free of sharp edges and protrusions;
 - c) inspected at least once daily for functionality, cleanliness and freedom from contamination and to ensure they are sufficiently filled; and
 - d) readily accessible to all horses within an housing area taking account of horse behaviour and social structure and positioned to avoid unintended spillage and contamination.

Guidelines

- G3.1** Regular assessments should be made of the quality and quantity of water supply, including inspection of the mechanical equipment controlling the delivery of water (including windmills, bores, valves and taps, and automatic waterers).
- G3.2** Where water is supplied without automatic refill, the supply should be inspected and topped up at least every 12 hours to ensure the racehorse has ad lib access to a supply of water.
- G3.3** If a racehorse has access to water in a dam, the dam should:
- a) provide safe access for the horse, including unimpeded access to water and no risk of becoming stuck or otherwise trapped;
 - b) be free from rubbish and contaminants;
 - c) be regularly inspected to ensure dam levels and water quality are adequate, especially during periods of low rainfall; and
 - d) if deemed unsafe, be fenced off and an alternative water source provided.

Notes

Water provided to horses should be clean and free of visible contaminants.

Water volume requirements of racehorses vary widely depending on age, bodyweight, air temperature and humidity, the work, state of health and type of diet of the racehorse. The basic maintenance requirement of water for horses is estimated to be approximately 52 ml/kg body weight per day. For maintenance, a 450-500 kg bodyweight racehorse requires a minimum of 25-30 litres per day.

² Also refer to the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* (Tas), Section 8.

Water requirement is closely related to the dry matter intake of feed. Racehorses need 2-4 litres of water per kilogram of dry matter intake.

As air temperatures or humidity rises, or in cases of illness associated with bowel disease, such as obstructive bowel disease or severe diarrhoea, substantial amounts of water and essential electrolytes (in addition to maintenance requirements) may need to be provided (50-70 litres per day).

If a horse fails to consume water at *appropriate* levels (as per the above recommendations), further investigations should be undertaken, including the water quality and the horse's health status.

4 Feed

Minimum Standards

- S4.1** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure the horse has daily feed of sufficient quantity and quality³ to:
- a) maintain good health;
 - b) meet its physiological demands; and
 - c) minimise *metabolic* and *nutritional disorders*.
- S4.2** A person responsible for a racehorse that grazes must take all reasonable steps to minimise (or eliminate where possible) in the area that the racehorse has access to for grazing:
- a) plants that are poisonous or detrimental to horses;
 - b) physical items that may be injurious to horses;
 - c) chemicals known to be toxic to horses or present on the pasture whilst still within their designated grazing withholding period; and
 - d) any other contaminant (physical or chemical) that poses a risk to the health or welfare of a racehorse, or is otherwise prohibited.
- S4.3** A person responsible for a racehorse must not allow its body condition to become less than body condition score 2 out of 5 (see Appendix A to this Code of Practice) unless that horse is under direct veterinary supervision.
- S4.4** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure that it is provided with *appropriate* feed at a least twice in every 24-hour period, unless the horse is under direct veterinary supervision.
- S4.5** A person responsible for a racehorse must regularly observe behaviour patterns and response to feed and take all reasonable steps to minimise bullying or other competition to ensure that all racehorses in a group have access to sufficient feed to meet their needs. A log of abnormal behaviours observed, and remedial actions taken, must be kept for inspection.
- S4.6** Racehorses in work kept in stables and/or yards must be provided with concentrate feed rations *appropriate* for their level of work spread over at least two meals per day, in addition to the provision of a minimum daily amount of 'roughage' equivalent to 1% of their bodyweight (1kg/100kg body weight) (see Notes below) provided throughout the day to maintain optimum gut health.
- S4.7** For racehorses in work kept in *paddocks*, paddock management and stocking density of racehorses must be adjusted to ensure:
- a) there is sufficient pasture for racehorses to meet their daily nutritional, social and behavioural requirements, including engaging in grazing activity for a significant part of the day
 - b) where there is insufficient pasture to meet nutritional demands, racehorses must be fed a suitable and sufficient supplementary feed at least twice a day, incorporating

³ Also refer to the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* (Tas), Section 8.

a total minimum daily amount of ‘roughage’ equivalent to 1% of their bodyweight (1kg/100kg body weight) (see Notes below).

- S4.8** Where provision of sufficient feed cannot be ensured, racehorses must be agisted, sold, leased or otherwise moved to a location or into the care of a person that results in the racehorse having access to sufficient feed to maintain optimum health and does not fall below body condition score 2 out of 5. Where this cannot be achieved, euthanasia should be considered as an option of last resort.

