

Code of Practice for the Welfare of the Horses

In January 2024, a Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses in the ACT came into effect under s. 23 of the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*. This mandatory Code is intended to provide the minimum standards of welfare for horses, ponies, donkeys and mules used for any kind of work, pleasure or competitive activity in the ACT. It emphasises that persons in charge have a legal liability to care for the physical and mental welfare of horses under their control. The overriding theme of this Code is that the wellbeing of the horse must at all times be considered above the demands of owners, agistment managers, breeders, trainers, riders, drivers, sponsors, officials or spectators.

The Code was developed by the ACT Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) in consultation with the community. It is very detailed and provides a manual on the treatment and management of horses in every stage of their lives. You can access the Code at <https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/di/2024-11/>

Mandatory standards must be complied with and non-compliance by riders, owners or agistment managers can constitute an offence under the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* <https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/1992-45/>. There are penalties for non-compliance which are spelled out in the Act. The value of a penalty unit for an offence against this law is \$160 for an individual and \$810 for a corporation. Most penalties start at 10 penalty units.

ACTEA has consulted with the Domestic Animal Services about the implementation of this Code, particularly in relation to complaints about non-compliance. While animal welfare and cruelty complaints are jointly managed by Domestic Animal Services and the RSPCA, people are advised to make any complaints in the first instance through Access Canberra on 13 22 81 or make a written complaint via

Access Canberra
Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
GPO Box 158
Canberra ACT 2601

If you are making a complaint you need to connect it directly to one of the standards spelled out in the Code. Complaining via Access Canberra will ensure the issue is registered before being despatched to the appropriate agency for response.