



***New Zealand Equine Health Association Incorporated***  
*Protecting the health and welfare of New Zealand horses*

## **New Zealand Equine Health Association (NZEHA) Position Statement on the Welfare of Horses Exported from New Zealand**

### **Background:**

- When animals are sold within New Zealand the expected level of welfare and care remains the same. That level is upheld by the Animal Welfare Act 1999. As allowed in the Act, existing codes of welfare provide detailed minimum standards on the level of care that must be given.
- Equine sectors and organisations in New Zealand have additional rules and expectations that detail and define the minimum standards on the level of care that must be given to equines participating in competitions.
- Ministry of Primary Industry standards detail the care that must be given when horses are transported out of New Zealand, either by air or by sea. Animals being exported from New Zealand require an animal welfare export certificate (AWEC), as set out in the Animal Welfare Act 1999. This ensures the welfare of animals is provided for, so that they may travel and arrive in good health.
- In addition to generic international guidelines set down by a number of international bodies, including **International Air Transport Association (IATA)** and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), New Zealand standards have been negotiated with those who transport horses by sea and air from New Zealand. These detail the planning, reporting, competence of grooms and requirements relating to the care and welfare of horses during their trip.

### **Issues:**

Each year over 2,000 horses are exported from New Zealand.

When horses leave New Zealand the standard of welfare that will be afforded to them can be expected to be directly reflective of the animal welfare law of the destination country.

The majority of horses exported from New Zealand to date have been exported to Australia, and lesser numbers to Hong Kong, Singapore, the United States and the European Union member countries, which all have animal welfare laws and standards similar in intent to those in New Zealand.

Horses that are exported to countries where welfare laws do not require owners to provide a level of care for animals that is equivalent to that expected in New Zealand or base international standards gives rise to an ethical dilemma.

In other countries where animals are transported to countries where lesser welfare laws exist and adverse welfare outcomes for the transported animals have transpired, criticism has been levelled at the industry for ignoring their social and ethical responsibilities.

**NZEHA response:**

The NZEHA is assured the standard of care that are and will be enforced before and during transport, and post-arrival for horses exported to countries where animal laws have been enacted are equivalent to base international animal welfare laws.

Members of the OIE are obliged to observe the OIE's animal welfare guidelines for the transport of animals (by land, sea, and air).

The Ministry for Primary Industries supports the welfare of horses exported from New Zealand, while at the same time acknowledging that it has no authority in other countries.

**Comment on the current export of horses to China:**

To our knowledge, to date China has been unable to enact useful animal welfare legislation that mandates for the care of domestic animals. There is evidence that considerable within-country lobbying is occurring to achieve this end. The NZEHA offers its support to China as it moves towards adopting international animal welfare standards and laws.

The NZEHA has monitored the trade of horses into China, including sending qualified vets on shipments to China, and made inquiries, and is satisfied with the current level of welfare provided for the horses on arrival, which are to a level equivalent to base international welfare laws.

The NZEHA will continue to monitor welfare of horses being exported.

Copies of New Zealand's legislation and the latest draft Code of Welfare for Equines are being made available to those responsible for the care of these exported horses.

The NZEHA supports and actively promotes building a strong relationship between the Chinese and New Zealand equine industries so that we can share expertise and accurate information to satisfy all New Zealanders that our responsibilities towards our animals continue to be met wherever they are domiciled.