Guidelines

- G4.1** Racehorses should be fed according to metabolic state and body condition. Those that are in lighter condition and those that are subject to constant bullying or other competition related to feed should be segregated from the main group and fed *appropriate* rations to maintain adequate body condition. A registered veterinary practitioner or qualified equine nutritionist should be consulted for feed advice, where required.
- G4.2** The ideal range of body condition scores for racing horses is 2 – 3 out of 5. If a racehorse fails to thrive, the quantity, quality and availability of feed, and the health of the racehorse (including the state of its teeth, the extent of parasitism and the horse’s age) should be evaluated and any remedial action applied. A registered veterinary practitioner or qualified equine nutritionist should be consulted for advice, where required.
- G4.3** Any changes to a racehorse’s diet should be introduced gradually over a period of several days and horses monitored closely during this time.
- G4.4** When a racehorse in work is given a ‘rest’ day, the concentrate part of the ration should be reduced to decrease the risk of metabolic problems.
- G4.5** Good quality pastures, containing suitable grasses and legumes, can provide the maintenance nutritional requirements for most horses, except for racehorses in work, those with compromised teeth, aged racehorses, or lactating mares. In temperate areas where permanent pastures are fertilised annually, about 1 hectare (2.5 acres) of pasture for each grazing horse should provide maintenance requirements during years with normal rainfall. Pasture management is complex and advice from qualified professionals should be sought where required.
- G4.6** The daily concentrate feed ration for racehorses in work should be divided into several smaller meals fed throughout the day, rather than one large meal. Approximate minimum feed requirements of adult horses are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Approximate minimum daily feed requirements for adult racehorses

| Body weight (kg) | Spelling (maintenance only) Hay (kg) | Moderate work | |
|------------------|---|---------------|------------|
| | | Hay* (kg) | Grain (kg) |
| 450 | 7-8 | | |
| 500 | 8-9 | 5.5-7.5 | 4-6 |
| 550 | 9-10 | | |

*Good quality pasture hay rich in clover, or lucerne hay

G4.7 Lactating mares require about 70% more energy than horses with maintenance requirements.

Notes

Horses are 'trickle feeders' and roughage (fibrous feed such as pasture, hay and chaff) should form a significant part of a racehorse's diet to provide sufficient bulk and fibre to enable the digestive system to function properly and should be available to the horse for most of its non-active hours. Racehorses need at least 1% of their body weight in roughage daily. If fed processed feeds and grains, these should be fed in addition to the *appropriate* amount of roughage.

5 Exercise

Minimum Standards

- S5.1** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure the racehorse is provided with an opportunity to exercise each day, except where the exercise may be detrimental to the health and welfare of the racehorse.
- S5.2** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure that the intensity and duration of the exercise does not exceed the racehorse's ability for its age, size, strength, conformation, fitness, and level of education.
- S5.3** A person responsible for a racehorse must not use mechanical exercising equipment, such as walking machines or treadmills, unless the racehorse is under direct and constant supervision.
- S5.4** A person responsible for a racehorse must not exercise a racehorse if it is knowingly suffering from an injury or illness likely to be exacerbated by exercise, unless that racehorse has been inspected and cleared to exercise by a registered veterinary practitioner.

Guidelines

- G5.1** Racehorses, particularly when immature and unconditioned, should not be subjected to excessive strenuous exercise that can result in injury.
- G5.2** Racehorses may be exercised by riding, driving, lunging or mechanical device, or releasing them into a large yard or paddock (for at least an hour a day).
- G5.3** A rider's size and weight should be *appropriate* for the size and condition of the racehorse. As a guide, a rider's weight should not exceed 20% of the weight of the racehorse.
- G5.4** When introducing new or recently spelled racehorses to exercise, their workload should be increased gradually, taking into account the characteristics of the racehorse, to prevent injury and stress.
- G5.5** A racehorse should be warmed-up before, and cooled-down after, strenuous exercise.
- G5.6** Following a spell period, a gradual return to exercise is recommended, with the length of time required to return to maximal workload following a spell being based on at least double the spell duration for up to 10 weeks of training (example 1: following a two-week spell, the horse could return to trialling stage after four weeks of training; example 2: following a six-week spell, the horse may return to trialling stage after 10 weeks of training).
- G5.7** Once fit, racehorses should undergo the minimum amount of fast work required to maintain cardiovascular fitness two to three times a week.
- G5.8** Trainers should keep a digital or written record of the daily exercise/training undertaken by each of the racehorses under their care, including the speed, distance, surface and method of exercise (e.g. ridden trackwork, treadmill, water walker).

6 Accommodation and Protection from Weather Extremes

Minimum Standards

- S6.1** A person responsible for a racehorse must take reasonable steps to ensure that an area in which racehorses are kept:
- a) is *appropriately* designed, maintained and cleaned to minimise the risk of injury and disease to the racehorse;
 - b) provides access to ground that is not waterlogged or unsanitary, sufficient for each racehorse to access at the same time;
 - c) provides access to proper and sufficient shade, shelter and other reasonable protection from the elements, including the *appropriate* use of rugs, for every horse, with due regard to prevention of bullying by dominant horses;
 - d) provides adequate number of paddocks or yards to permit animals of similar age, sex, size and compatible temperament to be grouped together; and
 - e) prevents overcrowding likely to lead to increased risk of injury due to bullying.
- S6.2** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure that stables and looseboxes for a racehorse:
- a) provide a minimum of 12 square metres of floor area and a sufficient vertical clearance immediately above the racehorse to enable the racehorse to stand freely in the normal position with the head fully raised, walk forward and turn, lie down with all limbs extended, roll, stretch and groom itself without restriction or risk of injury; and
 - b) contain *appropriate* clean bedding for warmth, insulation and protection from abrasion.
- S6.3** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure that:
- a) racehorses are provided with properly fitted rugs that are applied and removed as *appropriate* for the time of year and prevailing weather conditions; and
 - b) racehorses wearing rugs are inspected daily for any injury or entanglement caused by the rug.

