

New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing

Thoroughbred Welfare Assessment Guidelines

October 2019



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Introduction and purpose

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. This reflects the Maori term 'tiakitanga', meaning: guardianship, caring of, protection, upkeep¹.

New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing's vision for Thoroughbred welfare:

"A Thoroughbred should be provided a good life, with the care and conditions that allow it to thrive and perform to its natural abilities."

The aim of these welfare guidelines is to ensure that Thoroughbred horses in New Zealand have a 'good life', defined as one with a higher proportion of rewarding and positive than negative experiences².

To achieve this aim and to fulfil tiakitanga responsibility, overall welfare must substantially exceed minimum legal requirements and should include most of the optimal welfare conditions for Thoroughbreds.

NZTR's expectations of Thoroughbred Welfare

By and large, owners, trainers and breeders of Thoroughbreds in New Zealand meet or exceed minimum standards as prescribed in these guidelines. However, the benchmarks provided by these guidelines enable consideration by New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing (NZTR) or the Racing Integrity Unit (RIU) when determining whether standards have not been met, and corrective action and/or charges must be laid.

New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing's Rules of Racing contain enforcement provisions relating to the principles and vision within this document. These guidelines are intended as objective measures, against which the care and condition of Thoroughbreds can be assessed for the purposes of investigations in accordance with Part XIV of these Rules.

It is important to understand that these guidelines and the powers provided under the Rules of Racing are not intended as a substitute to the Animal Welfare Act 1999 nor the powers conferred to the Police or Animal Welfare Inspectors (whether employed by the Ministry for Primary Industries or SPCA New Zealand).

Rather, the Rules and these Guidelines together intend to set and enforce standards of care that **exceed** the standards that are enforceable under the Animal Welfare Act and applicable Codes of Welfare. To be clear, were it to be a possibility that breaches of Codes of Welfare or acts of cruelty or abject neglect might be proven under the Animal Welfare Act or Animal Welfare Regulations, then this would be referred by New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing or the Racing Integrity Unit to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

¹ As defined in maoridictionary.co.nz (noun: guardianship, caring of, protection, upkeep)

² Edgar, J.L., Mullan, S.M., Pritchard, J.C., McFarlane, U.J.C., and Main, D.C.J. (2013). Towards a 'good life' for farm animals: development of a resource tier framework to achieve positive welfare for laying hens. *Animals* 2013, 3, 584-605 doi:10.10.3390/ani3030584

Context and background

High welfare standards benefit the individual horse as well as the whole Thoroughbred racing industry. Horse welfare and peak performance are closely connected.

Equine welfare has, for a long time, been important to New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing, evident through:

- Close involvement and support of [NZ Equine Health Association](#) (NZEHA) and [NZ Equine Research Foundation](#) (NZERF), the [NZ Equine Trust](#), the [Ministry for Primary Industries](#) (MPI), the [New Zealand Equine Veterinary Association](#) (NZEVA), the [NZ Horse Ambulance Trust](#) and [SPCA New Zealand](#).
- Active support of equine science academic research, principally by Massey University. The knowledge gained from research is typically extended to the care of horses via equine veterinarians.
- [NZTR's Rules of Racing](#) includes a wide range of clauses relating to horse welfare
- Competency testing and licensing of jockeys and trainers
- Certification of horses for flat racing and jumping
- Minimum age restrictions for horses in flat and jumping races
- Ability to refuse the nomination of a horse
- Rules restricting the use and type of whips
- Provision of fully equipped horse ambulances (where available) at trials and races
- Regular inspection of stables and medical assessment
- Race day veterinary inspections to ensure suitability to start
- Attendance of farriers and plate and gear inspections on race day
- Powers to euthanise severely injured horses
- Powers to abandon race meetings
- Investment in racing and training surfaces and other infrastructure improvements
- Education and training of trainers, breeding staff, jockeys and stable hands.

In general, the New Zealand Thoroughbred industry is performing well on equine welfare matters. However, there are some welfare compromises, which we aim to improve over time. These include, but are not limited to, whip use, racing injuries and deaths. Whilst typically not a welfare matter per se for individual horses, the general guardianship of the Thoroughbred population will be enhanced by improved traceability of the Thoroughbred population and gaining a better understanding of welfare matters arising from the exit of horses from the active racing or breeding populations. To address this, NZTR aims to further increase demand for Thoroughbreds as sport or pleasure horses, and to educate owners of retired Thoroughbreds regarding best care.

The Thoroughbred Welfare Guidelines outlined in this document provide a clearly understandable framework for the care of Thoroughbreds before, during and after racing, and include aligned welfare benchmarks that clarify:

1. Desired or optimal welfare conditions for Thoroughbreds; and
2. Minimum acceptable welfare conditions for Thoroughbreds in development, racing, retirement and breeding which, if not consistently met, will lead to required corrective measures as provisioned under the Rules of Racing.

Further, and in relation to the post-retirement welfare of Thoroughbreds, these Guidelines outline the Duty of Care of persons accountable for Thoroughbreds. They also include educational material

that aims to ensure that post-retirement owners understand appropriate care, stabling and feed requirements of their horse.

