



**2015**

**Australian Interschool Equestrian  
Championships**

28<sup>th</sup> September – 2<sup>nd</sup> October

Sydney International Equestrian Centre

New South Wales

**HORSE HEALTH & BIOSECURITY**

July 2015



## CONTENTS

General Information.....	3
BIOSECURITY POLICY and PLAN.....	3
Biosecurity Advice for Horse Owners/Riders .....	3
VETERINARY ASPECTS .....	4
APPROVED LABORATORY .....	4
VETERINARY EXAMINATIONS and HORSE IDENTIFICATION .....	4
Veterinary Examinations .....	4
HORSE INSPECTIONS .....	5
HORSE IDENTITY DOCUMENTATION .....	6
SAMPLING FOR PROHIBITED SUBSTANCES .....	6
SOUNDNESS.....	6
Transporting HORSES Long Distances .....	7

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### BIOSECURITY POLICY AND PLAN

A simple explanation of 'biosecurity' is the action we take around animals and at home to help stop pests and disease from occurring, or if there is an outbreak, to stop them spreading. Biosecurity is also general term for measures designed to protect our country, state, events and individual properties from the entry and spread of unwanted animals, pests, diseases and weeds.

Biosecurity measures are actions OWNERS and EVENT ORGANISERS can take to keep horses healthy, and properties free from disease.

This event has a biosecurity plan and policy that will be put into action by the event management and the event veterinary team.

It is a condition of entry that that competitors and persons in charge of horses adhere to all EA Codes of Conduct and regulations as outlined in the Schedule.

An additional horse health declaration form will be required on arrival at the venue, together with EA horse registration papers at the Horse Inspection.

### BIOSECURITY ADVICE FOR HORSE OWNERS/RIDERS

While it is impossible to keep horses separate at events, make sure your horse is in full health before leaving your property. Events are prime places for your horse to catch an infectious disease.

#### **The role of ALL AUSTRALIAN INTERSCHOOL EQUESTRIAN CHAMPIONSHIP event entrant and the owner or person in charge of the horse(s) at this event is expected:**

- not to bring sick horses to the event. Sick animals may get worse during transport and infect other horses. Visually inspect horses to be transported and check rectal temperatures on the morning of the event. If in doubt, ask your vet to examine the horse.
- to provide truthful, accurate information as required
- to complete an Horse Health Declaration for each horse and hand it to the registration steward or secretary or the horse health official
- to carry out instructions from the horse health official
- to monitor their horse's health throughout the event and notify the horse health official if they see any signs of illness. If you notice strange behavior or signs of disease in your horse, or any horse, report it immediately to the event organiser so they can determine the risk to other horses. Do not move the horse.
- if you are at the event for longer than one day, take your horse's rectal temperature regularly. A rectal temperature above 38.5 degrees suggests disease.
- not to share tack and equipment between horses
- to ensure each horse has its own water and feed bucket
- not to use communal water troughs
- to minimise contact between horses
- to minimise contact between other people and your horse(s). Discourage people from touching your horse as this is a key way for disease to spread from horse to horse
- not to allow horses to eat any other horse's feed
- to take home any leftover feed or place in designated compost site
- to wash hands between horse contacts. Wash your hands with clean water, or disinfect with waterless hand sanitizer
- stables/yards are to be kept clean of manure and feed scraps including picking up manure from communal
- manure is to be disposed of in designated 'Manure' sites around the grounds
- the carrying of a Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kit is highly recommended

**After the event, event entrants should:**

- clean and disinfect all horse equipment and the horse transport vehicle
- have a thorough shower, wash hair and blow their nose to expel any inhaled bacterial or viral particles
- change into clean clothes
- continue to monitor the health of the horse(s)
- report any unusual signs of disease to their veterinarian
- isolate returning horses from other horses as much as is practical.

**For this event,**

- All horses must be accompanied by a completed Horse Health Declaration form. This must be handed to event managers on arrival at the venue
- All horses are recommended to have a current vaccination status with respect to Equine Strangles disease and Tetanus.
- Any sick horses may be isolated or removed from the contact with other horses

**In the Event of a Biosecurity Emergency**

- All individuals must obey directions given by the OC
- Everyone will remain at the venue until cleared to leave by the OC
- In the event of any horse movement restrictions participants are responsible for the care, maintenance and cost of their horses and themselves including feeding, bedding, vets and personal needs

## VETERINARY ASPECTS

### APPROVED LABORATORY

Details of EA/FEI Approved Laboratory appointed to carry out analyses on samples collected at this event

**Name:** Australian Racing Forensic Laboratory

**Address:** Randwick Racecourse, Randwick NSW 2031

**Phone:** 03 8344 5000

### VETERINARY EXAMINATIONS AND HORSE IDENTIFICATION

These will be carried out in accordance with the Veterinary Regulations Art. 1031 and the form attached will be used to record the examination and horse details.

