



NEW ZEALAND THOROUGHBRED RACING INC
PO Box 38386, Wellington Mail Centre | Telephone: (04) 576 6240 | Facsimile: (04) 568 8866
Web: www.nzracing.co.nz | Email: office@nzracing.co.nz

PREGNANCY GUIDELINES

(Effective 8 September 2008)

New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing (**NZTR**) considers that pregnancy is a state of health, not an illness. However, it is important that all pregnant riders are fully informed of the risks of track work and racing during their pregnancy.

The following guidelines outline the general responsibilities of the pregnant rider, trainers and owners, racing officials, NZTR and other riders when dealing with pregnancy in racing.

NZTR notes that Sports Medicine Australia, who have considered and provided guidelines for the Australian Sporting Industry in relation to pregnancy in sport, recognise the benefits of being active throughout pregnancy but recommend that pregnant women avoid sports such as riding. Accordingly, although NZTR respects a pregnant rider's decision to continue to ride during her pregnancy, a rider must have a certificate from a medical practitioner in accordance with these guidelines in order to continue participating in racing and track work to the end of her first trimester, and on a weekly basis from the start of her second trimester.

NZTR recognises that each person and each pregnancy is different. As such it recognises that a pregnant rider's ongoing participation in track work and racing should be made on an individual basis (in association with specific medical advice). These guidelines assist all those concerned with pregnancy in racing to make decisions. Of utmost importance in the pregnant rider's decision as to whether to continue track work and riding is the pregnant rider's own health and the wellbeing of her unborn child or children. Accordingly, pregnant riders are to obtain and act on professional medical advice in order to make informed decisions, particularly about the risks of continuing to participate in races and/or track work. Further, a pregnant rider is to obtain a medical certificate in accordance with these guidelines in order to certify that she is fit to continue racing and/or participating in track work.

Racing and track work presents a risk of injury

Racing presents the rider with the risk of falling or collision that, for a pregnant rider, could result in damage to the womb of the kind that could injure her unborn child or children. In this respect, pregnant riders should consider the likelihood of injuries in track work and racing, in consultation with their medical advisors. The pregnant rider should then decide whether she can accept that risk, for herself and for her unborn child or children, by continuing to ride.

The risk to the pregnant rider and unborn child or children will vary depending on the stage of pregnancy, and the activities the rider is undertaking. However, a pregnant rider should be aware of the following:

- generally, the unborn child is contained within the mother's pelvis during the first trimester and therefore tends to be more protected from injury by the mother's skeletal structure. However, as the unborn child rises higher in the pregnant rider's abdomen, it is more vulnerable to direct impact injuries;
- theoretically, a pregnant woman may be more vulnerable to falls because the growing unborn child causes a shift in her centre of gravity, which can affect her balance and coordination in later months;
- theoretically, hormonal changes in preparation for birth may also result in ligament and joint laxity, making women vulnerable to injuries or falls. It is considered that pregnant women should therefore also avoid excessive stretching and jerky ballistic movements.

A number of medical experts advise that damage to the womb of the kind that could injure an unborn child is usually associated with forces equivalent to those occurring in a car accident. NZTR considers that such collisions and falls in track work and racing could result in a pregnant rider experiencing forces equivalent to those occurring in a car accident. Accordingly, a pregnant rider and her medical advisors should consider the possibility of the pregnant rider encountering such forces in racing and track work,

when deciding whether she can accept that risk, for herself and for her unborn child or children, by continuing to ride.

Risks of maintaining low body weight

Racing places rigorous physical demands on the rider as a result of the rider's lifestyle, and in particular, riders are required to reach and maintain demanding riding weights. It is medical opinion that for a pregnant rider to maintain riding weight, particularly following the end of the first trimester, immediately produces detriment to the unborn child and compromises the health of the rider by maintaining a low riding weight at the expense of her muscle and bone mass, and any fat reserves.