These guidelines are aligned with:

- The provisions of the Animal Welfare Act 1999³
- Code of Welfare: Horses and Donkeys⁴
- Equine relevant Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018⁵
- International Group of Specialist Racing Veterinarians (IGSRV) Welfare Guidelines for Horse Racing⁶
- International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA) Welfare Standards⁷
- Equine health and welfare materials published by the NZ Equine Research Foundation⁸

³ <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1999/0142/56.0/whole.html#DLM49664> and <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2018/0050/latest/whole.html#LMS22850>

⁴ <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/11003-horses-and-donkeys-code-of-welfare>

⁵ <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2018/0050/latest/whole.html> [note: as at mid-2019 the regulations on surgical procedures remain in process of consultation by the Ministry for Primary Industries – see http://www.vetcouncil.org.nz/documentation/Other/MPI_2016-12-Proposed-Animal-Welfare-Regulations.pdf]

⁶ <https://igsrv.org/welfare> and outlined in Section 3 of this document

⁷ <https://www.ifhaonline.org/default.asp?section=About%20IFHA&area=30>

⁸ <http://www.nzerf.co.nz/books>

Section 1 - WELFARE ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES FOR THE GENERAL HUSBANDRY AND CARE OF THOROUGHBREDS AT ALL STAGES OF THEIR LIFE

Introduction

As stated in the general introduction, the welfare assessment guidelines outlined in this document provide a framework of clear expectations for the care of Thoroughbreds before, during and after racing, and include aligned welfare benchmarks that clarify:

1. Desired or optimal welfare conditions for Thoroughbreds; and
2. Minimum acceptable welfare conditions for Thoroughbreds in development, racing, retirement and breeding specifically addressing:
 - a. Disease prevention and management;
 - b. Unresolved pain or stress;
 - c. Inappropriate nutrition;
 - d. Inappropriate stabling or transport conditions; and
 - e. Failure to meet a defined Duty of Care regarding the retirement, sale or other disposal of a Thoroughbred.

Failure to meet these benchmarks will lead to required corrective measures as provisioned under the Rules of Racing and/or the appropriate welfare legislation. It is critical, therefore, that licence holders (trainers and jockeys), owners and breeders of racehorses are familiar with this entire document. Ignorance of these guidelines is not a defence or justification for failure to meet minimum welfare standards.

The Thoroughbred-human relationship in New Zealand

The horse-human bond underpins Thoroughbred welfare and is exhibited on a daily basis in the racing and breeding of Thoroughbreds. The industry and stakeholders have chosen to take a proactive approach to addressing Thoroughbred welfare because it matters to the people responsible for their care.

It matters because it fits with our beliefs about how horses should be treated. We believe that it is acceptable to use horses as long as their use is humane, that we have responsibilities and a duty to care for horses. We are also committed to seeking to continuously improve Thoroughbred welfare management.

It matters because horses are sentient bonded animals; they can feel pain, distress and anxiety. We recognise they have individual personalities and are alert to the different and subtle cues that are indicators of welfare for each horse. We recognise that each horse will develop differently, and because of this, we tailor training to the individual horse.

It matters because we often form emotional bonds with the horses in our care. We have a high regard for their abilities and contributions as an athlete. It matters because a happy, healthy horse is generally a well performing horse. It matters because even occasional cases of poor horse welfare are usually preventable.

The science behind our welfare approach – the Five Domains Model of animal welfare

In addition to international racing conventions and the NZ legislative and regulatory environment, NZTR bases our welfare vision for Thoroughbred racing on the Five Domains Model of Animal Welfare⁹. This model is a focusing device for defining optimal and minimal provisions, and has successfully identified a range of husbandry, veterinary and equitation impacts on horse welfare¹⁰. By adopting this model, NZTR aims to reduce avoidable negative experiences and ensure our horses enjoy 'a life worth living'.



Figure 1: The Five Domains Model of Animal Welfare applied to Thoroughbred horses

⁹ Mellor, D. Updating animal welfare thinking: Moving beyond the "Five Freedoms" towards "a Life Worth Living". *Animals* 2016, 6. Available online [here](#).

¹⁰ McGreevy, P. et al (2018). Using the Five Domains Model to assess the adverse impacts of husbandry, veterinary and equitation impacts on horse welfare. *Animals* 2018, 8, 41 doi:10.3390/ani8030041

"The Five Domains Model is an aid to detailed assessment of Thoroughbred welfare. Its use facilitates systematic and thorough welfare evaluations by focusing attention on a wide range of specific factors that can have negative or positive welfare impacts. The internal functional states and external circumstances of the horse give rise to subjective experiences, which include feelings, emotions and moods, which are technically called 'affects'. The welfare state of the horse reflects the overall balance of its negative and positive experiences at any particular time. Knowing what generates these experiences directs attention to what needs to be provided to the horse in order to minimise its negative experiences and to give it opportunities to have positive experiences. Practical welfare management therefore revolves around knowledgeable provision of resources, facilities and opportunities – collectively known as 'provisions' (see Table 1)."

– Professor David Mellor

The first three domains of the Model – nutrition, environment and health – focus on key elements of the internal functioning of the horse that are essential for its survival. Thus, these domains draw attention to basic management provisions that are necessary to meet horses' innate needs for sufficient food, water, shelter, health and safety (see Table 1).

The fourth domain – behaviour – focuses on the extent to which the horse can express 'agency'; i.e., the opportunities it has to exhibit voluntary, self-generated behaviours to achieve goals it finds rewarding. Thus, key provisions for this domain aim to make available opportunities to have rewarding behaviours (Table 1). For example, this might include seeking shade or mutual grooming. However, if there is no provision for shade or contact with another horse, the drive to seek them will be thwarted. We now know that behaviours such as windsucking, cribbing, weaving and pawing are not 'naughty' or learned by copying other horses; rather, they could be an indication of frustration, boredom, health issues or management deficiencies. The 'provision' of behavioural opportunities is the remedy for the deficiencies highlighted by this domain (Table 1).

The fifth domain – the mental state of the Thoroughbred – focuses attention on negative and positive subjective experiences (affects) of two main types:

- Firstly, those generated by the functional conditions within the body, captured by the nutrition, environment and health domains; and
- Secondly, experiences that are associated with the horse's perception of its external circumstances, captured by the behaviour domain.

Thus, the first four domains all focus attention on situations that contribute negative and positive experiences which are accumulated for consideration in the fifth mental domain. Our knowledge of the sources of different affects means that appropriate management of specific provisions can be used to forestall welfare problems before they arise or correct problems that do arise.

