



EQUESTRIAN SPORTS
NEW ZEALAND

ESNZ HORSE WELFARE
GUIDELINES

Effective 1 August 2024



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INTRODUCTION

ESNZ is committed to the welfare of every one of our horses used, at any time, for our competition – both during competition and outside of the arena. Sport and recreation can greatly enhance a horse's well-being if appropriate.

Every horse should be treated with respect, compassion and understanding, and optimising welfare should not only be prioritised during competition, but also when the horse is turned out.

The aim of these guidelines should be to not only ensure that ESNZ members follow the Code of Conduct for the Welfare of the Horse, but also that the horse has a good life, and to acknowledge the link between welfare and performance.

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with ESNZ General and Veterinary Regulations, Discipline Rules and other applicable Policies. They are not intended as a substitute to the Animal Welfare Act 1999, but rather to enforce standards of horse care that exceed the standards under the Act, and other applicable Codes of Horse Welfare.

FIVE DOMAINS MODEL

Building on a previous model based on the "Five Freedoms," the Five Domains model adheres to the current scientific knowledge of animal welfare, said David J. Mellor, BSc (Hons), PhD, HonAssocRCVS, ONZM, professor of animal welfare science and foundation director of the Massey University Animal Welfare Science and Bioethics Centre.

What does the Five Domains model mean and how do they contribute to these guidelines?

The Five Domains model of animal welfare assessment has been used since 1994. It is based on "Five Domains" of an individual animal, or group of animals' welfare at any point in time.

These Domains each contribute to an animal's overall welfare and allow us to assess the Four Functional Domains, which impact an animals' welfare, as either a positive or negative influence on the animals' experience of its world in Domain 5.

One of the most important strengths of the Five Domains is that it recognises that minimising or resolving negative physical, health or mental states does not necessarily result in positive welfare but may only provide a neutral state.

To help ensure animals have a 'life worth living' they must have the opportunity to have positive experiences.

To enable this, those responsible for the care of animals need to provide them with environments that not only allow but encourage animals to express natural behaviours that they find rewarding. Management of animals requires that all negative experiences are immediately addressed; positive experiences are identified and provided for them, and barriers to positive experiences removed wherever possible.

This shift in understanding is the basis for the Five Domains model which incorporates the provision of positive welfare and recognises mental affective states. It centres on the following five categories with practical provisions:



<i>Domain</i>	<i>Animal Welfare Aims</i>
<p>NUTRITION</p> <p>Provide ready access to safe water and a diet adjusted to the individual to ensure and maintain optimal health and fitness.</p>	<p>Minimise thirst and hunger, poor quality feed, lack of variety, unbalanced diet.</p> <p>Enable eating to be a pleasurable experience, satiety or feeling of fullness, quenching thirst. Pleasure of chewing or grazing for long periods of time. Pleasure of different tastes.</p>
<p>ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>Provide suitable safe enclosures with room to move, shade, good air quality and comfortable resting areas</p>	<p>Minimise discomfort and exposure, toxins or pollutants, inappropriate environment, unsafe facilities.</p> <p>Promote and provide a comfortable environment considering temperature, safety, rest, visual stimulus, social interaction, and enrichment.</p>
<p>HEALTH</p> <p>To diagnose, prevent and treat disease, or injury and to create and implement good exercise conditioning and free exercise</p>	<p>Minimise negative experiences of ill-health</p> <p>Promote pleasures of optimal health, fitness, and free exercise- feeling of vitality. Veterinary attention provided.</p>
<p>BEHAVIOURAL INTERACTIONS</p> <p>Provide sufficient space, proper and safe facilities, compatible company to enable the horse to express normal behaviours</p>	<p>Minimise threats and unpleasant restrictions on behaviour, ability to forage or exercise and minimise isolation.</p> <p>Promote engagement in rewarding activities and positive interactions, enjoyable experiences, calm and confident horse.</p>
<p>MENTAL OR AFFECTIVE STATE</p> <p>Provide safe, compatible, and appropriate opportunities to have pleasurable experiences</p>	<p>Minimise boredom, anxiety, fear, and loneliness. No distress.</p> <p>Promote various forms of comfort, pleasure, interest, reward and confidence.</p>

[Five Domains Model for welfare assessment](#)

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE WELFARE OF THE HORSE

The following is a Code of Conduct based on that promoted by the FEI but includes changes to reflect the New Zealand environment.

