QSAEC

Queensland Schools Animal Ethics Committee

An independent committee formed by
Department of Education,
Queensland Catholic Education Commission and
Independent Schools Queensland

HORSES AND OTHER EQUINES

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Approved 29/05/2024

Approval to conduct activities under this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is conditional upon curriculum justification for this use of animals being documented by the activity leader and reviewed by the principal.

Schools may undertake the approved activities outlined in this SOP once authorised to do so by the Queensland Schools Animal Ethics Committee (QSAEC) Animal Ethics Officer.

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SECTION 1 | OBLIGATIONS

1.1. LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

Schools have legal obligations under the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001* (Qld), the Animal Care and Protection Regulation 2023 (Qld) (the Regulation), and the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes*, 8th edition 2013 (updated 2021) (Cwlth) (the Code), including:

1) ensuring persons in charge of an animal fulfil their duty of care to that animal
2) obtaining animal ethics approval prior to conducting scientific activities involving animals and acting in accordance with that approval once granted
3) reporting on the use of animals for scientific purposes.

Non-compliance with this legislation may result in schools receiving a maximum fine of 2000 penalty units. (Penalty unit value is notified in the **Penalties and Sentences Regulation 2015 (Qld)**).

All Queenslanders have a 'general biosecurity obligation' under the *Biosecurity Act 2014* (Qld). Schools are responsible for managing biosecurity risks that are under their control and that they know about, or should reasonably be expected to know about. Contact Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 for advice on managing specific risks or to report notifiable incidents.

1.2. DUTY OF CARE FOR ANIMALS

If you are in charge of an animal, you have a duty of care to that animal - no matter why you are in charge of it, what you are using it for or how long it will be in your care. All decisions and actions involving the care and use of animals for scientific purposes must be underpinned by respect for animals. This respect is demonstrated by:

- using animals only when justified
- supporting the wellbeing of the animals involved
- avoiding or minimising harm, including pain and distress, to those animals
- applying high standards of scientific integrity
- applying the principles of Replacement, Reduction and Refinement (the 3Rs) at all stages of animal care and use through:
  - **replacement** of animals with other methods (alternatives)
  - **reduction** in numbers of animals used
  - **refinement** of techniques used, in order to minimise adverse impacts on animals
- knowing and accepting one's responsibilities.

1.3. CURRICULUM JUSTIFICATION FOR THE USE OF ANIMALS IN EDUCATION

It is the teacher's responsibility to provide a curriculum justification for any learning activity that involves the use of animals, including activities approved under a SOP. The use of animals must provide an added component to the learning that is neither trivial nor available in other ways, and there must be evidence to support this position**. Planning documents must clearly identify how the use of animals is essential to achieving the learning objectives.** The justification should consider whether non-animal alternatives achieve the same learning objectives, the minimum number of animals necessary to achieve the objectives, the impact on the animal/s involved and whether the potential effects on the wellbeing of the animals are justified by the potential benefits of their use.

The QSAEC, when undertaking a site visit at the school, may request to see documentation detailing the curriculum justification for the use of animals. If there are viable alternatives to animal use that meet the learning objectives, they must be used in preference to using animals. At all times the impact on the animal/s should be considered and, where appropriate, discussed with the students in an age-appropriate way.

Activities outside the scope of this SOP **must be considered by QSAEC before approval can be granted**. To seek approval to conduct activities additional to those approved under this SOP or to modify an activity approved in this SOP, submit a Modification, SOP variation or amendment form in conjunction with the Application/Activity notification form at the last page of this SOP.

Please note: The QSAEC will **not** approve any activities classified as Category 4 in the Categories of animal use.

1.4. ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

Responsibilities of school personnel under the Code details obligations of staff under animal welfare legislation to promote the responsible care and use of animals for scientific purposes.

An **unexpected adverse event** is any event that may have a negative impact on the wellbeing of an animal and was not foreshadowed in the approved proposal, SOP or subsequent documents to the QSAEC.

An unexpected adverse event may result from different causes, and includes but is not limited to:

- death of an animal, or group of animals, that was not expected (e.g. during surgery or anaesthesia, or after a procedure or treatment)
- adverse effects following a procedure or treatment that were not expected
- adverse effects in a larger number of animals than predicted during the planning of the project or activity, based on the number of animals actually used, not the number approved for the study
- a greater level of pain or distress than was predicted during the planning of the project or activity
- power failures, inclement weather, emergency situations or other factors external to the project or activity that have a negative impact on the welfare of the animals.

In the event of an unexpected adverse event or emergency, prompt action must be taken to address any adverse impacts on the animal/s. Alleviating unanticipated pain and distress must take precedence over an individual animal reaching the planned endpoint of the project, or the continuation or completion of the project. Emergency treatment may be required and, if necessary, animals must be humanely killed without delay.

In response to an unexpected adverse event, action and investigation by the activity leader or facility manager is required to ensure students, staff or other animals are not inadvertently affected. The specific response will depend on the animal and the circumstances. It may require seeking advice from a veterinarian to determine the best course of action (e.g. necropsy of the dead animal by the vet), removal of the deceased animal (e.g. by the supplier), or diagnostic investigations of facility or management practices to determine cause of death (e.g. water testing of fish tank, checking of ventilation).

All adverse events provide opportunities for students to learn from the experience. Activity leaders should optimise student learning outcomes (incidental and planned) by focussing on the learning potential of a specific event (e.g. prevention, animal welfare, diagnostic tools, treatment, security, harm minimisation).

