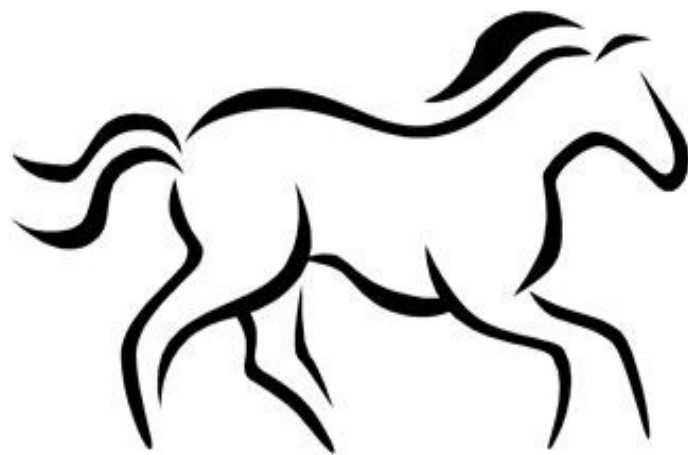


# Pocket Guide for Horse Organisations and Clubs

## Horse Welfare & Wellbeing



This pocket guide was developed by representatives from national horse organisations & State Horse Councils through the Australian Horse Industry Council Industry Advisory Committee.

# Contents

## Introduction

- 1. Legislation and Codes relating to Horse Welfare**
- 2. Organisation Horse Welfare Codes of Practice**
- 3. Horse Welfare Officers**
- 4. Continuous Improvement**
- 5. Five Minute Checklist**
- 6. Job Description for a Horse Welfare Officer**

Last Review Date: July 2011

Note: 'horse' refers to horses, ponies, donkeys (asses), hinnies, mules and other equids.

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Prepared by Horse SA [www.horsesa.asn.au](http://www.horsesa.asn.au)

## Introduction

Horse welfare in this pocket guide is about considering the positive wellness or well-being of horses associated with your organisation. Often people think of horse welfare as concerning only what is commonly described as a “welfare case” - a horse which has very poor body condition or treated very badly. There is in fact, much more to welfare than extreme cases of neglect.

Welfare includes seeing to the care and well-being of the horse in relation to all of its physical, mental, social and physiological needs both on and off the field of play.

Horse organisations will be familiar with welfare requirements as found in their rulebook; however, equally important for a balanced approach are the range of educational and role model or mentoring approaches employed by club or organisational leaders for their members.

Increasingly, horse sport & recreational activity organisers are thinking about how horse welfare can be promoted after the primary career of the horse is over. Examples include the promotion of linkages with horse activity groups (e.g. horse racing with equestrian sports), providing lists of horse re-educators or imparting information about how to care for aged horses.

Society too is changing its attitude towards the care and well-being of domestic animals. Horse event organisers must be aware of expectations around how horses are to be cared for and treated as valued members of our wider community and need to have a raised awareness of ‘perceptions’ of treatment by the wider general public.

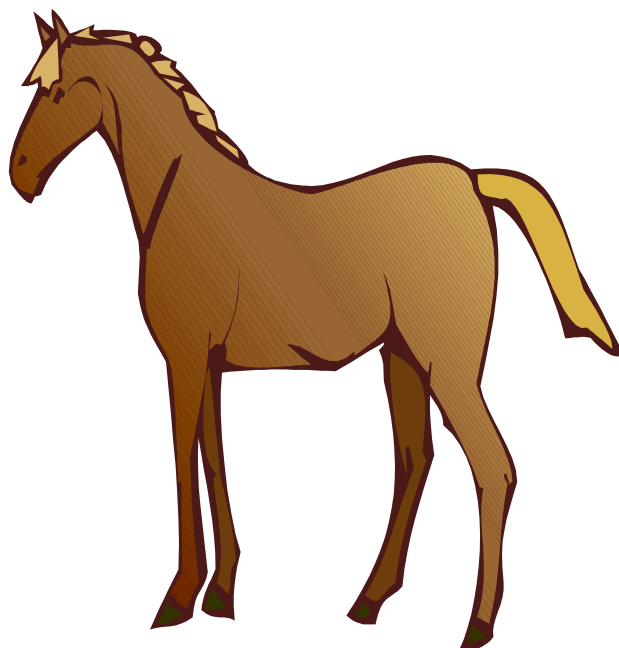
## 1. Legislation and Codes relating to Horse Welfare

The Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS) is currently preparing standards of care around a number of animal species, including horses. When completed, each State will have the opportunity to adopt the standards as law under their relevant animal welfare legislation. The AAWS is a managed program of the Commonwealth Department for Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry.

