

GUIDELINE – EQUINE FATALITY AND REMOVAL AND DISPOSAL OF A DECEASED HORSE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Guideline is to provide licensed clubs with information about the development of an appropriate process to be followed in removing and disposing of a deceased horse following an equine fatality at a licensed venue.

2. Scope

The Guideline applies to equine fatalities at licensed venues and includes, but is not limited to, fatalities occurring during race meetings, trackwork, official trials, jump-outs, and other training and stabling activities.

The Guideline should be adopted by licensed clubs, and followed by officials of licensed clubs. Licensed clubs should ensure racing participants and veterinarians involved in the response to an equine fatality at a licensed venue are aware of the relevant response arrangements made under this Guideline.

3. Definitions

The following definitions apply:

Equine fatality	Any incident involving the death or euthanasia of a Thoroughbred or Standardbred horse, including circumstances in which a horse is euthanased, or found deceased, in on-course stabling facilities.
Licensed club	A club licensed by RQ to hold race meetings for its code of racing.
Licensed venue	A venue of a licensed club, licensed by RQ for the conduct of race meetings and related racing and training activities.
QRIC	Queensland Racing Integrity Commission.
RQ	Racing Queensland.
Standardbred horse	A horse as defined by the Australian Harness Racing Rules Dictionary.
Thoroughbred horse	A named or unnamed horse as defined by AR 2 of the Australian Rules of Racing.
Licensed trainer	A person licensed by the QRIC to train Thoroughbred or Standardbred horses in Queensland.
Officiating veterinarian	A veterinarian employed or engaged by the QRIC or a licensed club to perform the duties of an official on-track veterinarian at a race meeting or official trials, and including a veterinarian engaged by a licensed club to provide veterinary services at jump-outs, in circumstances where it is the usual practice of the licensed club to do so.
Private veterinarian	A veterinarian engaged by a trainer, or other connections of a horse, to provide veterinary services.

4. Guideline

4.1 General principles

The welfare of horses is of paramount importance, and veterinary assessment and/or treatment must be provided to a horse where such assessment and/or treatment is required, or might reasonably be expected to be required, to ensure a horse's welfare, or to alleviate any pain or suffering.

In all circumstances, deceased horses should be dealt with in a discreet and respectful manner, with removal and disposal occurring in a timely manner following the granting of approval by the QRIC Stewards to do so.

The presence of a deceased horse is a hygiene hazard, and a potential disease risk. Horses euthanased by barbiturate infusion also represent a potential risk for secondary poisoning of other animals.

Subject to the granting of approval by the QRIC Stewards, deceased horses should therefore be removed and appropriately disposed of as soon as is practicable, ordinarily within 12 hours, and never more than 48 hours, after death.

The disposal of a deceased horse must be consistent with any relevant laws or regulations.

All persons dealing with ill or deceased horses should make themselves aware of measures to protect against and manage Hendra virus risks. Details are available at:

https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au_hendra-virus.

4.2 Preparedness

Removal and disposal of a deceased horse is the organisational responsibility of the licensed club operating the licensed venue at which the equine fatality occurs.

As part of being prepared for the management of an equine fatality at a licensed venue, licensed clubs should consider the manner in which costs associated with removal and disposal of a deceased horse will be met (refer to section 4.6).

Each licensed club should have the following arrangements in place at all times in order to be able to respond appropriately to an equine fatality, and the requirement to remove and dispose of a deceased horse in an appropriate and timely manner:

- (a) A service agreement (including cost and payment terms, and describing the acceptable timeframe for the provision of the service), with a person or entity with the necessary expertise and equipment to remove a deceased horse from the licensed venue, and transport it to an appropriate disposal site, in an appropriate manner.
- (b) The name and contact details of a suitable alternative, in the event that the person or entity described at 4.2(a) is not available within a reasonable period of time;
- (c) Arrangements for the disposal of the deceased horse, including having confirmed the suitability of those arrangements with the relevant local council. The following options may be considered, depending on local availability and permissions:
 - (i) burial, composting, cremation or burning (subject to fire ban or restrictions) on rural property;
 - (ii) transport to a waste facility that accepts dead livestock; or