Notify the QSAEC within 7 days of the event, using an Unexpected adverse event report.

Please note: Necropsy of a dead animal is not an approved activity under this SOP due to potential health and biosecurity risks, and must only be performed by a competent person. QSAEC recommends that if a necropsy is required it is performed by a vet.

Further advice about reporting unexpected adverse events is available on the Department of Primary Industries website.

1.5. STUDENT AND STAFF HEALTH

Those involved in the care and use of animals should make themselves aware of the potential disease hazards and other associated occupational health and safety issues, and manage risks according to the school's risk management process. Apart from injuries which may occur due to handling animals, there are a variety of infectious diseases (zoonoses) that are transmissible from various animals to humans.

Zoonotic diseases are common and the illnesses they cause can be serious. They can be spread by direct contact with animals, for example via bites or scratches, or through contact with animal faeces, bodily fluids, airborne particles, birth products, or enclosures contaminated with these materials.

Staff should familiarise themselves with the zoonoses the animals in their care may potentially transmit, the routes of transmission and what activities may potentially expose staff or students to infection. This research will inform the risk assessment to determine how to manage these risks or determine whether the activity should be conducted at all.

For comprehensive advice regarding zoonotic diseases and precautionary measures to minimise risks to staff and students, refer to Animal observation and handling, Animal contact guidelines - reducing the risk to human health 2014 (Interim) and Preventing zoonoses.

Risk management of animal activities ensures the health, safety and well-being of students, staff and others involved. If a specific Curriculum Activity Risk Assessment activity guideline exists, that guideline must be adhered to at a minimum. Risks associated with zoonotic diseases carried by animals must be identified and measures planned to allow activities to be conducted with an acceptable level of residual risk.

Any incident or injury that occurs in association with an activity must be reported, recorded and notified in accordance with Health, safety and wellbeing incident management procedure.

1.6. RECORDKEEPING

Schools must keep a school-based animal activity register which includes records relating to their use of animals for scientific purposes for seven years for audit purposes. This includes:

- scientific user registration (for non-state schools)
- signed applications, activity notification forms and modifications
- approval responses from QSAEC
- signed QSAEC reports (e.g. annual completion reporting, unexpected adverse events, complaints).

Clear and accurate records relevant to the particular species used in the activity/s should be readily available, including, as relevant:

- animal identification records (e.g. species, brands, identifiable features, number of animals in each paddock)
- dates and sources of acquisition (include relevant agreements such as for agistment or the use of privately-owned animals)
- feeding/watering logs (times/amount) and diet details for each animal
- supervision/monitoring logs of animal health and wellbeing
- maintenance/monitoring logs for each enclosure
- dates and types of husbandry practices carried out
- breeding records
- vaccination/treatment records (include chemical/medication administration details and any veterinary treatment provided)
- fate plan and disposal details and dates for each animal (including transport requirements)
- emergency contacts and procedures.

SECTION 2 | QUALIFICATIONS, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

Any teacher conducting scientific animal activity must have competency in the particular procedure and:

- a relevant science or science education qualification (e.g. Agricultural Science, Biological Science), or
- relevant science or science education experience as deemed appropriate by the school principal (generally 2 years' experience).

For new or inexperienced teachers (less than two years' experience), all activities must be conducted under the supervision of a Science or Agricultural Science Head of Department (HOD) or suitably experienced person.

Where direct supervision of a suitably experienced person is not available, a new or inexperienced teacher must:

- identify a mentor, maybe a Science or Agriculture HOD from a neighbouring school
- provide planning documents to the mentor.

Persons deemed to be suitably qualified must have:

- conducted risk assessments on the procedure/s to be carried out
- found the procedure/s to be safe and humane considering animal and student welfare
- considered the maturity and suitability of the student/s involved in the activity.

Teachers should ensure that animal users, including students, staff and volunteers, are provided with

adequate prior instruction in specific activities to enable appropriate care of an animal and to minimise risk of undue stress or harm to an animal.

SECTION 3 | STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

3.1. SPECIES CLASSIFICATION

The term equine refers to any member of the Equus genus, family Equidae, and includes horses, donkeys, mules and zebras. Horses and ponies belong to the subgenus Equus while donkeys are subgenus Asinus. Equine species can crossbreed, with the most common hybrid being the mule (male donkey, female horse). With rare exceptions, these hybrids are sterile and cannot reproduce.

There are some differences in the types of handling and care required to maintain the welfare of horse, ponies, donkeys and mules.

3.2. PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES

Physical attributes will vary depending on the type of equine and the specific breed.

The height of equines is measured in hands (one hand = 10 cm) and is taken to the top of the withers.

Attribute	Horses and miniature horses	Ponies	Donkeys	Mules
Size (Height)	Upon maturity, the miniature horse must not exceed 8.2 hands high (hh). A Draught breed or large Warmblood is 18-20 hh.	The International Federation for Equestrian Events rules that a pony can be defined as being less than 14.2 hh. Ponies tend to have stockier bodies than horses (including miniature horses), with thicker manes and coats, and proportionately-shorter legs.	7.3-15.3 hh depending on breed.	Mules can range in height from 9 hh to 17 hh, depending on the size of the mare and male donkey used.
Weight	Varies with breed from approximately 100-200 kg miniature horse to 700-900 kg Draught breeds and Percherons.	Varies from 200 kg Shetland pony to 250-360 kg pony.	Varies between breeds between 80-480 kg.	
Age at adult size	4 years. There is some variation between breeds. Miniature horses grow to approximately 90% of their adult height by the time they are one year old.		4 years	
Average life span	25-35 years		30-50 years	
Gestation period	320-345 days. Average is 335 days.		360-375+ days. Average is 365 days (plus or minus a week).	

