

# Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses in the ACT (2021)

## Preface

This Code of Practice is intended to provide an outline of the principles of husbandry, management and handling throughout the lifetime of the horse.

The Code emphasises the importance of good horsemanship and husbandry practices, highlighting that persons in charge of horses have a legal liability under ACT legislation to care for horses under their control. Horse owners are expected to be familiar with Animal Welfare Act 1992 and Regulations 2001 and other relevant legislation.

The Code comprises guiding principles which are already well accepted by those experienced with horses and those in the racing and other equine pursuits.

The Code does not replace the need for experience and commonsense in horse husbandry, and the use of veterinarian advice when necessary. The overriding theme and principles of this Code are that the wellbeing of the horse must at all times be considered above the demands of owners, breeders, trainers, riders, drivers, sponsors, officials or spectators.

The Code was compiled by the ACT Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC). It draws on documentation and contemporary works, including Animal Welfare Victoria's Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses.

## Legislation

ACT Animal Welfare Act 1992

ACT Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2008

ACT Animal Disease Act 2005

ACT Racing Act 1999

ACT Veterinary Practice Act 2018

## Regulations

ACT Animal Welfare Regulations 2001

## Mandatory Codes

National Livestock Identification Standards

Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines – Land Transport of Livestock

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# 1 Introduction

This Code of Practice recommends the basic needs of horses, irrespective of the husbandry system, including:

- readily accessible food and water to maintain health and vigour
- freedom of movement to stand, stretch, turn around, walk forward, lie down and roll
- regular exercise

have the ability to perform natural behaviours

- social contact with other horses or people
- accommodation that neither harms nor causes undue strain or discomfort
- protection from disease, and regular inspections to assess the need for attention to feet, teeth and parasite control
- rapid identification and treatment of injury and disease.

This Code applies to all horses that are kept in the ACT, including for the purposes of:

- work (for example, carriage, delivery, stock, trail riding)
- competition (racing, eventing, jumping, showing, endurance riding)
- pleasure riding or driving, including riding schools
- breeding
- pets

ACT legislation recognises horses as sentient beings that are able to subjectively feel and perceive the world around them. Under the legislation people have a duty to care for the physical and mental welfare of horses, which includes treating them with respect and providing them with a quality of life that reflects their intrinsic value.

This Code of Practice is intended to provide the minimum standards of welfare for horses for general husbandry and management practices and emphasises that persons in charge have a legal liability to care for horses under their control. Owners or persons in charge of horses must possess knowledge of the basic behavioural and physical needs of horses, irrespective of the intensity of husbandry. Assistance or advice on management of horses can be obtained from appropriately skilled equine veterinarians or suitably experienced/qualified equine professional, including riding instructors, and nutritionists. When applying this code in conjunction with existing codes or rules internal to equine organisations and clubs operating in the ACT, the higher welfare standard must always be applied.

Before acquiring a horse, the following factors must be carefully considered: the significant cost and work involved in maintaining a horse, whether you have appropriate housing and land to keep a horse in line with this Code and determining who will be responsible for the horse. Prospective purchasers and breeders of horses should be aware that proper feeding, maintenance and training of horses represent long-term responsibilities.

## 2 Behavioural needs

### Minimum Standards

- S2.1 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 have an opportunity to escape from bullying by dominant animals in the group.
- S2.2 Horses must be able to express normal behaviours such as freely grazing on pasture, unless there are reasonable grounds not to do so i.e., for medical or work reasons.
- S2.3 Persons responsible for a horse displaying a pathological behaviour pattern (stereotypies) including weaving, crib-biting, wind-sucking, self-mutilation, pawing, kicking or pacing must provide appropriate intervention therapy based on advice from a veterinarian or equine professional advice.

### Guidelines

- G2.1 Colts, stallions, weanlings, pregnant and sick animals, or those in advanced age, may require segregation from other groups of horses, to reduce the risk of injury and disease.

- G2.2 Introduction of a new horse or reintroduction of a segregated horse into a group should be supervised.
- G2.3 Horses may develop pathological behaviour patterns resulting from boredom, close confinement, isolation, diet, bedding material, inadequate exercise or other unknown factors. Stereotypic behaviour may indicate a welfare problem and may lead to further welfare problems.
- G2.4 Horses that do not have access to pasture should be provided with other suitable enrichment.

## 3 Supervision

### Minimum Standards

- S3.1 The person responsible for the supervision of a horse must be able to recognise signs of ill health and take appropriate action to obtain a diagnosis and treatment protocol.
- S3.2 The person responsible for the supervision of a horse must have access to a registered veterinary practitioner to diagnose and treat illness or injury or to humanely euthanase the horse to prevent further suffering, if treatment is not possible.
- S3.3 Horses confined in stables, stalls and yards must be inspected at least every 24 hours to ensure that their needs are met.
- S3.4 Aged horses, mares in late pregnancy and horses suffering from injury or disease must be inspected daily.
- S3.5 Contingency plans must be in place for emergency situations such as fire, flood, disease, injury and unexpected absences of the person in charge.

