

**SHOW HORSE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALASIA INC.**

***RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY***

DECEMBER 2004

To provide for the Safety and Welfare of  
Competitors, Officials, Ground Personnel, Volunteers and Spectators  
at all Events conducted by the Council and its Affiliates.

[www.showhorsecouncilaust.com.au](http://www.showhorsecouncilaust.com.au)

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:**

The S.H.C. gratefully thanks the Show Horse Of Victoria Inc. for permitting content from its Safety Policy to be implemented in this Risk Management Policy.

**INCLUSION:** A Rule shall be included in all Official S.H.C. Event Schedules &/or Programs stating that The S.H.C. Risk Management Policy applies to all persons competing &/or attending the Event. A Copy of the Policy to be available on the day at the Show Office.

**PROTOCOL – THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE** has a “duty of care” to provide a risk free environment. Given that animals can be unpredictable, safety practices can & do avoid potential problems, the Council has a proud record in this regard. It is the responsibility of Committees to ensure that safety practices are in place at each and every Council activity, therefore a Safety Officer shall be appointed who will be required to carry out the following:

*The SAFETY OFFICER* shall:

1. Assess the venue, identify Zones, identify any potential Hazards and take action to avoid or minimise these. Ground surfaces should be level & obstacle free, extreme muddy conditions could pose a danger & should be evaluated carefully before use. Depending if the venue allows, it is desirable that Gates be monitored
2. Rings are set in such a way as to avoid crowding on the Ring or to avoid competitors entering another Ring’s space.
3. Judges & Ring Officials are to be made aware of this Policy and the need to follow Safety Practices e.g. keeping Heat numbers within required limit to avoid overcrowding in the Ring; keeping young riders workouts simple and controlled.
4. In the event of a horse being out of control, the Ring should be halted until control is restored.
5. At all times, the Safety Officer should work closely with the Ringmaster & the Mounted Steward, with the Ringmaster being the person to have control and management of the Rings once they are in operation.
6. A Medical Officer (or First Aid Officer) shall be on hand throughout the day
7. Monitor the Safe Movement of horses between Rings and/or designated horse areas.
8. Supply the Announcer with details of any Safety matters that need to be conveyed on the day to those attending.
9. Maintain an Accidents Register Book and record all details of ANY incident where injury or damage has been sustained at the Event and hand to the Show Secretary as soon as practicable.
10. Follow a Check List and sign off on tasks as completed satisfactorily.

**A GEAR STEWARD** shall be appointed for the purpose of monitoring that safety standards applying to equipment for the horse and clothing of the rider are complied with.

## **COMPETITOR PROTOCOL**

Competition riders are currently having trouble relating to the availability of adequate insurance. Some of this problem is of our own making, because standards of safety in competition events has been very minimal, especially in relation to safety standards imposed on the professional horse racing industry. The Show Horse Council of Australasia Inc. takes its obligations in this area VERY seriously in adopting this Policy. Members are required to complete Waivers; Membership Cards should be carried at all S.H.C. Events as proof that their Membership is current & in order. In addition a copy is required to be provided with Entries in Major S.H.C. Competition, this practice confirms Public Liability cover for our members at these Events.

The following points are by no means a full list of all safety requirements on the ground, but are a basis for the formation of a safety code for all hack competitors. Any comments or additions to this list would be greatly appreciated, so that a safety code for hack competitions can be drawn up in the future. Many of the points may seem simplistic, especially to professional competitors, but it is often ignorance of these basic rules (and their application in horse behavior) that causes the worst accidents. It is up to us to be seen as proactive in improving safety at our venues and minimizing the risk of accidents and litigious proceedings.

### ***Horse Safety and Management at the Venue***

In all avenues of competition (in fact in all horse related activities), the safety of the animal, and the rider/driver, (as well as spectators), *is* of paramount importance. This means every competitor must have a thorough knowledge of and understanding of all the general aspects of horse safety, as well as the specifics of horse safety as applied to the field of competition. Designated areas will apply for Horses, Horse Vehicles, Horse free Spectator Areas, Vehicle parking, these directions are to be strictly adhered to.

### ***Ground Safety***

In all cases a RESPONSIBLE adult (18years or over) will be said to be in charge of the horse/pony at the venue. The safety of the horse/pony and others in relation to that horse/pony will be deemed as this person's responsibility.