Number of offspring	One usually. On rare occasions, twins are born but usually they have a low survival rate.	One usually. On rare occasions, twins are born but usually they have a low survival rate.	One usually. Twinning is much more common in donkeys than in other equines.	
Weaning	6-9 months		5 months	
Life stages	Less than 1 year: Foal Between 1-2 years: Yearling Intact males under 4 years: Colt Females under 4 years: Filly Adult intact male: Stallion Adult female: Mare Castrated male: Gelding.		Adult reproductive male: Jack Adult female: Jenny or jennet.	
Healthy characteristics	**Body temp:** 38.0-38.3 °C. At 38.4 °C you would be concerned. **Heart rate**: 30-40 beats/minute **Respiration rate:** 10-20 breaths/minute. Varies between individuals.		**Body temp:** 37.2 °C **Heart rate:** 36-68 beats/minute **Respiration rate:** 12-44 breaths/minute.	
Range of breeding ages	**Fillies**: sexually mature at around 18 months of age, however they are still growing at this stage and pregnancy at this age may hinder their growth. **Mares:** 3-20 years. Progesterone is sometimes used to help maintain pregnancy in mares over 15 years. **Colts:** It is recommended that colts are gelded (castrated) within their first year, and preferably before they reach sexual maturity.		Can start cycling from 6 months but shouldn't be bred before 3 years.	Non-fertile (although extremely rare, exceptions have occurred).

3.3. ENVIRONMENT

SPACE Equines kept at pasture will require at least one hectare to provide adequate feed. This will be variable, depending on pasture quality. Supplementation may still be required in summer and winter. Horses stabled, or kept in restrictive yards for long periods, require regular daily exercises. The recommended space for a yard is 5 m x 5 m per animal.

MOVEMENT AND EXERCISE Pastured equines will keep themselves exercised because they continually walk while they graze. Equines kept confined in yards or stables will need daily exercise or access to large grazing areas to ensure the wellbeing of their physical and mental health.

Horses and ponies are naturally active animals and are usually exercised by being ridden or in other ways such as by lunging.

Mules are intelligent and sensitive and do not settle well during long periods of being stabled. Mules should have time in a paddock where they can keep active and mentally stimulated. Mules can be used for riding or can be harnessed to pull a cart.

FENCING Paddocks and yards should have post and rail fencing using timber or steel piping. Barbed wire, prefabricated fencing and high tensile fencing can cause severe injury and should not be used. All fencing should be highly visible.

TEMPERATURE Equines can cope with the temperature extremes experienced in Queensland if they have adequate water and some form of shelter. Older animals or those stabled and recently turned out to pasture, may require rugging with a lined, waterproof rug in cold weather.

Donkeys are more susceptible to rain, wind and cold than horses, making rugs and/or shelter necessary in the winter.

LIGHT Artificial light is sometimes used for horses for show purposes, or to influence oestrus in breeding mares. It is unlikely that this need would exist in a school or college situation.

VENTILATION Stables should be well-ventilated and free from draughts. Paddocks need to have an area that is sheltered from the wind.

SHELTER Shelter from heat, wind and rain is required for all equines. It may be a belt of trees or the provision of a stable. Recommended minimum size for a stable is 3.5 m x 3.5 m or larger, (3 m x 3 m for ponies and donkeys) with a height of at least 2.5 m. The coat of donkeys is less waterproof that that of horses and ponies, and therefore donkeys may be more susceptible to exposure to cold climatic extremes.

CLEANING Remove dirty bedding from stables at least once a day. To help control worms, manure should also be removed from paddocks.

BEDDING 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 providing the animal does not eat it.

3.4. FOOD AND WATER REQUIREMENTS

TYPE **Horses & ponies:** A horse or pony kept at pasture will require at least one hectare (may be smaller for a miniature horse) to provide adequate feed. This will be highly variable, depending upon pasture quality. Supplementation may be required, particularly in winter. As horses and ponies are unable to digest low quality feeds efficiently, they should be provided with good quality feed at all times. Factors such as individual tastes, age, size and the amount of work done by a horse or pony will influence its feed requirements. Supplementing feed for horses and ponies usually consists of roughages such as legumes, cereal chaffs, hay and concentrates in the form of grains such as oats, barley (if boiled or steamed rolled) and corn, pellets and protein meals. Under no circumstances should lawn mower clippings be fed to a horse or pony.

Donkeys & mules: Donkeys require a diet high in fibre and low in protein, sugars, starch/carbohydrates and calories. The donkey diet should consist mainly of good quality grassy hay and carefully restricted access to grass.

QUANTITY **Horses & ponies:** Horses and ponies have a small stomach and consequently eat little and often. Horses and ponies will generally eat dry matter equivalent to about 1.5% to 3.5% of their bodyweight per day. If the quantity or quality of pasture is inadequate, then supplementary feeding will be necessary at least twice per day.

Donkeys & mules: Donkeys and mules should be fed at regular intervals and any change to the feeding regime must be carried out gradually. Avoid feeding excess protein in mule and donkey diets.