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- (iii) cremation by commercial pet cremation providers offering equine cremation services, if so requested by the owners of a deceased horse, noting all costs associated with such services are the responsibility of the owner/s of the deceased horse (see also 4.6).
- (d) A mechanism to ensure the name and contact details of the persons or entities described at 4.2(a) and (b), and the disposal arrangements described at 4.2(c), are known by, or available to, relevant club personnel.
- (e) Identification of an appropriate location at each licensed venue, in an area that is inaccessible to (and out of the view of) the public, where a deceased horse may be held pending clearance from the QRIC Stewards to remove and dispose of the horse. In selecting an appropriate location, consideration should be given to privacy, security, and access for the equine ambulance and disposal vehicle.
- (f) Availability of a tarpaulin (or other suitable heavy duty, opaque cover) of sufficient size to completely cover a deceased horse in the location described at 4.2(e) until such time as it can be removed. A sufficient number of heavy objects, such as concrete blocks, should be available to weigh down the edges of the cover such that it cannot be displaced by wind or animals.

4.3 Response

Where an equine fatality involving a Thoroughbred or Standardbred horse occurs at a licensed venue at a time when the QRIC stewards are not present, the licensed trainer of the deceased horse should notify the QRIC Stewards as soon as practicable after the death occurs.

In such circumstances, the trainer of the deceased horse should also contact the licensed club and advise of the incident, and seek the club's assistance to facilitate the removal and disposal of the deceased horse in accordance with this Guideline.

The QRIC Stewards must grant approval for the disposal of a deceased horse before the disposal takes place. See section 4.4 for specific provisions in relation to notification and approval for disposal under each codes' rules.

The QRIC Stewards may direct that samples are collected from a deceased horse for prohibited substance testing prior to removal and disposal of the horse.

In consultation with the QRIC Veterinarians (or the club-engaged officiating veterinarian), the QRIC Stewards may also direct that the horse be transported to an appropriate veterinary facility for post-mortem examination. Where the QRIC Stewards direct that a horse is transported to an appropriate veterinary facility for post-mortem examination, costs associated with the transport and post-mortem examination are met by the QRIC.

A deceased horse may be moved to an appropriate location (see section 4.2(e)) at the licensed venue prior to the QRIC Stewards providing clearance for the horse to be removed.

Once the deceased horse is cleared for removal and disposal by the QRIC Stewards, licensed club officials should liaise with the trainer of the deceased horse (and the officiating or private veterinarian as appropriate) to implement the established local process for removal and disposal of the deceased horse.

Where costs associated with removal and disposal are to be passed on to the owner/s of the horse via the trainer (see section 4.6), the trainer should be made aware of the costs that will be incurred

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(as established by the service agreement described at section 4.2(a)) at this time, such that, where relevant, those costs may be included in any finalisation of accounts with the owners/s of the deceased horse.

4.4 Participants' obligations under the Rules

Both thoroughbred and harness participants have obligations in relation to the notification to the QRIC Stewards following the death of a horse.

Australian Rules of Racing (Thoroughbred)

AR 299 Death of named horse

- (1) *Within 24 hours of the death of a named horse which has not been retired from racing in accordance with AR 297, the manager or his or her authorised agent must notify Racing Australia of that fact by lodging the relevant form (including a Stable Return where applicable) prescribed by Racing Australia.*
- (2) *A person must not dispose of the deceased horse without the written approval of the relevant PRA unless a veterinary certificate as to cause of death is provided to the relevant PRA.*

AR 292 Death of unnamed horse

- (1) *Within 48 hours of the death of an unnamed horse, the manager or his or her authorised agent must notify Racing Australia of that fact by lodging the relevant form (including a Stable Return where applicable) prescribed by Racing Australia.*
- (2) *A person must not dispose of a deceased unnamed horse without the written approval of Racing Australia or the relevant PRA unless a veterinary certificate as to cause of death is provided to Racing Australia or the relevant PRA.*

Australian Trotting Stud Book Regulations (Australian Harness Racing Rules)

