



香港賽馬會  
The Hong Kong Jockey Club

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# **Welfare of Retired and Equestrian Horses**

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**1. POLICY STATEMENT .....3**

**2. DEFINITIONS.....3**

**3. INTRODUCTION.....4**

**4. PURPOSE .....4**

**5. GENERAL BIOSECURITY GUIDELINES AND DISEASE CONTROL MEASURES .....4**

**6. TRAINING AND RECOVERY .....5**

**7. BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING.....6**

**8. USE OF THE WHIP .....6**

**9. USE OF SPURS.....7**

**10. USE OF TACK AND TRAINING AIDS.....7**

**11. DOPING, MEDICATION AND EUTHANASIA.....8**

**ANNEX 1: BODY CONDITION SCORE (BCS) CHART .....9**

## **1. Policy Statement**

The Hong Kong Jockey Club (The Club) is committed to maintaining and continually improving the health, safety, and welfare of retired and equestrian horses stabled in Hong Kong and Conghua.

Every horse is entitled to live in a safe and comfortable environment and be provided with the highest possible standards of care, with preventive health programmes and disease surveillance programmes designed to maintain a high herd health status and identify any presence of exotic equine disease as soon as possible.

## **2. Definitions**

For the purposes of this document:

- 2.1. “The Club” and “HKJC” refers to the Hong Kong Jockey Club.
- 2.2. “BREC” refers to the Beas River Equestrian Centre and all associated business units.
- 2.3. “Club premises” refers collectively to BREC and PRS and for the avoidance of doubt, all business units of BREC.
- 2.4. “Riding School” refers collectively to all premises stabling retired and equestrian horses in Hong Kong or CRC.
- 2.5. “Relevant persons” refers to any person that is, a rider, a riding school employee, (including, but not limited to equestrian assistants, stable staff, stable manager or supervisor), an event official, a veterinarian, a farrier, a para-veterinary service provider, a consultant, or any person that may have any interaction with a horse stabled in a premises as detailed above.
- 2.6. “EAD” refers to the Club’s Equestrian Affairs Department.
- 2.7. “EAD Management” refers to the Head of Equestrian Affairs and the senior management at each HKJC riding school.
- 2.8. “DVCS” refers to the Club’s Department of Veterinary Clinical Services.
- 2.9. “HVCS” refers to Head of Veterinary Clinical Services.
- 2.10. “AFCD” refers to the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, The Government of the HKSAR.
- 2.11. “Equestrian activities” includes riding lessons, shows and competitions, stable management lessons, pony parties, equine practical lessons, BHS Stage training and BHS Stage exams, hacking, retraining, recuperation and rehabilitation programmes, or any other equestrian related activity.

- 2.12. “Horse”, “horses” or “riding school horses” refers to all retired racehorses and/or equestrian horses and ponies in the care of a riding school and/or stabled on a Club or riding school premises, including privately owned horses.
- 2.13. “FEI” refers to Fédération Equestre Internationale.
- 2.14. “Welfare” refers to the provision of all horses with a quality of life that delivers “a life worth living” and goes beyond the provision of basic needs and the absence of neglect and cruelty.
- 2.15. “Neglect” is defined to be any failure to provide adequate shelter, food and water, failure to ensure a safe and healthy environment, or failure to provide routine preventive care, farriery, or seek prompt veterinary treatment for any horse that is ill or injured.

### **3. Introduction**

- 3.1. The Hong Kong horse population remains free of the most serious of infectious equine disease, and it is important for all persons involved in equestrian activities to recognise the vital role that we all play in maintaining the international equine health status of Hong Kong.
- 3.2. The Club expects that all persons involved in equestrian activities are dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of horses.
- 3.3. Veterinary expertise is always available. If a relevant person has any doubts over the health or welfare status of a horse, advice from a Club veterinarian should be sought.

### **4. Purpose**

- 4.1. This Code is to provide guidelines regarding the standard of care that must be provided to all retired and equestrian horses to promote their health and welfare.

### **5. General Biosecurity Guidelines and Disease Control Measures**

- 5.1. The objective of biosecurity procedures is to prevent the entry of infectious disease into a riding school, and if a disease does enter the riding school, to minimise its spread amongst the resident, and wider national, population.
- 5.2. When required to do so by AFCD or DVCS, any relevant person who has visited another riding facility should shower, completely change their clothing, and clean and disinfect their footwear before coming into contact with any horse at the Riding School.

- 5.3. Any relevant person who has visited a Mainland horse facility must abide by the “*General Conditions of Entry to Enter Hong Kong Horse Facilities*”, a copy of which must be displayed on the Riding School notice board.

