Non-Government Schools Animal Ethics Committee

ANIMAL CARE INFORMATION SHEET

The document outlines the guidelines and activities related to horse care in schools, emphasising the importance of safety and veterinary collaboration.

Horses

Scientific Name:	***Equus caballus***
Activities requiring School Principal approval only:	Capture, restraint and handling of horses Training for competition/showing Coat care and grooming Coat clipping Administration of eye drops, creams, ointments, bandages Collection of faecal and urine samples (non-invasive) Measurements of body condition, height and weight Measurement of heart rate and respiration Hoof trimming Mustering, yarding and draughting of horses Loading of horses Transporting horses
Activities requiring NGSAEC approval *prior* to the commencement of the activity:	Administration of subcutaneous, intramuscular, and intravenous injections Freeze branding of horses Semen collection from horses Breeding of horses using artificial insemination Collection of faeces or blood (invasive) Breaking in horses
Approval Level:	Where an activity is not listed in this **Animal Care Information Sheet (ACIS)**, advice must be sought from the Non-Government Schools Animal Ethics Committee (NGSAEC) and confirmed before it can be undertaken.
Authority:	**Independent and Catholic Schools** – Non-Government Schools Animal Ethics Committee
Disclaimer:	This document is reviewed annually. You should check the website regularly to ensure that you are meeting the most recent recommendations. If you note any concerns with the information provided (inadequate, incorrect) please contact the NGSAEC.
Licensing Requirement:	Check the Department for Environment and Water website for further details www.environment.sa.gov.au
Compliance Requirement:	The keeping of this species requires approval from the School Principal or the NGSAEC. It is recommended that this **Animal Care Information Sheet (ACIS)** be followed as a minimum in the provision of appropriate care and housing for this species.

General Information:	There is a range of breeds in use in Australia. These can **be** classified according to activity: • Olympic disciplines – e.g.: Thoroughbred/Warmblood • Showing and pleasure/trail riding - e.g.: all breeds • Racing- e.g., Thoroughbred; • Harness Racing – e.g., Standardbred; • Western – e.g., all breeds but especially Appaloosa, • Heavy Harness – e.g., Clydesdale, Draught, Percheron • Farm work – e.g., Stockhorse, Quarter Horse; and • Endurance riding – e.g., Arabians, Anglo Arabs, Stockhorse Horses are measured in hands. A horse over 14 hands two inches is deemed a horse, whereas anything under 14 hands two inches is deemed a pony. Safety is paramount when undertaking any activities with horses. Schools should choose horses that are accustomed to these activities with a quiet disposition. ***Pre-purchase examinations by a veterinarian and Hendra virus vaccination status of the horse should be considered by all schools when using horses for school activities*.**
Physical Attributes:	• **Size:** at the withers varies between breeds. Measured in hands (1 hand = 100 mm). (e.g., Shetland pony, approx. eight hands, draught breed, 18-20 hands) • **Weight:** varies with breed – for example, 130 kg (miniature horse) – 900 kg (Percheron) • **Age at adult size:** four years, but variations between breeds • **Average life span:** 25-35 years • **Range of breeding ages:** mares 3-15 years • **Weaning age:** 6-9 months • **Body temperature:** 38^{o}C • **Heart rate:** 30-40 beats/minute • **Respiration rate:** 12 breaths/minute. Variations between individuals.
Behaviour:	Horses have individual temperaments, and this should be considered when assessing behaviour. Horses are naturally gregarious and, as such, possess a strong herd instinct. Horses kept under domestic circumstances tend to find security in familiar surroundings, likened to the security derived from being members of the herd in the wild. Horses are naturally nervous, excitable, and suspicious of anything new or strange, sudden movements and loud noises. They possess a strong instinctive flight response. Horses may develop abnormal behaviours, such as weaving or windsucking, when kept in unnatural conditions (e.g., confined areas - stables or small yards) that involve social isolation, lack of stimulation or low-roughage diets. Weaving is lateral swaying of the head over the stable door or some other barrier. Wind-sucking and crib-biting may be performed while grasping a surface and involve contraction of the horses' neck muscles and audible grunting. These behaviours tend to persist even when the affected animals are managed more naturally. Crib-biting and windsucking can also occur when horses that are being fed cereals. To deter development, they should be fed small amounts at a time and be offered high-fibre forages. Horses chosen for use in schools should have calm temperaments and be easy to handle. Horses are very much individuals, and the restraint used to handle one horse may not be suitable for another. All horses used in schools should be capable of being restrained adequately with appropriate equipment.
Environment:	**Space:** A horse kept at pasture will require at least one hectare to provide adequate feed. (This will be highly variable, depending upon pasture quality). Supplementation may be required, particularly in summer and winter.