The manager of the horse needs to be cognisant of the signals that the horse provides regarding posture, demeanour, activity, vocalisation etc to indicate its mental state.

Table 1: The five provisions and aligned animal welfare aims – specific to Thoroughbred horses^{11,12}

Provisions	Animal Welfare Aims
Good nutrition Provide ready access to safe water and a diet adjusted to maintain optimal health and fitness	<i>Minimise</i> thirst and hunger <i>Enable</i> eating to be a pleasurable experience
Good environment Provide suitable safe enclosures with room to move, shade, good air quality and comfortable resting areas	<i>Minimise</i> discomfort and exposure <i>Promote</i> thermal, physical, auditory, visual, atmospheric and other comforts
Good health Prevent or rapidly diagnose and treat disease, injury and functional impairment, and foster good exercise conditioning and free exercise	<i>Minimise</i> negative experiences of ill-health <i>Promote</i> pleasures of optimal health, fitness, and free exercise
Appropriate behaviour Provide sufficient space, proper facilities, compatible company and appropriately varied conditions to enable expression of normal behaviours	<i>Minimise</i> threats and unpleasant restrictions on behaviour <i>Promote</i> engagement in rewarding activities
Positive mental experiences Provide safe, compatible and appropriate opportunities to have pleasurable experiences	<i>Minimise</i> boredom, anxiety, fear and loneliness <i>Promote</i> various forms of comfort, pleasure, interest and confidence

1. Nutrition

Nutrition provided to Thoroughbreds in racing and breeding is generally excellent, due to:

- High levels of understanding of the nutritional requirements for Thoroughbred racehorses
- The benefits of the competitive commercial feed market which has significantly improved nutritional outcomes
- The generally good variety, quality and composition of feed
- The usually very good variety and quality of natural feed (including grazing) when offered
- The quantity of food offered being generally appropriate for work regime
- Appropriate adjustments being made for physiological stages and environment
- Recognised good husbandry practices being deployed.

Desired or optimal welfare conditions would be provided where Thoroughbreds have opportunities to:

- Drink enough water
- Eat enough food
- Eat a balanced diet including sufficient natural fibre/roughage and essential trace minerals
- Eat a variety of foods aligned to innate preferences
- Eat at a natural rate and timing
- Eat correct quantities

Minimum acceptable welfare conditions for Thoroughbreds may not be met in circumstances where:

- Insufficient quantities of food and water are made available.

¹¹ Adapted from D.J. Mellor (2016). Moving beyond the ‘Five Freedoms’ by updating the ‘Five Provisions’ and introducing aligned ‘Animal Welfare Aims’. **Animals** 6(10), 55; doi:10.3390/ani6100059.”

¹² “Adapted from D.J. Mellor (2017). Operational details of the Five Domains Model and its key applications to the assessment and management of animal welfare. **Animals** 7(8), 60; doi:10.3390/ani7080060.”

- Temperature, taste and or odour of water discourage horses from drinking
- Food quality is poor or unpalatable or additives make the taste unpleasant
- Regular eating patterns are disturbed
- Horses may indulge in voluntary overeating
- Horses are not fed to meet their metabolic requirements
- Horses are over-fat or very thin

Body condition score (BCS) assesses the thickness of subcutaneous fat of a horse is and is a useful indicator of the nutritional health of horses. BCS is well recognised as an overall indicator of the nutritional health and requirements of a horse. NZTR expects that persons responsible for Thoroughbreds will know how to monitor body condition scores.

Factors other than nutrition that contribute to body condition (i.e. training workload, age, disease or thermal extremes) should be considered when assessing different classes of horses. For instance, yearlings and horses in race training will have less fat and a lower BCS than broodmares and Thoroughbreds used for recreational riding. Horses of any age or occupation should be maintained between BCS 2-4.

The NZTR Body Condition Score (BCS) standard scale is as stipulated in the Code of Welfare: Horses and Donkeys:

0 – Emaciated 1 – Thin 2 – Moderate 3 – Good 4 – Fat 5 – Very Fat

The standard BCS chart is provided in the Appendix C of this document, and is to be used by vets and investigators as the evidential basis for the assessment of Thoroughbred body condition.

2. Environment

Stabling and the general environment provided to New Zealand Thoroughbreds in racing and breeding would normally include the following features:

- Safe containment
- Use of substantial and/or electric fencing to reinforce boundaries – providing social barriers, reducing injuries, protecting horses
- Predictability and routine that 'protects' horses
- Farms that are well set up to manage herd hierarchies
- Pasture based management of mares and young stock which allows expression of natural behaviours
- Stable and paddock management and maintenance that provide good hygiene
- Good air quality
- Comfortable variation in light and temperature
- Handling and husbandry of transported horses which is appropriate
- A licensing system backed up by stable inspections which enable conditions to be assessed by Stipendiary Stewards.

Desired or optimal welfare conditions are achieved where Thoroughbreds are provided stabling with:

- Safe enclosures made from appropriate materials with opportunities for shade and shelter
- A thermally comfortable environment

- Suitable ground surfaces in stables, yards and paddocks, and training and racing venues
- Space for free movement
- Fresh air
- Comfortable light intensity
- Acceptable noise exposure
- Familiar routines and consistent environment
- Familiarisation with normal activity

Minimum acceptable welfare conditions for Thoroughbreds may not be met in circumstances which include:

- Thermal extremes
- Unsuitable ground surface
- Sustained close confinement
- High levels of atmospheric pollutants (CO₂, ammonia, dust, smoke)
- Unpleasant or strong odours
- Inappropriate light intensity
- Environmental monotony (ambient, physical, lighting)
- Unpredictable noise or events
- Unsafe enclosures and risk for injury
- Exposure to toxic plants.