Average weight gain in pregnancy in New Zealand is in the order of 10-12 kilograms. Generally, there would be:

- four kilograms in the first 20 weeks of pregnancy; and
- a further eight kilograms in the second half of pregnancy.

Medical opinion would generally expect, by the end of the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, a pregnant rider to have at least two kilograms of extra blood volume with perhaps a further kilogram of weight gain associated with the anabolic steroids secreted during pregnancy.

Some riders maintain riding weight by eating irregularly (and not necessarily balanced or nutritious meals), and maximising fluid depletion as a result of steam rooms and fluid restrictions before racing. Such fluid restrictions and occasional diuretics decreases blood volume, which for a pregnant rider, may mean less placental blood flow and a higher risk of blood clots. Further, it is medical opinion that the long-term dietary requirements for a pregnant rider to maintain riding weight is incompatible with the conduct of a normal pregnancy and precludes a safe lifestyle being adopted in terms of long term nutrition.

Accordingly, pregnant riders are to obtain and act on professional medical advice in order to make informed decisions, particularly about the risks of continuing to maintain racing weight during their pregnancy. Further, a pregnant rider is to obtain a medical certificate in accordance with these guidelines in order to certify that she is fit to continue racing and/or participating in track work.

Responsibilities of the Pregnant Rider

- Have a clear understanding of the risks before making a decision on whether to continue to participate in track work and/or racing and for how long.
- Obtain professional medical advice (from a medical practitioner who understands and appreciates the specific risks presented by racing) and seek certification from that medical practitioner prior to continuing to participate in racing and/or track work.
- Regularly review training, track work and racing programme with medical advisor, taking into account the changes to their physical condition.
- Adopt a common sense approach to training, track work and racing, and avoid taking unnecessary risks.
- Bleeding and/or abdominal pain are warning signs. If either or both occur, stop activity and seek immediate medical advice.
- Pregnant riders should avoid overheating, especially in the first trimester. Precautions include drinking plenty of water and other fluids regularly to maintain hydration levels, eating nutritious and regular meals and avoiding prolonged exercise.
- Pregnant riders should avoid excessive dieting, fluid restrictions, and should not undertake activities for the purposes of fluid depletion (e.g. steam rooms).
- Pregnant riders **should not** increase the intensity of their training, track work or racing programme at any stage during their pregnancy.

- Pregnant riders should monitor their heart rate regularly to ensure they maintain a moderate exercise level and always work at less than 75% of their maximum heart rate.
- A pregnant rider should advise trainers of her pregnancy so that training can be modified accordingly, and should advise NZTR and racing officials so that emergency medical staff are aware of the rider's pregnancy should an accident occur.
- Pregnant riders need to also pay special attention to a thorough warm up and cool down, consuming adequate fluids before, during and after exercise.

Formal process to be followed by the pregnant rider in order to continue participating in racing and/or track work

1. The pregnant rider is to advise NZTR of her pregnancy. In doing so the pregnant rider acknowledges and agrees that NZTR may inform health and safety officials at the racecourse, such as first aid staff and any medical practitioner on duty during a race meeting of that rider's pregnancy to ensure that the pregnant rider's health needs and the unborn child are taken into consideration should any medical emergency occur.
2. At the same time as informing NZTR of her pregnancy, the rider is to obtain a consent form and a medical form (for certification of her fitness to ride in the circumstances). The rider shall provide these forms together with the pregnancy guidelines to the examining medical practitioner.
3. After the examining medical practitioner has considered the pregnancy guidelines and examined the pregnant rider, the examining medical practitioner may issue (if they consider the rider fit to race and/or participate in track work) a medical clearance for the pregnant rider to continue riding until:
 - if the rider is in her first trimester, to the end of the first trimester of the pregnancy;
 - if the rider is beyond the end of the first trimester, for a seven day period,

In providing such clearance to ride, the medical practitioner is to acknowledge that he/she has read and discussed the pregnancy guidelines with the pregnant rider.
4. Subsequent to the expiration of the medical clearance at the end of the first trimester, or seven day period, as applicable, the pregnant rider is to seek a further medical clearance in accordance with these guidelines if she wishes to continue riding.