### Guidelines

- G3.1 Frequency and level of supervision should relate to the likelihood of risk to the welfare of each horse, however, ideally, all horses should be inspected at least daily. Horses may need to be inspected more frequently than once a day depending on their physiological requirements.
- G3.2 Horses kept under intensive management in stables and yards should be inspected at least twice daily.
- G3.3 Mares in late pregnancy should be observed for signs of impending foaling.
- G3.4 Contingency plans may include an evacuation plan where necessary and frequent handling of horses. Such plans should be practised regularly.
- G3.5 Factors that can increase the welfare risk to horses include availability of suitable feed, the breed type, nature and disposition, age and pregnancy status, the quality of fencing and reliability of water supply.

Note: A horse is considered aged at 20 years old.

## 4 Water

- S4.1 Horses must have continual access to an adequate supply of good quality water unless they are being transported in accordance with the relevant ACT legislation regarding the land transport of horses.
- S4.2 Horses must have access to sufficient water to supply their daily needs and maintain good health of each horse present.
- S4.3 Water containers must be of a design that does not cause injury to the animals.
- S4.4 Where provision of sufficient water for health and vitality cannot be met, immediate steps must be taken to move or sell the horse.

## Guidelines

- G4.1 Water containers and mechanical water sources should be inspected at least daily to ensure that they are functioning normally.
- G4.2 Where water is supplied in buckets, the supply should be inspected at least every 12 hours to ensure the horse has free access to an adequate supply of good quality water.
- G4.3 Water containers should be secured and minimise spillage.
- G4.4 Water containers should be maintained for cleanliness and proper function.
- G4.5 Dams should have safe access for horses.
- G4.6 Dams should be free of rubbish and contaminants. Dam levels and water quality need close monitoring during periods of low rainfall.
- G4.7 Water volume requirements of horses vary widely, depending on age, bodyweight, air temperature and humidity, the work, state of health and type of diet of the horse.

## Minimum Standards

The basic maintenance requirement of water for horses is estimated to be approximately 52 ml/kg bodyweight/day:

- Ponies (200-300 kg body weight) require 10-15 litres daily
- Light hacks (300-450 kg body weight) require 15-25 litres daily
- Thoroughbreds (450-500 kg body weight) require 25-30 litres daily.

These requirements are increased with growth, work and lactation. Two or three times as much water as shown above is needed by horses in work.

Water requirement is closely related to the dry matter intake of food. Horses need 2-4 litres of water per kilogram of dry matter intake. This requirement increases as air temperatures or humidity rise.

Illness associated with bowel disease, such as obstructive colic or severe diarrhoea, can result in substantial loss of water and other essential electrolytes (50 - 70 litres/day).

# 5 Food

## Minimum Standards

- S5.1 Horses must be provided with a diet of sufficient quantity and quality to maintain their good health and meet their physiological requirements.
- S5.2 Supervision during feeding must be provided to observe behaviour patterns and response to feed.
- S5.3 A horse's body condition must not be allowed to become less than body condition score 2 (see Appendix A).
- S5.4 Horses must have appropriate access to food.
- S5.5 Where provision of sufficient food for health and vitality cannot be met, steps must be taken to immediately move, rehome or sell the horse to ensure its needs can be met.

## Guidelines

- G5.1 If there is not sufficient pasture for horses to graze, they should be fed a suitable and sufficient supplementary feed.
- G5.2 Feed troughs for horses should be well spaced to minimise bullying and allow subordinate animals access to feed. Horses that are in lighter condition and those that are subject to constant bullying should be segregated from the main group.
- G5.3 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.

- G5.4 Horses should be fed according to body condition. Over-fatness is undesirable for the health of the horse. The efficiency of food utilisation will vary between particular horses and breeds of horses. Most ponies utilise feed efficiently, but thoroughbred horses require substantially more feed per kilogram of body weight. Overfeeding some horses, particularly idle ponies, can induce laminitis or founder. Animals at risk should be exercised and their intake of food energy reduced to minimal maintenance requirements.
- G5.5 Horses should be protected from access to food harmful to health, such as mouldy hay, lawn mower clippings and poisonous plants.
- G5.6 Changes to the horse's diet should be introduced gradually to reduce the risk of digestive disorders.
- G5.7 All components of diet essential for growth, health and vitality should be readily available to horses. Selective reduction in food intake should be undertaken only by experienced persons, or under veterinary supervision.
- G5.8 Supplying supplementary feed in no spill containers, rather than directly on the ground, will decrease the risk of sand colic and minimise wastage of food.
- G5.9 Good quality pastures, containing suitable grasses and legumes, can provide the food requirements for most horses, except those doing hard work, those with compromised teeth, aged horses or lactating mares. In temperate areas where permanent pastures are fertilised annually, about 1 hectare (2.5 acres) of pasture for each grazing horse should provide maintenance requirements during years with normal rainfall.
- G5.10 Horses kept in smaller areas or on unimproved or minimal pasture may require supplementary feed for some part of the year, depending on requirements for their growth, stage of life, pregnancy, lactation, and work.
- G5.11 Roughage (fibrous feed such as pasture, hay and chaff) should form a significant part of a horse's diet, to provide sufficient 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.
- G5.12 Approximate minimum feed requirements of adult horses are shown in Table 1 (see page 8).
- G5.13 Persons inexperienced in horse care should consult a registered veterinary practitioner or an appropriate organisation such as an experienced equine professional about selection of suitable foodstuffs for horses used for a particular purpose.