	Pastured horses keep themselves exercised, but horses that are stabled or kept in restrictive yards for extended periods require regular daily exercise. The recommended minimum size for a stable is 3.5 m x 3.5 m (3 m x 3 m for ponies), with a height of at least 2,500 mm, and for a yard, 5 m x 5 m, with some form of shelter. Small yards should have post-and-rail fencing using timber, steel pipes or steel posts. Barbed wire, prefabricated fencing and high-tensile fencing can cause severe injury to horses and should not be used. Horses should be able to see fencing material easily. Bedding is only needed in a stable and should be deep enough to prevent leg injuries. Straw, wood shavings or any absorbent material is suitable, provided that the horse does not eat it. **Temperature**: Horses can cope with most temperature extremes if they have adequate water and some form of shelter. Older horses or those stabled and recently turned out to pasture may require rugging with lined waterproof rugs in cold weather. **Lighting**: Natural light is adequate for horses. Experienced stock people using horses for show purposes or to influence oestrus in breeding mares sometimes employ artificial light. It is unlikely that this need would arise in school situations. **Shelter**: Shelter from heat, wind, and rain, provided by belts of trees or stables, is required. **Ventilation**: Stables should be well-ventilated and free from draughts, and in paddocks, horses need an area protected from the wind. Faeces should be cleaned up regularly to prevent odours from developing. **Cleaning**: Remove dirty bedding from stables at least once a day. To help control worms, manure should be removed from paddocks. Mouldy food should be removed and never fed to horses. Clean water should be offered daily.
Feeding:	**Diet**: Horses will eat dry matter equivalent to about 1.5 to 2.5 per cent of their body weight per day. This equates to 1-2 kgs per 100kg of bodyweight per day. If the quantity or quality of pasture is inadequate, supplementary feeding will be necessary. High-fibre feed should always be available. Lucerne hay is a useful source of roughage for horses, supplying all the nutritional requirements for a horse not in work. As horses are unable to digest low- quality feeds efficiently, they should be always provided with good-quality feeds. Factors such as individual tastes, age, size, and the amount of work done by horses will influence their feed requirements. Mature horses not in work can be maintained on pasture if it is of high quality throughout the year. Unlimited access to feed is allowed only when horses are at pasture. Horses have small stomachs, so small amounts, fed more often, are preferable to large amounts given less frequently. Horses are sensitive to feed changes so any changes in diet should be made gradually, over eight to ten days. This minimises the risk of colic, especially if introducing grain or changing grain types or quantities. Do not feed mouldy feed. Beware of poisonous plants, those that are palatable to horses. Low-fibre grains should be avoided unless treated: for example, barley should be boiled or steam rolled. **Supplementary feeding**: Roughages such as legumes, cereal chaffs and hay and concentrates in the form of grains such as oats, barley and corn, pellets and protein meals can be used. If supplementary feed is supplied, they should be fed at least twice a day. **Water**: A horse may drink 25 - 45 litres of water per day. Water and troughs should be clean and free from contamination. Supply water on demand, except after strenuous exercise, when the water should have the chill taken off it and be given in limited quantities until the horse has cooled off. Horses that are limited in their access to water tend to gorge themselves, resulting in colic.
Breeding:	• **Weight at birth:** Shetland 30 kg, draught 100 kg

