



Horse Safety Australia

Standards for Riding Programs

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INTRODUCTION

HISTORY

Horse Safety Australia (formerly known as the Association for Horsemanship Safety and Education in Australia Incorporated: AHSE) was originally based on the Certified Horsemanship Association (CHA) in the U.S.A., which was founded in Texas in 1967. Their main objective was to provide a progressive riding program and other instructional information designed to stimulate safer horseriding programs in the camping situation.

AHSE began formally in 1993, and has been well accepted in this country. CHA helped set the initial standards by sending their National Training Director to Australia to accredit our first instructors. Since then accreditation clinics have been run regularly in SA, Victoria, NSW and Queensland.

Horse Safety Australia (as AHSE) has been involved in formulating the standards for horse riding programs involving school students, compiled by the Education Departments in SA, Queensland, NSW, Tasmania, ACT, Victoria and W.A.

In 2007 AHSE changed its name to Horse Safety Australia.

OUTDOOR RECREATION TRAINING PACKAGE

In 1999, AHSE staff were involved in the writing of the National Outdoor Recreation Industry Training Package. This has since been revised: with new versions released 2003, 2006, 2010, 2013 and now 2018 now called the Sport Fitness and Recreation Training Package. Horse Safety Australia links its clinics to some of these equine units of competency, and assesses its participants for them in this framework.

RIDING PROGRAMS

Horse Safety Australia's standards cover most areas within the horse industry. They were initially intended only for use by those involved in group riding situations, but now include those working with single riders as well. They are relevant to evaluating and improving existing riding programs, as well as establishing new programs. A site accreditation process is available, in addition to the personal accreditation that occurs during our instructor and trail riding, or other specialized "clinics".

Within Horse Safety Australia, no style of riding is favoured, all acceptable as long as the method is safe, is good horsemanship, and produces good results.

Horse Safety Australia Standards incorporate and in some cases exceed the requirements in the 2009 (revised) Australian Horse Industry Council Code of Practice (HorseSafe) for the horse industry and the Safe Work Australia Guide for managing risks when new and inexperienced persons interact with horses. They are designed to promote safe practices, and to aid in improving the effectiveness of any riding program. However, while compliance with these standards will assist in developing a good program, they cannot guarantee the safety or efficiency of any program.

1. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS (SITE)

Legislation:

Premises must comply with commonwealth, state and local government regulations relevant to their site. Instructors working at a premises managed by a third party must ensure these also comply with safety requirements. The legislation that is most applicable to horse related activities includes the following:

- Trade Practices Act
- Fire Regulations
- Building regulations
- Workplace Occupational Health & Safety
- Employment awards
- Hazardous chemicals
- Child protection legislation to prevent abuse
- Health regulations
- Planning Ordinances
- Environmental Protection
- Animal welfare
- Food Handling

CODES

Australian Horse Industry Council Code, HorseSafe (2009)

Safe Work Australia "Guide to managing risks when new and inexperienced persons interact with horses" (2014)

Safe Work NSW Code of Practice: "Managing risks when new or inexperienced riders or handlers interact with horses in the workplace" (2017)

Adventure Activity Standards : Trail Riding (pre-release 2019)

2. QUALIFICATIONS

Horse Safety Australia instructors are responsible for maintaining safe, enjoyable and educational environments.

1. The senior instructors must be :
 - a) A minimum of twenty-five years of age.
 - b) Hold current accreditation from Horse Safety Australia, or comparable riding instructor certification.
 - c) Have experience and background in teaching riding (minimum of five years).
 - d) Have personal horse related abilities corresponding to the needs of the program.
 - e) Have training and a minimum of two years' experience in horse care.
2. All horse riding staff must have a current first aid certificate (HLTAID003 Provide first aid)

Riding instructors/guides should be at least 18 years, and have a recognised first aid certificate

Assistant instructors/guides should be at least 16 years of age and have a recognised first aid certificate
3. The instructors/guides should be qualified in the style of riding that they will be teaching, and their level of accreditation should meet the needs of the program.
4. All qualified staff must:
 - a) Have had training in instructional methods, communication and teaching techniques, and be able to use these in a safe, enjoyable and educational program.
 - b) Have the ability and knowledge to demonstrate correct riding techniques, and to educate and train horses used in the program.
 - c) Set a professional example for the students at all times, i.e., dress, conduct and horse related behaviour.
 - d) Have attained the relevant units of competency from the Sport Fitness and Outdoor Recreation Training Package or its equivalent

