



Minimum Standards & Guidelines of Equine Welfare

Version 1

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Contents

Preface	3
Introduction	3
1. Supervision	4
2. Water	4
3. Food	5
4. Health and Veterinary	5
5. Treatment and Surgical Procedures	7
6. Housing, Shelter Structures and Yards	7
7. Fencing and Gates	8
8. Foot Care	9
9. Dental Care	9
10. Exercise	9
11. Behavioural Needs	10
12. Training	10
13. Agistment	11
14. Restraint	11
15. Rugging	12
16. Identification	12
17. Transport	13
18. Re-homing	13
19. Euthanasia	13
20. Deceased Horses	13

Preface

Thoroughbred Racing NT is committed to the welfare of thoroughbred horses during their racing careers and on retirement. This commitment is supported by the Australian Racing Rules and Local Rules of Racing to ensure the welfare of Thoroughbred horses.

The welfare of horses is also underpinned by legislation, all animals in the Northern Territory (NT) are entitled to a standard level of care for their welfare, health and safety under the *Animal Protection Act 2018* and *Animal Protection Regulations 2022*.

The Act establishes obligations relating to the care of animals in general terms. These Minimum Standards and Guidelines of Equine Welfare ('The Standards') have been prepared by Thoroughbred Racing NT, to define the minimum standards expected for the care of thoroughbred horses in the Racing industry to promote education regarding welfare practises, avoid cruelty, and reflect expectations in the community. The Standards also include "guidelines" to encourage the industry towards best practice in ensuring horse welfare. The guidelines within this document, whilst not compulsory, should be implemented wherever feasible.

Introduction

These Standards detail the minimum standards of welfare for horses that "persons in charge" (e.g. Owners and Trainers) of horses must comply with.

These Standards, in general terms, address:

- Provision of appropriate nutrition and water
- Freedom of movement and exercise
- Provision of appropriate accommodation
- Protection from disease
- Identification and treatment of injury and disease.
- Sales, auctions and re-homing
- End of life decisions and death

Ultimately, these Standards seek to affirm and ensure the provision of the Five Domains of Animal Welfare:

1. **Nutrition – enough water and food, balanced and varied diet**
2. **Environment – comfortable and safe environment**
3. **Health – wellbeing and fitness, injuries and ailments appropriately treated**
4. **Behaviour – able to express natural and rewarding behaviours**
5. **Mental or affective state – comfortable in environment , sociable contact and bonding with other animals , close bond between horse and human**

Persons in charge of horses must possess knowledge of the basic welfare requirements of horses to implement the contents of The Standards effectively.

Given that responsibility for a horse may be shared between several people, it is important that there is clarity as to who is directly responsible for the horse at any one time. The person in

charge must take reasonable steps to ensure that the horse will be managed in accordance with the **minimum standards** whilst in the care of others e.g. Agistment providers.

The Standards are not an exhaustive source for equine welfare and management. Detailed and specific advice should be sought from appropriate resources, including but not limited to skilled Equine Veterinarians, other evidence-based equine subject matter experts and the Stewards.

Incorporated herein are Minimum Standards which are in bold and referenced **S1.1** for example, and also Guidelines which are referenced G1.1 for example.

1. Supervision

Minimum Standards

S 1.1 A person in charge of the supervision of a horse must be able to recognise signs of ill health and have access to a registered veterinary practitioner.

S 1.2 Horses must be inspected at an appropriate frequency to ensure their welfare needs are met at all times.

S 1.3 Horses kept in stables and yards, or without access to forage, should be inspected, fed and watered at least twice a day.

Guidelines

G 1.1 Where horses are kept at unoccupied premises, the contact details of the person in charge of the horse should be clearly displayed or readily accessible.

G1.2 Contingency plans should be in place to ensure a prompt response to emergency situations such as fire, flood, disease, injury and unexpected absences of the person in charge.

G 1.3 Aged, injured and ill horses should be inspected frequently to ensure their welfare needs are met.

G 1.4 Persons in charge of a horse should stay abreast of current, evidence-based best practice in horse welfare.

2. Water

Minimum Standards

S 2.1 Horses must have free access to an adequate amount of water to meet their physical needs. Water must be of a quality suitable for equine consumption.

S 2.2 Water containers must be clean, functional and inspected at least daily or at a frequency that ensures that animals will not go without water before a failure in an automatic system is detected.

S 2.3 Where water is supplied in buckets, the supply must be inspected at least every 12 hours.

Guidelines

G 2.1 Water volume requirements of horses vary widely, depending on age, bodyweight, air temperature and humidity, workload, health and the diet of the horse. A thoroughbred may require more than 60 litres per day when in work and more if suffering from illness.

