

Policy: 607.1
Effective: 19 August 2016
Subject: Equine Welfare Policy
Reference: *Harness Racing Act 2009*
HRNSW Board Meeting – 19 August 2016

PURPOSE

The purpose of this welfare policy is to ensure that the welfare of registered standardbred racing horses is maintained whilst they are involved in:

- Racing;
- Training;
- Activities associated with racing and/or training;
- Breeding.

By maintaining the welfare of the registered standardbred, the interests of the public and the participants in harness racing activities are protected.

Prior to the retirement of horses from racing, HRNSW encourages owners to consider all available retirement options which will ensure the continued good welfare of the retired horse for the rest of its natural life.

POLICY STATEMENT

HRNSW is committed to the welfare of standardbreds. The maintenance of appropriate welfare standards is critical to the viability of the NSW Harness industry.

“Welfare” of the registered standardbred means protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of the animal, including for example;

- The wellbeing of the animal
- Housing conditions
- Transport conditions
- Drug control relating to equines
- The prevention and management of diseases that may affect animals

HRNSW’s equine welfare policy has been developed in conjunction with the requirements of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*, Rules and HRA Horse Animal Welfare Statement.

The *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* imposes a duty on a person in charge of an animal to ensure that the welfare of the animal is protected and maintained. It establishes the benchmark for the protection of animals, protection against cruelty and unreasonable abandonment or release of animals.

POLICY STATEMENT

Current standards for the welfare of standardbred harness racing horses largely reflect those originally devised by the International Group of Specialist Veterinarians (IGSRV), an association of regulatory veterinarians employed with horse racing authorities around the world.

HRNSW is a member of Harness Racing Australia (HRA). HRA develops national policies and also developed the Horse Animal Welfare Statement. HRA also liaises with the Australian Veterinary Association, Australian Equine Veterinary Association and the RSPCA.

It is the policy of HRNSW to ensure that appropriate standards for the welfare of standardbred racing horses are maintained. HRNSW believes that any person who does not abide by the minimum standards for welfare of the standardbred has no place in the NSW harness industry. Accordingly, all persons are placed on notice that breaches of established animal welfare standards may result in considerable penalties being imposed, which may include the cancellation of their licence.

HRNSW will regularly review established relevant information on equine welfare, through its Regulatory Veterinarian and may make standards, procedures and rules as required to ensure that the protection of the standardbred horse is maintained. Matters which HRNSW may make standards, procedures and rules about may include, but are not limited to:

- The husbandry and keeping of horses;
- Travelling with horses
- Racing in extreme conditions;
- Race Track preparation
- Use of the Whip
- Racing of pregnant mares
- The use of prohibited substances
- Veterinary inspections

HRNSW will undertake regular audits of standardbred horses in the control of licensed trainers, to assess whether the animals are being cared for according to established standards for equine welfare.

Disciplinary action will be taken against persons who fail to provide that registered Standardbred horses are cared for in a manner that ensures that the welfare of the horse is maintained according to established standards.

Increasing focus on the protection of the welfare of registered standardbred horses is linked to other policies of HRNSW. Including the “Harness Heat Racing Policy” and “HRNSW Penalty Guidelines”.

DUTY OF CARE

All persons in charge of a standardbred horse owe that animal a duty of care and must not breach that duty of care. HRNSW requires all persons in charge of a standardbred horse to act at all times in a way which protects their welfare.

In the case of trainers, this duty of care cannot be transferred to another person. If a trainer engages a person, for example, a transport operator to transport horses, the trainer has a responsibility to engage competent persons who abide by the established standards of equine welfare.

HRNSW will not tolerate animal cruelty. HRNSW will investigate allegations of cruelty to registered standardbred horses and will institute disciplinary action a person found to be treating animals cruelly.

Notification of diseases

A person in charge of a standardbred horse who believes or suspects that a horse has become infected with a notifiable disease must immediately inform the Chief Steward and the government department responsible for biosecurity matters .

Deregistration of Horse after its racing career

HRNSW requires greater awareness and understanding of horses activities and whereabouts, both on and off the track, which will provide a clearer picture of the Standardbred herds lifecycle in order to building on successful welfare initiatives such as re-training or retirement programs.

Subsequently, a number of Australian Harness Racing Rules (AHRR) have been amended which compel owners and trainers of registered Standardbreds to advise authorities of a horses retirement from racing or death within specific timeframes. The importance of providing this information for currently active horses cannot be understated, and this is reflected in the penalties for non-compliance which have been set at a minimum fine of \$500 per offence.

Owners and trainers are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the various retirement options available for Standardbreds, as well as the relevant AHRR's.

The Deregistration Form is available at:

<http://www.harness.org.au/hra/form-R25A-deregistration-death-form.pdf>

APPLICATION

The policy applies to all persons:

- Having care and control of a registered standardbred
- Involved in the caring of a registered standardbred



POLICY STATEMENT

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Stewards
- Investigators
- Veterinarians
- Race Clubs and Officials
- Trainers
- Drivers
- Stablehands
- Barrier Attendants
- Farriers
- Breeders; and
- Owners.