Some Australian states have a specific Horse Welfare Code of Practice which is attached to the relevant state Animal Welfare Act.

The AAWS has completed the “Land Transport of Livestock” standards, which includes a section for horses, and state governments are now preparing to adopt these. Horse event organisers will need to be familiar with the requirements within the state in which their event is to be held and inform competitors.

Some states have existing Horse Welfare Codes of Practice, and where these exist, they must be adhered to.



## 2. Organisation Horse Welfare Codes of Practice

Horse Welfare Codes of Practice prepared by organisations are valuable, as it is a policy prepared by the members, for the members.

For a policy to be effective, it should be:

- reviewed and updated at least annually, to take into account new research findings;

- cross-checked with any State or National Codes from sporting bodies or government;

- evaluated by an independent third-party from time to time;

- easily found on the organisation website;

- have a written procedure outlining on how the policy will be implemented;

- promoted through reproduction in newsletters, posted on websites, event programs, noticeboards or signage;

- clearly explained as to how it will be enforced.

Most national horse organisations will have a welfare policy which can be used or adapted for your own club or event.

### 3. Horse Wellness/Well-being/Welfare Officers

Horse organisations & event managers are continuously seeking ways to improve how horses are cared for. Many organisations will have welfare & well being included as part of the stated role of an official with further information included in the official program. Consideration can be given to appointing horse welfare/well-being/ wellness officer, even if a veterinarian is present. The advantages of creating the Officer role may include:

- welfare & well being of horses seen as a high priority by the committee;
- promotion of an organisation's horse welfare policies may help attract sponsors;
- supports implementing a continuous improvement program for an organisation or event (see below);
- one person can provide information on solutions to current non-clinical problems that may compromise horse welfare, freeing any veterinary personnel to focus on clinical incidents;
- one person can liaise with veterinarians from one event to the next and provide continuity over time on the most likely need for intervention; and
- record keeping of incidents that accrue over time and other indicators of how horse welfare policy, procedures or practices are measured in the organisation.

## 4. Continuous Improvement

Continuous Improvement for horse organisations, clubs and events is described as;

- an ongoing effort to improve horse welfare
- taking into account changing needs and expectations of all stakeholders including riders, members and those who service the organisation e.g. veterinarians, farriers
- incremental changes, taking small steps at a time
- relying on an active feedback process and self-reflection matched against the goals and aims of the organisation
- having measureable in outcomes or outputs
- fostering an overall management & member welfare ethos
- confidence to undergo validation by a third party if required.

In other words, continuous improvement is simply a matter of an organisation aiming to do things better and documenting the process. Many clubs are doing this already but quite informally with little or no record keeping or promotion of positive benefits.

The Five Minute Checklist is a suggested starting point for a continuous improvement register or checklist for your horse organisation. By starting with some of the headings and working through a few items at a time until in the future, your organisation can undertake an annual assessment against a whole-of-organisation checklist.

## 5. Five Minute Checklist

### Organisation Governance

A **horse welfare statement** is included in key organisational documents including Constitution, Mission Statement and membership form.

**State & Federal laws** or Codes relating to horse welfare are known and promoted.

**Standing item** on Agendas for horse welfare in board meetings, activity and event sub-committees.

**Policy & Procedures Library** includes horse welfare code of practice, policies on specific issues identified for the organisation which may include heat stress, travel and sporting effort recovery. Clear procedures for each policy are written down and promoted.

**Rule book** is regularly reviewed from a horse welfare aspect, including updating wording, implementing new requirements as a result of research findings or member feedback and clarifying enforcement procedures & penalties.

**Event programming** considers total hours or total courses. Event planners consider flexibility in programming & travel options for weather or other condition extremes.

**Staff & volunteers** have job descriptions which include a horse welfare statement.

**Involve members** in organisational governance, policy review and implementation of procedures. This will ensure a higher level of ownership and adoption.

**Appoint a Horse Welfare Officer** as part of a clear line of authority.



## **Benchmarking & Good Practice**

**Benchmark** organisation governance, procedures and recreation & sporting conduct against international best practice. Identify where improvement can be made.

**Promote good practice options** amongst members where a choice is provided.

**Assess** horse event venue infrastructure design & sporting surfaces to evaluate components such as shade & shelter, water supply & performance surface. Plan for improvements.