**Table 1 Approximate minimum daily feed requirements of adult horses**

Body weight of horse	Idle horse (maintenance only)	Moderate work (jumping, stock work, some eventing) – horse needs both hay and grain	
		kg of hay*	kg of grain (oats)
kg	kg of hay	kg of hay*	kg of grain (oats)
300	5	4	1
400	7	5	3.5
500	8-9	5.5-7.5	4-6

\*Good quality pasture hay rich in clover, or lucerne hay

- G5.14 Protein, mineral and vitamin supplements should be provided when required. Horses should have access to a source of salt when it is not provided in foodstuffs.
- G5.15 Adequate, good quality food is necessary for growth of young horses. At six months of age horses require as much energy-rich food and more protein than idle, adult horses.
- G5.16 Lactating mares require about 70% more energy than idle, adult horses.

# 6 Exercise

## Minimum Standards

- S6.1 Stabled or yarded horses must be exercised daily, except where the exercise may be detrimental to the health and welfare of the horse.
- S6.2 Horses must not be overworked, overridden or overdriven. The workload imposed must not exceed the horse's ability for its age, size, strength, and fitness.
- S6.3 Horses on mechanical exercising devices, such as walking machines, must be continuously monitored by a competent person to prevent excessive strain or injury.

## Guidelines

- G6.1 Horses should not be subjected to excessive strenuous exercise, particularly immature horses.
- G6.2 Rider's size and weight should be appropriate for the size and condition of the horse.
- G6.3 Horses may be exercised by riding, driving, lunging or releasing them into a large yard or paddock for at least one hour a day. In some circumstances, due to injury or convalescence, horses may need to be stabled for extended periods.
- G6.4 Stabled horses should be spelled outside at least once a year, for at least two to four weeks.
- G6.5 When introducing new or spelled horses to exercise, their workload should be increased gradually to prevent injury and stress.

# 7 Housing, shelter structures and yards

## Minimum Standards

- S7.1 Premises must be designed and maintained to minimise the risk of injury to horses.
- S7.2 Horses must have access to an adequate number of paddocks or yards to permit animals of similar age, sex, size and compatible temperament to be grouped, see S2.2.
- S7.3 Horses must not be overcrowded in confinement, they must have freedom of movement to stand, stretch, turn around, walk forward, lie down and roll.
- S7.4 Yards and loose boxes must have sufficient room to allow the horse to display natural behaviours, stand freely in the normal position with the head fully raised, walk forward and turn, lie down, roll, stretch and groom themselves without restrictions.
- S7.5 Loose-boxes for horses must provide a floor area of at least 12 square metres (9 square metres for ponies) and be at least 2.4 metres high for horses and ponies.
- S7.6 Appropriate clean bedding must be provided in stables and loose boxes for warmth, insulation and protection from abrasion.
- S7.7 Horses must have access to proper and sufficient shade and shelter at all times.
- S7.8 Horses must not be kept in stalls or other small, confined spaces on a permanent basis, see S6.1 and G6.4.
- S7.9 Adequate firefighting equipment should be available and easy to access. Persons in charge of stabled horses should be trained and practised in use of fire-fighting equipment. There should be ready access to horses to enable them to be released quickly in case of fire.

## Guidelines

- G7.1 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 (such as allowing these horses to see other horses), and stimulation through environmental enrichment may reduce stress, boredom and the risk of stereotypic behaviour, and should be provided.
- G7.2 Stable design should allow a horse to achieve visual contact with other horses, humans and activities in the stable surroundings.

- G7.3 Sheds should be constructed and maintained so as to provide adequate security and minimise risk of injury and disease.
- G7.4 Stables, stalls and loose boxes should have adequate lighting that permits inspection of a horse.
- G7.5 The floors of yards, sheds and stalls should have surfaces that permit adequate drainage and provide firm footing for horses.
- G7.6 Stables and stalls should give adequate natural ventilation. Air vents on opposite sides of the box are preferred. Dust levels in stables and stalls should be kept to a minimum to reduce the risk of respiratory disease.
- G7.7 Horses should be accommodated singly if in loose boxes and tied if in stalls. During weaning it is acceptable to have two weanlings together in a loose box.
- G7.8 Dirty bedding and stale or contaminated feed and water should be removed each day. Disposal of washings, urine and dung should be made in compliance with the requirements of statutory authorities.
- G7.9 Paddocks and yards should be kept free of noxious plants, rubbish and debris that may injure horses.
- G7.10 Healthy horses can tolerate a wide variation of heat and cold if they are acclimatised and have adequate feed and water. However, steps should be taken to minimise the effects of climatic extremes and other factors producing either cold or heat stress. Young foals, very old, or sick horses are most susceptible.
- G7.11 Landscape features, such as rows of trees, hedges, and gullies, can provide some shelter for horses.
- G7.12 The risk of injury increases where horses are overcrowded and competition for food, water and space leads to aggressive behaviour.
- G7.13 Shelter should provide protection from hot, cold, windy and wet conditions.