Extracts of FEI Veterinary Regulations Article 1031. Not all clauses were relevant or included here.

**Definitions:**

- a) The term '**Veterinary Examination**' is used to denote a clinical examination carried out by a qualified veterinarian to establish the general health status of a horse about to compete. Veterinary Examinations are also used to ensure that competition horses are not ill or injured as a result of international movement.
- b) The term '**Verification of Identity**' refers to the means of checking the identity markings of the horse against its diagram in the passport at a Veterinary Examination or Horse Inspection.

### VETERINARY EXAMINATIONS

At this event due to the number of horses that will have had early arrival to compete at other events at the venue, the first veterinary examination will be conducted at the time of the horse inspection on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

The first Veterinary Examination ('Examination upon Arrival') should be carried out as soon as possible after arrival, but in any case before the horse comes into contact with other horses in the event stables. Each competitor is to complete and provide the horse identification and vet check form to the nominated vet for their inspection (form attached).

The object of the Veterinary Examination is to:

- a) Verify the identity of each horse from its paperwork;
- b) Check that the animal has not been in contact with other animals suffering from infectious or contagious disease (e.g. strangles) or has come from an establishment that is not free of such disease (VR Art 1032.2); and
- c) Carry out a clinical examination to ensure that the horse is not suffering from any infectious or contagious disease. This examination may include the palpation of limbs and body, monitoring heart and respiratory rate, body temperature and any other pertinent clinical parameters necessary. The limbs may be palpated or lifted to examine a suspected abnormality. However, an examination for any lameness (i.e. flexion tests or a trot-up) is not part of this examination. A record of the clinical findings must be made which should follow the horse through successive examinations and inspections.

If the veterinarian's opinion is that the horse should not be allowed to be in contact with the other participants or should not take part in the event, the case must be referred to the Ground Jury and the Veterinary Commission/Delegate for a final decision.

Following a Veterinary Examination:

- a) Any horse, which is considered to be a health risk to other horses at the event, must be refused permission to enter the event stables. It may however, be stabled in separate isolation stables pending recovery or until alternative arrangements have been made;
- b) Any horse, which is not considered to be fit to participate in the event, must be reported to the Ground Jury. The Veterinary Commission/Delegate should discuss the case with the Ground Jury which is responsible for making the decision, if necessary, to eliminate the horse before the First Horse Inspection;
- c) Mares may not compete after their fourth month of pregnancy or with a foal at foot. If it is subsequently confirmed that a mare competed under either of these conditions, she will be disqualified from all events to which these conditions applied and the Person Responsible will be referred to the Secretary General for reference to the Judicial Committee;
- d) Horses may not compete with a tracheotomy (i.e. a surgical opening through the skin into the trachea) or after a neurectomy has been carried out;
- e) Tongue straps or guards for horses are not permitted in any FEI competitions; and
- f) Shock wave therapy (i.e. Extra-Corporal Shockwave, ESWT) and Cryo-therapy are not permitted during competition and for a period of five days prior to the first Horse Inspection. The application of ice is acceptable.

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## HORSE INSPECTIONS

A Horse Inspection has been scheduled 24 hours prior to the start of competition at the Australian Interschola Championships:

- To identify horses
- To ensure soundness and health of horses
- To provide a learning opportunity for junior athletes

The aim of the Horse Inspection is to ensure the "fitness to compete" of horses taking part in competitions by providing the same objective protocol for all disciplines. At the Australian Interschola Championships the Horse Inspections on Day One may also be used to establish the identity of horses taking part in the competition (more usually carried out during the Veterinary Inspection upon arrival to the stables at an FEI event) and is specifically intended to give athletes experience in presenting their horse at an inspection under the conditions they will encounter at FEI events.

At the Australian Interschola Championships there may be more than one Horse Inspection scheduled, due to the number of horses participating. Should this be the case, groups will be arranged by discipline or age group of riders. Horses will not be presented in more than one Horse Inspection. In the case of a horse competing in more than one discipline, it must be presented in the discipline group that it will be competing in first.

