



## **INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT OF HORSES COMMITTEE (IMHC)**

# **The International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA) Transportation Welfare Guidelines**

### **Introduction.**

The IFHA, in its role to promote good regulation and best practice internationally across horseracing, recognizes the central role played by the horse itself and so the importance of its welfare. The Federation formed the IFHA Animal Welfare Committee in 2010 and adopted a number of broad principles of racehorse welfare to be translated by the Federation's members into more detailed outputs to assure racehorse welfare.

The Animal Welfare Committee plays a leading role in promoting the overall welfare of the Thoroughbred horse however the transportation of Thoroughbreds is a specific period of risk that requires special attention by the industry. Accordingly the IFHA International Movement of Horses Committee (IMHC) has prepared the following principles and guidelines to specifically promote the safety and welfare of thoroughbred horses during transportation for training, competition and breeding purposes.

### **The Risks of Horse Transportation.**

Thoroughbred horses being transported for training, racing or breeding purposes are usually of high value (both monetary and personal) to their owners and there is a strong incentive for transporters to ensure that horses travel and arrive in the best possible condition. Nevertheless safety and welfare deficiencies may occur and are most likely to occur in the following situations:

1. When the persons involved in the transportation process are poorly trained and ignorant of the requirements for safe and humane transportation.
2. When the vehicles and facilities used for transportation are inadequate or unsafe for the purpose because of poor design and/or poor maintenance arising out of ignorance or financial pressures.
3. When unreasonable deadlines are imposed because of financial pressures and/or poor planning.
4. When incidents occur during travelling that may be beyond the direct control of the operator but for which contingency plans and emergency procedures have not been planned and/or implemented.

5. When adverse environmental conditions within the transport vehicle occur or are permitted to develop.
6. When there is deliberate cruelty or neglect of horses by disturbed individuals.

## **The Roles of Government Authorities, Animal Welfare Organizations and Transportation Companies.**

Many national governments, animal transportation organizations and animal welfare groups have established comprehensive guidelines for the safety and welfare of animals during transportation and have posted the guidelines on their organizations' websites. Examples of guidelines provided by government or industry organizations include:

- DEFRA (United Kingdom): [www.defra.org.uk](http://www.defra.org.uk)
- Australian Standards and Guidelines for the Welfare of Animals – “Land Transport of Animals” [http://www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au/shadomx/apps/fms/fmsdownload.cfm?file\\_uuid=9086E554-FE74-D6F2-4714-1874A2F3FD87&siteName=aahc](http://www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au/shadomx/apps/fms/fmsdownload.cfm?file_uuid=9086E554-FE74-D6F2-4714-1874A2F3FD87&siteName=aahc)
- Victorian Department of Primary Industry (Australia): [www.dpi.gov.au](http://www.dpi.gov.au)
- International Air Transport Association (IATA) Live Animal Regulations: [www.iata.org](http://www.iata.org)
- European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/panels.htm>

## **The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) Scientific Opinion Report on the Welfare of Animals during Transport.**

The EFSA Panel on Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW) published a report of expert scientific opinion in the EFSA Journal 2011; 9(1):1966 which may be accessed at <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/panels.htm>

The report covers all species but is not applicable to registered horses which, within the EU, includes thoroughbred horses. This is in large part because the community has a reasonable expectation that registered horses will be transported in excellent conditions because of the high economic value of the horses and because of the high regard horses owners have for their sporting and breeding animals.

It is critical that the equine sporting and breeding equine industries are worthy of this expectation and always strive to provide for excellence in equine safety and welfare during transportation.

The EFSA Opinion Report provides valuable advice, guidelines and references for the transport of horses that are applicable to the transportation of racehorses and breeding stock and should, in general, be regarded as a baseline for the equine industry. There may be situations where guidelines that are necessary to provide for the welfare of horses intended for slaughter, may be irrelevant or counter-productive to the welfare of sporting or breeding horses during transportation. In these cases it is incumbent on the industry and the individual transporter to explain and justify that the variations are necessary and reasonable for the conduct of business and the welfare of the sporting and breeding horse,

The following is a summary of the key points made by the report that are of relevance and importance to the welfare of racehorses and which should be considered and observed by transporters of registered horses. References are provided in the original EFSA document.