	• **Gestation period:** 320-345 days (average 335) • **Number of offspring:** Normally one. Twins are rare and associated with low survival rates. Any schools considering breeding of horses should discuss their breeding and management plan with a veterinarian prior to starting. Artificial insemination and semen collection are activities that should only be undertaken by experienced handlers or veterinarians, prior to having approval from the NGSAEC.
Handling:	**Humans**: Horses should be approached in quiet, kind way and handled in low stress, but non-hesitant manner. Schools should choose horses with calm temperaments that require minimal restraint to perform activities. The safety of animals and people must be always monitored when handling horses to avoid injuries to people or horses. **Equipment:** headstall and lead rope. Ensure all equipment is prepared ready for use prior to restraining a horse and horses are returned to their yards promptly once activities are completed. **Transport:** Consideration must be given to horse behaviour when loading and unloading horses. See Section B8 for Specific requirements for the land transport of Sheep in the Land Transport of Livestock Standards and Guidelines for more information in relation to horse transportation.
Hygiene:	Thoroughly wash hands with soap and running water for at least 15 seconds after working or handling any horses. Dry hands with clean paper towel or air dryer. Turn off the tap with the paper towel if possible.
Disease prevention:	Schools are encouraged to seek advice from veterinarians and animal industry representatives and to develop an equine management plan. This plan should outline a calendar of routine husbandry events and treatments (e.g., vaccinations and deworming) the school will undertake throughout the year. Treatments must be documented in the appropriate records. Schools should also develop a farm biosecurity plan to assess risks to their enterprise. ***Due to the high fatality rates associated with Hendra virus in humans having contact with infected horses, it is recommended for schools to vaccinate horses against Hendra virus to protect their horses, staff, students, other animals on the property and surrounding public. While cases have not been reported in South Australia, due to the high movement of horses across Australia the risk cannot be waived.***
Signs of Illness:	**Indicators:** • change in behaviour; • diarrhoea; • weight loss; • loss of appetite; • abortion or infertility; • abnormal discharges from the eyes, ears, mouth, anus, or genitalia; • persistent coughing, gasping, or panting; • lethargy or listless; • abnormal growths or skin lesions; • hair loss, excessive scratching or rubbing; • parasites; • swollen joints, stiff gait, or lameness; • swellings on the head; • rolling and thrashing on the ground; or • failure to thrive or grow.

	Horses should be monitored daily and preferably more often.
Treatments:	Schools are encouraged to develop relationships with a veterinarian and animal industry representatives (e.g., stock agent) familiar with horses. These contacts can be used for disease diagnoses, treatment options and dietary, husbandry and welfare advice. Veterinarians can also assist with advice for activities that may illicit pain where pain relief is required and for emergencies particularly when euthanasia is needed. Treatments must be documented in the appropriate records. Hoof care and mobility are important for horse health and schools should also seek advice from a farrier with regards to hoof shoeing and trimming where appropriate. Conditions on who can perform equine dentistry and pregnancy diagnosis by ultrasound apply. Consult with your equine veterinarian prior to undertaking these activities to comply with relevant legislation.
Euthanasia:	Where an injury or illness is such that recovery is unlikely then a horse must be euthanised by a veterinarian. Schools should contact their local Veterinarian to discuss emergency treatment options prior to an event occurring when keeping horses.
Disposal/fate planning:	Horses can be sold privately at auction or consigned to abattoirs. Carcasses must be disposed of in accordance with local council regulations.
Holiday and weekend care:	Horses can be sent home for the weekend or holiday periods with students providing consent is received from the school principal and the parents on advice from a Veterinarian. For safety reasons particularly, only experienced horse handlers should be caring for horses offsite. Staff should provide carers with animal care and record-keeping instructions, emergency contacts and provide appropriate equipment and food. Transportation should also be appropriate and safe for both humans and horses. Horses must be checked daily, records kept, and any problems reported to the school immediately whether kept onsite or taken offsite.
Approved activities:	Where an activity is not listed in this ACIS, approval must be sought from the NGSAEC and confirmed before it can be undertaken. Safety is paramount when undertaking any activities with horses. All staff and students involved in these activities must understand the risks involved. Schools should choose horses that are accustomed to these activities with a quiet disposition. Pre-purchase examinations undertaken by a veterinarian and Hendra virus vaccination status of the horse should be considered by all schools when using horses for school activities.
Activity:	**Capture, restraint and handling of horses**
Objective:	To instruct students in the safe techniques for capturing, restraining, and handling of horses. Safety is paramount when undertaking any activities with horses. All staff and students involved in these activities must understand the risks involved. Schools should choose horses that are accustomed to these activities with a quiet disposition.
Activity:	**Training for competition / showing**
Objective:	To instruct students in the methods of training horses for competitions and showing Staff must be competent with horse handling and restraint and understand horse behaviour before undertaking these activities.
Activity:	**Coat care and grooming**
Objective:	To instruct students in coat care and grooming horses