### Rules for Horse Inspection

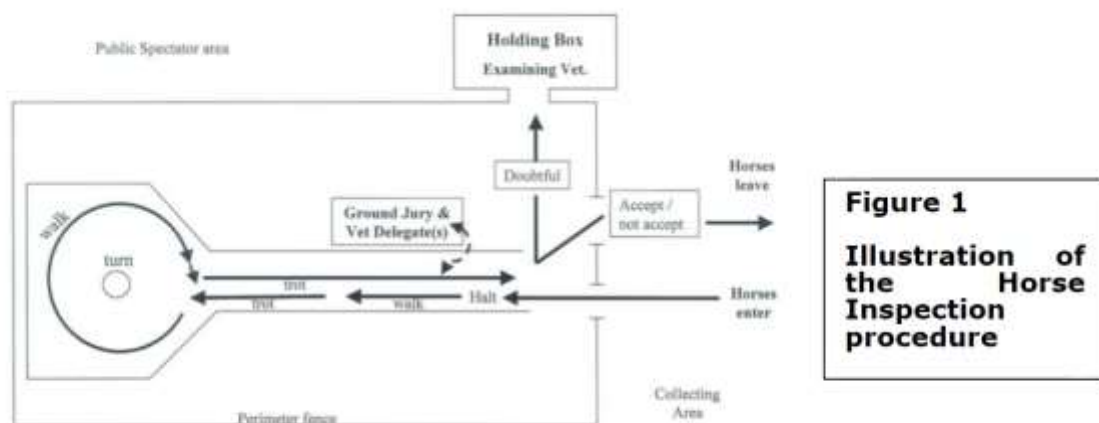
- Horses are to be presented in a snaffle bridle with ID number
- Handlers are to be neatly dressed and wearing enclosed shoes
- No rugs or bandages
- No dye or paint on horses
- Hooves must not be blackened or coloured in any way
- Whips are not allowed (unless permission is given by the President of the Ground Jury)
- Plaiting is not required

The person responsible (the nominated athlete of the horse) should present the horse for inspection unless prior permission to have a substitute lead the horse has been granted by the Inspection Panel (through the Chief Steward/Organising Committee). The handler must stand the horse correctly at the spot indicated, preferably in front of, and facing the horse. Should the athlete not be able to safely hold the horse in a specified manner they may stand the horse from the near side.

The veterinarian will walk around the horse to carry out a brief visual inspection of the horse. The horse will be compared to its identification papers. After the visual inspection, the horse will be walked for a short distance (about 5 metres/10 paces) and then trotted on a loose rein for 30-40 metres, with the handler on the left side of the horse. The veterinarian watches the horse from the center of the inspection track. The horse is then walked and turned to the right around the market at the end of the track before being trotted back towards the Inspection Panel.

The Inspection Panel then makes a decision, taking into account the opinion of the veterinarian to accept, to not accept, or to refer the horse to the holding box for examination and re-inspection. The responsibility for accepting or not accepting horses to compete is shared between the Ground Jury and the Veterinary Delegate, but should be based on the professional opinion of the veterinarian.

The decision of the Inspection Panel is final and there can be no appeal.



**Figure 1**  
**Illustration of the Horse Inspection procedure**

## HORSE IDENTITY DOCUMENTATION

Horses do not require an FEI Passport but do require their EA Registration papers in order to compete.

## SAMPLING FOR PROHIBITED SUBSTANCES

Medication control sampling (swabbing) is compulsory at all Australian Interschool Championships. A minimum of three horses or 3% of horses taking part (whichever is the greater) will be sampled.

Emergency treatments of horses with prohibited substances during the competition and in the immediate pre competition period require the permission/authorisation of the event veterinarians.

Competitors should refer to the EA Equine Anti-Doping and Medication Control Rules ([www.vic.equestrian.org.au](http://www.vic.equestrian.org.au)) and discuss any treatment for their horses with their veterinarian.

## SOUNDNESS

The Judges are required to satisfy themselves regarding soundness of all horses and under EA Sport Rules they have the authority to stop an unsound horse during the competition or from competing.

## HENDRA VIRUS STATEMENT

Hendra virus is a virus carried by flying foxes, that can spread to horses and then to people. Symptoms are similar to colic.

The likelihood of contracting Hendra virus is rare but the consequences can be fatal. To date, most cases have been reported in coastal Queensland and the north coast of NSW. A small number of people have been infected with Hendra virus, resulting from very close contact with infected horses (either sick horses or during autopsies). There have been no reported cases of human-to-human, bat-to-human, or human-to-horse spread of Hendra virus.

The NSW DPI states in its Primefact 970 “vaccination is the single most effective way of reducing the risk of Hendra virus infection in horses”.