3. PLANNING AND DESIGN OF RIDING & ASSOCIATED AREAS

1. Rules, restrictions and information about risks should be displayed clearly in the horse area so that they can be observed by riders/visitors
2. There is a safe and convenient area where riders can handle their horses before and after riding. This area must be enclosed, and designed to separate the non-riding public from the horses.
3. Riding arenas/yards for mounting prior to trails meet the following standards:
 - a) Fences are at least 1.05 metre in height and constructed from materials that do not provide danger to horse or rider (not barbed wire, metal droppers etc) and designed to contain the horse and rider.
 - b) Fence material is on the inside of posts.
 - c) Gates are at least 1.05 metre high and sturdily constructed with latches for proper closure.
 - d) The surface provides good footing, and is kept free of rubbish, rocks and holes (softfall for lessons for beginner riders, but possibly other surfaces in some circumstances : e.g. yards for trail riding).
 - e) The area is free of hazards such as water troughs, trees, permanent mounting blocks, overhanging branches etc.
 - f) The area is accessible and both large enough for expected numbers of riders and small enough that horses and riders can be adequately controlled.
 - g) The area is as level
 - h) All of the above are consistently inspected and maintained.
4. All riding trails meet the following standards:
 - a) Provide safe footing and head clearance under normal riding conditions.
 - b) Are typically located away from main highways.
 - c) Fixed hazards are clearly marked.
 - d) Trails are clearly marked and mapped, and all guides receive trail orientation.
 - e) All bridges have sufficient support strength for horses and have sturdy guard rails.
 - f) Trails are rated as to their level of difficulty.
 - g) Emergency access to trails is possible.
 - h) Trails are regularly inspected and maintained.
 - i) Minimum impact procedures are applied in all situations.
 - j) If public roads are used, road rules must be obeyed.
 - k) Trails are not located next to barbed wire fences
5. Perimeter fencing must be installed for a horse business, and/or other measures must be taken, that will prevent horses from escaping from the premises
6. To minimise the occurrence of uncontrolled interaction between horses, vehicles and people there must be designated areas for different activities (e.g. areas for parking, floats/horse trailers, mounting yards, visitors parking etc).

4. SAFE PROCEDURES: WORKING WITH RIDERS

1. As far as practical, areas used by the public or for horse riding activities must be maintained free from hazards and fit and safe for their intended use. The environment should always be checked for hazards before activities commence.
2. Riders, whether mounted or un-mounted, are under direct supervision and control of a qualified riding instructor / guide at all times
3. Participants must be advised of their responsibilities in relation to:
 - a) the operating rules and procedures to be followed;
 - b) maintaining their own safety;
 - c) ensuring the safety of others
 - d) maintaining the welfare of the horses that they rideMuch of this will be achieved by understanding that horse riding can be dangerous and that they must attend to the behaviour of horses, obey the rules of the site in regard to access to horses, and obey instructions relating to the horses for their own protection and for the protection of others.
4. There is a set of procedures that address the issue of a participant or member of the public failing to comply with a reasonable direction. Staff are aware of such procedures and trained in specific responses.
5. Instructors / Guides have a comprehensive knowledge of individual horses in the program, and are able to judge their suitability for various riders.
6. To ensure there is a reasonable expectation that participants will not fall from a horse, or be otherwise injured:
 - a) All horses provided to participants must be allocated on the basis of suitability of the horse relative to the size and ability of the participant.
 - b) Horse suitability audits must be completed and kept up to date for all horses used in the program
 - c) The participant's levels of skill, knowledge and experience with horses must be ascertained and assessed, and group activities provided at a level appropriate to the abilities of the least capable rider.
7. Student/Instructor ratios (when horses are provided by the establishment):
 - a) Arena riding classes may not exceed ten students with a qualified instructor and an assistant, or eight students with an instructor working alone
 - b) Trail riding groups may not exceed six riders per trail guide, with a minimum of two trail guides on every trail ride

For 'clinics' (where all participants are riding their own horses) ratios should be determined through a risk assessment process, taking into account the levels of abilities of the riders, activities to be undertaken and the size and condition of the area being used.

General notes:

The ratio of staff to participants and spectators must be at a level that:

- allows adequate supervision of all participants and spectators;
- minimises potential risks to riders and spectators
- allows a rapid and adequate response to emergency situations.