	Staff must be competent with horse handling and restraint for grooming and understand horse behaviour before undertaking these activities. This particularly includes the positioning of people in relation to the horse when grooming and desensitising the horses to the equipment (e.g. brushes).
Activity:	**Coat clipping**
Objective:	To instruct students in coat care and grooming horses Staff must be competent with horse handling and restraint for grooming and clipping. They must also understand horse behaviour before undertaking these activities. This particularly includes the positioning of people in relation to the horse when clipping and desensitising the horses to the noise and sensation of clippers used for grooming and other equipment (e.g. brushes).
Activity:	**Administration of eye drops, creams, ointments, bandages**
Objective:	To demonstrate to students the administration of eye drops, creams, ointments, and bandages on horses Staff must be competent with horse handling and restraint for medication administration as required. They must also understand horse behaviour before undertaking these activities. This particularly includes the positioning of people in relation to the horse when administering any of the products listed or applying bandages.
Activity:	**Administration of subcutaneous, intramuscular, and intravenous injections to horses**
Objective:	To demonstrate the administration of subcutaneous, intramuscular, and intravenous injections to students. Schools should discuss treatments with their local Veterinarian prior to the administration of any injections to horses.
Activity:	**Collection of faecal and urine samples (non-invasive)**
Objective:	To demonstrate the non-invasive collection methods for faeces and urine from horses to students. Hygienic practices should be employed including the wearing of gloves when collecting samples. Schools should discuss the needs for such sample collection with their Veterinarian prior to doing so. Faecal samples can be used for parasite detection programs for example.
Activity:	**Measurements of body condition, height and weight**
Objective:	To demonstrate assessing body condition, height, and weight of horses to students. To weigh horses, they will need to be walked onto horse scales by a handler. Alternatively, staff can use a girth tape, or they can be taken to a Veterinary clinic for weighing where the scales are combined into a horse crush. Reasons for routine weighing can include monitoring growth rates, calculating medication doses, accurately assessing nutritional requirements, and providing data for analysis and planning. See the Resources section for more information.
Activity:	**Measurement of heart rate and respiration**
Objective:	To instruct students in the measurement of heart rate and respiration of horses Quick and accurate measurements can be obtained by confining a horse in a small area. Animals that are accustomed to handling should be used. A single animal will suffice however a second horse allows comparisons to be made and improves the accuracy of results.