G 2.2 Dams should have safe access for horses and be of a suitable quality for drinking.

3. Food

Minimum Standards

S 3.1 Horses must be provided with a diet of sufficient quantity and quality to maintain good health, growth, body condition and meet their physiological requirements.

S 3.2 Horses must not be deprived of access to food for more than 12 hours.

Guidelines

G3.1 All endeavours should be made to maintain a horse's body score at a suitable level (see Appendix A), and veterinary advice sought if attempts to maintain condition fail.

G 3.2 Appropriate feed troughs for horses should be utilised and well spaced to minimise bullying and allow subordinate animals access to feed. Horses that are in lighter condition should be segregated from the main group for feeding if necessary.

G 3.3 If a horse fails to thrive, the quantity, quality and availability of feed and the health of the horse (including the state of its teeth, the extent of parasitism and the horse's age) should be evaluated.

G 3.4 Roughage (fibrous feed such as pasture, hay and chaff) should form a significant part of a horse's diet, to provide enough bulk and fibre to enable the digestive system to function properly. Horses need at least 1% of their body weight in roughage daily. If fed processed feed or grains, these should be offered in addition to the appropriate amount of roughage.

G 3.5 The diet of young and growing horses should be designed with special consideration for their additional needs.

G 3.6 Horses should be protected from access to food harmful to health, such as mouldy hay, lawn mower clippings and toxic plants.

4. Health and Veterinary

Minimum Standards

S 4.1 a registered owner, trainer or any person in charge of or that has in his or her possession, control or custody any horse must ensure that the horse is provided with veterinary treatment, where such treatment is necessary.

S 4.2 a registered owner, trainer or any person in charge of or that has in his or her possession, control or custody of any horse, must ensure that they exercise reasonable

care, control and supervision as may be necessary, to prevent any such horse from being subject to cruelty or unnecessary pain or suffering.

S 4.3 Horses that are sick, suffering, injured, diseased or that have unexplained weight loss must be provided with prompt veterinary or other appropriate treatment.

S 4.4 Horses must be vaccinated against disease in accordance with the Rules of Racing and local veterinary advice

S 4.5 Veterinary advice must be sought immediately if a horse:

- demonstrates acute abdominal pain or colic seen as pawing, kicking at the stomach or rolling, often accompanied by straining, teeth-grinding and sweating
- sustains serious injuries e.g. deep wounds, severe haemorrhage, severe or unexplained lameness or eye injuries
- is unable to, or has difficulty rising or standing
- show signs of laminitis, including lameness, increased pulse to the affected hooves, reluctance to stand on affected feet and reluctance to move
- demonstrates neurological symptoms
- demonstrates signs of acute respiratory illness.

S 4.6 Veterinary advice must be sought as soon as possible if the horse has:

- lameness that does not rapidly resolve
- signs of respiratory disease such as discharge from eyes, nostrils, or swollen lymph nodes under the throat; these are indications of respiratory disease and may be accompanied by a cough, fever, loss of appetite
- diarrhoea or persistent weight loss
- constipation
- persistent skin conditions
- inactivity or unresponsiveness.
- persistent elevated temperature (ie. > 38.5 degrees C)

S 4.7 Veterinary advice must be sought regarding the appropriate level of exercise for horses demonstrating symptoms or signs listed in S4.5 and S4.6 above.

S 4.8 Veterinary advice must be sought for the administration of medication, supplements or substances to ensure the horse's welfare and compliance with Rules of Racing.

S 4.9 A program to control internal parasites, such as drenching, worming or regular faecal egg count should be conducted. Worming products must be registered for equine use.

Guidelines

G 4.1 Early treatment of external parasites such as lice, should be practiced.

G 4.2 Measures should be taken to control spread of disease. Prompt appropriate preventive treatment should be given to horses for diseases that may be common in a district or occurring in a herd.

G 4.3 Wherever possible, a new horse to a property should be quarantined away from the established group for 10-14 days to reduce the risk of introducing disease.

G 4.4 Consideration should be given for assessment and treatment (in addition to that provided by a Veterinarian) by evidence based adjunctive allied health practitioners e.g. Physiotherapists to optimise a horse's recovery from training and injury.

G 4.5 Horses should be vaccinated for Tetanus at least annually. It is recommended that Strangles vaccination occur on a 6-monthly basis. Vaccination advice should be sought from a veterinarian.