ESNZ requires all those involved in equestrian sport to adhere to this ESNZ Code of Conduct for the Welfare of the Horse and to acknowledge and accept that at all times the welfare of the Horse must be paramount. Welfare of the Horse must never be subordinated to competitive or commercial influences. The following points must be particularly adhered to:



1. GENERAL WELFARE:

a) Good Horse management

Stabling/paddock and feeding must be compatible with the best Horse management practices as per the [MPI Code of Welfare for Horses and Donkeys](#). Clean and good quality hay, feed and water must always be available.

b) Training methods

Horses must only undergo training that matches their physical capabilities and level of maturity for their respective disciplines. They must not be subjected to methods which are abusive or cause fear.

c) Farriery and tack

Foot care and shoeing must be of a high standard. Tack must be designed and fitted to avoid the risk of pain or injury.

d) Transport

During transportation, Horses must be fully protected against injuries and other health risks. Vehicles must be safe, well ventilated, maintained to a high standard, disinfected regularly and driven by competent personnel. Competent handlers must always be available to manage the Horses.

e) Transit

All journeys must be planned carefully, and Horses allowed regular rest periods with access to food and water in line with current [ESNZ guidelines](#).

2. FITNESS TO COMPETE:

a) Fitness and competence

Participation in Competition must be restricted to Horses and Athletes whom have been suitably prepared for that level. Horses must be allowed suitable rest period between training and competitions; additional rest periods should be allowed following [travelling](#).

b) Health status

No Horse deemed unfit to compete may compete or continue to compete, veterinary advice must be sought whenever there is any doubt.

c) Doping and Medication

Any action or intent of doping and illicit use of medication constitute a serious welfare issue and will not be tolerated. After any veterinary treatment, sufficient time must be allowed for full recovery before Competition. For the purpose of Clean Sport, ESNZ has chosen to adopt the FEI Regulations and Prohibited Substances Databases. We recommend that you familiarise yourself with [these](#) for ALL ESNZ competition.



d) Surgical procedures

Any surgical procedures that threaten a competing Horse's welfare or the safety of other Horses and/or Athletes must not be allowed.

e) Pregnant/recently foaled mares

Mares must not compete under saddle after their fourth month of pregnancy or with foal at foot.

f) Misuse of aids

Abuse of a Horse using natural riding aids or artificial aids (e.g. whips, spurs, etc.) will not be tolerated.

3. EVENTS MUST NOT PREJUDICE HORSE WELFARE:

a) Competition areas

Horses must be trained and compete on suitable and safe surfaces. All obstacles and competition conditions must be designed with the safety of the Horse in mind.

b) Ground surfaces

All ground surfaces should be appropriate to the activity taking place. Ground surface conditions, frequency of Competitions and any other risk factors should be examined carefully to indicate ways to minimise injuries.

c) Extreme weather

Competitions must not take place in extreme weather conditions that may compromise welfare or safety of the Horse. Provision must be made for cooling conditions and equipment for Horses after competing. ESNZ's Extreme Weather policy can be found [here](#).

d) Stabling/Yarding at Events

Stables and yards must be safe, hygienic, comfortable, well ventilated and of sufficient size for the type and disposition of the Horse. Washing-down areas and water must always be available.

4. HUMANE TREATMENT OF HORSES:

a) Veterinary treatment

Veterinary services should always be available at an Event to meet the discipline requirements.

b) Referral centres

Wherever necessary, Horses should be collected by ambulance and transported to the nearest relevant treatment centre for further assessment and therapy. Injured Horses must be given full supportive treatment before being transported. ESNZ has an agreement in place with NZHAT for all major Events.



c) Competition injuries

The incidence of injuries sustained in Competition should be monitored and reported using ESNZ incident reporting forms/app and steps taken to identify and minimise any risks.

d) Euthanasia

If injuries are sufficiently severe a Horse may need to be euthanised on humane grounds by a veterinarian as soon as possible, with the sole aim of minimising suffering.

e) Retirement

Horses must be treated sympathetically and humanely when they retire from Competition. ESNZ should be notified when horses on its database are retired or deceased.

5. EDUCATION:

ESNZ urges all those involved in equestrian sport to attain the highest possible levels of education in areas of expertise relevant to the care and management of the Competition Horse. This Code of Conduct for the Welfare of the Horse may be modified from time to time and the views of all are welcomed. Particular attention will be paid to new research findings and ESNZ encourages further funding and support for welfare studies.

6. REPORTING:

ESNZ members have a positive responsibility to report Horse abuse to appropriate authorities. If at an ESNZ Event, report it to the Ground Jury. If outside of an Event, to ESNZ (head office). There is no fee for reporting Horse abuse.