Guidelines

- G6.1** In temperate areas where permanent pastures are fertilised annually, a stocking density of about 1 hectare (2.5 acres) of pasture for each grazing racehorse should provide maintenance requirements during years with normal rainfall. Paddock management will be needed to ensure that sufficient grazing is available year-round.
- G6.2** Stables that house racehorses should be designed, constructed and maintained in a manner that:
- a) provides adequate lighting that:
 - i) enables inspection of the horses; and
 - ii) includes natural light, so that the racehorse experiences natural light and dark periods as determined by the local diurnal cycle (i.e. day and night); and

- b) provides adequate natural ventilation, with air vents on opposite sides of the box being preferred;
- c) provides adequate drainage, in a manner that prevents slipping and allows for rapid removal of waste;
- d) minimises dust levels to reduce the risk of respiratory disease; and
- e) withstands damage if kicked by a horse.
- f) Constructed of *appropriate* materials to minimise accumulation of contaminants and facilitate cleaning.

G6.3 Full-time accommodation of racehorses in stables is not likely to meet the full spectrum of their behavioural and social needs. If stabling is used, provision of exercise, turn out to pasture, a high fibre diet, social interaction (such as visual contact with other horses), and stimulation through environmental enrichment may reduce stress, boredom and the risk of stereotypic behaviour, and should be provided.

G6.4 Stable design should allow a racehorse visual contact with other horses, humans and activities in the stable surroundings.

G6.5 Bedding type should be selected to minimise dust and maximise absorption and drainage. Dirty bedding and stale or contaminated feed and water should be removed each day.

G6.6 Healthy racehorses can tolerate a wide variation of temperature if they are acclimatised and have access to adequate feed and water. However, steps should be taken to minimise the effects of climatic extremes and other factors producing either cold or heat stress. Young foals, old or sick racehorses are more susceptible.

Notes

Overstocking risks soil erosion, parasitic worm infestation, weed infestation, loss of pasture and native vegetation, and land degradation. When racehorses are kept in paddocks, *appropriate* stocking density will vary depending on factors including land type and productivity, pasture improvements, time of year, pasture and food availability, stabling and yarding facilities and fencing. Good quality pastures, containing suitable grasses and legumes, can provide the maintenance requirements for most horses. Feed in addition to pasture will need to be provided for racehorses in work, those with compromised teeth, aged horses or lactating mares.

7 Racehorse Health, Veterinary Procedures and Treatments

Minimum Standards

S7.1 A person in charge of a racehorse must ensure that veterinary services are sought and provided to any racehorse that is sick, injured or diseased in an *appropriate* timeframe.⁴

Examples of conditions that require prompt (as soon as immediately practicable) veterinary attention:

- acute abdominal pain or colic seen as pawing, kicking at the stomach or rolling, often accompanied by straining, teeth-grinding and patchy or generalised sweating;
- serious injuries, including deep wounds, severe haemorrhage, severe or unexplained lameness, or eye injuries;
- straining for more than 30 minutes by a mare that has not foaled;
- retained foetal membranes;
- marked lameness or injuries not responding to treatment within 24 hours;
- signs of respiratory disease such as discharges from eyes, nostrils, or swollen glands under the throat, which may be accompanied by a cough, fever, or loss of appetite affecting multiple horses;
- diarrhoea, constipation, sudden or persistent weight loss;
- signs of laminitis, including lameness, increased pulse to the affected hooves, reluctance to stand on affected feet and reluctance to move;
- neurological syndromes (e.g. head pressing, lack of balance, unstable gait);
- inactivity or unresponsiveness.

S7.2 A person in charge of a racehorse must ensure that any sick or injured racehorse that does not respond to veterinary or other *appropriate* treatment must be promptly examined by a registered veterinary practitioner to ensure that all necessary steps are taken to minimise suffering of the racehorse.

S7.3 A person in charge of a racehorse must ensure that any horse undergoing veterinary treatment is provided with a rest period appropriate to the condition being treated, and that treatment response is monitored by a registered veterinary practitioner to ensure that training is only recommenced once the condition has sufficiently responded to treatment.

S7.4 A person in charge of a racehorse must ensure that any racehorse that loses body condition to below BCS 2 out of 5 and does not respond to special feeding must be promptly examined by a registered veterinary practitioner.

S7.5 A person in charge of a racehorse must ensure that the horse is routinely vaccinated against tetanus and that they seek and comply with veterinary advice about vaccination against other diseases.

³ Also refer to the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* (Tas), Section 8.

Guidelines

- G7.1** A person in charge of a premises at which racehorses are kept should ensure that a written biosecurity plan, approved by a veterinary surgeon, is prepared and implemented on the premises. The biosecurity plan should address:
- a) the prevention and control of common infectious diseases and parasites at the premises; and
 - b) monitoring and control of movement of animals, staff and equipment on and off the premises.
- G7.2** A person in charge of a premises at which racehorses are kept should ensure that any horse that is new to the property is quarantined away from other resident horses for a minimum 10-to-14-day period with twice daily monitoring of rectal temperature and for signs of ill health to reduce the risk of introducing disease.
- G7.3** It is recommended that all racehorses receive an annual general health examination by a registered veterinary practitioner, including the implementation of *appropriate* vaccination and parasite control programs.