ESSENTIAL DIETARY NEEDS (VARIATIONS) High fibre food should always be available. Lucerne hay can be a useful roughage feed for horses, but may not supply all nutritional requirements. It can be too rich for horses not in work. Equines are far more sensitive to their feed than other animals and therefore any changes in diet should be made gradually, over a week. This minimises the risk of colic, especially if introducing grain, changing grain type or quantities. Do not feed any equine mouldy feed. Beware of poisonous plants, in particular those palatable to equines (e.g. crofton weed). Low fibre grains should be

avoided unless treated (e.g. barley should be boiled or steam rolled). Loose salt (preferred) or a salt lick should always be provided for equines (mineral salt licks are the best option).

WATER A horse may consume up to 25 - 45 litres of water per day (7 litres per 100 kg body weight). Water and troughs should be placed undercover, but not under trees or near areas where flying foxes may be present. Water should be clean and free from contamination. Water should be available on demand, except after strenuous exercise when the water should have the chill taken off it and be given in limited quantities until the animal has cooled off. Horses that are not limited in their access to water directly after strenuous exercise may gorge themselves, possibly resulting in colic.

3.5. NORMAL BEHAVIOUR

These points should always be noted when considering the behaviour of equines:

Horses & ponies:

- are naturally gregarious and, as such, have a strong herd instinct.
- may develop abnormal behaviours such as weaving or wind-sucking, when kept under unnatural conditions that involve social isolation or low roughage diets. Weaving is the 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 horse's neck muscles and an audible grunting. These behaviours tend to persist even when the affected animals are managed more naturally.
- in the domestic state tend to find security in familiar surroundings. This can be likened to the security that they derive from members of the herd in the wild state.
- are essentially nervous and excitable, so there is a strong instinctive flight response.
- have individual temperaments and this should be considered when assessing behaviour.
- are naturally nervous and suspicious of anything new or strange, sudden movements and loud noises.

Donkeys & mules:

- are social animals and domestic donkeys interact well with other livestock.
- are intelligent and can be known to be 'unforgiving' and may even 'hold a grudge'.
- enjoy the company of other equines and may become stressed when their partner leaves.
- donkeys are generally born with an investigative nature and tend to be more forgiving than mules that are not handled at an early age.
- are cautious and careful yet less reactive than horses in their response to perceived dangers.
- commonly create an area (roll patch) where they can take dust and/or sand baths during warm weather.
- donkeys are passive by nature, but will aggressively protect their young and other animals where an emotional attachment has developed.
- are known for their surefootedness and strength.

Note on the selection of animals: Animals chosen for use in schools and colleges should have a calm temperament and be easy to handle. Equines are very much individuals and the restraint used to handle one animal may not be suitable for another. All equines used in schools should be able to be adequately restrained with the use of a halter and lead rope. Ultimately, the choice of a suitable equine for use in a school should be one that does not require the use of a twitch to restrain it for any activities.

3.6. BREEDING MANAGEMENT

In accordance with s.4.6 of the Code, animal breeding that does not achieve an educational outcome in science and fails to provide for the lifetime welfare of animals (and their offspring) cannot be demonstrated to, or carried out by, students.

Donkeys tend to be more fertile than horses.

Because a horse has 64 chromosomes and a donkey has 62, the mule winds up with 63, making it impossible for the chromosomes of either a horse or a donkey to pair up with those of a mule. As a result, mules are sterile, although there have been rare instances where female (molly) mules have given birth when bred by a donkey jack.

3.7. SUPERVISION AND MONITORING

Equines should be inspected at least once a day to assess health and wellbeing. Water, paddocks, fencing and other environmental needs of equines should also be inspected daily.

Feeding, watering and cleaning logs/schedules must be easily accessible, preferably displayed, for ease of monitoring.

Diligence in observation does not alter on weekends and holidays. Staff members need to be rostered to maintain observation schedule as per weekdays.

Staff should ensure that appropriate records are maintained.

3.8. HANDLING

Equines should be approached in a quiet, kind way and handled in a firm, non-hesitant manner. Schools and colleges should choose equines with calm temperaments that require minimal restraint to perform activities. Many equines only require a halter and lead rope to carry out all activities (except riding) performed in schools. A good snaffle bit and bridle should be used when horse riding. Ensure the relevant activity guideline is consulted when completing a curriculum activity risk assessment for horse riding activities.

When working with donkeys, a handler with prior experience is recommended.

3.9. MOVEMENT

Schools that own or keep one or more equines are required to register as a biosecurity entity with Biosecurity Queensland and will be allocated a property identification code for the property where the animal(s) are kept. Please refer to On-farm biosecurity for further information on biosecurity obligations.

There are a number of restrictions relating to the movement of equines. Refer to Horse registration and movement records or contact Department of Primary Industries directly for more information.

3.10. TRANSPORT

The Regulation includes a compulsory code of practice for the transport of livestock at Schedule 5 (the Transport code).

All persons involved in the transport of livestock must ensure that they are aware of and comply with their obligations under this code.

The key features of the Transport code are detailed on the Department of Primary Industries website.

The Transport code applies to the transport process from animal assembly prior to loading to unloading at the final destination. It applies to commercial and non-commercial livestock.

General requirements for transporting all livestock are mandated in the Transport code and include fitness for transport, advice of estimated time of arrival, impact of extreme weather conditions, suitability of handling facilities and vehicles, ramp alignment, livestock handling, loading density, inspection duties and record-keeping, use of prodders and dogs, and arrangements for distressed stock including killing.