3. Health

In general, owners, breeders, trainers, jockeys, stablehands and farriers demonstrate a longstanding culture of good husbandry, including high regard for the physical wellbeing of Thoroughbreds, demonstrated by:

- Expert equine veterinary care
- Industry training
- Good regulatory control
- Vet checks conducted before and after a race to assess the horse's suitability to race
- Conditioning (enhancing the horses' fitness, confidence and competence) which is done appropriately for age and stage of preparation
- Positive human-horse interaction conferring health benefits
- Prevention of the spread of contagious disease

Desired or optimal welfare conditions would be provided where Thoroughbreds are regularly observed and appropriately treated when necessary to ensure that:

- Chronic injuries or conditions, and acute or contagious disease are well managed
- Acute injuries are well managed
- Vaccinations are conducted in line with [Equine Vaccination Guidelines for NZ](#)
- Elective surgeries are expertly conducted in line with regulations
- Therapeutic substances are used appropriately
- The body and coat condition and foot care are appropriate
- Good fitness level, posture, demeanour and gait are apparent

Minimum acceptable welfare conditions may not be met in circumstances where Thoroughbreds exhibit:

- Chronic conditions or infectious diseases
- Acute or unmanaged chronic injury or unsoundness
- Extreme obesity or leanness

- Poor physical fitness and muscle de-conditioning
- Toxicity induced health problems

Also, minimum acceptable welfare conditions may not be met in Thoroughbreds when:

- Therapeutic substances are used inappropriately, or prohibited substances are used in competition

4. Behaviour

The horse-human bond enables breeders, trainers, and handlers to recognise the many subtle behavioural cues that are indicators of welfare, reinforced by:

- Regular consistent contact which builds familiarity with each individual horse's behaviour
- Daily interaction with horses which allows behaviours to be observed
- A culture of empathy and concern for horse wellbeing
- Horses having scheduled routines of exercise, feed and rest
- Horses having varied environmental challenges and choices and opportunities for engaging in rewarding behaviours
- Appropriately consistent training and management (meeting the minimum requirements of Part 6.1 of the [Code of Welfare: Horses and Donkeys](#), but ideally using graduated learning training practices with positive reinforcement)

Desirable or optimal conditions or available opportunities that would enhance the welfare of Thoroughbreds include the following:

- Comfortable sensory inputs
- Engaging activities
- Training based on graduated training practices supported by positive reinforcement of the horse's learning
- Opportunities for spontaneous free movement
- Opportunities to respond to varied and interesting environmental challenges
- Opportunities for foraging and browsing
- Opportunities to bond with other animals and with humans
- Opportunities to play
- Opportunities to use safe spaces, retreat, or defensive activity
- Having sufficient sleep and rest.

Minimum acceptable welfare conditions may not be met in circumstances where Thoroughbreds exhibit the following behaviours:

- Stereotypies
- Resistance or lack of cooperation when worked or handled
- Lethargy
- Exhaustion

5. Mental or affective state

Breeders, trainers and stablehands depend on healthy and willing horses, so they will regularly monitor their mental state for:

- Alertness and engagement with handlers
- Appropriate energy levels for workload
- Willingness to work
- Confidence and calmness

- The absence of signs of anxiety, fear or panic
- The absence of signs of pain, anger or frustration

Desired or optimal welfare conditions for Thoroughbreds would be provided where:

- Management provisions meet nutritional, environmental, health and behavioural requirements
- Negative experiences are kept at tolerably low levels¹³
- Opportunities are available for positive experiences

Minimum acceptable welfare conditions for Thoroughbreds may not be met in circumstances where:

- Provision for nutritional, environmental, health and behavioural requirements have not been met
- Horses have negative experiences that exceed tolerably low levels
- Horses have no or few opportunities for positive experiences

Minimum legal requirements

In addition to the provisions above, people in charge of Thoroughbreds must also be familiar with minimum legal requirements under legislation and regulation that relate to horses:

[Animal Welfare Act 1999](#)

[Code of Welfare: Horses and Donkeys](#)

[Code of Welfare: Transport within New Zealand](#)

[Animal Welfare \(Care and Procedures\) Regulations 2018](#)

- s18 – Tethered horses need to be provided access to food, water, shade and protections from extremes of heat or cold;
- s19 – Must ensure that equipment (halters, lead ropes, or other equipment does not cause cuts, abrasions, swelling or hinders normal breathing or drinking); and
- s20 – A horse must not be struck on the head.

¹³ Note that the negative affects in the nutrition, environment and health domains (see Appendix A Figure 1) have roles in motivating horses to engage in specific behaviours that are essential for their survival, e.g., thirst leads to drinking water, hunger to eating, pain to escape from or avoidance of injury, etc. So, these negative experiences cannot be eliminated, but careful attention to the ‘provisions’ can keep them at tolerably low levels most of the time. Adjustment of the ‘provisions’ enables restoration to tolerable levels when e.g., ill-health or injury occur, and the intensity of the associated negative experiences increases.

Section 2 - WELFARE ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES FOR THOROUGHBRED HORSES PRIOR TO RACING

Welfare in the first two years of the Thoroughbred life cycle

The New Zealand Thoroughbred production cycle begins with the annual foal crop in the Spring and progresses to horses being prepared for yearling sales, and/or having a trial or race start, and/or being exported. At this stage of the life cycle, there are few apparent welfare issues:

- Animal welfare codes (as noted on the prior page) regulate management practices such as branding, microchipping and surgeries such as gelding.
- The industry is well organised and regulated with codes of practice, and health and safety processes.
- Thoroughbred breeders aim to produce healthy, sound horses with few heritable conformational or genetic problems.
- Production efficiencies developed over the years have resulted in a higher proportion of foals eventually becoming part of the racing population.
- New Zealand's temperate climate enables year-round pasture-based management of breeding and young stock, contributing to optimal athletic development and expression of natural behaviours.
- There is a high level of horse handling and management expertise, and many staff hold industry qualifications.
- Long-standing and ongoing research provides insights into processes that contribute to better understanding, and consequently, improved practices.
- Breeders and trainers can access a high level of veterinary support and technical expertise to ensure horse welfare.
- While NZTR Rules of Racing do not govern this juvenile stage of the Thoroughbred life cycle, there are rules for the minimum age that a horse may start in racing, hurdle or steeplechase races.