## **1. Health and Welfare Issues associated with the Transportation of Horses.**

### **1.1. Respiratory Disease.**

Shipping Fever (pleuropneumonia) is a significant problem associated with the transport of horses and has been reported to occur in up to 12% of horses transported by road and up to 30-40% of horses transported by air.

Risk factors to the development of transport related respiratory disease in horses include:

- The duration of the journey.
- The presence of subclinical respiratory disease.
- Restraint in the Head-Up position.
- Stress related impairment of the immune response.
- The presence of noxious gases and high concentrations of airborne dust and bacteria.
- Body orientation during transport.

Suggested preventative measures include limiting the duration of the journey between rest periods, scheduling frequent rest periods and maintaining a clean transport environment.

### **1.2. Fighting among Horses/ Provision of Adequate Space.**

Fighting has been identified as a major cause of injury. It is recommended that horses be transported in individual compartments to minimize the risk of stress and injury caused by fighting. The size of the compartment for horses should at least comply with published EFSA guidelines.

### **1.3. Nursing Foals**

Nursing foals must travel with their dam and must not be tied up. We should have guidelines here on the minimum age that foals can be transported and this should be related to the distance traveled. Foals have a limited response to stress and a developing immune system which could affect their resistance to stressors encountered during transport.

### **1.4. The High Centre of Gravity of Horses.**

Horses have a relatively high centre of gravity and carry 60%+ of their body weight on their forelimbs. Transport of horses is likely to be more tiring to horses than most other species because of uneven load distribution and the need for horses to constantly brace and adjust their position in response to vehicle movements.

The suspension of the transport vehicle and the care exercised by drivers to provide a smooth trip should be monitored and improved whenever necessary.

### **1.5. Thermoregulation.**

Equidae can have problems with thermoregulation especially at high temperatures, high humidity and in poorly ventilated areas.

Consideration should be given to maintaining good ventilation, insulation and, in extreme weather conditions, to provide air-conditioned transportation.

### **1.6. The Stress of Isolation.**

Isolation is a significant source of stress for herd animals such as the horse and may contribute to behavioural problems and immune suppression.

### **1.7. Dehydration.**

Transportation has been shown to cause weight loss due to dehydration in horses which has been demonstrated to be a risk factor for falls in UK racing if the transportation period exceeded seven hours.

On prolonged journeys, horses must be provided with access to water either during the journey or at scheduled rest stops. One hour is an adequate time to rest for a water stop and to allow most of the horses to drink at least once.

### **1.8. Inadequate Rest Periods.**

Including a twelve hour rest period in the middle of two twelve hour periods of transport was demonstrated to provide immuno-physiological benefits in horses compared to travelling continuously for twenty four hours.

## **2. The Impact of Disease Transmission during Transportation on Welfare.**

Fitness for travel, horse welfare and infectious disease are closely related. Horses that show signs of clinical disease are clearly not fit to travel both in the interests of their own health and that of other animals on the vehicle. Stresses related to travel may reactivate latent disease.

Movement of horses may be associated with the international transmission of infectious disease and the spread of disease vectors resulting in the introduction of exotic disease and international epidemics.

The risks of transmission of infectious disease by transport can be minimized by pre-export quarantine (PEQ), preventing mixing of horses of different health status, pre-travel health inspections, hygienic transport vehicles, minimal stress management procedures and direct transport without stopovers.

## **3. Management during Control Post Stopovers.**

The major horse welfare risks associated with control posts relate to:

- The increased risk of transmission of disease, especially if horses are unloaded.
- The risk of injury during loading or unloading.

- The risk of fatigue, dehydration and respiratory disease if stopovers are prolonged and unloading is not possible.

The risks associated with Control posts may be minimized by:

- Reducing the need for, and/or duration of Control stopovers by pre-planning of the journey.
- If possible by not unloading animals at control points provided adequate provision is made for space allowance for each horse, watering facilities, ventilation, temperature control, environmental hygiene and feeding.
- Proper management of health and identification (ID) documentation.