Additionally, specific requirements for transporting certain animals are mandated. These include maximum journey time, spell duration and time off food and water. Requirements for horses include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Prodders must not be used.
- The driver of a road-going vehicle transporting a lactating horse with a dependent foal less than 6 months of age must, if the journey time is reasonably expected to be more than 5 hours, provide sufficient space in the vehicle for the foal to suckle from its mother and to lie down.
- For a vehicle with separate stalls or other partitions, each stall or partition must be accessible so as to allow feeding, watering and visual inspection of the horse.
- A vehicle that is fully enclosed with a controlled environment must have sufficient airflow, with at least 12 air changes every hour.
- Vehicles other than horse floats must have a vertical clearance of at least 2.2 m.

- Stallions must be segregated from other horses on the vehicle.
- Maximum journey times, maximum time off water and minimum spell durations are specified. Despite the table below, the maximum journey time for a horse, other than one known or visually assessed to be more than 43 weeks pregnant is 36 hours with the following conditions:
    - reasonable access to water and feed is given at least once every five hours of the journey
    - the vehicle protects the horse from the natural elements
    - the vehicle has sufficient space for the horse to stand at rest with its head raised
    - the vehicle has sufficient drainage to remove urine
    - the horse is spelled for at least 24 hours before starting another journey.

Class of animal	**Maximum hours journey time**	**Maximum hours off water**	**Minimum hours spell duration**
Horses known or visually assessed to be between 30 and 43 weeks pregnant (inclusive); Lactating horses travelling with dependent young; Horses less than 6 months of age	12	12	12
Horses known or visually assessed to be more than 43 weeks pregnant	4	4	24
Any other horse	24	24	12

Whilst the Transport code specifically refers to the transport of horses, it is recommended the same principles are used to transport all equines.

3.11. DISEASE PREVENTION

Disease control methods and internal and external parasite control programs should be developed in consultation with a veterinarian or Department of Primary Industries officer. All activities should be documented using the appropriate records.

Refer to protecting equines from disease for further information.

It is important to carry out good biosecurity practice at **all** times, not just during an emergency incident, to reduce the spread of disease. Good biosecurity practice includes:

- checking equines daily for signs of ill health and injury, and to ensure they are eating and drinking
- removing manure and soiled bedding twice a day where equines are stabled or in yards
- controlling vermin and insects, which can spread disease
- ensuring tack and equipment are kept clean
- keeping up to date with vaccinations (including for Hendra virus, strangles and tetanus) and worming protocols.

3.12. SIGNS OF ILLNESS

Stock health should be monitored daily. The first sign noticed is a change in the animal's natural demeanour. It may be listless or lethargic. Closer examinations may show:

- variations in
    - body temperature
    - gastrointestinal functions such as diarrhoea, weight loss or loss of appetite
    - urogenital functions (e.g. abortion, infertility or abnormal discharges)
    - respiratory functions such as persistent coughing, gasping or panting, or

- evidence of
    - failure to thrive or grow
    - skin condition such as lesions or abnormal growths
    - lameness
    - discharge from eyes, nose and swollen glands under the throat

- lethargy and/or weakness, and/or an inability to stand
- a tucked up appearance, stiff gait, abnormal posture, patchy coat or loss of hair
- excessive scratching or rubbing
- prolonged or abnormal sweating
- oedema (fluid accumulation) around the belly midline
- swollen joints or limping
- wobbly gait, apparent loss of vision, abnormal movement, muscle twitching, urinary incontinence or inability to rise.

Common ailments that may occur include colic or internal parasites. Common signs of worm infestation are tail rubbing, pale gums, colic and poor coat. If an equine is showing any of these signs, they may be attributable to a significant worm burden. Worms can also cause diarrhoea or sudden death in extreme cases.

Common signs of colic include pawing, increased desire to roll, sweating, looking at the flank and reduced appetite. Veterinarian attention should be sought immediately if colic is suspected.

If the cause of ill-health cannot be identified and corrected, assistance should be sought from a veterinarian who is familiar with equines. Any signs of illness or injury, and treatment given, should be documented in the appropriate records.

3.13. HENDRA VIRUS

Vaccination of equines against the Hendra virus is strongly recommended, and is the single most effective way of reducing the risk of Hendra virus.

Hendra virus can cause a range of clinical signs and should be considered where there is an acute onset of illness, fever and rapid progression to death associated with either respiratory or neurological signs, and possibly colic signs. Most cases in horses are fatal but occasionally a horse will survive the infection. The reported mortality rate in affected horses is greater than 70%. No other animal is known to be infected naturally. Suspected infected equines should be isolated from other equines, people and animals until it is assessed by a veterinarian.

Hendra virus is a notifiable disease. If you suspect Hendra virus, contact Biosecurity Queensland immediately on 13 25 23 or the Emergency Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888.

3.14. ANIMAL EMERGENCY ARRANGEMENTS

The school must have an emergency management plan to deal with events in and out of school hours. Details of the plan will vary according to the needs of each school and must include:

- signage that includes emergency contact and animal identification details
- monitoring of animals, including on weekends and school holidays
- a first aid kit for animals
- at least one local veterinarian on call
- strategies to withdraw individual animals (e.g. due to illness or death) or all stock (e.g. due to equipment issues, natural disasters, vandalism)
- strategies for animals to be easily identified and returned to schools (e.g. due to escape, theft, or displacement in natural disasters)
- arrangements for power outages (e.g. checking on backup power, battery level checking)
- a list of who is competent to euthanase animals if necessary
- schedule of persons authorised to respond to emergencies and engage veterinary assistance.

3.15. HUMANE KILLING & EUTHANISIA

Equines may be consigned to a registered processor/abattoir at the conclusion of their use for scientific purposes.