Responsibilities of the Trainer and Owner

- Respect the rights of riders who wish to continue exercising while pregnant.
- Encourage riders to obtain and act on professional medical advice with regard to their continued participation in training, track work and racing and when to stop. Request a copy of the relevant medical clearance obtained by the rider.
- Avoid giving advice that you are not qualified to give. Trainers must be careful when giving advice on how to train during pregnancy that they are not placing themselves in the position of medical experts. A consultative approach between the rider, trainer and medical expert is recommended.
- Select riders as per the relevant selection policy and ensure that this is based on merit and capability without discriminating on the basis of pregnancy itself.
- Retain the confidentiality of a rider's pregnancy, unless the rider agrees to disclosure or there is a serious or imminent threat to the rider's or the unborn child's life or health.

Responsibilities of New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing

- Where a rider advises NZTR that she is pregnant, provide to the pregnant rider a consent form, a medical form and a copy of the pregnancy guidelines, to be provided to an examining medical practitioner to enable a clearance to continue riding to be issued.
- Respect the rights of women who wish to continue exercising while pregnant.
- Evaluate and consider precautions that can be taken to avoid harm to all riders, including pregnant riders.
- Seek professional medical and legal advice, when necessary, and ensure that this advice is available to trainers, racing officials and riders when required. It is particularly important for NZTR to seek professional medical and legal advice in the event that a pregnant rider is continuing to race despite receiving medical opinion to stop racing, particularly in the event that the pregnant rider does not have written medical clearance.
- Seek up-to-date information on the benefits and risks of exercise during pregnancy.
- Advise riders of risks involved in racing while pregnant, avoiding giving advice that it is not qualified to give.
- Encourage pregnant riders to obtain and act on medical advice, particularly regarding the risks involved of racing while pregnant and the point at which they should discontinue racing.
- Where a rider advises NZTR that she is pregnant, then ensure that emergency medical staff at race meetings are aware of the rider's pregnancy (on a confidential basis if the pregnancy is not public knowledge) should an accident occur.
- It is recommended that a clear statement referring to these Guidelines be prominently displayed in an appropriate place at each racecourse.

Responsibilities of Race Day Officials

- Respect the rights of women who wish to continue training, track work and racing while pregnant.
- Avoid giving advice that you are not qualified to give.
- Where a rider advises NZTR/race day officials that she is pregnant, then ensure that emergency medical staff at race meetings are aware of the rider's pregnancy should an accident occur.
- Apply the Rules of Racing equally and fairly to all participants at all times.
- Prioritise the safety and welfare of all riders, above all else.

Responsibilities of the Other Riders

- Respect and support a pregnant rider in the same way as they would any other rider.
- Adhere to the Rules of Racing.

Other

- Legal issues to be considered in dealing with pregnant riders include: providing safe racing environments; and the privacy of the pregnant rider. It is recommended that legal and/or medical advice is sought if an issue arises where it is not clear what steps should be taken in a given situation.

Review and Approval of Pregnancy Guidelines

The Pregnancy Guidelines will be reviewed from time to time against related medical and legislative changes.

Important information: These Guidelines are intended to be an information source for the thoroughbred racing industry, NZTR, riders, trainers, owners and race day officials, and other persons involved in the industry whether employed or voluntary. It is not, is not intended as, nor is suitable to be used as, advice to riders. NZTR has identified some, but by no means all, of the risks associated with riding while pregnant. However, pregnancy in sport is a medical issue, and it is therefore vital that pregnant women who wish to ride in races, track work or training within the thoroughbred racing industry obtain medical advice before doing so.

Disclaimer: These Guidelines are general in nature, and are not a substitute for professional medical or legal advice. While care has been taken in the preparation of these Guidelines, NZTR does not accept any responsibility for any errors or omissions, nor for the result of actions taken on the basis of these Guidelines.