#### **4. Monitoring Horse Transport.**

There are various indicators that can be measured to assess the conditions under which horses are transported. Many of these indicators are better managed by systematic monitoring over the duration of the journey rather than by spot checks.

EC Regulation (EC) 1/2005 (EC, 2005) requires that a monitoring document (Journey Log) for long journeys of domestic cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and domestic horses other than registered horses.

While registered horses are generally high value animals that transporters have a significant self-interest in delivering in excellent shape, transporters of registered horses should, wherever possible, consider the implementation of journey logs as quality control monitoring systems to demonstrate excellence in animal transportation.

Parameters that may be monitored and documented include:

- Exact time and position by Global Positioning Systems (GPS).
- Internal vehicle temperature and humidity.
- Status of the loading door.
- Journey events.
- Airflow and ventilation.
- Vehicle movement and vibration.
- Behaviour of horses (by digital CCTV).

#### **5. Specific EFSA Guidelines applicable to Horse Transport.**

Specific EFSA guidelines for all species are provided in table format in the EFSA document referred to above. Registered horses, including racehorses and thoroughbred breeding stock are not specifically covered by the EFSA guideline because it is expected that the standard of care provided to registered horses will be, at all times, of a very high standard.

Nevertheless, a summary of key points of the EFSA guidelines for food animal transportation is provided below for the information of Racing Authorities and all involved in the transportation of registered horses.

There may be situations in which the guidelines for the transportation of food animals may not necessarily apply to the transportation of registered horses, for example, the duration of

transportation because of the high standard of the transport vehicle and its internal environment, however where deviations from the minimal standards may occur, it should be the responsibility of the transporter to demonstrate the standard of care provided during transport is of the highest quality and that it adequately compensates for any deviations from EFSA guidelines.

The following is a summary of the key EFSA recommendations relevant to the transportation of registered horses

### **5.1. Fitness for Travel.**

No horse shall be transported unless it is fit for the intended journey, and all horses shall be transported in conditions guaranteed not to cause them injury or unnecessary suffering.

Horses that are injured or that present physiological weaknesses or pathological processes shall not be considered fit for transport. However, sick or injured horses may be considered fit for transport if they are:

- certified by a veterinary surgeon that the injuries or illness are minor and transport would not cause additional suffering;
- transported under veterinary supervision for or following veterinary treatment or diagnosis. However, such transport shall be permitted only where no unnecessary suffering or ill treatment is caused to the horses concerned.

Horses that fall ill or are injured during transport should be separated from other in the group and receive first-aid treatment as soon as possible.

Sedatives should not be used on horses to be transported unless necessary to ensure the welfare of the horses and should only be used under veterinary supervision.

### **5.2. Design and Construction of Transport Vehicles.**

Means of transport, containers and their fittings shall be designed, constructed, maintained and operated so as to:

- avoid injury and suffering and to ensure the safety of the horses;
- protect the horses from inclement weather, extreme temperatures and adverse changes in climatic conditions;
- permit cleaning and disinfection;
- prevent the horses escaping or falling out and be able to withstand the stresses of movements;
- ensure that appropriate air quality and ventilation can be maintained;
- provide access to the horses to allow them to be inspected and cared for;
- present a flooring surface that is anti-slip;
- present a flooring surface that minimizes the leakage of urine or faeces;
- provide a means of lighting sufficient for inspection and care of the horses during transport.

Sufficient space shall be provided inside the horses' compartment to ensure that there is adequate ventilation above the animals when they are in a naturally standing position.

### **5.3. Facilities and Procedures for Loading and Unloading of Horses**

Facilities for loading and unloading, including the flooring, shall be designed, constructed, maintained and operated so as to:

- prevent injury and suffering and minimise excitement and distress during animal movements as well as to ensure the safety of the animals. In particular, surfaces shall not be slippery and lateral protections shall be provided so as to prevent animals from escaping;
- permit cleaning and disinfection.