G 4.6 Persons working with horses should be familiar with the non-specific signs of the Hendra Virus such a rapid onset of illness, increased body temperature, colic like discomfort, rapid deterioration of either respiratory or nervous signs. All horse facilities in the NT should conduct a risk assessment of their property by not feeding or watering their horse under trees, avoiding fruit trees in and around horse yards, restrict grazing from under trees and consider implementing a vaccination protocol, where deemed appropriate.

5. Treatment and Surgical Procedures

Minimum Standards

S 5.1 Surgical procedures on horses of any age must only be conducted by a registered Veterinarian.

Guidelines

G 5.1 Treatments and medications should be administered in accordance with the manufacturer's or veterinarian's instructions, in compliance with the relevant Commonwealth and state legislation.

6. Housing, Shelter Structures and Yards

Minimum Standards

All horses should be kept in a stable and/or paddock that meets the following minimum standards below recommended by Thoroughbred Racing NT.

S 6.1 Premises must be designed and maintained to minimise the risk of injury, disease and escape.

S 6.2 Horses must not be overcrowded in confinement. There must be adequate space for each horse to separate himself or herself from the group.

S 6.3 Yards and stables must have sufficient room to allow the horse to stand freely in the normal position with the head fully raised, walk forward and turn, lie down, roll, stretch and groom themselves without restriction.

S 6.4 Appropriate clean bedding must be provided in stables for warmth, insulation and protection from abrasion.

S 6.5 Horses must have access to adequate shelter, relevant to the weather conditions, environment and the condition of the horse. Shade must be provided in hot conditions. Extra care must be taken for very old and sick horses.

Guidelines

G 6.1 Stable design should allow a horse to achieve visual contact with other horses, humans and activities in the stable surroundings.

G 6.2 Accommodation of horses in stables is not likely to meet the full spectrum of horses' behavioural and social needs. If stabling is used, provision of exercise, time out at pasture, a high fibre diet, social interaction, and stimulation through environmental enrichment may reduce stress, boredom and the risk of stereotypic behaviour.

G 6.3 Stables and stalls should have adequate lighting and ventilation. Dust levels should be kept to a minimum.

G 6.4 The floors of yards, stables and stalls should have surfaces that permit adequate drainage and allow horses to stand and walk normally. Manure, soiled bedding and stale or contaminated feed and water should be removed daily.

G 6.5 Adequate fire-fighting equipment, appropriate to fuel types should be available, visible and easy to access.

G 6.6 Paddocks and yards should be kept free of noxious plants, rubbish and debris that may injure horses.

G 6.7 Steps should be taken to minimise the effects of climatic extremes and other factors producing either cold or heat stress.

G 6.8 Efforts should be made to effectively control of pests including ticks, flies, lice, mosquitoes and rodents

G 6.9 Appropriate facilities to segregate horses e.g. For quarantine purposes should be available to prevent the spread of disease.

7. Fencing and Gates

Minimum Standards

S 7.1 Fencing should be designed and maintained to minimise the risk of injury to horses and prevent escape.

Guidelines

G 7.1 Permanent and temporary fences should be visible to horses and properly maintained to adequately confine horses. Post and rail, and electric fencing are recommended for the safe containment of horses. Barbed wire and high tensile wire can cause severe injury to horses and should not be used for yards and small areas. Star pickets should be capped to minimise the risk of impalement.

G7.2 Alleys and stand-off fencing can reduce injuries caused by entanglement in fencing as it restricts contact between horses.

G7.4 Gateways should be designed to give easy and safe passage of horses. Gates should be a minimum of 1.2 metres wide, without projections that may cause injury and have secure fastenings to prevent escape.

8. Foot Care

Minimum Standards

S 8.1 Horses' feet must be maintained to permit normal mobility and to maintain hoof shape and function.

S 8.2 Horses with a hoof injury, overgrowth, infection or laminitis must be provided with veterinary, farriery or other appropriate treatment.

Guidelines

G 8.1 Horses' feet should be inspected at least every six weeks and regularly trimmed or shod by a farrier or other competent person.

G 8.2 Shoeing or trimming should not cause any abnormality of gait or conformation. Shoeing should be practised only by farriers or trainees under the supervision of a farrier.

9. Dental Care

Minimum Standards

S 9.1 Horses must be assessed periodically by a person suitably skilled and experienced in equine dentistry. The frequency of assessments should be increased for young, stabled and aged horses.

S 9.2 A person must not provide any dental treatment that causes modification, damage or injury which results in a negative impact on the welfare of the horse.

S 9.3 Dental procedures likely to cause unreasonable pain must be performed with suitable analgesia or anaesthesia and under the supervision of a registered Veterinarian.

