

EQUINE WELFARE POLICY

1. Definition of horse welfare

Horse welfare is the physical and mental state of a horse in relation to the conditions in which it lives and dies.

A horse enjoys good welfare if it is healthy, comfortable, well-cared for kept in a safe environment, free from pain, fear and distress, and is able to express natural behaviours essential to its physical and mental wellbeing, thereby experiencing “a life worth living”.

Good horse welfare requires disease prevention and appropriate veterinary care, shelter, management and nutrition, a stimulating and safe environment, humane handling and when necessary, humane euthanasia.

The five pillars of animal welfare are:

- i. Nutrition – availability of water, a balanced and varied diet
- ii. Environment – comfortable and safe
- iii. Health – wellbeing and fitness, injuries and ailments appropriately treated
- iv. Behaviour – able to express natural and rewarding behaviours
- v. Mental or affective state – comfortable in environment, sociable contact and bonding with other animals and humans.

2- At all stages during the preparation and presentation of horses for racing their welfare should take precedence over all other demands

a-Good horsemanship

The housing, feeding and training of racehorses should be compatible with good horsemanship and must not compromise their welfare.

Any practices which cause physical or mental suffering, whether in stables, training or racing, should not be tolerated.

Gambling Regulatory Authority

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b-Training methods

Training methods which could harm or impose undue restrictions on the normal behaviour 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 programmes for which they have not been properly prepared.

c-Transport

During transport to and from training grounds and racecourse, every effort must be made to protect horses from injury and other health risks. Transport vehicles must be well ventilated, properly maintained and regularly cleaned and disinfected.

3- Horses should be in a fit and healthy condition before being allowed to compete

a-Veterinary inspections

No horse showing symptoms of disease, lameness or other ailment should be entered in a race.

Whenever there is any doubt as to the ability of a horse to perform at its best, a veterinary inspection should be requested and this should be undertaken before the horse is allowed to race.

b-Severe or Recurrent Clinical Conditions

Horses with severe or recurrent clinical conditions, e.g. “bleeders”, horses suffering from cardiac arrhythmia should, on veterinary advice, be temporarily or permanently excluded from racing.

4- Conditions at race meetings should not prejudice horse welfare

a-Surface conditions

Race tracks and racing surfaces should be designed and maintained to minimize risk factors that may cause injuries.

Particular attention should be paid to crossings and uneven racing surfaces.

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.

c-Misuse of the whip

Abuse of the whip cannot be condoned, for example, to make a beaten horse run faster, or if a horse is unable to respond, or if a horse is clearly winning.

Any postrace whip wheals clearly indicate injury.

d-Medication

After any veterinary treatment, time should be allowed for full recovery before competition.

The main purpose of rules controlling the use of drugs should be to protect the welfare of the horse and the safety of riders.

e-Starting gates/barriers

Horses should be adequately trained so as to be familiar with starting gates and how to react to being loaded in a confined environment.

Barriers should be properly designed and safe.

Aids to loading should be limited to encouraging a horse without causing alarm or fear.

5- Every effort should be made to ensure that horses receive proper attention after they raced and that they are treated humanely when their racing careers are over

a-Veterinary treatment

When a horse is injured during a race, jockeys should dismount and the horse should be collected by ambulance whenever necessary.

Veterinary expertise should always be available on the racecourse.

Injured horses should be given full supportive treatment before transport.

b-Racing injuries

The incidence of injuries sustained in racing and training should be monitored.

Track conditions, frequency of racing, immaturity, and any other risk factors, should be carefully examined to indicate ways to minimise severe injuries.

c-Euthanasia

If injuries are sufficiently severe the horse may need to be destroyed on humane grounds.

Euthanasia should be undertaken as soon as possible with the sole aim of minimising suffering.

If euthanasia is to be performed on race day on the track, appropriate screens should be set up to ensure it is carried out of view of the racing public.

Blood samples should be taken for analysis especially when the death takes place on a racetrack and or on the premises of a licensed establishment.

Autopsy should be performed if circumstances of the death are undefined.

d-Retirement

Upon the retirement of a registered horse from racing, the Trainer or Owner of such horse shall within two (2) days notify the HRID by completing the required Retired Horse Form indicating the name of the new owner, and the place where the horse is retired to.

The Authority shall inspect the facility where a newly retired horse is to be stabled to ensure that the environment is suitable for the horse's wellbeing.

Retired horses will remain ineligible to race under the Rules of Racing

Owners should make every effort to ensure that their horses are sympathetically and humanely treated when they leave racing.

Racehorses should be permanently identified and registered, so that their welfare in retirement can be monitored.