8 Identification and Traceability

Minimum Standards

- S8.1** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure that it is permanently identified by such means as prescribed under the respective Rules of Racing.
- S8.2** Only three methods of permanently identifying racehorses are permitted:
- 1.** implanting of a microchip into the nuchal ligament on the near side crest of the neck, which must be performed by a registered veterinary practitioner or authorised implanter.
 - 2.** freeze branding, which must be carried out by a suitably experienced operator.
 - 3.** DNA profiling, which must be performed by a registered veterinary practitioner.
- S8.3** Fire-branding and other forms of permanent identification are not permitted to be applied to registered racehorses.
- S8.4** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure that the racehorse's ownership details and location information are kept up to date on the relevant racing code's database by lodging a stable return in the prescribed timeframes up to and including the first retirement to a non-participant member of the public.
- S8.5** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure that in case of the death of a racehorse, the prescribed forms are lodged with the relevant authority in the prescribed time frame.
- S8.6** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure that an appropriate record is kept for all movements of that racehorse from one property to another, regardless of property ownership or length of stay.

Guidelines

- G8.1** Where racehorses are kept at unoccupied premises, the contact details of the person in charge of the racehorse should be clearly displayed or readily accessible.
- G8.2** An owner of a racehorse that has retired from racing should register that racehorse with the Tasracing off-the-track program.

9 Biosecurity and Protection from Disease

Minimum Standards

- S9.1** A person responsible for a racehorse must discharge their general biosecurity duty⁵ by taking all reasonable and practicable measures to prevent, eliminate or minimise biosecurity risk when dealing with a racehorse, including by:
- a) ensuring *appropriate* hygiene of personnel, animals, equipment and environments;
 - b) managing entry and exit of visitors and non-essential personnel to the premises on which racehorses are kept;
 - c) ensuring all people involved in the handling, loading, transport and unloading of racehorses follow any biosecurity procedures in place in respect of the premises; and
 - d) engaging *appropriate* veterinary assistance and expertise to address identified biosecurity risks.
- S9.2** A person responsible for a racehorse must have the ability to isolate one or more racehorses from other horses:
- a) when introducing a racehorse to an existing population of horses on the premises, to observe its health status for an *appropriate* period of time prior to introducing it to the existing population; and
 - b) if the person suspects that the racehorse is suffering from a significant infectious disease.

Guidelines

- G9.1** All premises at which racehorses are housed or held for any length of time should have a documented biosecurity plan.⁶
- G9.2** Where a person responsible for keeping a racehorse employs people or otherwise has the assistance of other people, those people should be given specific guidance and/or training in biosecurity procedures that apply to the premises.
- G9.3** Signage should be placed in one or more conspicuous positions on a premises detailing:
- a) the name and contact details of the usual veterinary surgeon;
 - b) the name and contact details of the person in charge of the premises; and
 - c) the phone number for the national Emergency Animal Disease Hotline

Notes

Biosecurity and welfare are inextricably linked. Effective biosecurity on premises at which racehorses are kept or handled should be considered basic business practice. Many resources are available to guide people in effective biosecurity practices, along with people and service providers with relevant skills, knowledge and experience.

⁵ Also refer to the *Biosecurity Act 2019* (Tas), Section 70.

⁶ Assistance and information on Biosecurity Planning can be found at: <https://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/extension/aha-livestock-extension/property-biosecurity/>. Specific guidance for 'Horse Venues' can be found at: <https://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/industry/horses/>

10 Dental Care

Minimum Standards

- S10.1** A person must not perform equine dental procedures on a racehorse unless they are:
- a) competent to perform the procedure; and
 - b) where required under the *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1987 (Tas)* and *Veterinary Surgeons Regulations 2022 (Tas)*, a veterinarian or authorised person.
- S10.2** A person must not perform any equine dental procedure on a racehorse that causes modification, damage or injury, which poses a risk to the welfare of the racehorse.
- S10.3** Where an equine dental procedure is likely to cause pain, a person responsible for a racehorse must ensure the provision of *appropriate* pain relief, which may include the administration of anaesthesia and sedation under the direct supervision of a registered veterinary surgeon.
- S10.4** A person must not perform equine dental procedures on a racehorse using power tools unless they are a registered veterinary surgeon.

Guidelines

- G10.1** Racehorses' teeth should be regularly checked (minimum once a year) by a person suitably skilled and experienced in equine dentistry. The frequency of dental checks should be increased for young racehorses, stable fed racehorses and aged racehorses.
- G10.2** Any person performing a dental procedure on a racehorse should have sufficient experience, knowledge and skill to:
- a) handle the racehorse in a safe, humane manner;
 - b) identify relevant anatomy, both normal and abnormal; and
 - c) recognise and understand the complications of the procedure and know when to refer cases to an *appropriately* qualified person.
- G10.3** Good practice equine dental service should include:
- a) inquiry into the racehorse's general and dental history;
 - b) full mouth examination with assistance of palpation, illumination, mirror and probe;
 - c) assessment of, and advice on, all detected abnormalities;
 - d) advice on treatment options and further investigative procedures; and
 - e) completion of the above or referral to other *appropriate* practitioners where indicated.
- G10.4** The use of motorised tools on a racehorse's teeth should only be performed with the racehorse adequately restrained.