### **5.4. Handling of Horses during Loading, Unloading and Transportation.**

It shall be prohibited to:

- strike or kick the horses;
- apply pressure to any particularly sensitive part of the body in such a way as to cause them unnecessary pain or suffering;
- suspend the animals themselves by mechanical means;
- lift or drag the animals by head, ears, legs, or tail, or handle them in such a way as to cause them unnecessary pain or suffering;
- use prods or other implements with pointed ends;

### **5.5. Maximum Journey Duration for Horses.**

Domestic Equidae may be transported for a maximum period of 24 hours. During the journey they must be given liquid and if necessary fed every eight hours. Ideally, journey times for horses should not exceed eight hours except in the case of air transport.

### **5.6. Minimum Space Allowances for Horses.**

Space allowances for horses for road transport should at least comply with published EFSA guidelines.

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

In principle, Racing Authorities can contribute to the enhancement of horse welfare during transportation by:

1. Ensuring that their officials are thoroughly familiar with government regulation and industry codes for the transportation of animals in their region.
2. Providing or encouraging education for racing industry personnel involved in the transportation of horses.

3. Embracing welfare within their Rules and establishing systems to promote compliance with established welfare and transportation codes.
4. Supporting research into transportation welfare and safety.

## **Specific Transport Welfare Initiatives and Activities.**

To achieve the general objectives above, some specific activities recommended to Racing Authorities include:

1. **Support of the Training and Certification of Personnel involved in the Transportation of Thoroughbred Racehorses by the Authority, by Animal Welfare Organizations and/or by competent Technical Training Colleges.**

Experienced people involved in the day to day operations of horse transportation are best placed to ensure the welfare and wellness of horses during transportation. Most are strongly motivated to do so and should always be provided with the training and knowledge to enable them to do the best job possible in caring for horses under their charge.

2. **Encouraging Quality Transport Vehicle Design and Maintenance Procedures by Education and Communication and/or by Regulation.**

Racing Authorities may wish to, in consultation with industry experts, prepare checklists for vehicle and procedures inspections to assist officials and welfare organizations who may need to inspect vehicles and investigate incidents.

The following are fundamental horse transport vehicle safety and wellness features:

- Proper ventilation with dust and vehicle exhaust minimization procedures.
  - Design features that enhance easy cleansing and disinfection.
  - Internal environmental monitoring systems including temperature, humidity, ventilation, ammonia and airborne particle levels.
  - Adequate flooring strength and non-slip qualities.
  - Maximization of partition safety.
  - Minimization/elimination of overhead hazards.
  - Elimination of gaps that may entrap a horse's limb.
  - Elimination of dangerous projections within the horse area.
  - Safe loading ramps and door security.
  - GPS monitoring of vehicle route and trip duration.
  - Emergency human access/egress points.
  - Adequate watering of horses in transit.
  - Vehicle design that permits gravity drainage of the horse's upper respiratory tract.
  - Fire risk minimization measures and provision of fire extinguisher system.
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#### **4. Incident Preparedness by Transportation Operators.**

Racing Authorities may wish to require that any company or individual involved in the commercial transportation of registered Thoroughbred horses must prepare and submit to the authority on a regular basis, standard operating procedures and contingency plans to manage incidents that may occur during the transportation of horses including, but not limited to:

- Vehicle breakdown.
- Transportation in adverse weather conditions.
- Injuries to horses en route.
- Loss of air-conditioning / ventilation.
- Traffic accidents.
- Natural disasters such as fires, flooding or storms.
- Loss of feed and / or water supplies.
- Driver illness or injury.
- Injury / illness to humans accompanying horses.

#### **5. Emphasizing the Importance of Animal Welfare at Transit Points and Border Crossings.**

Transit depots and border crossings are potential points of delay in movement that may compromise the welfare of horses during transportation. While appropriate pre-planning by transportation companies should minimize the risks, it is important that contingency plans have been made. Racing authorities may wish to regularly liaise with government authorities to explain and emphasize the needs of thoroughbred horses during transportation and proactively negotiate the requirements for safe and rapid movement of horses through potential choke points.

#### **6. Ongoing Research, Development and Implementation of Practices that contribute to the Optimal Wellness of Horses during Transportation.**

Racing authorities may wish to encourage research into the welfare and wellness of horses during transportation, disseminate the results of such research to the industry and strongly encourage the adoption of recommendations for best practice.