



**EQUESTRIAN SPORTS  
NEW ZEALAND**

# ESNZ Horse Transport Policy

*Version 1.0, 1 August 2024*

## Preamble

Movement of competition horses is a frequent practice globally. In New Zealand horses are moved via road or ferry, in a purpose-built transporter, whether that be trailer (horse float) or truck (horse truck). Thank you to Harness Racing NZ and the many contributors for the content of this policy.

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## Purpose:

The ESNZ horse transport policy aims to ensure the welfare of all members' horses during transport by providing standards for the transport of horses, according to International best practice advice<sup>1</sup>.

The provisions of the ESNZ Code of Conduct for the Welfare of the Horse apply:

## 11. TRANSPORTATION

11.1 When a horse is transported in a vehicle, aircraft, or ship:

11.1.1 It must be examined by the person in charge prior to loading to ensure that it is fit for transport and is able to withstand the journey without suffering unreasonable or unnecessary pain, or distress.

11.1.2 It must be protected against injuries and other health risks including dehydration, fear, and distress.

11.1.3 The care of the horse should be properly attended to by a competent person.

11.1.4 The transportation must be appropriate for the horse including ensuring:

11.1.4.1 is provided with reasonably comfortable and secure accommodation; and

11.1.4.2 is supplied with proper and sufficient food and water at sufficient intervals as required in the ESNZ Horse Transport Policy.

11.1.4.3 the horse float, vehicle, or truck used in the transportation must have a current Warrant of Fitness or Certificate of Fitness as applicable.

## Scope:

This policy applies to all registered ESNZ members' horses, which are being transported within New Zealand by road or ferry at the request of, or by, persons registered with Equestrian Sports New Zealand and considered to be the 'accountable person'.

## Horses must be fit for transport:

1. Horses must be inspected for fitness to travel prior to loading on a transport vehicle by somebody familiar with horses and competent at assessing horse health status.
2. Horses must not be transported should they be demonstrating signs of disease, including but not limited to: colic, diarrhoea, respiratory disease, nasal discharge; or suspected fever or dehydration; or any condition likely to cause them unnecessary pain or distress during transport, unless they are being transported to a veterinary hospital, or facility, for treatment of the condition at the instruction of a veterinarian.
3. Horses must not be transported if they have an injury, or lameness, which is likely to cause them unnecessary pain or distress during transport, unless they are being

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<sup>1</sup>The IFHA Transportation Welfare Guidelines  
(<https://nzeha.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/horsetransportationwelfareguidelines.pdf>)

transported to a veterinary hospital, or facility, for treatment of the condition at the instruction of a veterinarian.

4. Horses that fall ill, or become injured, during transport must be provided with emergency first aid treatment or veterinary care (if required) at the first available opportunity, and when safe to do so.
5. Sedation should not be used routinely to transport horses and should only be used when necessary to ensure the welfare of horses and the safety of personnel. Sedation must only be used under veterinary direction and must be carefully administered to horses to ensure compliance with prohibited substances withholding times.
6. Horses should be given access to pasture or other roughage before transport and access to water at all times prior to transport.

### Transport vehicles/ compartments:

7. Transport vehicles and compartments must be designed, constructed, maintained, and operated to avoid unnecessary injury, and ensure the safety of horses during transport.
8. The loading and unloading facilities must be adequately designed, constructed, maintained, and operated to avoid unnecessary injury, and ensure the safety of horses during loading and unloading.
9. Horses must be transported in individual compartments or stalls.
10. Transport vehicles and compartments must:
  - a. protect the horses from inclement weather, extreme temperatures and adverse changes in climatic conditions;
  - b. permit easy cleaning and disinfection;
  - c. prevent the horses escaping or falling out and be able to withstand the stresses of movements;
  - d. ensure that appropriate air quality and ventilation can be maintained;
  - e. provide an ability for horses to be monitored so that appropriate action can be taken if needed as soon as it is practical and safe to do so;
  - f. present a flooring surface that is anti-slip;
  - g. present a flooring surface that minimises the leakage of urine or faeces;
  - h. provide a means of lighting sufficient for inspection and care of the horses during transport;
  - i. provide sufficient space inside the horses' compartment to ensure that there is adequate ventilation and headroom above the animals when they are in a naturally standing position; and
  - j. be roadworthy and fully compliant regarding Registration, RUC and WoF/CoF (as applicable).

### Handling of Horses during Loading, Unloading and Transportation:

11. Personnel handling horses must be trained, or competent, as appropriate for this purpose and carry out their tasks without using any method likely to cause unnecessary fear, injury, or suffering.
12. Personnel must be mindful of potential behavioural issues when planning the partitioning and location of horses within a float, particularly regarding ungelded males travelling with mares.

13. Commercial float operators must not be asked to pick up or deliver horses to a property without the Person in Charge or a suitable representative present.
14. To be prepared for transport, horses must be acclimatised and habituated to human interaction.
15. A whip, lead or other similar object must only be used for safety, correction and encouragement and not used in an unnecessary, excessive, or improper manner<sup>2</sup>. All forms of punishment are prohibited in the loading and unloading of horses, including:
  - a. striking or kicking the horse/s;
  - b. applying pressure to any particularly sensitive part of the body in such a way as to cause them unnecessary pain or suffering;
  - c. suspend the animals themselves by mechanical means; or
  - d. lift or drag the animals by head, ears, legs, or tail, or handle them in such a way as to cause them unnecessary pain or suffering.

## Maximum Journey Duration and Rest Periods for Horses:

The risks of transport related welfare issues increases with the duration of the journey.

Common risks include:

- developing travel sickness or respiratory disease;
  - dehydration and weight loss; and
  - inadequate rest periods following long journeys.
16. Horses must not be transported for journeys longer than 12 hours without a rest period. For journeys of more than 12 hours, a rest period of least 10 hours must be provided, with free access provided to water and to pasture and/or roughage.
  17. Rest periods must allow horses sufficient time to drink and eat, rest, relieve themselves and recover.
  18. Long journeys will take several days for a horse to fully recover from.

### Note: Travel Disruption

In circumstances where traffic is queued for long periods due to roadworks or accidents, drivers may dial \*555 or dial 111 and note the potential adverse welfare conditions to seek Police assistance to gain priority in resuming the journey.

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<sup>2</sup>[Ref. MPI – Code of Welfare for Horses and Donkeys.](#)