Activity:	**Hoof trimming**
Objective:	To demonstrate hoof trimming of horses to students. Staff must be competent with horse handling and understand horse behaviour before undertaking these activities. Only an experienced person (e.g. farrier) or Veterinarian should undertake hoof trimming. Incorrect trimming can be detrimental to the welfare of the horse.
Activity:	**Breaking in horses**
Objective:	To demonstrate breaking in of horses. Safety is paramount when breaking in horses. All staff and students involved in these activities must understand the risks involved. Staff must be competent with horse handling and understand horse behaviour before undertaking these activities.
Activity:	**Collection of faeces or blood (invasive)**
Objective:	To demonstrate the collection of faeces or blood from horses to students. Hygienic practices should be employed including the wearing of gloves when collecting samples. Schools should discuss the needs for such sample collection with their Veterinarian prior to doing so.
Activity:	**Breeding of horses using artificial insemination**
Objective:	To demonstrate artificial insemination of horses to students **Only veterinarians or experience operators under the supervision of a Veterinarian should undertake this activity.** Safety is paramount and schools must develop a strong and ongoing relationship with their local veterinarian prior to undertaking this activity. Note that pregnancy diagnosis of horses by ultrasound should also be undertaken only be veterinarians.
Activity:	**Semen collection from horses**
Objective:	To demonstrate semen collection from horses to students **Only experienced operators or veterinarians should undertake this activity**. Safety is paramount and schools must develop a strong and ongoing relationship with their local veterinarian prior to undertaking this activity.
Activity:	**Mustering, yarding and draughting of horses**
Objective:	To demonstrate mustering, yarding, and drafting of horses to students. Safety is paramount when undertaking any activities with horses. All staff and students involved in these activities must understand the risks involved. Schools should choose horses that are accustomed to these activities with a quiet disposition. Staff must be competent with horse handling and understand horse behaviour before undertaking these activities.
Activity:	**Freeze branding of horses**
Objective:	***NOTE: Fire branding is one of the prohibited activities listed for horses.*** To demonstrate freeze branding of horses to students Staff must be competent with horse handling and restraint for branding horses. They must also understand horse behaviour before undertaking these activities. This particularly includes the positioning of people in relation to the horse.
Activity:	**Loading of horses**

Objective:	To demonstrate methods of loading and unloading horses to students. Considerations must be given to horse behaviour when loading and unloading horses. See Section B8 for Specific requirements for the land transport of horses in the Land Transport of Livestock Standards and Guidelines for more information in relation to horse transportation. This outlines requirements with regards to time off water, long distance travel, food and water requirements when travelling, vehicle and facilities requirements and handling. All horses must be deemed fit fort travel prior to transporting them.
Activity:	**Transporting of horses**
Objective:	To demonstrate methods for transporting horses to students Considerations must be given to horse behaviour when loading and unloading horses. See Section B8 for Specific requirements for the land transport of horses in the Land Transport of Livestock Standards and Guidelines for more information in relation to horse transportation. This outlines requirements with regards to time off water, long distance travel, food and water requirements when travelling, vehicle and facilities requirements and handling. All horses must be deemed fit fort travel prior to transporting them.
Resources:	**Horse movements, health, biosecurity, and Hendra Virus – PIRSA** www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity/animal_health/horses **Horse health - Vet Voice** www.vetvoice.com.au/ec/horses/horse-health/ **Hendra Virus infection – South Australian Health** www.sahealth.sa.gov.au **How is horse height measured? – including a video** www.horse.com/content/horse-care/how-horse-height-is-measured/ www.youtube.com/watch?v=lQ0HJGPfHNc **Property Identification Codes – PIRSA** www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity/animal_health/property_identification_code_pic **Horse SA** www.horsesa.asn.au/ **Equestrian SA** https://www.sa.equestrian.org.au/ **Horses and Biosecurity Farm Biosecurity** www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/industry/horses/
Document Control	Document Inception date: 1 August 2010 (Standard Operating Procedure) Approved by: Non-Government Schools Animal Ethics Committee Approval date: October 2024
Revision Record	Review Date: August 2024 (amended to Animal Care Information Sheet (ACIS) Brief description of changes: Renaming of document Next Review due date: October 2025