Where an animal has become so sick, diseased or injured that recovery is unlikely or undesirable on humane grounds, euthanasia must be arranged with a local veterinarian or a person competent in the technique for horses.

Notify the QSAEC of deaths and other unexpected adverse events within 7 days of the incident's occurrence, using the Unexpected adverse event report. The signed hardcopy should be held in the school's animal activity register.

3.16. DISPOSAL – FATE PLANNING

Forward planning (e.g. how and when to retire an animal from the program) will support animal welfare and wellbeing and ensure that animals used are fit to fulfil the needs of the program.

Animals approaching old age should be retired from scientific-use activities, unless the approved activity includes keeping the animal for its lifecycle before replacement. Note the QSAEC must be notified at the time of application for approval if animals are intended to be used for scientific purposes for their full lifecycle.

Equines can be sold privately or at auction, consigned to a registered abattoir, or returned to normal husbandry conditions at the end of scientific use. Carcasses must be disposed of in accordance with local council regulations.

Equines that are returned to normal husbandry conditions at the end of scientific use can remain on school property and continue to be cared for by the school in accordance with current best practice. Stocking rates, facilities and assets need to be managed accordingly to ensure the animal's wellbeing is maintained.

During an animal's retirement it is important to ensure the animal remains in good health. If their quality of life is being impacted by ill health then a decision to euthanase the animal may be required. It is important to ensure prompt action is taken based on the monitoring and assessment of the animal's wellbeing to ensure all reasonable steps are taken to avoid animals becoming unwell or dying without humane intervention.

Donkeys form strong bonds with other donkeys and animals and separation can be stressful. Where an animal has died, remaining donkeys (including foals if the mother has died) should be left with the corpse for approximately one hour to help it adjust to the loss.

Please note: Reporting on animal use and unexpected adverse events to the QSAEC is not required for retired animals once they are no longer used for scientific purposes.

SECTION 4 | APPROVED ACTIVITIES

All activities must be conducted in line with industry and veterinary standards. Chemicals and drugs used must be judged to be required by a qualified instructor, must be registered products, and must be used in accordance with Safety Data Sheet information and manufacturer's instructions.

Please note: Instructor:student and student:animal ratios cannot always be specified with accuracy given the wide variety of class sizes, student ages and settings in which activities are being conducted. While ratios stated in this document are suggested minimum requirements, careful consideration must be given to determine ratios that are most effective in supporting and safeguarding animal wellbeing.

4.1 RESTRAINT AND INSPECTION

Category 3 – moderate impact				
Activity	Objective	3R activities	Ratios	References
Restraint and inspection	To instruct students in procedures for the safe and humane restraint of equines to enable procedures and close observations to be carried out	Step-by-step guides, modelling, videos, simulations	**Instructors:Students** 1:30 instructing 1:30 supervising **Students:Animals** 30:1 observing 2:1 performing	NSW Animals in Schools - Handling

4.2 HANDLING AND TRAINING

Category 3 – moderate impact				
Activity	Objective	3R activities	Ratios	References
Handling and training	To instruct students in methods of training equines, including lunging, for human handling in yard facilities; to lead, tie up and stand in a show setting	Step-by-step guides, modelling, videos, simulations	**Instructors:Students** 1:30 instructing 1:30 supervising **Students:Animals** 30:1 observing 2:1 performing	NSW Animals in Schools - Handling

Qualified instructors must have the safety and welfare of animals as the principles of operation. Inhumane procedures must not be used. Equines that are not suitable for training should be excluded from this activity.

4.3 GROOMING

Category 2 - low impact				
Activity	Objective	3R activities	Ratios	References
Horse grooming	To instruct students in the methods of preparation of equines for showing by grooming, washing, trimming manes/tails, combing, rugging etc	Step-by-step guides, modelling, videos, simulations	**Instructors:Students** 1:30 instructing 1:10 supervising **Students:Animals** 30:1 observing 2:1 performing	NSW Animals in Schools - Handling

Grooming should be done as part of routine equine care. Equines that are not rugged should be cooled down and dried with a towel after exercise and before being put back in the paddock. Brushing the tail every day can pull out a lot of hair and should be reserved for immediate show preparation.

4.4 COAT CLIPPING

Category 3 - moderate impact				
Activity	Objective	3R activities	Ratios	References
Coat clipping	To instruct students on coat clipping of equines	Step-by-step guides, modelling, videos, simulations	**Instructors:Students** 1:30 instructing 1:2 supervising **Students:Animals** 30:1 observing 2:1 performing	NSW Animals in Schools - Handling

Some equines may be extremely sensitive to the use of electric clippers for body clipping, especially near the ears. If an equine needs to be restrained for coat clipping, the use of a nose twitch or tranquilliser should only be used following advice from a veterinarian. Generally, equines can be restrained using a halter and lead rope.

Unless donkeys are doing a lot of work, being prepared for the show ring, or have unusually heavy or thick coats, they should not be fully clipped at any time of the year. The natural coat of a donkey is needed for many reasons, including assisting body temperature regulation and protection from the weather and flies.