## 8 Fencing and gates

### Minimum Standards

- S8.1 Gateways must be designed to give easy and safe passage of horses.
- S8.2 Barbed wire, prefabricated wire fencing (e.g. ring lock), and high tensile wire (2.8 mm or 2.5 mm) can cause severe injury to horses and must not be used for yards and small areas.

### Guidelines

- G8.1 Permanent and temporary fences should be readily visible to horses, and properly maintained to adequately confine horses.
- G8.2 Electric fencing, properly fitted and maintained, provides a safe and effective barrier to horses, when used with conventional post-and-wire and post-and rail fences. Horses should be supervised during the process of being introduced to electric fences, to ensure their education and safety.
- G8.3 Double fencing can reduce injuries caused by fencing such that it restricts nose to nose contact between horses.
- G8.4 Gates and doorways should be a minimum of 1.2 metres wide. Gateways should be fastened securely, to prevent escape of horses and possible injury.
- G8.5 The strength and height of the fencing is particularly important for stallion enclosures. Fencing should prevent escape and minimise risk to the stallion, other horses, handlers and the general public.
- G8.6 Suitability of fencing varies according to the size, sex and disposition of the horses, stocking density and paddock size.
- G8.7 Injuries occur more frequently where horses are over-crowded and facilities are inadequate.

## 9 Agistment

### Guidelines

- G9.1 An agistment property owner should record the full name, street address and contact telephone number of the owner of every horse agisted on their property.
- G9.2 A written agreement defining the conditions of the agistment should be made between the horse owner and the agistment property owner. The agreement should state the fee, the service to be provided, the name of the person responsible for supervision and provision of feed and water, the steps to be taken should the horse become sick or be injured, and a contingency plan for emergency situations such as fire, flood or disease outbreak.
- G9.3 The owner of the agistment property should advise the horse owner of the persons responsible, and the provisions made for safety and care of the animals, the supply of feed and water, the treatment of injured or ill horses, general paddock maintenance, and routine measures for control of parasites and prevention of overstocking.
- G9.4 A wide variety of agistment is available for horses and, usually, the degree of care and attention given to agisted horses is in direct proportion to the fee charged.
- G9.5 Low cost agistment on pasture is satisfactory, providing all welfare requirements are met.
- G9.6 Agistment agreements may also include supervision, rugging, grooming, stabling, individual feeding, removal of manure and provision of a high standard of facilities and management.

## 10 Tethering and hobbling

### Minimum Standards

- S10.1 Horses must not be tethered or hobbled for continuous periods more than 12 hours in any 24 hour period.
- S10.2 Equipment used to hobble horses must be specifically designed for hobbling.
- S10.3 (a) Equipment used to hobble horses must have a quick release capability.
- S10.4 (b) Equipment and the method used to hobble horses must not cause injury or distress.
- S10.5 Hobbled horses must not have access to deep water due to the risk of injury or death, unless under direct supervision.

### Guidelines

- G10.1 Tethering and hobbling of horses is inherently dangerous and should be undertaken with extreme care and supervision.
- G10.2 Hobble straps should be lined or greased regularly.
- G10.3 Tethering and hobbling of horses should only be a short-term practice and should not be used to restrain horses constantly because fencing is inadequate.
- G10.4 Hobbled horses should not be tethered.
- G10.5 "Hobbling" referred to in this section does not refer to the practice of "hoppling" of harness racing horses during racing and training.

# 11 Rugging

## Minimum Standards

- S11.1 Rugging must be appropriate for the weather conditions and not result in heat stress to the animal.
- S11.2 Horses wearing rugs must be inspected at least every 24 hours for any injury or entanglement caused by the rug.
- S11.3 Rugs must be removed at least weekly for inspection of the horse's body condition, skin health and rubbing or injury caused by the rug.

## Guidelines

- G11.1 Rugs should be fit for purpose, particularly in extremes of hot, cold or wet weather. Rugs used in wet weather should be waterproof.
- G11.2 Rugs should be well fitting and in good repair.
- G11.3 Any rug that causes injury or disease should not be placed back on the horse.
- G11.4 Horses clipped during winter should be rugged, except when working or when weather conditions are very mild.
- G11.5 Horses should be familiarised with wearing rugs before being released into a paddock while wearing a rug.

