



SA Barrel Horse Association Inc – Animal Welfare Policy



Policy overview and purpose

SA Barrel Horse Association Incorporated (SABHA) recognizes the importance of sound animal welfare policies, which prevent the use of animals which are not fit for competition. Fitness may be gauged as appropriate physical fitness or lack of suitability for competition due to injury or disease. The welfare of all horses is paramount and as an affiliate of the Australian Barrel Horse Association (ABHA) we adhere to their [Animal Welfare Policy](#).

Scope

It is the responsibility of all persons to ensure the well-being and humane treatment of any horse either entrusted in their care or within their scope.

Method

SABHA will enforce any disciplinary action because of any mistreatment of horses as indicated in both SABHA and ABHA Rule Books.

Competition areas

Each venue should be designed for equine activities with the safety of the horse in mind. The ABHA risk matrix has been put into place as a guide for affiliates to ensure they can provide a safe and risk free environment for horses.

Ground Surfaces

Our focus is to supply and compete on suitable and safe surfaces. All surfaces on which horses walk, warm up and compete must be designed and maintained to reduce factors that could lead to injury.

Extreme weather

Competitions must not take place in extreme weather condition that may compromise welfare of safety of the horse. If the committee identifies that there will be an extreme weather event coinciding with a SABHA event, notifications will be made to entrants either via social media channels or via website (as per SABHA rules) informing persons of either a modified start time or cancellation/reschedule of the competition. It is the responsibility of the competitor to monitor these mediums for information.

In the event the forecast temperature for SABHA competition date is 38 degrees during the peak of the day is, or heavy rain impacting the competition grounds, the committee will assess accordingly.



Heat Stress Horses

A common ailment observed in horses as a consequence of hot weather is heat stress. Most horses easily adjust to conditions of high heat and/or humidity. Heat stress after exercise is most likely to be seen on days when both the ambient temperature and relative humidity are high and wind speeds are low or absent (conditions of high environmental thermal load). Horses cool themselves efficiently by evaporative cooling. As sweat and water molecules evaporate from the skin these molecules absorb and remove body heat causing the horse to cool. If the ambient temperature and humidity are both high this will slow the rate of transfer of heat from the horse's body into the environment and any cooling effect will be reduced or delayed, increasing the risk of heat stress. Local experience identifies that heat stress is most likely to occur on days when the ambient temperature is 35°C or above or the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature is 26°C (WBGT sun). Days on which the humidity is high or there is an absence of air movement are susceptible to an increased risk of heat stress."

Symptoms of Heat Stress

Symptoms of heat stress are:

- rapid shallow breathing (as in panting);
- very high body temperature;
- flared nostrils;
- a congestion appearance of the gum;
- staggering or weakened gait;
- abnormal, irrational behaviour such as lashing out with hooves etc; and
- (in extreme circumstances) collapse.

Circumstances Contributing to Heat Stress

The susceptibility of a horse to heat stress may not solely be influenced by temperature or the prevailing conditions. Certain other factors may adversely affect an individual horse's ability to withstand racing in hot weather. These include:

- travelling a horse long distances prior to or on the same day as competition;
- an excitable temperament;
- younger horses less acclimatised to heat;
- heavy sweating;
- withholding drinking water on the day*

* Note: Depriving a horse of water prior to an event is not a recommended practice. During late spring or early summer horses may exhibit heat stress on days when the ambient temperature is relatively low (30°C) with relatively moderate humidity.

Veterinary treatment

A contact number for an on call vet must be made available for an emergency at any SABHA event.



Document Details

Policy owner	SA Barrel Horse Association Incorporated
Approved by	Committee
Effective date	2024
Updated by	President
Review schedule	At least once every 2 years

Document Change Control

Version	Date	Owner	Approved by	Brief description of change	File reference
1.0	31/01/2023	President	Committee	Draft Policy	
1.1	06/11/2023	President	Committee	Version 1	2023 SABHA Animal Welfare Policy VS1
2.0	14/08/2024	President	Committee	Reviewed	2024 SABHA Animal Welfare Policy VS2
3.0	07/8/2025	President	Committee	Reviewed VS2	2025 SABHA Animal Welfare Policy VS3