## **6. Training and Recovery**

- 6.1. The health, safety and well-being of the horse must never be subordinated to competitive or commercial influences.
- 6.2. Horses must only undergo exercise, training and competition that matches their physical capabilities and level of maturity for their respective discipline(s).
- 6.3. Horses must not be worked at such an intensity or frequency that is likely to cause exhaustion, heat stress, injury or distress.
- 6.4. Horses must not be subjected to training or handling methods which are abusive, or cause fear or suffering.
- 6.5. Weather and climate conditions must be taken into account during training and exercise. Be aware of the horse’s condition and behaviour; exercise must not take place in extreme weather conditions that may compromise welfare or safety of the horse. The “*Hot Weather Advice for Hong Kong Riding Schools*” issued by the DVCS should be followed.
- 6.6. Extreme caution is required when exercising horses diagnosed with anhydrosis (‘dry-coatedness’ or the inability to sweat). The management and monitoring of horses with anhydrosis should be agreed with the DVCS and the relevant Riding School Manager or relevant Supervisor. It is advised that where possible, a horse found to have anhydrosis Grade 2 or 3 is stabled in an air-conditioned environment during hot weather on welfare grounds. A horse found to be Grade 1 should be carefully monitored and offered respite from environmental heat when required.
- 6.7. Horses must be allowed sufficient rest periods between lessons, training and exercise. Rest periods must be monitored to ensure each horse’s recovery: that the horse has cooled down and is ceased sweating; respiration and pulse rates are at a resting rate; and that the horse is not showing signs of exhaustion or discomfort. Rest periods should be without tack on.
- 6.8. Participation in competition must be restricted to ‘fit’ horses (i.e. horses who have the physical ability to cope with the workload of competition and training without undue exhaustion, heat stress, injury or distress), and riders of proven competence. Horses must be allowed rest periods between training and competitions.
- 6.9. Veterinary advice should be sought whenever there is any doubt about a horse’s suitability to continue training or compete in an event. No horse deemed unfit to compete may compete or continue to compete. The decision of the Club Veterinarian shall be final.

## **7. Behaviour and Handling**

- 7.1. Encouraging desirable behaviours and appropriate responses in horses (as well as discouraging undesirable behaviours and responses) requires an understanding of basic learning theory. As such, inexperienced riders and handlers should seek the advice of a riding instructor or veterinarian where correction of unwelcome behaviour(s) is required.
- 7.2. Horses must be handled in a competent and calm manner. Respond quietly and promptly to signs of fear, agitation or confusion.
- 7.3. Avoid sudden actions or noises that may startle or frighten horses, and do not use excessive and/or unnecessary force when handling horses.
- 7.4. When leading or riding, under no circumstances should a rider or handler use the action of a bit, chifney, halter or stud chain to reprimand a horse.
- 7.5. Abuse of a horse using natural riding aids or artificial aids (e.g. whips, spurs, etc.) is not permitted. If a rider has any doubt about the acceptability of any equipment or aid, the advice of the Riding School's senior instructor must be sought.
- 7.6. Inexperienced riders must always seek the advice of a riding instructor on the appropriate use of equipment and aids.

## **8. Use of the Whip**

- 8.1. There are two reasons why a rider may use a whip: as a method to encourage the horse forwards if it is not listening to the rider's seat and leg aids or as a correctional behaviour measure.
- 8.2. The whip should only be used as a correctional measure where there is a valid reason. If the whip is used, it must be applied at the appropriate time, in the correct place, and proportionately.
- 8.3. Riders using the whip should not bring their arm above elbow height; the horse must be given a chance to respond and the stimulus must be limited and reasonable.
- 8.4. The following actions are not acceptable in any circumstances:
  - 8.4.1. Using any other implement instead of a manufactured whip.
  - 8.4.2. Using the whip in an attempt to pre-empt poor behaviour.
  - 8.4.3. Venting anger and frustration by use of the whip.
  - 8.4.4. Use of the whip around the horse's head and neck.
  - 8.4.5. Using the whip more than three times for any incident. Above this would be considered excessive.
  - 8.4.6. Whip use that leaves marks, breaks in the skin or welts.

- 8.5. To help stop a rearing horse, discretion, common sense, and safety and welfare of both horse and rider should be applied to the situation.

## **9. Use of Spurs**

- 9.1. Spurs should only be used by competent riders. In lessons, or when riding HKJC riding school horses, spurs should only be used with the approval of a riding instructor.
- 9.2. Riders wearing spurs should understand how to apply and use the spurs correctly; spurs should be used to refine the riding aids (commands) and to back up the natural aids (the leg, seat, hands and voice), directing a horse to move forward or laterally. Spurs should not be used as a replacement to natural aids.
- 9.3. Spurs of excessively severe design must not be worn: Spurs must be of smooth material (metal or plastic). If there is a shank it must not be more than 3cm long (the overall shank must be measured from the boot to the end of the spur) and must point only towards the rear. The end of the shank must be blunt to prevent wounding a horse. If the shank is curved, the spurs must be worn only with the shank directed downwards.
- 9.4. Spurs should not be used to reprimand a horse.
- 9.5. Intentional use of spurs that leave marks or breaks in the skin is not acceptable.
- 9.6. The use of spurs should cease on horses which have spur rubs or marks until the affected area has fully healed.