# 12 Health

## Minimum Standards

- S12.1 Horses that are sick, suffering, injured or diseased must be provided with prompt veterinary or other appropriate treatment as required under 6B of the ACT Animal Welfare Act 1992. As per the Act, appropriate, in relation to an animal means "suitable for the needs of the animal having regard to the species, environment and circumstances of the animal"; treatment includes veterinary treatment, including preventative treatment, if a reasonable person would expect veterinary treatment to be sought in the circumstances.
- S12.2 Where treatment and appropriate aftercare of sick or injured horses is not possible, the animals must not be left to suffer, but must be humanely euthanased. The person in charge must be able to demonstrate that they have exhausted all possible treatment options including transfer of ownership/custody to another person able to provide appropriate care, and that it would be inhumane to keep the animal alive under the circumstances.
- S12.3 Horses losing body condition that do not respond to special feeding must be examined by a registered veterinary practitioner.
- S 12.4 Horses must receive regular health checks and treatment as appropriate, see S12.1
- S.12.5 If a person has reasonable grounds for believing that a horse is infected with an exotic or declared endemic disease, the person must immediately notify the ACT chief veterinary officer in writing.
- S12.6 If the owner or person in charge of an animal has reasonable grounds for believing that the animal is infected with an exotic disease or declared endemic disease, the person must immediately separate the animal from any other animal that is not infected with the disease.

## Guidelines

- G12.1 Examples of conditions that may require prompt veterinary attention:
- acute abdominal pain or colic seen as pawing, kicking at the stomach or rolling, often accompanied by straining, teeth-grinding and patchy or generalised sweating
  - serious injuries, including deep wounds, severe haemorrhage, suspected bone fractures, or eye injuries
  - straining for more than 30 minutes by a mare that has not foaled
  - inability or difficulty rising or standing
  - retained foetal membranes
  - marked lameness or injuries not responding to treatment within 24 hours
  - signs of respiratory disease (colds) such as discharges from eyes, nostrils, or swollen glands 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
- signs of laminitis, including lameness, increased pulse to the affected hooves, reluctance to stand on affected feet and reluctance to move
- inactivity or unresponsiveness.

G12.2 Routine vaccination of horses against tetanus is recommended. Owners should seek veterinary advice about vaccination against other diseases.

G12.3 Prompt appropriate preventive treatment should be given to horses for diseases that may be common in a district or occurring in a mob.

G12.4 A new horse to a property should be isolated away from the established group for 10-14 days to reduce the risk of introducing disease. Husbandry and handling of isolated horses should be undertaken only after the care of non-isolated horses; equipment should not be transferred between the two groups.

G12.5 Appropriate regular treatment for internal worm parasites and early treatment of external parasites such as lice, should be practised. The effectiveness of treatment should be evaluated by veterinary examination if the response to routine treatment is poor.

G12.6 Good hygiene and cleanliness in and around stables, yards and paddocks, including disposal of effluent and litter, will reduce the risk of parasitism and disease.

G12.7 Aged and geriatric horses should be assessed by a registered veterinary practitioner or person experienced in the care of horses for general health, and be given a full dental examination and treatment, every 12 months.

G12.8 Paddocks used for grazing horses should be managed in such a way that contamination by parasites or other agents is minimised. Good management practices include spelling paddocks for intervals of at least 6 weeks and preferably 12 weeks, or grazing with other species such as sheep and cattle.

G12.9 Unhealthy horses should not be offered for sale.

## 13 Foot care

### Minimum Standards

S13.1 Horses' hooves must be maintained to permit normal mobility and to maintain hoof shape and function.

S13.2 Horses with a hoof injury, overgrowth, infection or laminitis must be provided with veterinary or other appropriate treatment.

### Guidelines

G13.1 Horses ridden or driven on rough or stony surfaces should be shod or have been accustomed to being unshod on such surfaces.

G13.2 Shoeing or trimming should not cause any abnormality of gait or conformation. Shoeing should be practised only by experienced farriers.

G13.3 Hooves of horses in work should be inspected each day for signs of injury, loose shoes or impacted stones.

G13.4 Loose shoes and those with risen clenches (shoe nails) should be promptly removed, to prevent possible foot injury. Clenches remaining in the hoof should be promptly removed. The shoes should be replaced prior to work on roads, stony or hard surfaces.

G13.5 Shod horses should be inspected at least every six weeks for replacement or adjustment of shoes. Shoes should be removed or inspected regularly when horses are not in use for a particular purpose.

# 14 Dental care

## Minimum Standards

S14.1 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.

S14.2 A person must not attempt any dental procedure that they are not competent to perform.

S14.3 The need for analgesia or anaesthesia must be considered before undertaking any equine dental procedure, and dental procedures likely to cause unreasonable pain must be performed with suitable analgesia or anaesthesia. Drugs used for sedation must be stored, administered and disposed of in accordance with the *ACT Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2008*.

S14.4 Horses must have their teeth examined at least once a year by a veterinarian or person suitably experienced and skilled in equine dentistry. The frequency of checks should be increased for young horses, stable fed horses and aged horses.

S14.5 The following dental procedures must only be performed by a registered veterinarian

- (a) making an incision through the skin or oral mucosa; or
- (b) extracting a tooth by repulsion; or
- (c) entry below the gum line or into the tooth cavity; or
- (d) using a power tool to maintain or restore correct dental function

The following procedures can be performed by a or person suitably experienced and skilled in equine dentistry.:

- (e) cleaning, rasping, grinding the horse's teeth (manual float)
- (f) removing a loose tooth or deciduous tooth cap from the horse

## Guidelines

G14.1 Any person performing dental tasks on a horse should have sufficient experience, knowledge and skill to:

- handle a horse in a safe, humane manner
- identify relevant anatomy, both normal and abnormal
- recognise and understand complications of the procedure and know when to refer cases to an appropriately qualified person.