**Invest in Research & Community Education:** Look at different ways your horse organisation or members can become involved in research and look at how different ways new information learned through research, that has impact on your horse activity, can be shared e.g. through seminars, newsletter articles or demonstrations at events.

**Engage** with other horse organisations in discussing welfare. Join or network with organisations & industry leaders who can add value to your organisation.

## **Event / Activity**

**The Horse Welfare/Well –being/Wellness Officer** appointed for the day is made known.

**An Equine Emergency Incident Plan** is written down, with easily accessible contact details.

**Training** is provided to volunteers on responding to an equine emergency incident.

**Equipment** is ready for responding to a horse emergency incident.

**Promote best practice horse welfare, care & training options**

amongst members where a choice is provided.

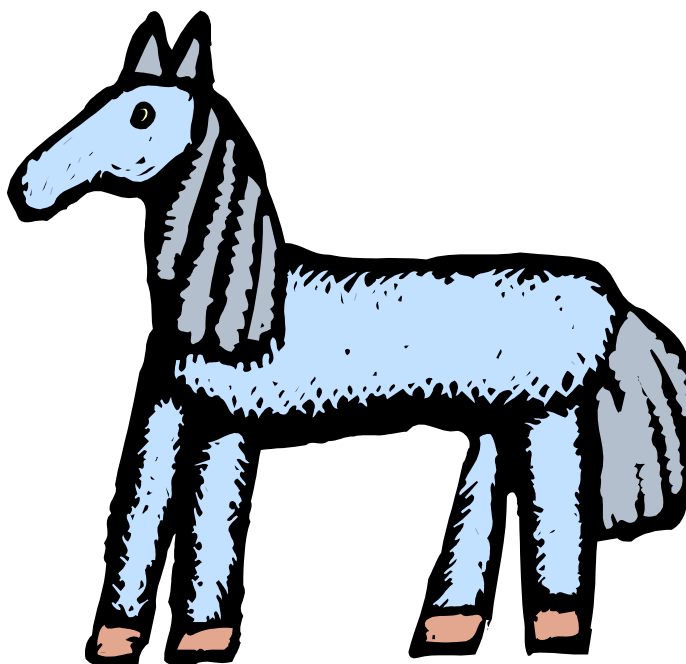
**Pre & post career** programs in place or promoted for members' horses.

## **Education & Training**

**Share information** with members about organisational statements, codes of practice, rules relating to welfare and information about horse care & training. Utilise a range of communication methods including website, newsletters, noticeboard, and speakers.

**Education programs** are promoted or provided for coaches, officials, office bearers and members both formal and informal. Encourage recording of training received.

**Reward and Recognise** members or affiliate clubs who have demonstrated their contribution to horse welfare awareness or improvement within your organisation.



## 6. Sample Job Description

### Horse Welfare/Well being/Wellness Officer

An Officer may be paid or voluntary. The job can be shared or more than one position appointed. Organisations are encouraged to prepare a standard job description which includes any remuneration and/or reimbursements, expected work hours, to whom and how reporting should take place.

Required skill sets will also need to be identified which may include above average personal communication skills, strong industry networks and an ability to write reports.

Organisational or professional memberships are recommended e.g. Australian Horse Industry Council [www.horsecouncil.org.au](http://www.horsecouncil.org.au) and the International Society for Equitation Science [www.equitationscience.com](http://www.equitationscience.com)

#### Key Tasks:

- Implement and coordinate the horse welfare & well being program for the relevant organization
- Through effective coordination, protect and enhance the health and welfare of all horses involved
- Collection of information and data on issues such as horse activity related injuries, accidents or deaths
- Provide advice to the organisation committee to assist in developing a position on equine welfare issues to various stakeholders
- Ensure all horse welfare documentation and policies are appropriately managed and coordinated
- Liaison with peak research bodies, stakeholders and

other organisations, to develop and share information concerning horse welfare & well being

- Through the achievement of effective implementation and coordination, build public awareness concerning horse welfare strategies and developments
- Report the emerging scientific evidence to the organisation committee and membership
- Coordinate regular reviews of the organisation horse welfare policy in the light of the emerging science and organisational data collected

Some organisations may also require this position to work directly with Chief Steward, Ground Jury or equivalent to report or refer cases where breaches of organisational rules may have taken place, attend equine incidents or accidents at an event as part of a trained response team, or other duties.