SAFE PROCEDURES: WORKING WITH RIDERS (continued)

Assistant Instructors or instructors in training may not operate without direct supervision (i.e. a qualified instructor personally with them during all their activities which involve clients. If the assistant is learning to instruct riders, the supervisor must be with them at all times and ready to intervene immediately should a problem arise or a situation be deemed not to be managed adequately by the assistant. The safety of the learners in the care of the assistant is paramount.)

8. All riders wear safe and suitable attire including:
 - a) Long pants and sleeved shirt (at least covering the shoulders).
 - b) Properly fitted protective head gear designed for horse riding activities.
i.e. helmets for all riding activities that meet Australian Standards i.e. AS/NZ 3838 (2006) or ASTM F1163 or European standards if they include a Kitemark designating the production of the helmets is monitored and tested. (no hair clips, pony tails or hats/caps to be worn under helmets)
 - c) Riding Boots, suitable flat soled shoes with small heels, or equivalent riding footwear, or if these are not available suitable devices to prevent feet being caught in stirrups should be used (e.g. Breakaway stirrups)
9. Whenever handling or in close proximity to horses, closed, solid shoes must be worn
10. Loose items (cameras, medication, etc.) if carried, must be stored safely in saddle bags provided or as approved by staff and long hair is to be tied back. Jewellery which could catch on equipment must be removed.
11. The quality and condition of equipment used in the horse program is:
 - a) Appropriate for it's intended use.
 - b) Sized correctly to the riders.
 - c) Fitted correctly to the horse.
 - d) Properly maintained (and records kept)
 - e) Saddles must have two points of attachment (or latigos must be double wrapped)
12. Safety checks are done on equipment and rider's clothing:
 - a) Before each class/group begins their ride.
 - b) Each time a rider is mounted.
13. Beginner riders must mount their horse for the first time in a secure area that has a surface that minimises the risk of slipping and is kept free from obstructions/obstacles. Horses must be held by a staff member when a rider is mounting for the first time. The stirrup's position and width must be checked against the rider's leg length and shoe size by a staff member and adjusted as necessary for optimum safety.
14. Before being allowed to ride out on the trail, all riders must be instructed in, and demonstrate, effective horse control (a minimum of stop, start and turn),
15. Rules for trail riding: Instructors/guides must ensure that:
 - a) participants understand the commands that will be used throughout the ride
 - b) participants are warned when changes of pace, direction or terrain are about to occur
 - c) there is a contingency plan for sudden weather changes that may affect the activity
 - d) participants have adequate protection from the environment
 - e) if rides include public roads, staff direct clients in safe procedures to be followed

SAFE PROCEDURES: WORKING WITH RIDERS (continued)

16. The minimum recommended age to take riders on trails is 10 years (unless the child has had significant previous riding experience and has demonstrated good control of their mount and appropriate responses to instructions). Younger riders may be taken on lead ropes at the discretion of the staff, however the staff leading these riders may not be counted in the normal staff/client ratios for the group.
17. Horses known to behave dangerously must not be permitted to undertake an activity. If it becomes apparent that safety is compromised by the presence of a horse, or rider, or combination of both, showing dangerous behaviour, staff must take all necessary action to identify, isolate and/or control the offending horse and/or rider, including if necessary remove them from the activity.
18. If staff form the opinion that a horse and its rider pose an unduly high risk to themselves, other persons or other horses, actions must be taken to prevent that horse and rider combination continuing in that activity.
19. Dogs should not be loose at, or near, horse activities unless working as part of the activity (e.g. droving stock as part of a mustering experience).
20. A suitably qualified staff member must be designated as responsible for risk management issues for a business.
21. Mobile phones, walkie talkies, personal locator beacons, or some effective form of communication must be present at ALL horse activities.

5. HEALTH AND HUMANE TREATMENT OF HORSES

The riding staff have an obligation to the horses used in their program. Participants should be encouraged to learn respect, and develop a feeling of responsibility for the health and safety of the horses they ride.

Proper care of horses requires an understanding of their needs, expert knowledge in horse management and planning for economical and appropriate methods of care.

The following standards must be observed to increase safety and provide for the well-being of the horses in the program.