11 Foot Care

Minimum Standards

- S11.1** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure that horse's hooves are maintained at *appropriate* intervals to permit normal mobility and to maintain normal hoof shape and function.
- S11.2** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure the racehorse's hooves are adequately protected or accustomed to the surfaces on which the racehorse is exercised or kept.
- S11.3** A person responsible for a racehorse must seek advice from a veterinarian or farrier if the horse is suffering from overgrown, injured or diseased hooves likely to cause the horse pain.
- S11.4** A person must only shoe or trim a racehorse's hooves if they are competent to do so, or *under the supervision of a competent person*.

Guidelines

- G11.1** Shoeing or hoof trimming should not cause pain, result in a gait abnormality or in significant changes to the racehorse's conformation, unless otherwise advised by a registered veterinarian.
- G11.2** The hooves of a racehorse should be inspected regularly for signs of injury, loose shoes or impacted stones. This may require daily inspection, especially when racehorses are in work.
- G11.3** Loose shoes and those with risen clenches (shoe nails) should be promptly removed to prevent possible foot injury.
- G11.4** The feet of racehorses should be inspected at least every six weeks and:
 - a) in the case of shod horses, replacement or adjustment of shoes by competent persons;
or
 - b) in the case of unshod horses, trimmed as needed by competent persons.

12 Personnel Education and Training

Minimum Standards

- S12.1** A person responsible for a racehorse must be *appropriately* trained and/or competent, or have the assistance of one or more people who are *appropriately* trained and/or competent, to care for the racehorse.
- S12.2** A person responsible for a racehorse must keep a record of having read and understood these Standards and Guidelines for themselves and any other person assisting them to care for the racehorse.

Guidelines

- G12.1** Areas of training and competency for people who have care of a racehorse should include:
- a) recognising signs of ill health and abnormal behaviour;
 - b) *appropriate* care and/or treatment of injury, disease or distress;
 - c) maintaining the horse's living environment;
 - d) general horse husbandry and management, including supply and maintenance of feed and water;
 - e) handling and movement of horses, including human safety around horses;
 - f) safe transport of racehorses, including determining fitness for transport and loading/unloading of horse transport equipment; and
 - g) accurate record keeping.
- G12.2** Where a person responsible for keeping a racehorse employs people or otherwise has the assistance of other people, those people should be given *appropriate* site-specific induction upon first engagement and at any other time when there is a significant change to equipment, practices or procedures on the premises.
- G12.3** Supporting evidence of training and competency should include one or more of the following:
- a) records of on-the-job training;
 - b) relevant experience;
 - c) recognised training and/or qualifications;
 - d) staff training registers;
 - e) induction training; or
 - f) Supervisor sign-off for specific tasks.

13 Racehorse Education and Training

Minimum Standards

- S13.1** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure that all horse training methods used are *appropriate* and humane and do not cause unreasonable pain or suffering to the racehorse.⁷
- S13.2** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure that any method employed in training the racehorse:
- a) protects both human and horse safety;
 - b) makes *appropriate* use of equipment and facilities;
 - c) considers the physical and mental characteristics of the racehorse at the time of training; and
 - d) minimises, and where possible eliminates, use of *aversive training techniques* (see Table 2).
- S13.3** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure that training methods used are tailored to how the horse learns and must at all times be clear to allow the horse to learn to respond as required to a given signal (cue, aid).
- S13.4** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure persons engaged in the education or training of a racehorse are *competent* and *suitably qualified* or under the *direct supervision of a suitably qualified or competent person*.

Guidelines

- G13.1** Any person involved in training a racehorse should cease any training activity if:
- a) the racehorse does not appear to be progressing or responding as intended;
 - b) any signs of illness or injury develop;
 - c) any equipment being used in the training becomes damaged or faulty; or
 - d) when working with other people, any person in the group is observed not to have the necessary competency to conduct the training activity.
- G13.2** Most racehorses respond best to firm but gentle techniques and to rewards when the racehorse responds correctly. Training methods should be based on techniques using natural instincts and positive reinforcement (see Table 2).
- G13.3** Negative reinforcement (see Table 2) should involve the use of minimal force. Occasional disciplinary measures may be necessary to discourage bad habits, such as biting, in the racehorse. Discipline has to be administered immediately following the act of misconduct and should employ minimal effective force.
- G13.4** Veterinary advice should be sought if a racehorse continues to display undesirable behaviours during training, to ascertain if such behaviours are attributable to an underlying cause, which, if identified, should be addressed where possible, before training is resumed.

⁷ Also refer to the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* (Tas), Section 8.