Equestrian NSW, which is staging the 2015 Australian Interschola Equestrian Championships, has a duty under Workplace Health and Safety legislation to provide a safe competition. Welfare of our horses is also the founding principle under FEI and Equestrian Australia rules.

How Equestrian NSW will manage the risk of the Hendra virus and other biosecurity risks, to be as low as reasonably practical, is detailed in the Event Biosecurity Plan sent to all Team Managers for distribution.

If a Hendra virus case does occur at the event, insurance cover can't be guaranteed as a Hendra virus case has not occurred at an Equestrian Australia sanctioned competition, so there hasn't been any precedent established.

Equestrian NSW gives notice, that in submitting your entry to participate in the event, YOU WAIVE ANY RIGHT TO SEEK COMPENSATION OF ANY TYPE FROM EQUESTRIAN NSW, SYDNEY INTERNATIONAL EQUESTRIAN CENTRE, OR ANY OF THEIR OFFICERS, SERVENTS OR AGENTS FOR ANY LOSS, INJURY OR OTHER DAMAGE ARISING IN ANY WAY WHATSOEVER, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE HENDRA VIRUS IN ANY HORSE OR PERSON ATTENDING THE EVENT OR FROM ANY PERSON OR ANIMAL CONTRACTING ANY ILLNESS OR DISABILITY, FROM THE HENDRA VIRUS, WHETHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY OR HOWSOEVER OTHERWISE.

## TRANSPORTING HORSES LONG DISTANCES

Below is some information regarding the transportation of horses over large distances. A horse being transported long distances may experience stress and discomfort that could precipitate disease. Fortunately – these are rare occurrences that can be mitigated with good management.

The Major Diseases/Problems are

- Pleuropneumonia – Travelling Sickness
- Laminitis
- Off Food/Water – weight loss and dehydration
- Colic/Enteritis/Colitis Syndrome
- Stress/Anxiety

### **Pleuropneumonia – Travelling Sickness/Shipping Fever**

"Travel sickness" is the colloquial term used to describe the bacterial disease in the lungs and chest cavity in horses that sometimes follows road and air transportation. The condition is technically known as pleuropneumonia, and apart from being associated with transportation, it may also develop following viral illness ("colds"), strenuous exercise, or general anaesthesia and surgery.

### **What Causes Travel Sickness?**

The horse's respiratory tract has a number of defense mechanisms which are involved in the removal of secretions and debris from the lungs to the throat, and in the destruction of bacteria in the lungs. While a horse is being transported, particularly over long distances (and therefore over a long time), these defence mechanisms are compromised and there is impairment of the horse's ability to clear normal contaminants, thereby allowing increased numbers of bacteria to gain access to the lung tissue.

Horses can undergo considerable stress when they are transported for any significant length of time. There are a number of important factors involved: Most horses will lose weight during transportation for extended periods since they are unlikely to drink or eat much during this time. The water loss will lead to a drying of the lining of the airways, thereby reducing the ability of the lungs and trachea (windpipe) to clear bacteria and airway mucus.

There is considerable muscular activity, particularly during road transportation, as the horse works hard to retain its footing. The increases in muscle enzymes after 6 hours of road transportation are equivalent to those after a race.

There are changes in stress hormone levels as a result of transportation. The most important hormonal change is an increase in cortisol levels, which is associated with reduced immunity and can reduce the ability of cells within the lungs and airways to destroy bacteria. Factors such as age, gender and the degree of prior experience can influence how a particular horse responds to this stress.

Transport of horses is usually associated with the confinement of horses in individual compartments with their heads elevated. Studies at the University of Sydney's Veterinary Faculty have shown that when horses are unable to lower their heads for a period of time, they are unable to clear their normal airway secretions. The inability to periodically lower the head is associated with greatly increased numbers of bacteria in the airways. Continued confinement leads to the accumulation of pus in the airways, with further impairment of the clearance of secretions.

Inadequate ventilation within transport vehicles and the inhalation of exhaust gases and small particles may be associated with the accumulation of substances which impair clearance of secretions, damage the lining of the airways, or impair the ability of lung cells to kill bacteria.

The combination of these factors can lead to inflammation of the airways with damage to the airway lining, bacterial invasion of the lung tissue (pneumonia), and extension into the pleural space (pleuritis). Affected horses are febrile, depressed and can appear colicky. Intensive treatment with antibiotics is required to manage horses with pleuropneumonia. In severe cases, return to athletic function is unlikely, and death is not uncommon. Studies at the University of Sydney have shown that the bacteria involved in pleuropneumonia are not spread from horse to horse but are "opportunistic pathogens", that is, bacteria which normally live in parts of the body without causing disease, but due to factors such as those outlined above, can infect other parts of the body such as the lungs which normally do not have a resident bacterial population. The bacteria isolated in the lungs of sick horses appear to be the same as those found in the mouth and throat of normal horses.

