



HORSE WELFARE POLICY

1. Purpose

The Horse Riding Clubs Association of Victoria (HRCAV) is committed to the highest welfare for horses participating in our disciplines. This policy sets clear welfare principles and describes what is considered best practice. It is expected that riders, coaches, officials, volunteers and supporters involved in the HRCAV will use this document and associated policies, rules and guidelines to meet the HRCAV and community expectations.

This Policy applies to: All HRCAV employees, affiliated Clubs, Club Members and employees of those Clubs, Participants, parents/guardians of Junior Members, Spectators, Contractors, Officials, and coaches, throughout all HRCAV events and activities.

2. Policy breaches and disciplinary action

The HRCAV Committee may impose sanctions where they are satisfied that there is proof that a breach of the Horse Welfare Policy has occurred. Breaches of the Horse Welfare Policy shall be dealt with as described in the Disciplinary Rules.

Cases of perceived cruelty must be reported to the appropriate agency in each state.

3. Horse Welfare Principles

3.1. The welfare of the horses must take precedence over all other demands. This includes:

- Level assessment of combinations prior to competition.
- Ensuring good horse management.
- Using training methods which are appropriate to the physical and mental capabilities of the horse, and which do not result in pain or fear.
- Use of equipment which is correctly fitted and do not cause pain or injury.
- A high standard of health care; and appropriate methods of transport.

3.2. Horses must be fit, competent and capable and in good health, appropriate to the type of riding activity and the specific demands. This includes:

- Ensuring an adequate level of fitness for the activity
- Applying appropriate horse-health and biosecurity practices.
- Allowing adequate recovery time following veterinary treatment.

3.3. Horses must be trained and compete on suitable and safe surfaces. All obstacles and competition conditions must be designed with the safety of the Horse in mind.

3.4. Horses to be provide food and water of good quality at all times, unless restriction is required due to veterinary advice.

3.5. The HRCAV and Clubs to promote education in the appropriate care and management of horses used for HRCAV activities.



4. Extreme Weather at HRCAV Events and Activities

There are many factors to be considered when Clubs are contemplating modifying, postponing or cancelling events or activities. Clubs need to be aware of the difficulty of setting 'one size fits all' guidelines in this area.

- 4.1. All parties are reminded that they must act responsibly. The HRCAV encourages a commonsense approach and the consideration of the comfort and well-being of all individuals and the welfare of horses participating at the event.
- 4.2. The wellbeing of the horse shall be above the demands of owners, riders, organisers, sponsors or officials.
- 4.3. When weather conditions have the potential to affect the health and safety of welfare of horses and/or competitors at HRCAV events and activities, organisers are expected to take steps to reduce the risk of illness or injury.
 - 4.3.1. Decisions by a Club to cancel or modify an event where it can be shown that extreme weather conditions constituted a risk to health and safety are supported by the HRCAV.
- 4.4. It is expected that organisers will observe all Extreme Weather alerts including alerts of storms, extreme winds, and extreme fire danger and will not knowingly bring horses and competitors into danger. Travel bans issued by relevant authorities in the case of fire or flood must also be observed.
- 4.5. Factors to be considered before cancelling or modifying an event or activity include:
 - Environmental factors: temperature, extreme weather conditions
 - Duration and intensity of an event/activity: type of activity – is it low, medium or high intensity.
 - Format of event/activity: opportunities for rest and hydration breaks
 - Time of day: possibility of rescheduling to cooler part of day
 - Local environment: radiant heat from sand arenas, indoor facilities, availability of shade
 - Availability of vet or doctor
- 4.6. Where forecasts indicate that an event may be impacted by extreme weather, Clubs should consider initiating arrangements to cancel or modify an event between 72 and 48 hours prior.
 - 4.6.1 All reasonable steps should be taken to notify competitors and officials of the changes.
 - 4.6.2 Revised arrangements are to be advertised on the event and HRCAV website.
 - 4.6.3 Where sudden changes to the weather forecast necessitate cancellation or modification of the event less than 48 hour prior, organisers are required to take reasonable steps to advertise the revised arrangements and notify all participants in person via telephone or SMS



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4.6.4 Where the option to enter on the day is offered, event programs should include advice to competitors on how to determine the status of the event should extreme weather conditions be forecast.

4.7 Clubs are to manage the risks associated with the conduct of equestrian events in hot weather by considering the following;

4.7.1 The dangers of heat illness are likely to arise from high intensity or prolonged activities conducted in hot and/or humid conditions. Most HRCav activities can be managed to ensure that participants and horses are not required to perform high intensity activities for a period long enough to cause harm, however extra precautions will need to be taken to manage risks where activities are of a high intensity or where participants are liable to push themselves or their horses beyond their normal boundaries of activity.

5 The Activity Modification Chart

5.6 This Chart provides estimates of risk related to weather and also guidelines to managing activity in order to minimise the effects of heat. Temperature should be based on the forecast (pre event) or actual (at event) issued by the Bureau of Meteorology or by onsite measurements.

| Ambient Temp | Relative Humidity | Risk of heat Illness | Intensity level | Suggested Event modification |
|--------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|---|
| 26 – 30 | >60% | Moderate - High | Low – med intensity activity | Provide regular relief for officials. Ensure adequate water supplies. Ensure adequate shade for officials. Encourage competitors to make use of shade and take regular breaks. |
| | | | High intensity activity | In addition: Reduce number of jumping efforts. Monitor event for over exertion of mounts. Relocate arenas to grass. |
| 31 – 35 | >50% | High – very high | Low – med intensity activity | In addition: Shorten workouts. Delete non points earning classes. Reduce number of jumping efforts and/or length of course. Reduce speeds by 20%. Shorten distance of navigation ride and/or required speed. Add extra breaks/water stops |
| | | | High intensity activity | In addition: Ensure rapid access to vet/hospital care. Monitor all areas for signs of distressed horses. Provide aggressive cooling facilities ie: water and ice. |
| 36 + | >30% | Extreme | Low – med intensity activity | In addition: Reschedule to avoid hottest part of day. Reduce number of classes. Consider postponing/cancelling event. Provide vet on site. Monitor cool down area for appropriate care. Consider cancelling phases |
| | | | High intensity activity | In addition: Cancel cross country phase of HT. |

*At relative humidity levels above those indicated on the table, risk of heat stress increase markedly.

Reference Materials

- [Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses](#)
- [The Australian Horse Industry Council \(AHIC\)](#)

VERSION CONTROL



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| Version | Effective Date | Endorsed Date | Endorsed By | Next Review Date |
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