G14.2 Good practice equine dental service may include:

- inquiry into the horse's general and dental history
- full mouth examination with assistance of palpation, illumination, mirror and probe
- diagnosis of, and advice on, all detected abnormalities
- advice on treatment options and further investigative procedures
- completion of the above or referral to other appropriate practitioners where agreed and indicated.
- 

G14.3 Use of power tools:

Due to the danger of tooth fracture and pulp exposure, the use of dental shears, molar cutters and inertia hammers should be avoided.

Great care should be taken with the use of power tools due to the risks of thermal damage, pulp exposure and tooth damage.

G14.4 If a pulp horn or cavity is accidentally exposed, it should have a pulp capping procedure performed immediately.

G14.5 Removal of any cheek teeth overgrowths need to be performed with great care to avoid pulp exposure.

G14.6 Removal of large dental overgrowths should only be performed by a person trained and competent to visually monitor cheek teeth (via methods such as sedation, illumination and mirror) to manage risks, and recognise and treat pulp exposure.

G14.7 Indications for removal of 'wolf' teeth (PM1 or premolar 1) are:

- abnormally large or displaced PM1
- horses that require PM2 rostral border reshaping ('bit seating') such as those ridden in double bridles
- loose or diseased PM1 (inflamed, painful or discharging adjacent soft tissues).

G14.8 Shearing off or filing off 'wolf' teeth is not recommended.

G14.9 Negative welfare impacts to a horse caused by dental treatment may include the horse being unable to eat within a reasonable time of the treatment, or creating an abnormal bite that affects the horse's ability to effectively chew its food.

## 15 Treatment and surgical procedures

### Minimum Standards

S15.1 Surgical procedures on horses of any age, including castration, must only be performed by a registered veterinary practitioner.

S 15.2 Analgesia, plus sedation or anaesthesia as appropriate, must be provided for all surgical and husbandry procedures likely to cause pain.

S15.3 Docking of a horse's tail and any invasive procedure to alter the tail set of a horse is not permitted unless by a registered veterinary practitioner for therapeutic reasons.

S15.4 Treatment practices that cause pain must not be carried out on horses if painless or alternative methods of treatment can be adopted.

### Guidelines

G15.1 Restraint methods used on horses should always be the minimum necessary to carry out routine management procedures. Prolonged or over-zealous use of restraints, such as nose-twitches, may cause severe reaction in many horses.

G15.2 Adequate facilities to provide a safe environment, and suitable equipment, should be available when horses are subjected to any procedure or treatment. Management and treatment procedures should be performed by competent persons.

G15.3 Internal medication such as vaccines, drenches, food additives, and external medications such as liniments, lotions and insecticides, should be used strictly in accordance with the manufacturers or veterinarian's instructions - overdosing may cause harm; underdosing may be ineffective. Treatments should be administered in a hygienic manner.

G15.4 Effective management and treatment of horses involves using various forms of restraint. These will vary with the temperament, disposition, and previous learning experience of the particular horse, the nature of the management procedure, and the skill of the handler.

## 16 Identification

### Minimum Standards

S16.1 Horses must not be branded using corrosive chemicals or fire-branding.

S16.2 All horses must be microchipped and microchips must be inserted by a registered and authorised veterinary practitioner.

S16.3 The person responsible for a property where horses are kept must have a property identification code (PIC) in place as per the requirements under the National Livestock Identification System.

### Guidelines

G16.1 Microchipping with animal owner details recorded on a licensed microchip registry, freeze-branding, DNA profiling and blood type profiling are acceptable methods of permanent identification.

G16.3 Horses should be permanently identified as early as management practices will allow, by persons experienced and proficient in performing the procedure.

G16.4 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.

G16.5 Horse owners should regularly check that their contact details are correctly recorded with the licensed animal microchip identification registry. This information will be available two days after the horse has been microchipped.

G16.6 Microchips must be inserted into the nuchal ligament halfway along the left-hand side of the horse's neck.

## 17 Breeding

### Minimum Standards

S17.1 Behaviour management of horses during breeding, including for dangerous stallions, must not cause unreasonable or unjustifiable pain, suffering, distress or injury. Management procedures with the potential to cause pain, distress or injury must only be performed to protect the safety of the animal itself, another animal, or human; they must be performed for the shortest duration possible to stop or prevent the undesirable behaviour.

S17.2 Facilities used for breeding must be constructed and maintained to minimise potential for injury to the horses.

S17.3 Horses with known or potentially inherited conditions which have potential to result in adverse welfare must not be used for breeding.

S17.4 Indiscriminate breeding of horses and the breeding of horses of a type or temperament unsuitable for specific purposes should be avoided. Many welfare problems are created when owners neglect animals that may have little economic value or when horses are not able to find suitable homes.