Horses/ponies will be ridden outside the ring and exercise areas at a walk.

Horses may be ridden in float laneway BUT not between vehicles where they may be kicked or cause accidents.

### ***Ring Safety***

**The judge or appropriate steward will have the right to ask a competitor to leave the ring under the following circumstances**

- the horses behavior is seen to be a danger to the safety of the rider or to other competitors.
- the horse /rider combination is inappropriate (i.e. the horse/pony is too difficult for the rider to handle)
- the gear chosen by the competitor is deemed unsafe/ inappropriate by the gear check steward, or by the judge

# *Horse Management*

## *.1 Weather*

consider wind, rain, storm coming, extreme heat, extreme cold, This will affect the comfort and the attitude of your horse. In hot weather make sure the horse receives adequate supplies of water and is rested IN THE SHADE.

In windy weather consider that things will be blown around the ground that may frighten/injure your horse.

In cold conditions make sure that the horse is adequately rugged and kept warm when not competing.

## *.2 Handling safety*

Remember that even a small pony is a large and heavy animal. Whether he is shod or not shod he still has very sharp feet. He is a creature of flight, and the quietest pony can move like greased lightning if suddenly startled. If you always bear the following safety factors in mind you should avoid unnecessary accidents.

### **TYING UP**

Preparing the horse: Careless **tying-up** causes many accidents to horses/ponies and people.

When tying up, keep your fingers out of any loops while tying the knot

**Use a quick-release knot**

Preferably tie the horse with headstall & lead rope attached to a piece of twine or string that will break under pressure should the horse pull back

Never tie to an insecure movable object, such as a branch of a tree, a jump stand, wire in the fence **or an unattached float**, but always tie to something firm, such as a solid post or a secure rail.

Don't have the rope too long, or the horse may put his foot over it and hurt itself. The horse should NOT be able to get its nose to the ground.

*Never* tie your horse/pony up by the bridle, the probable effect of that would be a broken bridle and a horse/pony with a badly injured mouth.

If feeding a horse while it is tied up, make sure the feed tin cannot catch on the horse's headstall or lead and that any hay net is correctly tied (to itself). A feed bin or hay net must be positioned high enough so the horse cannot get a leg caught in the feed bin or the rope of the hay net.

### **Preparing the horse**

Never stand directly in front of any horse/pony, or directly behind one that you don't know well, for instance, when brushing the tail

Speak before touching him, so that he knows you are there

Always wear solid boots or shoes around horses/ponies

Never sit, knee or crawl underneath the horse/pony

When brushing the legs, bend or squat down, so that you can move quickly if you need to

When holding or leading a horse/pony, never twist the rope around your hand

Don't leave loose ends of rope or reins trailing on the ground, where you or the horse could get tangled up in them

Never allow a led horse/pony too much lead; keep the horse under control on a reasonable length of lead.

- Work around a horse from a position as near to the shoulder as possible. Also, stay close to the horse, so that if it kicks you do not receive the full impact. Stay out of kicking range wherever possible. When you go to the opposite side of the horse, move away and go around it out of kicking range, or close where the impact is minimized
- A good horse person always lets a horse know what he or she intends to do. When picking up the horse's foot, for example do not grab the foot hurriedly. This startles the horse and may cause it to kick. Carefully and confidently run your hand from the shoulder/hip down the leg. Learn the proper way to lift the feet
- Be careful not to drop grooming tools underfoot while grooming. Place them where they will not trip you and where the horse will not step on them. An accidental slip or stumble can result in injury
- Your actions around a horse reflect your ability and confidence in handling it. Remain calm and confident at all times Nervous handlers usually make a horse become nervous and unsafe
- Never tease nor unduly punish a horse. A teased horse may develop dangerous habits for the rest of its life and may lose all respect for its handler
- If you must punish a horse, do so at the instant of its disobedience. If you wait, even for a minute, the horse will not understand why it is being punished. Control your temper at all times, but let the horse know that you are its firm kind master
- Know the horse's temperament, reactions, and peculiarities *If* the horse is unfamiliar to you ask about the horse before working with it
- Wear footgear that protects your feet from being stepped on and from being injured by nails and other small objects around the stables and yards. Boots or hard-toed shoes are preferable. Never wear soft-shoes, and NEVER go barefoot because infectious organisms such as tetanus are prevalent around stables. Gloves safeguard against cuts, scratches splinters and rope burns.
- Lead ropes shall be strong and approximately 15 mm in thickness, 1.5 to 1.8 meters in length. Hemp or cotton is safer than nylon. Thin nylon is most dangerous if fingers get caught up in them.

