

## **IFHA Principles of Good Practice for Activities to minimise injury and other conditions associated with training and racing and to optimise horse welfare**

### **Preamble**

1. Training and veterinary activities are fundamental to maintaining and enhancing not only the safety and welfare of horses and participants but also of the integrity of racing and the economics of horse ownership.
2. Therefore racing authorities should take a proactive role in guiding the industry towards achieving excellence in the conditioning of equine athletes, the provision of sports-medicine services and in the design and maintenance of training facilities.

### **The Key Result Factors**

3. Some important factors that impact on horse welfare and safety in horseracing are;
  - a. The rules, regulations and policies of racing authorities;
  - b. Training and racing surfaces and other training support facilities;
  - c. The knowledge, experience and ethics of horse trainers and stable personnel;
  - d. The knowledge, experience and ethics of veterinary practitioners and other health services providers including farriers;
  - e. Investment in equine research and development;
  - f. The culture within the racing industry that places the safety and the welfare of the horse as a critical priority.

### **The Role of Racing Authorities**

4. It is important that racing authorities provide rules, policies and guidelines that require and encourage a culture of welfare, safety and integrity in horseracing.
5. Rules, regulations and policies should be implemented to address the following matters;
  - The assessment of the suitability of horses to participate in races including provision for ordering compulsory pre-race inspections under certain circumstances;
  - Ensuring appropriate rest and rehabilitation after injury and illness including provision for compulsory stand-down periods for certain conditions such as exercise induced pulmonary haemorrhage syndrome with epistaxis, significant cardiac irregularities, some lamenesses and other conditions as assessed appropriate by the racing authority;
  - Identifying and controlling prohibited practices that may adversely affect the safety and welfare of horses in racing and training;
  - The assessment and control of the veterinary suitability of horses to return to racing after injury or illness;
  - The assessment and control of the veterinary suitability of horses to be maintained in training;
  - The education and regulation of equine health service providers including veterinarians, farriers and other para-veterinary service providers to ensure that spirit of Article 6D of the International Agreement on Breeding, Racing and Wagering is always respected;
  - The prevention of cruelty, neglect and sub-standard husbandry;
  - Ensuring appropriate biosecurity, infectious disease control, hygiene and the availability of preventative medicine services;
  - The provision of injury and incident management services on race day.

### **Racing and Training Surfaces**

6. The construction and maintenance of training and racing facilities are expensive and challenging undertakings for racing clubs which are often faced with competing demands and environmental constraints.
7. While it is not appropriate for racing authorities to be overly prescriptive in the design and maintenance of training facilities, it necessary that certain principles and standards be promulgated and adhered to by those responsible for facilities.
8. Racecourse and training facilities management and staff should be provided with appropriate training, access to expert consultation services and the necessary staff and equipment to deliver safe and consistent racing and training surfaces.

### **Trainer Knowledge, Experience and Ethics**

9. The training and conditioning of racehorses is an art but it is an art that must be based on scientific principles. Horse trainers are responsible for the primary care of racehorses and for presenting them in a suitable condition to race. Horse trainers are professionals and must be expected to obtain and continually update the knowledge required for them to comply with the rules of racing, to optimise the health and athletic performance of horses and also to enhance the safety and welfare of horses under their care.
10. Therefore, while the art of training must be learnt through experience, racing authorities should ensure that the licensing process requires potential licensed trainers to demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge of the principles of athletic conditioning and exercise physiology to provide the scientific base on which they can build their skills.
11. In addition, a system of continuing education of trainers (as is required for any profession) should be implemented and supervised by the relevant racing authority.

### **Veterinary Practitioner Knowledge, Experience and Ethics**

12. The registration and regulation of veterinary practitioners are managed by national and/or state Veterinary Practitioner Boards. However there are unique legal and ethical obligations associated with the provision of veterinary services to racehorses including compliance with the rules of racing, the reputation of racing and the safety and welfare of both horses and their riders.
13. It is appropriate that racing authorities should provide training and guidelines for legal and ethical best practice for veterinary practitioners. Such guidelines should be based on the fundamental principle provided by Article 6 D of the International Agreement on Breeding, Racing and Wagering that requires that all treatments administered to racehorses must be medically and ethically justifiable.
14. Racing authorities are ultimately responsible for providing an environment in which the image of racing, the integrity of racing and the safety and welfare of all participants, both equine and human, are maintained to the highest possible standards. Therefore racing authorities should consider how veterinary practitioners may be best regulated to ensure, as far as is possible, their ethical behaviour in the treatment of racehorses. Such initiatives may include;
  - Providing educational programs;

- Forming relationships with other regulatory bodies such as Veterinary Practitioner Boards, professional veterinary organisations and animal welfare groups to influence the education and regulation of practitioners;
  - Implementing a system of permits or license issued by the racing authority system to control practitioners providing veterinary services to racehorses in training.
15. The initiatives recommended for veterinary practitioners should also be applied to farriers and other equine health services providers.

### **Research and Development**

16. The support of research aimed at better understanding the pathophysiology of the conditions that impact on the safety and welfare of racehorses and also on economics of horse ownership by racing authorities has, in general, been sporadic, uncoordinated and inadequate.
17. It is only by better understanding the cause and nature of conditions that cause acute injury, chronic degenerative conditions, chronic pain, distress and premature retirement that positive evidence-based initiatives may be implemented to achieve real and consistent improvement in racehorse welfare.
18. Racing authorities should therefore facilitate the conduct of relevant, practical and efficient research into the veterinary conditions and environmental factors, including track design and maintenance, which can be demonstrated to have a major impact on horse safety and welfare.
19. Such facilitation may include direct funding of selected research projects, forming research and development partnerships with Universities or other organisations, and the support of internal investigations and data collection projects.

### **Developing a culture of ethical treatment of the equine athlete**

20. It is imperative that the culture of the veterinary treatment of racehorses is changed from one of providing services and medication that push the envelope of legality to enhance athletic performance to a culture in which the health, soundness and wellness of the equine athlete is the paramount priority and the means by which a stable/training establishment can obtain a competitive advantage.
21. Achieving this objective will require positive measures to provide incentives for stables to optimise health and welfare and to provide disincentives to stables overly reliant of medication and drugs. Strict control of medication and practices that may be used to mask veterinary conditions in competition or to facilitate the training of compromised equine athletes should be enforced by racing authorities.
22. A 'whole of life' approach to racehorse welfare should be adopted by racing authorities to ensure that, at all stages in the horse's life cycle, excellent husbandry and training practices are adopted by those professionals managing the breeding industry, the pre-training and early conditioning phase of training and full race training so that, at all stages, the horse's durability, psychological welfare and physical and mental preparedness to train and compete in races are optimised.

### **Biosecurity, hygiene and preventative medicine**

23. Infectious disease impacts on both horse welfare and the economics of horseracing.

24. Racing authorities should ensure that appropriate biosecurity, hygiene, vaccination and disease monitoring systems are implemented in all training facilities, and that these systems are supported by the rules of racing.