## **10. Use of Tack and Training Aids**

- 10.1. Tack and training aids should be correctly fitted and regular checks should be carried out to ensure that the fit of saddlery has not changed through routine use or change in body condition. Tack should only be left on for the minimum time necessary. Tack should always be removed if a horse is on a rest period.
- 10.2. Exercise boots and bandages, if used, should be suitable for purpose, correctly fitted to avoid discomfort or injury and only left on for the minimum time necessary.
- 10.3. No item of saddlery or training aid should be used or misused to reprimand a horse, or intentionally to cause pain or discomfort. Training aids must not compromise the horse's well-being by causing unreasonable stress, pain or suffering in any way.
- 10.4. Regular saddle fitting checks are recommended and can be performed by the Club's Master Saddler if requested.
- 10.5. The correct fitting and use of training aids is vital (e.g. the chambon, de gogue, pessa, harbridge, draw reins or a bungee). Users should know the mechanics of the

training aid and what it is aiming to achieve, how to fit it, and the correct amount of pressure and tension to apply. If in doubt, users must seek professional advice.

- 10.6. Hyperflexion, also known as extreme flexion, is flexion of the horse's neck achieved through aggressive force and is not acceptable.
- 10.7. A horse should not be forced into an outline from the use of a training aid, but instead encouraged to work correctly. When working correctly and in flexion (achieved without force), the same flexion position should not be held for more than ten minutes at a time.
- 10.8. Ensure new or inexperienced horses are allowed time to become familiar with new tack or training aids.

## **11. Doping, Medication and Euthanasia**

- 11.1. The administration of any drug or medicine to a horse without the prescription of a Club Veterinarian, and any breach of the FEI Equine Anti-Doping & Controlled Medication Regulations, is not permitted.
- 11.2. Stable Managers, or their delegate, should maintain a log of all medication administered orally to horses in their care for inspection on a monthly basis by the attending Club Veterinary Surgeon.



**Annex 1: Body Condition Score (BCS) Chart**

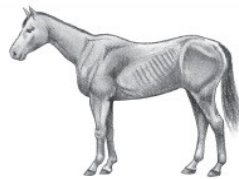
**Body Condition Score Chart**

**Areas of emphasis for body condition scoring:** thickening of the neck, fat covering the withers, fat deposits along backbone, fat deposits on flanks, fat deposits on inner thighs, fat deposits around tailhead, fat deposits behind shoulders, fat covering ribs, shoulder blends into neck



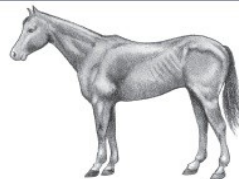
**1 Poor**

Animal extremely emaciated; spine, ribs, tailhead, points of hip and buttock projecting prominently; bone structure of withers, shoulders, and neck easily noticeable; no fatty tissue can be felt.



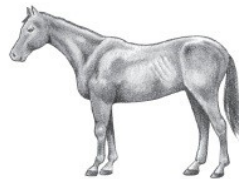
**2 Very Thin**

Animal emaciated; slight fat covering over base of spine; ribs, tailhead, points of hip and buttock prominent; withers, shoulders, and neck structure faintly discernable.



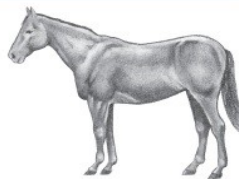
**3 Thin**

Fat buildup about halfway on spine; slight fat cover over ribs; spine and ribs easily discernable; tailhead prominent, but individual vertebrae cannot be identified visually; points of hip appear rounded but easily discernable; points of buttock not distinguishable; withers, shoulders, and neck accentuated.



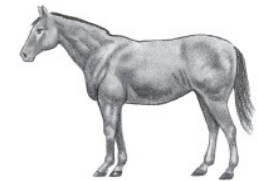
**4 Moderately Thin**

Slight ridge along back; faint outline of ribs discernable; tailhead prominence depends on conformation, fat can be felt around it; points of hip not discernable; withers, shoulders, and neck not obviously thin.



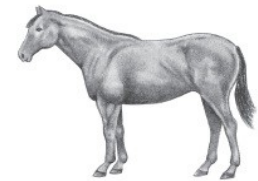
**5 Moderate**

Back is flat (no crease or ridge); ribs not visually distinguishable but easily felt; fat around tailhead beginning to feel spongy; withers appear rounded over spine; shoulders and neck blend smoothly into body.



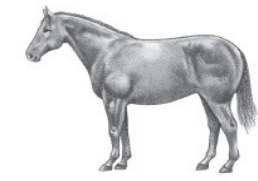
**6 Moderately Fleshy**

May have slight crease down back; fat over ribs fleshy/spongy; fat around tailhead soft; fat beginning to be deposited along sides of withers, behind shoulders, and along sides of neck.



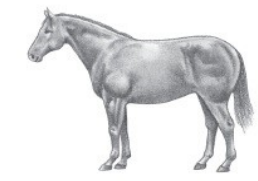
**7 Fleshy**

May have crease down back; individual ribs can be felt, but noticeable filling between ribs with fat; fat around tailhead soft; fat deposited along withers, behind shoulders, and along neck.



**8 Fat**

Crease down back; difficult to feel ribs; fat around tailhead very soft; area along withers filled with fat; area behind shoulders filled with fat; noticeable thickening of neck; fat deposited along inner thighs.



**9 Extremely Fat**

Obvious crease down back; patchy fat appearing.

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