4.5 ADMINISTRATION OF EYE-DROPS, CREAMS, OINTMENTS, BANDAGES

Category 3 – moderate impact				
Activity	Objective	3R activities	Ratios	References
Administration of eye-drops, creams, ointments, bandaging	To instruct students in the procedures for the administration of eye-drops, cream, ointments and bandaging	Step-by-step guides, modelling, videos, simulations	**Instructors:Students** 1:30 instructing 1:1 supervising **Students:Animals** 30:1 observing 2:1 performing	Animals are restrained as per Item 4.1; NSW Animals in Schools - Health

When using medications, animal care chemicals and equipment, staff must be appropriately qualified and care must be taken to:

- read labels carefully and follow label instructions
- use correct animal weight to determine correct dosage/ rate
- adhere to withholding periods and check expiry dates where applicable before use
- store and dispose of chemicals/medications/syringes/bandaging being used appropriately
- use protective clothing when required
- use correct equipment for application
- document the dose, chemical/medication name, batch number, expiry date, withholding period, identity of animal(s) administered to and date of administration.

4.6 ADMINISTRATION OF INJECTIONS

Category 3 – moderate impact				
Activity	Objective	3R activities	Ratios	References
Administration of injections	To instruct students in the administration of injections and implants	Step-by-step guides, modelling, videos, simulations	**Instructors:Students** 1:30 instructing 1:1 supervising **Students:Animals** 30:1 observing 2:1 performing	Animals are restrained as per Item 4.1; NSW Animals in Schools - Health

Administering vaccination injections to equines should be carried out in a quiet, firm manner. A halter and lead rope should be used and some animals, adverse to needles, may need to be twitched. For tetanus and strangles, use vaccines. For local disease incidence, seek advice from a veterinarian.

When using medications, animal care chemicals and equipment, staff must be appropriately qualified and care must be taken to:

- read labels carefully and follow label instructions
- use correct animal weight to determine correct dosage/ rate
- adhere to withholding periods and check expiry dates where applicable before use
- store and dispose of chemicals/medications/syringes/bandaging being used appropriately
- use protective clothing when required
- use correct equipment for application
- document the dose, chemical/medication name, batch number, expiry date, withholding period, identity of animal(s) administered to and date of administration.

4.7 DRENCHING AND ORAL PREPARATIONS

Category 3 - moderate impact				
Activity	Objective	3R activities	Ratios	References
Drenching and administration of oral preparations	To demonstrate the administration of pharmaceuticals by the oral route for internal parasite control, nutritional supplement, etc	Step-by-step guides, modelling, videos, simulations	**Instructors:Students** 1:30 instructing **Students:Animals** 30:1 observing 2:1 performing	Animals are restrained as per Item 4.1; NSW Animals in Schools - Health

When using medications, animal care chemicals and equipment, staff must be appropriately qualified and care must be taken to:

- read labels carefully and follow label instructions
- use correct animal weight to determine correct dosage/ rate
- adhere to withholding periods and check expiry dates where applicable before use
- store and dispose of chemicals/medications/syringes/bandaging being used appropriately
- use protective clothing when required
- use correct equipment for application
- document the dose, chemical/medication name, batch number, expiry date, withholding period, identity of animal(s) administered to and date of administration.

All horses and ponies should be wormed at least once every three months regardless of the conditions in which they are kept. Some may require more frequent worming. All horses and ponies on the property should be wormed at the same time.

4.8 COLLECTION OF FAECAL AND URINE SAMPLES

Category 2 - low impact				
Activity	Objective	3R activities	Ratios	References
Collection of faeces and urine samples	To demonstrate the process of collection of faeces and urine samples from an equine	Step-by-step guides, modelling, videos, simulations	**Instructors:Students** 1:30 instructing 1:1 supervising **Students:Animals** 30:1 observing 30:1 performing	NSW Animals in Schools - Activities

Collection of samples requires minimal restraint. Ensure hands are washed **before the activity**, gloves are worn and hands washed after completion.

4.9 MEASUREMENT OF BODY TEMPERATURE, HEIGHT AND WEIGHT

Category 2 – low impact				
Activity	Objective	3R activities	Ratios	References
Measurement of body temperature, height and weight of an equine.	To instruct students in the measurement of body temperature, height and weight of an equine	Step-by-step guides, modelling, videos, simulations	**Instructors:Students** 1:30 instructing 1:1 supervising **Students:Animals** 30:1 observing 2:1 performing	Animals are restrained as per Item 4.1; NSW Animals in Schools - Activities

4.10 MEASUREMENT OF PULSE AND RESPIRATION RATE

Category 2 – low impact				
Activity	Objective	3R activities	Ratios	References
Measurement of pulse and respiration rate	To instruct students in the procedures for the determination of pulse and respiration rate of equines	Step-by-step guides, modelling, videos, simulations	**Instructors:Students** 1:30 instructing 1:15 supervising **Students:Animals** 30:1 observing 1:1 performing	Animals are restrained as per Item 4.1; NSW Animals in Schools - Activities

4.11 DENTAL EXAMINATION

Category 2 - low impact				
Activity	Objective	3R activities	Ratios	References
Mouthing	To instruct students in the procedures for the examination of the condition of teeth and ageing of an equine	Step-by-step guides, modelling, videos, simulations	**Instructors:Students** 1:30 instructing 1:15 supervising **Students:Animals** 30:1 observing 1:1 performing	Animals are restrained as per Item 4.1; NSW Animals in Schools - Activities

Teeth should be checked at least every 12 months by an Equine Dental Vet.

4.12 HOOF TRIMMING

Category 3 - moderate impact				
Activity	Objective	3R activities	Ratios	References
Hoof trimming	To instruct students on hoof trimming of equines	Step-by-step guides, modelling, videos, simulations	**Instructors:Students** 1:30 instructing 1:2 supervising **Students:Animals** 30:1 observing 2:1 performing	NSW Animals in Schools - Activities

Hooves should be trimmed as often as is necessary to maintain the health and soundness of the foot. Frequency will depend on factors such as age, season, nutrition, management and injury. As a guide this should occur every 4-8 weeks. This can be done by an experienced person with competence in the activity for the particular animal (i.e. donkey foot care will be different to horse foot care).