Guidelines

G9.1 Typically, an adult horse should have a dental assessment at least twice annually.

10. Exercise

Minimum Standards

S 10.1 Horses confined to a stable or small yard (e.g. where they are unable to trot freely) must be exercised at least once daily, except where the exercise may be detrimental to the health and welfare of the horse.

S 10.2 Horses must not be overworked. The workload imposed must not exceed the horse's ability for its age, size, strength, conformation, fitness, and level of education.

S 10.3 Horses must not be exercised if they are showing signs of lameness or sickness, until such time that they have been inspected and cleared to exercise by a registered veterinarian.

S 10.4 Horses on mechanical exercising devices, including but not limited to walking machines and treadmills, must be adequately supervised by a competent operator to enable prompt action in the event of an incident.

Guidelines

G 10.1 Rider's size and weight should be appropriate for the size and condition of the horse.

G 10.2 Horses that are confined to stables or small yards should be spelled in larger paddocks periodically.

G 10.3 When introducing new or spelled horses to exercise, their workload should be increased gradually to prevent injury and stress.

11. Behavioural Needs

Minimum Standards

S 11.1 The design of facilities, the stocking density and the composition of groups of horses must allow each horse to have an area of its own, sufficient for subordinate horses to escape bullying by dominant animals in the group.

Guidelines

G 11.1 Horses are social animals and should not, wherever possible, be kept in isolation

G 11.2 Sick animals or those in advanced age, may require segregation from other groups of horses, to reduce the risk of injury and disease.

G 11.3 Persons responsible for a horse displaying stereotypical behaviour e.g. weaving, wind-sucking, self-mutilation should provide appropriate intervention therapy based on accepted industry practice or veterinary advice.

12. Training

Minimum Standards

S 12.1 Sufficient training should be provided in the early education of a horse, to enable the horse to conduct their work with minimal anxiety, free from fear and distress. The

education process should aim to produce a relaxed, compliant horse when handled on the ground, under saddle and during transport. Investment in this foundation training will assist the horse and its handlers throughout its racing life and career beyond racing.

S 12.2 Horses must not be trained if they are showing signs of lameness or sickness, until such time that they have been inspected and cleared to be trained by a registered veterinarian.

S 12.3 Training methods and equipment must be humane and must not cause unreasonable pain or suffering to the horse. Equipment for training Thoroughbred racehorses must comply with the National Register of Approved Gear or be approved by the Stewards. The use of stockwhips is strictly prohibited.

S 12.4 Horses must not be beaten or abused.

S 12.5 Persons engaged in the education and training of horses must be competent, or under direct supervision of a competent person and must be aware of these minimum standards.

S 12.6 The use of electrical devices, such as cattle prodders or electronic anti-crib collars is not acceptable and their use is strictly prohibited by the Australian Rules of Racing.

Guidelines

G 12.1 Veterinary attention should be sought to rule out medical causes of persistent undesirable behaviour.

G 12.2 People training horses should be patient and confident, and instil confidence in the horses they train. Horse trainers should stay abreast of developments in Equine Behavioural Science to enable them to apply best practice principles.

G 12.3 Horses should only be given training schedules that are suited to their physical capabilities or level of maturity.

G12.4 All saddlery, harness and other equipment used with horses should be of sound condition, clean, well-fitting, correctly adjusted and must not compromise the welfare of the horse. Professional advice should be sought in fitting the saddle and other equipment if the owner/handler is not competent to do so.

13. Agistment

Minimum standards

S 13.1 The person responsible for a horse must take reasonable steps to source a reputable agistment provider that will care for the horse in accordance with The Standards.

S 13.2 All minimum standards prescribed in this code must be achieved by the agistment property.

S 13.3 An agreement defining the conditions of the agistment should be made between the horse owner or trainer and the agistment provider. This agreement should include the provision of veterinary care and the notification of relevant persons should the horse's welfare be at risk.

14. Restraint

Minimum Standards

S 14.1 Equipment and the method used to restrain horses must not cause injury or distress. A restrained horse must be under supervision.

Guidelines

G 14.1 Effective management and treatment of horses involves using various forms of restraint. The method should take into consideration the temperament, disposition and previous learning experience of the particular horse, the nature of the management procedure, and the skill of the handler.

G 14.2 Tethering and hobbling of horses is inherently dangerous and should only be a short-term practice used in exceptional circumstances. Tethered and hobbled horses must be kept under direct supervision.

15. Rugging

Minimum Standards

S 15.1 Rugging must be appropriate for the weather conditions and not result in heat stress to the animal.

S 15.2 Horses wearing rugs must be inspected daily for any injury or entanglement caused by the rug.