Table 2 Behavioural training techniques for use in racehorses⁸

| | Reinforcement | Punishment |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| | <i>Increasing the likelihood or intensity of a behaviour</i> | <i>Decreasing the likelihood or intensity of a behaviour</i> |
| Negative (Subtraction) | The removal of an aversive stimulus to reward a desired response. | The removal of a desired stimulus to punish an undesired response. |
| | <i>Example:</i> Rein tension is applied until the horse stops and the removal of the tension rewards the correct response. | <i>Example:</i> The horse paws and so food is withheld. |
| Positive (Addition) | The addition of a pleasant stimulus to reward a desired response. | The addition of an aversive stimulus to punish an undesired response. |
| | <i>Example:</i> The horse approaches when called for and receives a carrot to reward the response. | <i>Example:</i> The horse bites and receives a slap on the muzzle. |

⁸ Refer to the International Society for Equitation Science.

14 Breeding and Foaling

Minimum Standards

- S14.1** A person who causes a racehorse to breed must ensure that breeding is managed to avoid unnecessary pain, distress or injury.
- S14.2** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure facilities used for breeding are constructed and maintained to minimise the risk to welfare of the racehorse.
- S14.3** Artificial reproductive procedures are prohibited in registered Thoroughbred racehorses.
- S14.4** In registered Standardbred horses, artificial reproductive procedures may only be performed by a registered veterinarian, or an authorised person.
- S14.4** A person responsible for a racehorse must not cause the horse to be bred with a:
- a) sibling of the racehorse; or
 - b) parent or offspring of the racehorse.
- S14.5** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure that rectal examination, which is an inherently risky procedure, is only carried out by a registered veterinary practitioner.
- S14.6** A person responsible for a racehorse that is due to foal must ensure that the racehorse is observed discreetly (so as not to disturb the mare) and as frequently as required to ensure that the racehorse is not experiencing foaling difficulties.
- S14.7** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure that they provide prompt and expert assistance to any racehorse experiencing difficulties at any point during, or following, foaling.

Guidelines

- G14.1** Known, or potentially, inherited conditions should be considered when selecting racehorses for breeding.
- G14.2** Indiscriminate breeding of racehorses, including those of a type or temperament unsuitable for racing, should be avoided.
- G14.3** Persons involved in the breeding of racehorses should be experienced and have an understanding of the reproductive systems of both the mare and stallion.
- G14.4** Racehorses should not be bred if their body condition score is below 2 out of 5.
- G14.5** Physical restraints may be used to prevent injury to mares and stallions, and where these are used, it is important to ensure that they are correctly fitted.
- G14.6** Racehorse mares should be provided with specialised *appropriate* nutritional management during pregnancy and lactation.
- G14.7** A racehorse in the last month of pregnancy should be provided with a safe and suitable foaling environment.

- G14.8** Racehorse mares should be monitored after birth to ensure they pass the placenta within three hours after birth. If the placenta fails to pass, urgent veterinary advice should be sought.
- G14.9** Racehorse foals should be monitored for the initial 24 hours after birth to ensure the meconium is expelled, urination and suckling are normal and the foal consumes colostrum.
- G14.10** Racehorse foals orphaned at birth should receive colostrum or a substitute within 24 hours of birth. Veterinary advice should be sought to ensure an *appropriate* health and feeding program is provided for the foal.
- G14.11** Weaning of racehorse foals should:
- a) not be carried out before 4 months of age, unless under veterinary advice;
 - b) be carried out in a safe environment; and
 - c) be carried out in a manner that minimises stress on the foal and mare, which may require a staged approach and the company of other horses.

15 Racehorse Retirement and Rehoming

Minimum Standards

- S15.1** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure that the horse is retired in accordance with the Rules of Racing, including all relevant notification requirements.
- S15.2** The managing owner of a racehorse or their authorised agent (e.g. Trainer), upon its retirement or earlier, regardless of whether it raced or not, must provide the opportunity for that racehorse to be assessed by a *competent person* as to its retraining and rehoming potential, and must support the transition of that racehorse into any such identified new career, or retirement.
- S15.3** A person responsible for a racehorse that is being retired must ensure that the racehorse is provided with an *appropriate* standard of care and that it is maintained in at least body condition score 2 out of 5 until ownership is transferred to the new owner.
- S15.4** A person responsible for selling or rehoming a racehorse must advise any future owner or their authorised agent before the sale/rehoming of all relevant details regarding the temperament and physical condition of the racehorse, including any specific requirements for successfully managing that racehorse.

Guidelines

- G15.1** A person responsible for a racehorses should make all endeavours to ensure that the horse retires from racing physically and mentally suited to a transition to a second career.
- G15.2** The owner(s) of a racehorse should provide opportunities and support efforts for retraining of that racehorse throughout its training and racing career, as well as post-retirement from racing.
- G15.3** Racehorses that have been retired due to injury or illness should be treated and fully rehabilitated prior to rehoming, unless rehabilitation is agreed to be part of the rehoming process.
- G15.4** Racehorses that retire with a chronic injury or illness should be assessed by a registered veterinary practitioner to ascertain the *appropriate* level of care they require post-racing.
- G15.4** Retiring racehorses should be given the opportunity to spell following their racing career, prior to entering a second career.
- G15.5** Retiring racehorses should have their diet assessed and amended as *appropriate* for their post-racing activities.
- G15.6** A person responsible for a racehorse that is rehoming or selling that horse should document the physical condition of the horse (through photographs and/or video) prior to the horse leaving their care.