11 Retirement or Death of a Horse

- (4) *The owner or trainer of a registered horse at the time of its death shall:-*
 - (a) *In the case of a horse which dies whilst in the care of a licensed trainer immediately notify the Stewards of the death.*
 - (b) *In any other case notify HRA and the Controlling Body or Stewards of the death within twenty four hours of its occurrence.*
- (5) *A notification of death under sub rule (4) shall be in writing or such other form as HRA, the Controlling Body or Stewards may determine.*
- (6) *The person in possession of the dead horse's registration certificate shall within 7 days of such notification return the certificate to HRA.*
- (7) *The owner or trainer shall comply with any direction given by HRA, the Stewards or the Controlling Body to verify the death.*
- (8) *The owner or trainer of a horse whose death has been notified, or which should have been notified, under sub rule (4)(a) shall not dispose of the carcass without the permission of the Stewards or the Controlling Body.*

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4.5 Report to be submitted by a licensed club

If an equine fatality occurs at a licensed venue at a time other than a race meeting or official trials, the licensed club must complete and submit the <Name of Form> to RQ within 48 hours, ensuring that where possible all relevant details are provided.

4.6 Costs

Subject to the provisions at 4.6(a) – (c) below, costs associated with the removal and disposal of a deceased horse, including circumstances in which the removal and disposal follows the death, or euthanasia by a private veterinarian of a horse in on-course stabling facilities, are, in the first instance, ordinarily met by the licensed club operating the licensed venue at which the equine fatality occurs. This is on the basis that the licensed club has organisational responsibility for managing the process.

At their own discretion, licensed clubs may elect to account for this cost in various ways as part of their broader operating model, including, for example, by written agreement with licensed trainers under on-course stabling contracts, or through consideration of such costs in the setting of track usage fees.

Where the licensed club does not cater for these circumstances in its operating model, the licensed club may determine to pass on the cost to the owner/s of the horse via the trainer. If the licensed club intends to pass on these costs to the owner/s of the deceased horse via the trainer, this should be established when the removal and disposal arrangements are confirmed between the licensed club and the trainer as outlined in section 4.3. The licensed club should then issue an appropriate invoice to the trainer for the relevant costs.

Exceptions to the above provisions:

- (a) Where the QRIC Stewards direct that a horse is transported to an appropriate veterinary facility for post-mortem examination, costs associated with the transport and post-mortem examination are met by the QRIC (see also section 4.3 above).
- (b) Where the owner/s of a deceased horse request that the horse be cremated (including aqua-cremation and similar services) by commercial pet cremation provider offering equine cremation services, all costs associated with such services, including transport to the facility at which the service is provided, are the responsibility of the owner/s of the deceased horse.
- (c) Where a post-mortem examination is undertaken by, or at the request of, a private veterinarian, or at the request of the owner of a deceased horse for insurance or other purposes, costs associated with the post-mortem examination (including transport to the facility at which the post-mortem examination is conducted) are the responsibility of the owner/s of the deceased horse.

4.6.1 Veterinary costs

For the avoidance of doubt, RQ notes that:

- (a) Costs associated with the veterinary treatment and/or euthanasia (excluding removal and disposal of a deceased horse) of a horse by an officiating veterinarian, will ordinarily be included as part of the usual engagement arrangements between the officiating veterinarian and the QRIC or licensed club.

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- (b) Where a private veterinarian attends to an injured or unwell horse at a licensed venue, the trainer of the horse is responsible for the cost of any veterinary assessment and/or treatment (including euthanasia), noting that those costs may subsequently be passed on to the owner/s of the horse.

5. Roles & Responsibilities

Licensed clubs should proactively make the necessary enquiries and arrangements to ensure preparedness in accordance with section 4.2.

Licensed clubs should ensure racing participants and veterinarians involved in the response to an equine fatality at a licensed venue are aware of the relevant response arrangements made under this Guideline.

Licensed trainers are reminded of their relevant obligations under the Australian Rules of Racing and Australian Harness Racing Rules, as applicable.

6. References & Related Documents

Document	Document
Thoroughbred Rules of Racing: Racing Queensland	Harness Rules of Racing: Racing Queensland

7. Version History

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1.0	xx/xx/2024	EGM Veterinary Services and Animal Welfare	New Guideline