Early life: Post-weaning

Breeders and handlers are well aware of the challenges involved in weaning and manage the process to avoid stress and reduce the risk of injury or harm. Thoroughbreds prepared and offered for sale as yearlings are carefully managed, conditioned and expertly cared for.

Horses start in work between 18 – 24 months after birth with a short period of general education and habituation to the environment and routines of race training, followed by a spell. Training of horses usually resumes with a 'first preparation', which may culminate in a trial start that will enable trainers and owners to assess each horse's ability and likely racing career. Trainers, handlers and jockeys are aware that young horses require understanding and patience. Training regimes are tailored to individual horses, and horses are spelled if they are not coping physically or mentally with training.

Section 3 - WELFARE GUIDELINES FOR THOROUGHBRED RACEHORSES

NZTR has adopted the Thoroughbred Welfare Guidelines formulated by the International Group of Specialist Racing Veterinarians' (IGSRV). These Guidelines provide a benchmark for welfare standards deemed acceptable by NZTR and aim to provide clarity and accountability around racehorse welfare before, during, and also after racing.

The key tenets of these Guidelines include the following:

- Reasonable steps should be taken to prevent unnecessary pain and distress of racehorses in breeding, racing and training by ensuring adequate care, a suitable diet, the ability to exhibit normal behaviour, appropriate housing, and protection from injury and disease.
- While horse racing carries risks, reasonable steps should be taken to prevent avoidable risks and research should be undertaken to reduce risks, and to share this information between participants in horseracing.
- In the context of these responsibilities it is recognised that properly conducted euthanasia can be a humane option for racehorses; for example, for individual horses with severe or chronic injuries, or where care would be inadequate, and long-term pain and distress is likely to be the result.

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

These guidelines are reviewed periodically, provide a foundation for NZTR and racing industry regulation, policy and initiatives, and form an additional basis for the general welfare guidelines as outlined in Section 1 of this document.

NZTR recognises and regulates the welfare of horses in racing through the Rules of Racing, and consistent with the IFHA Welfare Guidelines for Horses in racing, as contained in Appendix B. Further to this, NZTR recognises the primacy of the Animal Welfare Act and associated Codes and Regulations.

Section 4 - WELFARE ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES FOR THOROUGHBREDS IN BREEDING

The well-being of Thoroughbreds is the primary consideration of breeders who are committed to the enhancement of the health and welfare of the Thoroughbreds in their care.

The NZ Thoroughbred Breeders Association (NZTBA) regularly provides its members with advice, education, guidance and policy updates via newsletters, resources and information available to them on the NZTBA website (see [link](#)).

The NZTBA also supports equine research, development and educational projects through the [NZ Equine Research Foundation](#) (NZERF) and the [NZ Equine Trust](#) as well as endorsing updated equine health and biosecurity information through the [NZ Equine Health Association](#) (NZEHA).

The NZTBA aims to provide members with information ensuring a standard of care well above the minimum standards and constantly promotes and encourages this through its guidelines.

The NZTBA guidelines state:

- Horses should be provided with appropriate amounts of food and have access to quality drinking water.
- Handling should accommodate the horse's behaviour and be done in a calm manner.
- Horses should not be forced into positions or situations which cause unnecessary pain, harm or injury and no horse should be abused.
- Horses should not be subjected to submissive techniques that injure or harm.
- Sick and injured horses should be given appropriate care and medical attention in a timely manner in keeping with best practice. Where necessary, veterinary advice should be sought.

Section 5 - WELFARE ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES FOR THOROUGHBRED HORSES AFTER RACING

Thoroughbred racehorses are retired from racing by their owners for a variety of reasons, because:

- the horse does not show an initial desire or aptitude for racing,
- the horse has progressed to a point where it struggles to be competitive,
- it is relocated to a stud for breeding,
- it is disabled, injured or lame, or
- of its age or the owners wish to relocate the horse to a retirement paddock.

The most common outcome for retired racehorses is rehoming, with the potential for horses to have a 'good life' for decades in a second career. Thoroughbred horses are well suited for other equestrian disciplines because they are relatively young, intelligent, athletic and attractive animals (see Appendix D for a list of possible 'second careers'). NZTR endorses and promotes rehoming of Thoroughbreds after racing where it is possible and appropriate.

Retraining ensures a greater likelihood of better future homes and is an effective way to minimise any potential welfare problems arising from the transition out of racing. Having started under saddle, racehorses are prepared specifically to race, but in the right hands are usually very adaptable to training and learning new skills. Racehorses are adapted to sometimes specific high-energy diets, and to some extent, will need to learn to forage or find water from natural sources, or to negotiate and utilise natural terrain for protection from bad weather. It may take as little as a few days, or on rare occasions, potentially up to 12 months of active and skilled retraining for a horse to physiologically and psychologically transition out of racing.

Many mares with commercial pedigrees are recruited into the broodmare population when they are retired from racing. Outside the racing industry, Thoroughbred dams can also be utilised to improve sport horse breeds, or occasionally as surrogate dams. When it is necessary (unresolvable injuries or unmanageable temperament), horses may be euthanised.

Off the track Thoroughbreds may be sold for a nominal sum. A low value horse may attract adopters who may not have the financial capability to provide sustained adequate care. This creates the potential for poor welfare outcomes. The average cost of keeping a recreational sport horse in New Zealand is significant (\$12,000pa¹⁴), so potential adopters must be realistic about their financial ability to support a horse.

NZTR also supports initiatives that celebrate the achievements of Thoroughbred racehorses in their second careers.