### Guidelines

G17.1 Persons responsible for reproductively entire horses should have a breeding program, and ensure that mares and stallions are housed separately except for specific breeding purposes. Horses should not be allowed to breed with closely related horses.

G17.2 Where stallion behaviour endangers handlers or mares, the behaviour should be modified using an appropriate training method by a competent person, or the stallion gelded. Humane euthanasia should be a last resort if all other options have failed and the animal's quality of life cannot be assured. Stallion behavioural problems may be minimised by training and enrichment from a young age.

G17.3 Special nutrition should be provided to the mare to cope with the burden of pregnancy, foaling and lactation.

G17.4 Frequency of monitoring of mares should increase as foaling becomes imminent.

G17.5 Mares should be monitored perinatally to ensure they pass the placenta within three hours.

G17.6 Foals should be monitored perinatally (for the initial 24 hours after birth) to ensure meconium expulsion, urination and suckling are normal and that colostrum intake occurs.

G17.7 Foals orphaned at birth and under human care, should receive colostrum or a substitute within 24 hours of birth.

G17.8 Nurse mares should be supervised until they have accepted the foal.

G17.9 Foals should not be weaned before four months of age.

G17.10 Foals should be weaned before nine months of age.

## 18 Training and Handling

### Minimum Standards

S18.1 Training methods used must be humane and must not cause unreasonable pain or suffering to the horse. Training methods and tools that have the potential to cause pain, distress or injury must only be used to protect the safety of the animal itself, another animal, or human; they must be performed/used for the shortest duration possible to stop or prevent the undesirable behaviour.

S18.2 Horses must not be beaten or abused.

S18.3 Electronic prodders must not be used on horses.

S18.4 Mouthpieces that cause pain including those that are twisted at the point where the device is in contact with the bars of the horse's mouth must not be used.

S18.5 Electronic collars, such as anti-crib collars, must not be used on horses.

## **Guidelines**

G18.1 Training methods should be adapted to suit the needs of the particular horse.

G18.2 Persons engaged in the education and training of horses should be experienced, or under direct supervision of an experienced person.

G18.3 Horses should be of the appropriate type, be adequately educated, fed and housed, and trained to the degree of fitness for the task to be performed. Veterinary attention should be sought if there is any doubt about the fitness of a horse for a particular purpose.

G18.4 Most horses respond best to firm but gentle techniques and to rewards when the horse responds correctly. People training horses should be confident and instil this confidence in the horses they train.

G18.5 Abnormal physiological and behavioural responses to training and confinement should be recognised and measures taken to correct the suspected cause of them. These responses may include aggression, biting, pawing, kicking, weaving, pacing, crib-biting or wind-sucking.

G18.6 Some behavioural management measures may be necessary to establish the hierarchy of a relationship between horses and people.

G18.7 Horses should only be given training schedules that are suited to their physical capabilities or level of maturity. Basic education of young horses is desirable; however it should not be strenuous, to reduce risk of injury and growth abnormalities.

G18.8 All saddlery, harness and other equipment used with horses should be of sound condition, well-fitting, correctly adjusted, regularly cleaned 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.

G18.9 When accompanied by their mothers, foals less than four or five months of age may be handled to accustom them to being caught, tied up and led, to having their legs and feet handled and to being confined within a yard, stable or horse float. Handling of foals from the earliest possible age is recommended.

G18.10 Horses require regular exercise for a period of months before they are adequately conditioned for strenuous exercise. Experience and skill are required to ride or drive horses to their utmost ability in competitive horse sports without inducing distress, injury or illness.

# **19 Transport**

## **Minimum Standard**

S19.1 Horses must be transported in accordance with the relevant ACT's Mandatory Code regarding the land transport of horses, the *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines – Land Transport of Livestock*.

S20.9 Horses held at saleyards must be dealt with in accordance with the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines – Saleyards and depots, Appendix B.

# **20 Euthanasia or slaughter**

## **Minimum Standards**

### **General**

S20.1 Before euthanasia or slaughter is undertaken, the person in charge must be able to demonstrate that they have exhausted all possible options including treatment for injury or illness, or transfer of ownership/custody to another person able to provide appropriate care.

S20.2 Euthanasia or slaughter must be performed humanely. The method must result in immediate death or immediate loss of consciousness followed by death while unconscious.

S20.3 Euthanasia or slaughter must only be performed by persons suitably qualified and competent in the method used and licensed where appropriate.

S20.4 Where possible, horses must be euthanased on-farm to avoid the need for transportation to a slaughterhouse. [Note this is mandatory for racehorses (see S20.9)].

S20.5 Euthanasia must be undertaken away from any other animals i.e., out of view

S20.6 Only the following methods of euthanasia are permitted for horses:

- Injectable pentobarbital euthanasia solution, administered by a registered veterinarian
- A head shot using appropriate firearm and ammunition by a person competent to know the landmarks, and resulting in immediate death (see guidelines, add diagram).

S20.7 Where on-farm euthanasia is not possible, horses other than racehorses may be sent to a slaughterhouse, provided the facility is specifically designed and equipped to kill horses humanely.