16 Racehorse Transport

Minimum Standards

- S16.1** A person transporting a racehorse must do so in accordance with the *Animal Welfare Act 1993 (Tas)* and the *Animal Welfare (Land Transport of Livestock) Regulations 2013 (Tas)* as amended from time to time.
- S16.2** A person transporting a racehorse must ensure that stress and welfare risks associated with transport are minimised. This includes ensuring that time spent by a racehorse on the transport vehicle is minimised.
- S16.3** A person must not transport a racehorse displaying lameness at rest or walk, or if that horse has any signs of compromised health (e.g. an elevated rectal temperature or signs of respiratory disease), or a body condition score of 1 or less out of 5 unless:
- a) The transport is for the purpose of obtaining veterinary diagnosis/treatment;
 - b) The transport is in accordance with advice from a registered veterinary practitioner.
- S16.4** A person transporting a racehorse must ensure that the transport vehicle:
- a) Is specifically designed for equine transport.
 - b) Does not exceed the manufacturer-intended load capacity or the approved number of horses (one horse per loading bay).
 - c) Is designed to permit satisfactory fresh air ventilation throughout the horse loading area.
 - d) Has non-slip flooring, or low-dust, absorbent bedding.
 - e) Is designed to permit visual inspection of the horse(s) from outside the vehicle, or has functional cameras installed within.
 - f) Is regularly cleaned, remains hygienic and does not pose a risk to the horse's safety or welfare.
- S16.5** A person transporting a racehorse must comply with the relevant road traffic laws, including maximum speed limits, maximum specified towing limits, towbar and safety chain attachments, and *appropriate* braking systems.

Guidelines

- G16.1** *Appropriate* training and conditioning of racehorses for transport should be employed to minimise horse injury and welfare risks.
- G16.2** Persons engaged in the transport of racehorses should be experienced or trained in the handling of racehorses, the transport of live animals and the vehicle(s) used.
- G16.3** Persons engaged in the transport of racehorses should ensure the loading area permits for the safe and calm loading and unloading of horses.

17 Euthanasia or Humane Destruction

Minimum Standards

- S17.1** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure that euthanasia or destruction of a racehorse is performed humanely, and that the method employed results in immediate death, or rapid loss of consciousness, followed by death while unconscious.
- S17.2** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure that euthanasia or humane destruction of a racehorse is performed only by a person *competent* in the method used and licenced where *appropriate*.
- S17.4** A person responsible for a racehorse must ensure that it is euthanased or humanely destroyed in an environment that it is familiar with, and that pre-slaughter transport is avoided.
- S17.3** A person must, after euthanasing or humanely destroying a racehorse, ensure that the racehorse is dead by observing three or more of the following signs:
- a) there is no corneal blink reflex when the eyeball is touched;
 - b) the pupils are at maximum dilation and do not respond to light;
 - c) there is no heart beat; or
 - d) there are no rhythmic respiratory movements for at least five minutes.

Guidelines

- G17.1** Acceptable methods of euthanasia of a racehorse are:
1. rapid intravenous injection of concentrated barbiturate solutions;
 2. shooting by a licensed person via the frontal method, using a registered firearm (minimum calibre .22 LR) or humane killer; or
 3. use of a captive-bolt device via the frontal method followed immediately by exsanguination (bleeding out).
- G17.2** The racehorse should be handled quietly before euthanasia or humane destruction to ensure it is not unnecessarily distressed or alarmed.
- G17.3** Wherever possible, a racehorse should not be euthanased or humanely destroyed in view of other horses.
- G17.3** Euthanasia method employed as per G17.1 will dictate *appropriate* options for carcase processing and/or disposal, with the use of barbiturate limiting disposal options to incineration or deep burial away from water courses (and in accordance with all applicable regulations).

18 Record Keeping

Minimum Standards

S18.1 Any record required to be kept as a result of these Standards must be:

- a) stored securely for a period not less than five (5) years;
- b) legible;
- c) accessible at any time; and
- d) produced upon lawful request to an authorised person.

Guidelines

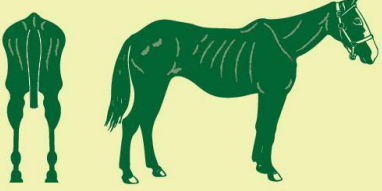
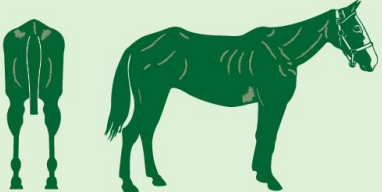
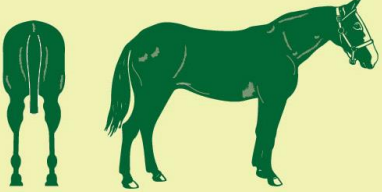
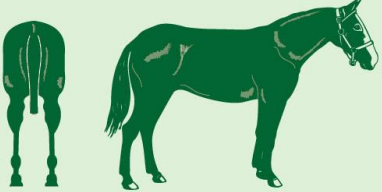
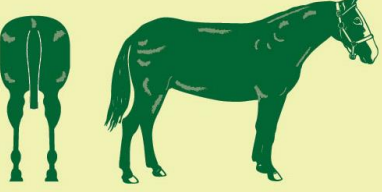
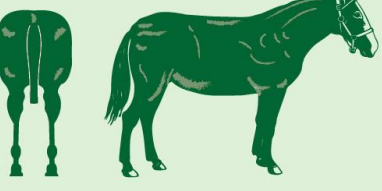
G18.1 Records created for the purpose of adhering to these Standards should be kept on the premises where the racehorse/s is/are located, where practical.