- Beyond the Barriers has a website providing support and information for adopters, and sponsorship for various events that involve Thoroughbreds, including the Dunstan Ex-Factor competition and showcase for Thoroughbreds within 12 months of leaving racing which is held at Equidays each year. Further, Beyond the Barriers also conducts horse and rider clinics.
- Thoroughbreds in Equestrian Sports (TiES) is a joint project between NZTR and Equestrian Sport New Zealand to promote Thoroughbreds in dressage, show jumping, show hunter and eventing.
- Also, the NZ Show Horse Council runs a series for Off the Track Thoroughbreds in showing.

¹⁴ Matheson, A. and Akooire, M.E.M. (2012). Economic impact report on the New Zealand sport horse industry.

NZTR has jurisdiction over horses in racing, with the Owner(s) and Racing Managers able to be held responsible and accountable for not meeting the requirements, as outlined in the Rules of Racing and these guidelines.

NZTR does not have jurisdiction over adopters and anyone else in charge of the care of a Thoroughbred after retired from racing, unless those persons are licenced by NZTR or deemed an accountable person under the Rules of Racing. Where NZTR lacks jurisdiction, the compliance framework and enforcement are addressed in animal and equine welfare legislation and regulation (principally the Animal Welfare Act and the Code of Welfare: Horses and Donkeys).

Some racing jurisdictions promote a 'full circle' approach, whereby one owner takes responsibility for the Thoroughbred in retirement. This may be regarded as an improvement in the retiree management for the industry but is not a guarantee of good welfare outcomes.

If owners are to take responsibility for retired Thoroughbreds, they should have the required knowledge, skills, support and resources to provide a 'good life' in retirement for their horse. NZTR is able to provide education materials such as these guidelines.

Deliberate neglect and abuse are rare, so the problem is more one of benign neglect due to inadequate knowledge. However, neglect – even if unintended – is not an acceptable condition for retired Thoroughbred racehorses.

Responsibilities and processes to ensure good horse welfare when retiring Thoroughbreds from racing

a) Duty of Care

The duty of care to ensure that the horse is treated in a way that enables it to transition to a second career. Responsibility will ultimately lie with the new owner, but prior to a potential transfer of ownership, the person in charge of the horse (the vendor) needs to satisfy him/herself that the person intending to own the horse possesses the competence and resources necessary for the horse's future well-being.

b) Traceability

The Racing Manager or Accountable Person must promptly submit the SR24 Death or Retirement form within one month of a horse dying or being retired from racing.

Anyone who euthanises, or arranges the euthanasia of a retired Thoroughbred, should notify NZTR of the death.

All Thoroughbreds are traceable via permanent identification in the form of a brand on the shoulder and/or a microchip and or DNA hair samples. This identification links to individual horse registration with NZTR.

c) Responsibility to communicate

The Racing Manager or Accountable Person must communicate to any adopter the temperament and physical condition of the horse, including any injuries or chronic conditions that need to be actively managed or may make the horse unsuitable for the anticipated use.

d) Decisions around Retirement

If the trainer is not the Accountable Person or Racing Manager, they should be involved when considering which option is best for the horse. The trainer's knowledge from their working relationship with the horse during training will be useful when making a decision.

e) Retraining

The Racing Manager or Accountable Person could consider retraining by a capable person to transition the horse to a career after racing.

f) Assessing Adopters and Purchasers

The Racing Manager or Accountable Person has a responsibility to assess prospective purchasers or adopters if the horse is being rehomed straight from training. The Owner or Racing Manager should consider the match of the horse's temperament with the skills, resources and capability of the prospective adopter.

If the Racing Manager or Accountable Person is not satisfied that the person would provide proper care of the horse they should decide against proceeding with a sale or adoption of the horse.

NZTR acknowledges that whilst resale of horses through public auction is a legitimate means of securing a new owner for a horse, this diminishes the ability of the vendor to assess the

appropriateness of the purchaser. NZTR will seek to work with auction houses to develop appropriate safeguards on behalf of vendors.

g) Responsibility of Adopters

Prospective adopters or purchasers of retired racehorses straight from training should be aware of the need to manage the transition out of racing and consider their ability to achieve this successfully. If they do not have this ability, they should seek support and guidance from a capable source.

Adopters should also consider their financial ability and the resources required to provide adequate care for horses.

h) Euthanasia (humane death of the retired horse)

Adopters should consider euthanasia if injury, temperament, illness, age or other conditions negatively affect the physical welfare or mental state of the horse they have adopted. This will not be an easy decision, but the need to avoid suffering of the horse must outweigh personal feelings and loss of companionship. Anyone that euthanises, or arranges the euthanasia of a retired Thoroughbred:

- i. must ensure that the euthanasia is carried out either by:
 - a. intravenous injection by a veterinarian; or
 - b. by a veterinarian or another person who is competent in the use of captive bolt or firearm, in compliance with Schedule III of the [Code of Welfare: Horses and Donkeys](#), and
- ii. notify NZTR of the death.