S20.8 A person euthanasing or slaughtering a horse must take appropriate action to confirm the horse is dead. This includes confirming all three of the following:

- Permanent cessation of breathing, and
- Permanent cessation of heart beat, and
- Loss of corneal reflex

#### Racehorses

S20.9 The euthanasia of racehorses must be undertaken in accordance with the Rules of Racing in the ACT as prescribed in the *ACT Racing Act 1999*. This means that racehorses must not be killed in slaughterhouses, but must be humanely euthanased on-farm, and only after satisfying requirements under S20.1.

### Guidelines

G20.1 The horse should be handled quietly before euthanasia or slaughter to ensure it is not unnecessarily distressed or alarmed.

G20.2 Acceptable methods of euthanasia or slaughter include:

- rapid intravenous injection of concentrated barbiturate solutions; it should be noted that tissue residues will render the carcass unfit for human or pet consumption if this technique is used
  - shooting by a licensed person, using a registered firearm
- Shooting:
- the firearm should be at least .22 calibre (long rifle)
  - persons other than the marksman and a handler for the horse should be cleared from the area or should stand well behind the marksman
  - a head collar or bridle should be put on the horse to enable it to be quietly restrained by an assistant, who must stand out of the line of fire
  - never fire while the horse is moving its head; wait patiently for a quiet interval before firing

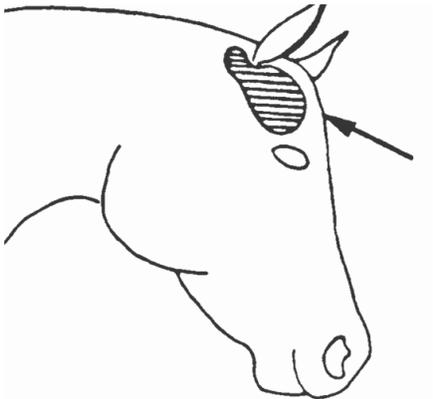
- to provide maximum impact and the least possibility of misdirection, the gun should be fired at a range that is as short as circumstances permit, but not in contact with the horse's head.
- the target area and direction of the bullet are as shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Figures 1 and 2 show the place on the horse's head where a firearm should be pointed and the angle at which it should be held, so as to obtain the right results. Draw an imaginary line from the base of each ear to the opposite eye, the intersection of the lines being the centre which, if hit, ensures instant loss of consciousness (Figure 1).



**Figure 1 Target area for humane destruction of horse by shooting. (Figure Courtesy State of Victoria)**

The target is just above intersection of broken lines.



**Figure 2 Direction (shown by arrow) in which bullet should be fired at the target area. (Figure Courtesy State of Victoria)**

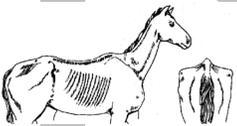
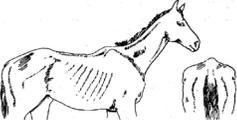
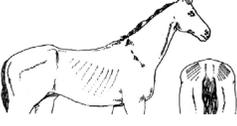
# Appendix A Body condition scoring

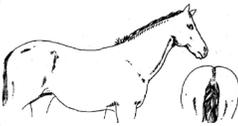
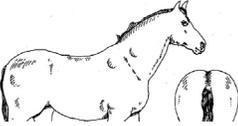
Body condition scoring provides a useful and objective method of monitoring body condition. Body condition, expressed as fatness, is the most reliable indicator of the suitability of a horse's diet.

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

1. Assess visually and by feel, the horse's pelvis and rump, back and ribs and neck. During winter, a long heavy hair coat complicates visual appraisal. You need to run your hands over the horse to get an accurate score.
2. Give those areas individual scores using a scale of 0 (very poor) to 5 (very fat).
3. Intermediate assessments can be given half scores.
4. 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.

Score	Description
<p><b>0 Very poor</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• very sunken rump</li> <li>• deep cavity under tail</li> <li>• skin tight over bones</li> <li>• very prominent backbone and pelvis</li> <li>• marked U shaped neck</li> </ul>
<p><b>1 Poor</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sunken rump</li> <li>• cavity under tail</li> <li>• ribs easily visible</li> <li>• prominent backbone and croup</li> <li>• U shaped neck - narrow and slack</li> </ul>
<p><b>2 Moderate</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• flat rump either side of backbone</li> <li>• ribs just visible</li> <li>• narrow but firm neck</li> <li>• backbone well covered</li> </ul>
<p><b>3 Good</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rounded rump</li> <li>• ribs just covered but easily felt</li> <li>• no crest, firm neck</li> </ul>

<p><b>4 Fat</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rump well rounded</li> <li>• gutter along back</li> <li>• ribs and pelvis hard to feel</li> <li>• slight crest</li> </ul>
<p><b>5 Very fat</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• very bulging rump</li> <li>• deep gutter along back</li> <li>• ribs buried</li> <li>• marked crest</li> <li>• folds and lumps of fat</li> </ul>

(Table Courtesy State of Victoria)

# DRAFT