1. Horses are properly fed and watered and maintained in good working condition.
Note: many factors (type of work, workload, size of horse, climate and feeding conditions, etc.) will determine what is appropriate.
2. Salt and other supplemental minerals are regularly provided for all horses as needed.
3. Horses in the program:
 - a) Work no longer than 6 hours in the arena per day with adequate rest periods.
 - b) Work no longer than 8 hours on the trail per day with adequate rest periods.
 - c) Have at least one day per week with no work.
 - d) Are given at least a short period of turn-out annually.
 - e) Are properly conditioned and acclimatized for the expected work load.
4. Horses are provided with proper hoof care, including but not limited to:
 - a) Regular cleaning and checking of hooves.
 - b) Trimming, or shoeing on a regular basis carried out by a qualified person.

HEALTH AND HUMANE TREATMENT OF HORSES (continued)

5. Horses are:
 - a) Vaccinated (as required) and de-wormed on a regular basis.
 - b) Horse's teeth are regularly inspected and rasped as needed.
6. Horses are handled with care, kindness and consideration. They are treated humanely at all times.
7. Horses not to be used in the riding program (including, but not limited to) those :
 - a) sick, lame or injured
 - b) less than 4 years of age (for beginners)
 - c) mares that are more than 8 months pregnant, or lactating and in the first 3 months after foaling
 - d) horses unfit because of old age
8. Injuries and ailments are treated immediately by qualified staff or professionals.
9. Horses have suitable tack, well maintained, properly adjusted and fitted.
10. Care is taken to prevent contamination of feed from dirt, droppings, insects and other foreign objects.
11. If stalls/stables are used for overnight housing, they are large enough that the horse can comfortably and safely lie down.
12. If buildings are used for housing horses, they are free of holes, bare electrical wires, projections and other hazards.
13. Horses are groomed before being tacked up for use.
14. Living areas for horses, such as stalls and paddocks, are kept clean, dry (well drained), and free from the accumulation of soiled bedding and manure.
15. Provisions are made to control ticks, flies, lice and other external parasites on and around the horses.
16. Pastures for horses should have:
 - a) access to shelter from the elements.
 - b) be safe, with well maintained fencing
 - c) no rubbish, holes, discarded vehicles, poisonous plants or other known hazards.
17. Provisions are made for the disposal of accumulated manure.

6. COORDINATING RIDING PROGRAM WITH TOTAL FACILITY AND PROGRAM

Goals should be established for the riding program which will contribute to meeting the objectives of the total facility (i.e. camps, stables, schools, tourist businesses etc). These goals must be clearly outlined to the horse staff.

1. The director of a facility that has a horse riding program should be familiar with the limitations and potential problems of riding programs. The safety of the riders should be their foremost consideration.
2. The goals are realistic for the program, considering the facilities, financial resources type of clients and the training of the staff.
3. The program goals include:
 - a) Safe practices in riding and handling horses (including compliance with WHS requirements)
 - b) Awareness of responsibilities to animals and the environment
 - c) Quality instruction designed to provide progressive education, or appropriate input for the needs and interests of the riders (as applicable to the expectations of the program)
4. There is comprehensive documentation for the site, including policies and procedures regarding the use of the horses, the riding area and the trails; training programs for staff; training & conditioning programs for horses; induction for new horse staff and training of non horse staff in horse related safety issues.
5. Human resources policies are in use which clearly presents staff with job descriptions and responsibilities.
6. Workplace Health and Safety procedures are applied to all aspects of the Horse Program (including a written WHS Policy which covers responsibilities of employers and employees), induction for staff in all activities to be undertaken, including training in manual handling, risk management and emergency procedures, and provisions for safe handling, Data Sheets for chemicals, and secure storage of hazardous goods
7. The site has an appropriate public liability insurance cover with a recognised and approved insurance provider.
8. Waivers (including risk warnings) are signed by all participants (or in the case of minors, by a parent or Guardian on behalf of the participants). Prior to activities commencing, participants (and when the participant is less than 18 years of age their parent or Guardian) are made aware of the inherently risky nature of horse activities.
9. Where sub-contractors are used, they should be appropriately contracted and complete induction training for site requirements.
10. There are current agreements with the land managers responsible for the land on which horse activities take place. These must be maintained and complied with.