Appendices

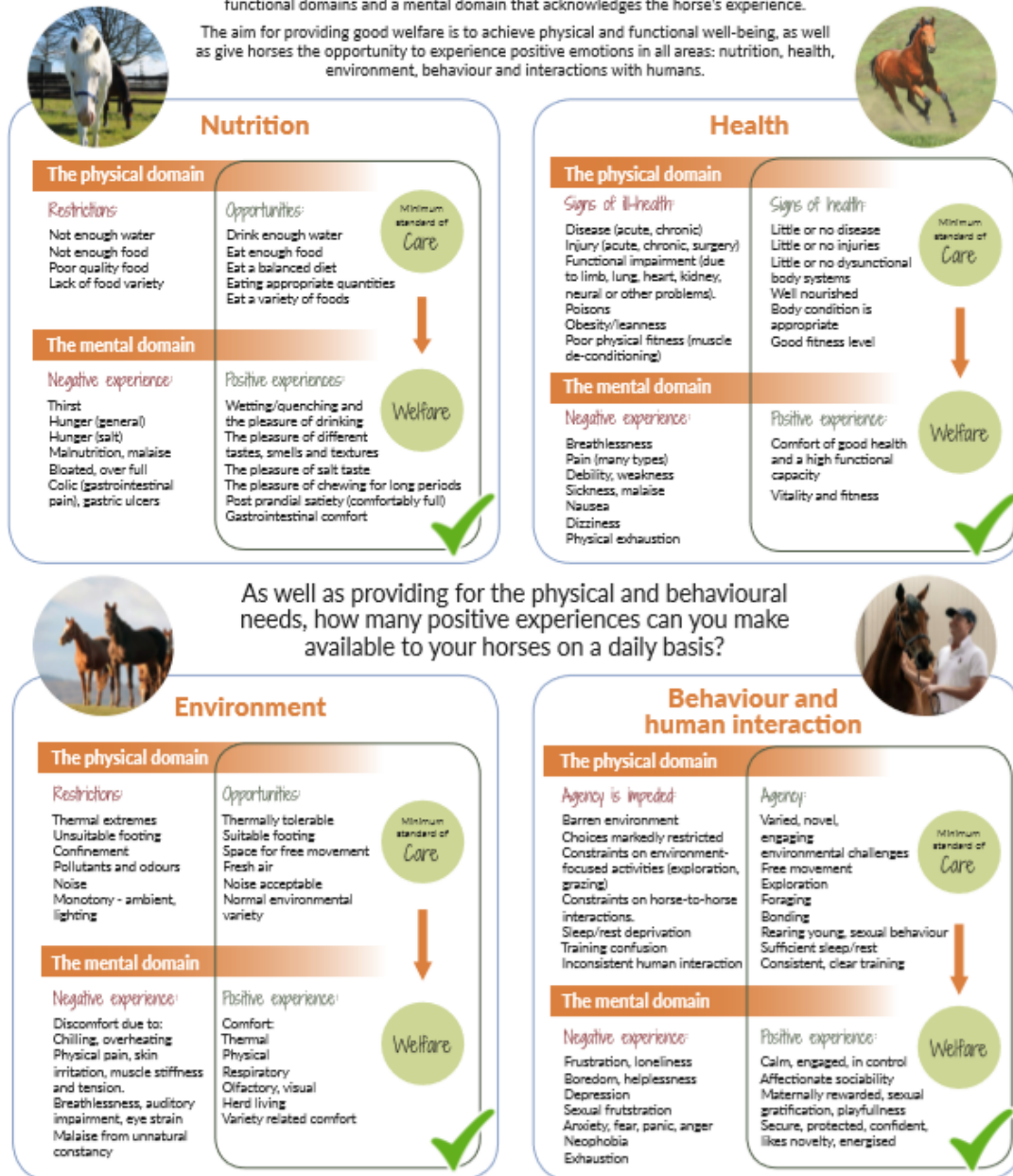
A. The 5 Domains Model for Equine Welfare

Figure 1: How optimal and minimal provisions for nutrition, environment, health and behaviour contribute to the mental state of Thoroughbreds⁴⁴

THOROUGHBRED WELFARE ASSESSMENT GUIDE

This guide is an adaptation of the Five Domains Model of Welfare Assessment and Monitoring that shows how it can be applied to achieve good horse welfare. The model has four physical or functional domains and a mental domain that acknowledges the horse's experience.

The aim for providing good welfare is to achieve physical and functional well-being, as well as give horses the opportunity to experience positive emotions in all areas: nutrition, health, environment, behaviour and interactions with humans.



Adapted by Cristina Wilkins, Horses and People Magazine, in collaboration with New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing, from Mellor, D.J. (2017). Operational details of the Five Domains Model and its key applications to the assessment and management of animal welfare. *Animals* 7(8), 60. doi: 10.3390/ani7080060



Table 2: Using the Five Domains to identify potential challenges to optimal welfare for Thoroughbred horses (illustrative examples):

Domain	Challenge or Measure
Nutrition	Sufficient energy intake to maintain body condition for winter outdoors
	Calcium: Phosphorus ratios balanced
	Sufficient carbohydrate/protein in weanling/yearling ration to achieve growth
	Identification and management of toxic plants
Environment	Appropriate shelter and rugging during winter
	Stock and pasture management to minimize slippery terrain and mud in winter
	Safe enclosures
	Transport – safety during loading and unloading, and periodic access to food and drink while transported
Health	Adverse heritable conditions and conformational traits
	Injuries which are difficult to detect
	Surgeries (bone chips, gelding)
	Well maintained and knowledgeably fitted equipment and saddlery to avoid pain or pressure points
	Diagnosis and treatment of gut ulcers
	Allergens and pathogens managed at pasture
	Appropriate cycle of training workload and rest training to ensure optimal musculoskeletal development
Behaviour	Managing changes in interaction with humans at weaning and start of work
	Requirement for play (foals and weanlings) or other daily interaction with other horses
	Recognition of stereotypies that indicate unmet needs
	Habituation and training to deal with novel and new experiences and environments
	Balance between variety and ability to cope with new situations and objects
	Enablement of spontaneous or managed exercise movement to induce optimal musculoskeletal development in foals through to yearlings
	Sufficient sleep and rest
	Limits on threat avoidance, escape and defensive activity in herd
Mental state	Distress, fear, anxiety at weaning
	Transport – initial stress reduced by familiarization, travel with companions
	Managing transitions to new experiences and environments (avoiding neophobia)

B. Welfare Guidelines in relation to horses in racing (based on IFHA guidelines)

1. At all stages during the preparation and presentation of horses for racing, welfare should be a primary consideration

a) Good Horse Management

The housing, feeding and training of racehorses should be consistent with good horse management and must not compromise welfare.

