



NEW ZEALAND THOROUGHBRED RACING HORSE WELFARE GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

The New Zealand thoroughbred racing industry is committed to the welfare of the New Zealand thoroughbred racehorse and the maintenance of appropriate horse welfare standards.

The New Zealand Rules of Racing contain provisions relating to the principles within this document.

These Guidelines are reviewed regularly.

1. AT ALL STAGES DURING THE PREPARATION AND PRESENTATION OF HORSES FOR RACING THEIR WELFARE SHOULD BE A PRIMARY CONSIDERATION

a) Good Horsemanship

The housing, feeding and training of racehorses should be consistent with good horsemanship and must not compromise their welfare. Any practices whether in stables, training or racing which are inconsistent with legislative requirements must not be tolerated. Industry training programmes should contain components on animal welfare relevant to the role performed by the person receiving the training. Audits of thoroughbred horses under the control of licensed trainers should be undertaken by racing authority officials.

b) Training Methods

Breaking and training methods which unreasonably influence the normal behaviour of racehorses should not be used. Horses should only be given training schedules which are suited to their physical capabilities and level of maturity.

c) Shoeing

Horse shoes and racing plates should be designed and fitted to minimise the risk of injury.

d) Transport

The risk of injury and disease should be minimised when racehorses are transported. Vehicles should be safe, clean, well ventilated, regularly maintained and disinfected.

e) Rest Periods

Long journeys must be planned carefully and horses should be allowed regular rest periods and access to water. Respiratory problems can often be reduced if horses are able to lower their heads to ground level during rest periods.

2. HORSES SHOULD BE SUITABLY CONDITIONED AND HEALTHY BEFORE BEING ALLOWED TO COMPETE

a) Veterinary Examinations

A veterinary examination should be undertaken of any horse showing signs of disease, lameness or other ailment to determine its suitability to race.

b) Immaturity

Horses mature at widely different rates. Training and racing schedules should be carefully planned to minimise the risk of musculo-skeletal injuries.

c) Surgical Procedures

Any surgical procedure which compromises the welfare or safety of any horse or rider must not be allowed in racing.

d) Severe or Recurrent Conditions

Horses with severe or recurrent clinical conditions should, on veterinary advice, be temporarily or permanently excluded from racing.

e) Pregnant Mares

Mares must not be raced beyond 120 days of pregnancy.

3. CONDITIONS OF RACING SHOULD NOT PREJUDICE HORSE WELFARE

a) Racecourse Conditions

Racecourses and racing surfaces should be designed and maintained to reduce risk factors which may lead to injuries. Particular attention should be paid to rails, crossings, uneven racing surfaces and extremes of surface quality.

b) Steeplechasing and Hurdling

Participation in these races should be restricted to horses with a demonstrated level of fitness and jumping ability. Weights to be carried, race distances, number, size, design and placement of fences should all be carefully assessed when planning these races.

c) Extreme Weather

Due care and attention should be paid to the welfare of horses racing in extreme weather. Provision must be made to cool horses quickly after racing in hot and/or humid conditions.

d) Misuse of the Whip and Spurs

Excessive, unnecessary or improper use of whips and spurs must not be condoned, for example, on a beaten horse, a horse unable to respond or a horse clearly winning.

e) Medication

One purpose of the rules controlling medication is to protect the welfare of the horse and the safety of riders. After any veterinary treatment, sufficient time should be allowed for recuperation before competition. Drugs must not be allowed to modify the racing performance of the horse, adversely impact on its welfare or conceal genetic or acquired conditions.

f) Racecourse Accommodation

Stabling and sampling facilities for horses on racecourses should be safe, clean and well-ventilated. Suitable drinking and washing-down water must always be available. Safe facilities for loading and unloading horses should be provided.

g) Starting Gates / Barriers

Horses should be educated so as to be familiar with loading procedures. Barriers should be properly designed and safe. Aids to loading must be humane and used appropriately.

4. RACEHORSES SHOULD RECEIVE PROPER ATTENTION AFTER THEY HAVE RACED AND BE TREATED HUMANELY WHEN THEIR RACING CAREERS ARE OVER

a) Veterinary Treatment

When a horse is injured during a race, the jockey must dismount. A registered veterinarian must be in attendance on the racecourse at race meetings and official barrier trials. Injured horses must be given appropriate first aid. A suitable vehicle for moving injured horses from the racetrack should be made available. If required, an injured horse should be transported to the nearest referral centre for further assessment and therapy.

b) Racing Injuries

The incidence of injuries sustained in racing and training should be monitored wherever possible. Track conditions, frequency of racing, age and any other risk factors, should be carefully examined to indicate ways to minimise the risk of injury.

c) Euthanasia

If injuries are sufficiently severe, an injured horse may need to be euthanased. If after evaluation euthanasia is deemed necessary, it should be undertaken as soon as possible with the sole aim of minimising suffering.

d) Retirement

Owners should attempt to ensure that their horses are sympathetically and humanely treated when they leave racing. Registered racehorses are permanently identified, so that instances of mistreatment during retirement can be pursued.

[These Guidelines have been adapted by New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing Inc. from the International Group of Specialist Racing Veterinarians' *Welfare Guidelines for Horseracing*.]