#### **What to Watch For – The Danger Signs**

- Rapid breathing (tachypnea)
- Difficulty breathing (dyspnea)
- Fever – over 39.5 degrees (digital thermometer)
- Nasal discharge that may be clear or may look like pus
- Poor appetite
- Weight loss
- Elevated Heart Rate
- Decreased exercise tolerance
- Dullness to profound depression
- Fetid nasal breath
- Enlarged submandibular lymph nodes (they lie under your horse's jaw)
- Cough, especially if productive – horses often look as though they are chewing or swallowing after a productive cough

#### **Recommendations to Help Prevent Pleuropneumonia (Travel Sickness)**

- Minimise lower respiratory tract contamination.
- Increased bacterial contamination and the accumulation of pus in the airways usually occurs after 12 to 24 hours of transportation, but may be apparent within 6 hours in some horses.
- It takes about 12 hours to clear the bacteria and secretions that accumulate after elevation of the head for 24 hours. The treatment of horses with antibiotics before or during transport has no influence on the accumulation of secretions and bacteria.
- Prevent entry of bacteria into the lungs.
- Increased bacterial contamination of the lower respiratory tract is unavoidable if horses are transported with their heads elevated for a significant period (may be at least 6 hours). It is therefore important to minimise the extension of this



airway contamination to the lung tissue. Transportation over long distances should be broken up into 12 hour stages with 8 to 12 hour rest periods between stages. Horses should be fed from the ground after travel to assist in the clearance of contaminated secretions from the lower airways.

- It is important to ensure that horses are in good health prior to long distance road, or air, transport. Horses with mild or subclinical viral infections prior to transportation are more likely to develop pleuropneumonia with transport. The likelihood of such infections can be monitored by daily measurement of rectal temperature in horses due to be transported by road over long distances or by air.
- More recent studies have indicated that the lung's defence mechanisms may be compromised for at least 36 hours after long road or air transportation, suggesting that horses may require a number of days to recover from the stress associated with such travel.

#### **Laminitis - What to look for:**

- Risk factors – overfed/obese horse (show horses)
- Lameness
- Stiffness
- Shuffling stance
- Can't move
- Lies Down in the Float
- Strong Digital pulse (know how to assess it)

#### **Off Food/Water – weight loss and dehydration**

- Take along your horse's favourite food
- Try putting apples in water bucket
- Use Water additives (electrolytes/molasses) to aid in drinking
- Consider Gastric Ulcer Medication (omeprazole – Gastrozol, get veterinary advice)

#### **Suggested Travel Medical Kit**

- Emergency treatments – wounds, lacerations
- Bandages, disinfectant, wound creams
- Dehydration – electrolytes, appetite stimulant
- Anti-inflammatories (bute, Finadyne – get veterinary advice before use, these are swabbable)
- Eye Treatments
- Creams, ointment
- Drug Rule Book/Medication Log Book
- Diagnostic tools
- Digital Thermometer
- Stethoscope
- Some Examples of Therapeutics

#### **TIPS TO REDUCE TRAVELLING DISEASES**

- Only transport healthy horses, watch for coughs
- Travel at night/morning to reduce heat stress. Reduce cramping, excessive noise, heat, high speed driving, try and get there promptly.
- Provide dampened hay low down or green pick
- Don't tie head too short
- Ensure adequate air flow, do not stay stationary for too long without off loading
- On longer trips, try to stop every 8 – 10 hours and off load to enable horses to “stretch their legs”
- Cover with a light rug to avoid dust, keep float upper back doors closed
- Put absorbent on the floor
- Travel near the front on large transports
- Post arrival vet examination/blood test
- Arrive at least 3-5 days before competition begins to allow time for recovery

#### **PRE-TRAVELLING TREATMENT SUGGESTIONS**

- General health check +/- blood test
- Comprehensive Emergency First Aid Kit – talk to your vet
- Electrolytes/Hydration (saline drench/IV fluids pre transport if weather is hot)
- Supplement with oral Tonics – Vitamins
- Reduce Grain/Nutrition in the diet immediately pre-transport
- ANTIBIOTICS pre and during travel are recommended (get veterinary advice)
- Continual assessment, especially rectal temperature
- Veterinary Management Plan for all the “issues”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sources:

QLD 2012, WA 2013, VIC 2014 Australian Interschola Championship Biosecurity Plans