Any practices whether in stables, training or racing which are inconsistent with legislative requirements, nor with the minimum provisions outlined in Section 1 of this document, must not be tolerated and may lead to penalties, as stipulated in the NZTR Rules of Racing.

Industry training programmes should contain components on animal welfare relevant to the role performed by the person receiving the training. Audits of Thoroughbreds under the control of licensed trainers should be undertaken by the RIU or other officers mandated by NZTR, or officers mandated by legislation.

b) Training Methods for Racehorses

Pre-training and training methods which unreasonably influence the normal behaviour of racehorses should not be used. Horse training schedules should include graduated learning training practices with positive reinforcement, adjusted to the horse's physical capabilities and level of maturity.

c) Shoeing

Horseshoes and racing plates must be designed and fitted to minimise the risk of injury. Shoes used in racing must be included in the NZTR Register of Notifiable Gear (see [link](#)).

d) Transport

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

Long journeys must be planned carefully, and horses should be allowed regular rest periods and access to water and feed as necessary. Respiratory problems arising from transport 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 race

a) Veterinary Examinations

A veterinary examination must be undertaken of any horse showing signs of disease, lameness or other ailments 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 musculoskeletal injuries.

c) Surgical Procedures

Any surgical procedure which compromises the welfare or safety of any horse or rider must not be allowed. Refer to Rules 345 and 650 ((Link: [NZTR Rules of Racing](#)))

- d) **Severe or Recurrent Conditions**
Horses with severe or recurrent clinical conditions should, on veterinary advice, be temporarily or permanently excluded from racing. Without limitation, two specific examples are:
- Two instances of nasal bleeding caused by exercise induced pulmonary haemorrhage (EIPH) (Rule 651); and
 - Cardiac arrhythmia (Link: [NZTR Directive](#))
- 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. Attention should be paid to running rails, crossings, and the provision of good and consistent running surfaces.
- 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, and the 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**
Excessive, unnecessary or improper use of whips is not condoned, for example, on a horse that is clearly out of contention, a horse that is fatigued and unable to respond, or a horse clearly winning. (Link: [NZTR Whip Directive](#))
- 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 adverse genetic or acquired conditions. (Link: [NZTR Prohibited Substances Regulations](#))
- f) **Starting Gates / Barriers**
Horses should be educated to be familiar with loading procedures. Barriers should be properly designed and safe. Aids to loading must be humane and used appropriately.
- g) **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.

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 euthanised. If after evaluation euthanasia is deemed necessary, it should be undertaken as soon as possible with the sole aim of minimising suffering.

C. Body condition scoring of horses


Method

To obtain the condition score for any horse, first score the pelvis, then adjust the pelvis score up or down by 0.5 if it differs by 1 or more points from the back or neck score.

Score

0 – Emaciated	
<p>Pelvis Angular, skin tight Very sunken rump Deep cavity under tail</p> <p>Back and ribs Skin tight over ribs Very prominent and sharp backbone</p> <p>Neck Marked ewe neck Narrow and slack at base</p>	
1 – Thin	
<p>Pelvis Prominent pelvis and croup Sunken rump but skin supple Deep cavity under tail</p> <p>Back and ribs Ribs easily visible Prominent backbone with skin sunken on either side</p> <p>Neck Ewe neck, narrow and slack at base</p>	

2 - Moderate	
<p>Pelvis Rump flat either side of backbone Croup well defined, some fat,</p> <p>Back and ribs Ribs just visible Backbone covered but spines can be felt</p> <p>Neck Narrow but firm</p>	
3 - Good	
<p>Pelvis Covered by fat and rounded No gutter Pelvis easily felt</p> <p>Back and ribs Ribs just covered and easily felt No gutter along back Backbone well covered but spines can be felt</p> <p>Neck No crest (except for stallions) firm neck</p>	
4 - Fat	
<p>Pelvis Gutter to root of tail Pelvis covered by soft fat Need firm pressure to feel</p> <p>Back and ribs Ribs well covered - need firm pressure to feel Gutter along backbone</p> <p>Neck Slight crest Wide and firm</p>	

5 - Very fat	
<p>Pelvis Deep gutter to root of tail Skin distended Pelvis buried, cannot be felt</p> <p>Back and ribs Ribs buried, cannot be felt Deep gutter along back</p> <p>Back broad and flat</p> <p>Neck Marked crest Very wide and firm Fold of fat</p>	

Note: When using this chart to assist in calculating bodyweight, the score must be calculated to the nearest 0.5 points.

Acknowledgement: This BSC scoring is based on the Carroll and Huntington Method, and is copied from the Code of Welfare: Horses and Donkeys ([link](#)).

D. Potential career options for Thoroughbreds after racing

Discipline	Key attributes and characteristics required	Support and relevant guidelines/codes
Companion animals	Companionable for young stock, other animals and humans	
CTR	Low recovery heart rates, relaxed temperament coupled with a good work ethic, soundness, ability to travel over natural terrain, rideable	ESNZ
Dressage	Trainable, good correct movement, usually bigger horses	ESNZ, TIES
Driving	Brave, willing and calm, obedient and trainable	NZDA, NZCDA
Eventing	Gallop, jump, usually bigger horses	ESNZ, TIES
Hunting	Able to gallop and jump on natural terrain and winter going, stamina	
Polo	Small (less than 15.2hh), usually mares	
Pony Club	Suitable for child and youth riders	NZPCS
Pleasure and leisure	Trainable and sound	ARC, Le Trec
Riding school industry	Kind, calm temperament, likes routine	
Showing – ridden and in-hand	Attractive, correct conformation, presence	OTTSH
Show hunter	Trainable, canter movement	ESNZ, TIES
Show jumping	Athletic ability, movement in canter, usually bigger horses	ESNZ, TIES
Therapeutic	Kind, calm temperament, habituated to a wide range of situations and environments	RDA
Tourism and trekking	Kind, calm temperament, well habituated, sound	