7. EMERGENCY SITUATIONS AND PROTOCOLS

1. The facility has a written emergency management plan that includes the horse riding and trail areas and covers all foreseeable emergencies (fire, falls, extreme weather, chemical spill, predictable horse misbehaviour, vehicle accident etc). The emergency materials should include emergency contact phone numbers (posted next to the phone), site map showing cut off points for utilities, assembly areas and evacuation procedures. All horse staff must be familiar with the protocols.
2. Accident and incident reports must be kept. Regular risk analysis exercises are to be undertaken for the site, procedures and programs; and discussions of these should be held by staff (including debriefing and evaluations of accidents and incidents)
3. All instructors and guides have first aid certification, and there is always a staff member present during horse related activities
4. Basic first aid kits are kept stocked at riding areas, and are checked on a regular basis, and an appropriate kit is taken on trail rides (for horses and riders).
5. An effective means of communicating with emergency services must be available at all times. This must be maintained in all horse activity areas.
6. Free and unobstructed access must be available for access and egress of emergency vehicles
7. Records are kept for horses hired to participants, including as a minimum:
 - a) When the horse was used and who was the rider
 - b) Any incidents relating to the use of the horse
 - c) The training of the horse
8. Horse related activities should be regularly evaluated by staff for their levels of safety and effectiveness, (debriefing); and the results of this process should be applied to future sessions.

8. AGISTMENT:

Contracts between the operator and the agistee cover:

- a) Agistee responsibilities for care of their equine and reporting problems to the site manager
- b) Agistee contact details including medical conditions and emergency contacts
- c) Medical information on horses, including vaccinations, worming history and condition at arrival on site
- d) Responsibilities for Veterinary care
- e) Accounts and charges
- f) Time frames of agreement (starting and completion times)
- g) Rules and procedures that include reporting of incidents and safety issues.
- h) Signatures of both parties
- i) Procedures for non payment of agistment fees and disposal of equines left on the property

9. EXEMPTIONS

In some cases (for example where the cultural nature of an event or program is involved, or where safety is compromised through complying with the above requirements: e.g. wearing helmets when vaulting) exemptions from specific requirements may be applied for, and granted, by the Horse Safety Australia Executive. If exemptions compromise safety, but are considered appropriate by the Executive, all participants in the activity must be over 18 years of age and have signed the appropriate waiver to acknowledge the risks involved in the activity.

10. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Documented procedures are available to deal with clients' complaints including recording them, timeframes for dealing with them, written responses, recording outcomes and improvements in response to the problems raised.

There should be a document available to clients which details the complaints process and provides the Horse Safety Australia contact details (Box 1190, Strathalbyn, 5255: Phone: 08 8536 3274) for follow up, if the complaint is not satisfactorily resolved.

11. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Documented procedures and associated forms must be controlled by either issue date and/or version number to ensure that only the current versions are in use. Records should be legible and stored in a manner to ensure their accessibility and to prevent their deterioration (e.g. accident reports which should be secured in a manner which ensures their long term preservation).

12. CODE OF ETHICS

Sites accredited with Horse Safety Australia should comply with the following:

Accredited sites shall:

Public responsibility:

- Ensure that their professional actions and their general conduct help maintain the prestige of horse related activities and contribute to the quality and responsibility of horse operations.
- Seek opportunities to be of service to their community in matters relating to the horse industry.
- Help create within the community an awareness and appreciation of the beneficial impact that horse related activities have on society.
- Provide the community with information that will assist it in formulating policies and making decisions on matters affecting horse activities.
- Within the limits of their responsibilities, ensure that areas of scenic or recreational significance, special scientific or archaeological sites, and the natural environment are respected, and that the requirements of land managers are followed.

Responsibility to individuals:

- Provide their services conscientiously and competently.
- Not breach public trust, or the specific trust of their participants, clients, staff or competitors.
- Ensure that advice and directions provided give full and proper cognisance of personal safety.
- Not indulge in nor permit bullying or harassment of clients or staff within their organisation

Technical skills of staff:

- Continue to develop their professional knowledge and technical skills.
- Not undertake activities they are not competent to perform and, when in doubt, obtain appropriate advice and assistance that will allow these activities to be competently carried out.
- State qualifications, experience and prior responsibilities accurately.

Behaviour of business and staff:

- Maintain a high standard of integrity, and apply honesty and fair dealing in all aspects of their operations.
- Carry out their professional duties with due care and diligence.
- Conduct themselves in a manner which is neither derogatory to their colleagues nor likely to lessen the confidence of the public in horse related activities.
- Communicate with the public in a professional and responsible manner.

Horse Welfare:

- Ensure horses in their care will have shelter, clean water, appropriate feed, medical and health care, and freedom to move to enhance their well being.
- Pay attention to ensure that horse equipment is well fitted and environments are safe.
- Ensure that their horses have opportunities for social interaction with other equines.
- Pay proper care and attention to the interactions of their horses and clients to ensure the wellbeing of both groups