S 15.3 Rugs must be removed daily for inspection of the horse's body condition, skin health and rubbing or injury caused by the rug.

16. Identification

Minimum Standards

S 16.1 Horses must be freeze branded for registration by the Australian Stud Book. This should be conducted by a person competent in this task.

S 16.2 Microchips must be inserted by a registered and authorised Veterinarian.

Note: These standards refer to welfare requirements only, refer to Australian Racing Rules for identification protocols for registration purposes.

Guidelines

G 16.1 Microchipping, freeze-branding and DNA profiling are acceptable methods of permanent identification.

G 16.2 Horses should be permanently identified in accordance with the requirements as set down by Racing Australia.

17. Transport

Minimum Standard

S 17.1 Horses must be transported in accordance with the *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for the Land Transport of Livestock*.

S 17.2 The vehicle must be designed for transporting horses safely and comfortably, and regularly inspected and maintained to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

18. Re-homing

Minimum Standards

S 18.1 Persons responsible must satisfy themselves when selling or re-homing a horse that the horse will be cared for in accordance with the minimum standards in this Code.

S 18.2 Persons in charge of a horse must issue a Bill of Sale or Transfer of Ownership to the new owner of a horse and retain a copy for their own records.

19. End of Life Decision

Minimum Standards

S 19.1 A registered veterinarian must be consulted prior to the decision being made to euthanise a horse.

S 19.2 Euthanasia must be performed humanely. The person in charge of the animal must ensure that the method results in immediate death or immediate loss of consciousness followed by death while unconscious.

S 19.3 A person humanely euthanising an animal must take reasonable action to confirm the animal is dead or to ensure death.

S 19.4 Acceptable methods of euthanasia include:

- In the first instance, rapid intravenous injection of overdose of barbiturates by a veterinarian.
- Where this is not possible, utilising a firearm by a suitably experienced and licensed person.

20. Deceased Horses

Minimum Standards

S 20.1 A death of a horse must be reported using the Retirement of a Racehorse or Death Notification Form in accordance with the Australian Rules of Racing.

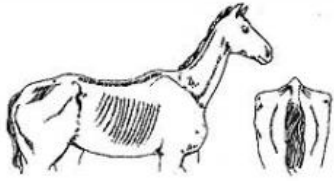
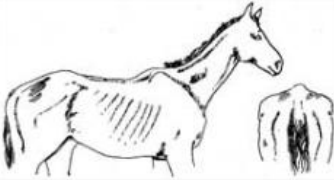

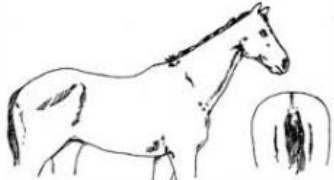
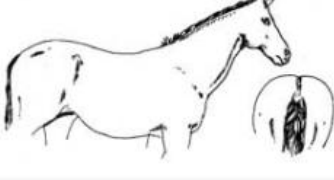
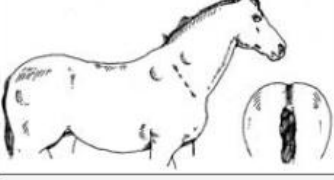
Appendix A: Body Condition Scoring

Body condition scoring provides a useful and objective method of monitoring body condition. Body condition, expressed as fat coverage, is the most reliable indicator of the suitability of a horse's diet.

Poor body condition is not always due to lack of feed; it could be related to parasite infestations, poor dental health, chronic injury or illness, advanced age, or lack of mobility affecting the horse's ability to forage.

Method of estimation

- Assess visually and by feel, the horse's pelvis and rump, back and ribs and neck.
- Give those areas individual scores using a scale of 0 (very poor) to 5 (very fat).
- Intermediate assessments can be given half scores.
- Using the pelvic and rump assessment as the base score, adjust that score by a half point if it differs by 1 or more points from the score for the neck or ribs.

0 Very poor		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very sunken rump • Deep cavity under tail • Skin tight over bones • Very prominent backbone and pelvis • Marked ewe neck
1 Poor		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunken rump • Cavity under tail • Ribs easily visible • Prominent backbone and croup • Ewe neck - narrow and slack
2 Moderate		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flat rump either side of backbone • Ribs just visible • Narrow but firm neck • Backbone well covered
3 Good		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rounded rump • Ribs just covered but easily felt • No crest, firm neck
4 Fat		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rump well rounded • Gutter along back • Ribs and pelvis hard to feel • Slight crest
5 Very fat		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very bulging rump • Deep gutter along back • Ribs buried • Marked crest • Fold and lumps of fat