G18.2 Where possible, records should be kept electronically to enable ease of access, security and longevity.

Notes

When creating and keeping records, people must be aware of their obligations for privacy where those records might contain a person's Personal Information.

Appendix A: Body Condition Scoring Chart

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <h3>0 - EMACIATED</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No fatty tissue can be felt • Skin tight over bones • Shape of individual bones visible • Marked ewe-neck • Very prominent backbone and pelvis • Very sunken rump • Deep cavity under tail • Large gap between thighs |
|  | <h3>1 - THIN</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barely any fatty tissue • Skin more supple • Shape of bones visible • Narrow ewe-neck • Ribs easily visible • Prominent backbone, croup and tailhead • Sunken rump; cavity under tail • Gap between thighs |
|  | <h3>2 - LEAN</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A thin layer of fat under the skin • Narrow neck; muscles sharply defined • Backbone covered with a very thin layer of fat but still protruding • Withers, shoulders and neck accentuated • Ribs just visible • Hip bones easily visible but rounded • Rump usually sloping flat from backbone to point of hips, may be rounded if very fit • May be small gap between thighs |
|  | <h3>3 - MODERATE</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A thin layer of fat under the skin • Top line developing and becoming more rounded • Withers rounded over tips of bones • Shoulders and neck blend smoothly into body • Back is flat or forms only slight ridge • Ribs not visible but easily felt • Thin layer of fat building around tailhead • Rump beginning to appear rounded • Hip bones just visible |
|  | <h3>4 - FAT</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muscles hard to determine beneath fat layer • Spongy fat developing on crest • Fat deposits along withers, behind shoulders and along neck • Ribs covered by spongy fat • Rump well rounded • Spongy fat around tailhead • Gutter along back • From behind rump looks apple shaped |
|  | <h3>5 - OBESE</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horse takes on a blocky, bloated look • Muscles not visible as covered by layer of fat • Pronounced crest with hard fat • Pads of fat along withers and behind shoulders • Extremely obvious gutter along back and rump • Flank filled in flush • Lumps of fat around tailhead • Very bulging apple shaped rump • Inner thighs pressing together |

Glossary of Terms

Accepted industry practice - The exercise of that degree of skill, care, diligence, prudence and foresight that would reasonably and ordinarily be expected under similar circumstances in the horse industry in the same type of undertaking under the same or similar circumstances but does not necessarily mean one particular practice or method in all cases and is instead intended to encompass a broad range of acceptable practices and methods.

Appropriate – suitable or proper in the circumstances

Aversive training techniques – techniques that use pain or intimidation to achieve the desired results.

Competent person – A person having the skills or knowledge to do something well enough to meet a basic standard.

Direct supervision – A type of supervision in which a supervisor is present at all times and has control over and professional knowledge of the work being performed.

Metabolic disorders – conditions that affect any aspect of metabolism, such as breaking down food or producing energy.

Nutritional disorders – any of the nutrient-related diseases and conditions, including nutrient deficiencies or excesses.

Paddock – a fenced area of land typically used for grazing animals.

Suitably qualified – Refers to someone who has the abilities, formal qualifications, relevant experience or potential to acquire, within a reasonable time, the skills and competencies necessary to perform a particular job.

Under the supervision of – where the supervisor provides general guidance and support to the person being supervised, but does not actively oversee or participate in the individual's work. The supervisor allows the person to work independently and trusts them to complete tasks and make decisions on their own, providing assistance only when needed.

Acknowledgements

The following documents were used as reference when compiling this Code of Practice:

- **Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses, Revision 1, Animal Welfare Victoria 2019**
- **Code of Welfare: Horses and Donkeys, Minister of Agriculture, Government of New Zealand, in force from 1 October 2018**
- **Minimum Standards and Guidelines of Equine Welfare, Racing NSW**
- **Standards and Guidelines for the Health and Welfare of Horses in Western Australia, Consultation draft – October 2022, State of Western Australia (Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development)**
- **Tasmanian Equine Welfare Guidelines September 2008, revised July 2021**
- **Thoroughbred Racehorse Welfare Policy, Racing Victoria, effective 1 May 2024.**
- **Various legislation referenced in this Code**

Document Control

This Code of Practice will be reviewed every 3 years or earlier, if appropriate.

| Date | Version | Author | Approved by |
|------------------------|-----------|--|---|
| 30/10/2024 | 1.1 | Dr Martin Lenz, Chief Veterinary & Animal Welfare Officer Tasracing | Andrew Jenkins, Chief Executive Officer Tasracing |
| Next Review Date | 1/10/2027 | | |