## **Lunging**

Horses to be lunged ONLY in appropriate areas. Horses MUST be lunged by an experienced handler, with the horse controlled by a bridle and suitable lunging equipment. People lunging MUST wear gloves.

## **When Riding**

**A safety helmet that conforms to current recognized Safety Standards shall be worn and be fastened whenever riding or sitting on a horse. S.H.C. Competition Rules on Attire apply at S.H.C. Events.**

- Never ride without a saddle or with a headstall rather than a bridle
- Never sit on a horse that is tied up
- Always tie your hair back securely
- Ride in boots or riding shoes with a heel and smooth sole [no ripple soles, ridges or deep tread as in bluntstones].
- For hot weather wear sun protection and a ventilated helmet
- Gloves optional

- Do not wear jewellery that could catch in the horse's gear
- Do not carry sharp objects in the hair or pockets
- Do not chew gum while riding [can cause choking]

### **In case of a Fall**

Stop the class/activity (all riders to stop immediately if a rider falls or a horse gets loose)  
Riders to halt and dismount if necessary until an appropriate first aid person has dealt with the rider. The loose horse is of secondary consideration.

- Keep the fallen rider still while you check for injuries
- Follow First Aid Procedures
- The most qualified first aid person to stay with the fallen rider and send someone else for help or to take charge of the other riders in the class or warm up area.

If the rider appears uninjured;

- Don't dramatize the situation but do allow time to regain composure
- Watch out for fear, shock or a delayed reaction

### *Loss of Control*

- Stop all other riders

### *Injured horse*

- The most experienced first aid person shall deal with the horse.
- Keep spectators away so as not to upset the horse or risk injury should the horse panic.
- Restrain the horse if necessary to avoid injury to yourself or others.
- Give precise instructions to call a veterinarian and to give details of the accident.
- Take and record vital signs and administer first aid until the vet arrives.

## **GEAR**

*SADDLERY: All equipment clean, supple, well fitting, and in good repair*

### *Saddle*

- No pressure on spine
- Balanced correctly
- Correct saddle for the task

### *Girth*

- Tighten gradually to a safe level
- Check before mounting and after some work.

### *Stirrups*

- Stirrup bar catches in open position
- Correct size for the rider
- Stirrups put on the right way
- Safety stirrups recommended

### *Saddle Cloth (sheepskin)*

- Pulled up in front so no pressure on the wither
- Covers the back of the saddle to protect the horses back
- Cannot slip from under the saddle

*Bridle*

Bit correctly adjusted for comfort and control [shape of the horse's pallet and the horse's tongue taken into consideration]. Suitable bit for

- the activity
  - the standard of the rider
  - the standard of the horse
- All buckles closed. Strap ends through keepers  
 All bridle parts sound, strong and supple  
 Browband not too tight  
 Noseband correctly adjusted  
 Throat lash moderately loose  
 .Breastplate fitted correctly.

**Training Equipment Safety Practices**

Control devices to be used only by riders educated in their correct use, suitable for the horse's level of activity and the level of the rider. Correctly adjusted to the horse for security and comfort

- Rein the correct length. **No dangerous loop that could catch the rider's foot**
- Always use rein stops with a running martingale
- Rubber ring at the neckstrap of a running martingale prevents the strap from dropping too low near horse's legs
- Boots and bandages correctly put on and securely fastened suitable for the activity

**DOGS**

Most horse people love, and own dogs. If your dog is at a horse venue, please keep the dog tied up away from horses at all times. Not all horses are used to dogs or like dogs.

**To not follow good safety practice is negligent on the part of the competitor and may even create a life threatening situation for others (as well as litigation). Horse related injuries rank in Australia's top 20 recreational activities that result in treatment at a hospital's emergency department. Equestrian helmets should meet recognised safety standards, which include Australian/New Zealand Standards. It is important children are always adequately trained and supervised if they are around horses.**