In dry conditions, care should be taken of donkey's hooves to ensure shock absorption and blood circulation is not impaired.

4.13 MUSTERING, YARDING AND DRAFTING

Category 3 - moderate impact				
Activity	Objective	3R activities	Ratios	References
Mustering, yarding and drafting	To instruct students in the low stress handling techniques used to gather equines in to yards for handling	Step-by-step guides, modelling, videos, simulations	**Instructors:Students** 1:30 instructing 1:5 supervising **Students:Animals** 30:1 observing 5:1 performing	NSW Animals in Schools - Handling

The handling and loading of livestock is regulated by the Transport code.

4.14 LOADING

Category 2 – low impact				
Activity	Objective	3R activities	Ratios	References
Loading	To demonstrate the loading of equines in a safe and humane manner	Step-by-step guides, modelling, videos, simulations	**Instructors:Students** 1:30 instructing 1:1 supervising **Students:Animals** 30:1 observing 2:1 performing	Code of practice for transport of livestock (Schedule 5 of the Regulation); NSW Animals in Schools - Transport

The handling and loading of livestock is regulated by the Transport code.

4.15 TRANSPORT

Category 3 - moderate impact				
Activity	Objective	3R activities	Ratios	References
Transport	To demonstrate to students the appropriate procedures for transporting equines	Step-by-step guides, modelling, videos, simulations	**Instructors:Students** 1:30 instructing **Students:Animals** 30:1 observing	Code of practice for transport of livestock (Schedule 5 of the Regulation); NSW Animals in Schools - Transport

All persons involved in the transport of livestock must ensure that they are aware of and comply with their obligations under the Transport code.

Refer to 3.10 Transport for specific requirements for transporting equines.

SECTION 5 | GLOSSARY

3R activities	Animals used for teaching and training are not being used to discover, prove or develop new ideas and techniques but to communicate scientific concepts and to develop manual skills and expertise in specific techniques. 3R activities provide opportunities to communicate scientific concepts and develop technical skills and expertise, ensuring animals are used only when necessary and minimising the impact on animals used
Alternatives to animal use	Replacement of animals with other methods/activities for educative purposes must be sought and used whenever possible
DPI	Queensland Department of Primary Industries
QSAEC	Queensland Schools Animal Ethics Committee
Supervision	Supervision in all instances means supervision by a suitably qualified person familiar with the procedures as well as normal and abnormal animal responses.
The Code	*Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes*, 8th edition 2013 (updated 2021)
The Regulation	Animal Care and Protection Regulation 2023 (Qld)
Transport code	Code of practice for transport of livestock, Animal Care and Protection Regulation 2023 (Qld), Schedule 5

SECTION 6 | REFERENCES

- Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council – Animal Welfare Guidelines for Horses, Ponies and Donkeys http://www.fawac.ie/media/fawac/content/publications/animalwelfare/AnimalWelfareGuidelineforHorsesPoniesDonkeys.pdf

- New Zealand Government – Horses and Donkeys Code of Welfare (2018) https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/46060-Code-of-Welfare-Horses-and-donkeys

- NSW Department of Education, NSW Catholic Education Commission, Association of Independent Schools of NSW – Animals in Schools – Horses https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/animals-in-schools/animals-in-schools-species/horses

- NSW Department of Primary Industries – Horses https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/horses

- NSW Department of Primary Industries – Caring for horses https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/animal-welfare/animal-care-and-welfare/other/companion-animal-files/caring-for-horses

- Queensland Department of Primary Industries – A guide to managing livestock on small properties https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/a-guide-to-managing-livestock-on-small-properties

- Queensland Department of Primary Industries – Horse ownership https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/biosecurity/animal-biosecurity-welfare/animal-health-pests-diseases/horses

- RSPCA Knowledge base – How do parasites affect my horse? https://kb.rspca.org.au/How-do-parasites-affect-my-horse_486.html

- RSPCA Knowledge base – Why do I need to groom my horse? http://kb.rspca.org.au/why-do-i-need-to-groom-my-horse_468.html

- RSPCA Qld – Keeping horses as pets https://www.rspcaqld.org.au/blog/pet-care/horses-as-pets

- RSPCA Qld – Straight from the horse's mouth https://www.rspcaqld.org.au/blog/pet-care/horse-dental-care

- Vet Voice – Colic in horses https://www.vetvoice.com.au/ec/horses/colic-in-horses/

SECTION 7 | APPLICATION/ACTIVITY NOTIFICATION FORM

To seek QSAEC approval for animal use activities covered by this SOP, please complete the online Activity notification form (ANF) prior to the activities commencing.

Before completing the ANF, please ensure the following documents (if applicable) are available to upload to the online application:

Privately-owned animal use template agreement:

- If you are using privately-owned animals a **template agreement** with the details and duration of the owner's responsibility must be attached to your QSAEC application. Note the owner's personal details and signature are not required to be included for the QSAEC, however schools must ensure the agreement is completed by the owner and stored on their school-based animal activity register for 7 years for audit purposes. If there are any changes to the agreement once signed by the owner then a copy of the updated template agreement must be provided to the QSAEC prior to the animal use activities commencing.

Ensure all required fields are completed in the ANF and submit as per the outlined instructions.