



IFHA Transportation Welfare Guidelines

Version 1 (June 2023)

IFHA Transportation Welfare Guidelines

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA) is committed to the welfare of the racehorse during all aspects of its career.
- 1.2. The IFHA Horse Welfare Committee (HWC) 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 the special attention of the IFHA International Movement of Horses Committee (IMHC) to support the work of the HWC.
- 1.3. Accordingly, the IMHC has prepared the following principles and suggested guidelines to promote the safety and welfare of horses during transportation for training, competition and breeding purposes.
- 1.4. Horse transportation information documents prepared by a number of government and equine welfare organisations are provided for reference.

2. The Risks of Horse Transportation

- 2.1. Horses that are 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 safely and arrive in the best possible condition.
- 2.2. Nevertheless safety and welfare deficiencies may occur from time to time and are most likely to occur when:
 - 2.2.1. The persons involved in the transportation process are poorly trained and ignorant of the requirements for safe and humane transportation and detection of the early signs of abnormalities such as colic, travel sickness or heat stress.
 - 2.2.2. 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.
 - 2.2.3. Horses are travelled when they are not in a suitable condition to do so because of injury or illness.
 - 2.2.4. Horses are travelled or held up for long periods of time without the opportunity for watering, feeding and opportunities to get their heads down.
 - 2.2.5. When unreasonable deadlines are imposed because of financial pressures and/ or poor planning.
 - 2.2.6. 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.

2.2.7. Adverse environmental conditions within the transport vehicle occur or are permitted to develop.

2.2.8. There is deliberate cruelty or neglect of horses by disturbed persons.

3. The Role of Shipping Agents

3.1. Long distance international movement of racing and breeding horses is usually managed by professional Shipping Agents who have the primary responsibility for the safety and welfare of racehorses during transportation.

3.2. While professional Shipping Agents generally manage horses during transportation to a very high standard, it may be appropriate for Racing Authorities to check that Shipping Agents used or recommended by an Authority have systems and procedures in place to:

3.2.1. Ensure compliance with relevant regulations on Air Transport such as IATA Live Animals Regulations¹ and International Air Transportation Association (IATA) guidelines on air safety and cargo requirements.

3.2.2. Strive to achieve best international practice with respect to duration of journeys, assessment of veterinary suitability to travel and provision of feed water and safe areas for rest and recovery during prolonged journeys.

3.2.3. Educate and train personnel in the safe and humane transportation of horses, for example by requiring the completion of provided appropriate education and training such as Live Animals for Passenger Handling Personnel² programme.

4. Private Owner or Trainer Managed Transportation of Horses

4.1. Horses may be transported short to medium distances by Owners or Trainers. Owners and Trainers will have a vested interest in transporting horses under their care safely and humanely. However, occasionally financial pressures or lack of knowledge may result in sub-optimal transportation conditions that may adversely affect horse health and welfare.

4.2. To minimise the risk of adverse outcomes, Racing Authorities may prepare guidelines and training programmes for the local transportation of horses and conduct audits on horse transport vehicles from time to time to encourage compliance with local welfare standards.

¹IATA Live Animals Regulations. <https://www.iata.org/en/publications/store/live-animals-regulations/>

² IATA Live Animals for Passenger Handling Personnel (e-learning) <https://www.iata.org/en/training/courses/live-animals-passenger/tcgg43/en/>

5. The Role of Racing Authorities

- 5.1. Racing Authorities can contribute to enhancing horse welfare during horse transportation by:
 - 5.1.1. Educating Officials to become familiarized with local government regulations and industry codes for the transportation of horses.
 - 5.1.2. Codifying welfare requirements within their rules or systems to promote compliance with established welfare and transportation codes whenever practicable and appropriate to do so.
 - 5.1.3. Implementing systems and procedures to monitor and enforce compliance by licensed persons or contractors with any codified travel welfare requirements.
 - 5.1.4. Supporting research into transportation welfare and safety.

6. Specific Transport Welfare Initiatives and Activities

- 6.1. To help achieve the objectives above, Racing Authorities may encourage and support participants to achieve good international practice by promoting the following activities and standards:
 - 6.1.1. Pre-travel inspection of horses for veterinary suitability to travel is as suggested by the European Food Safety Authority (30 June, 2022), *Welfare of Equidae during Transport*.
 - 6.1.2. Limiting the duration of continuous road transport to eight to ten hours whenever possible and, when a longer period of transportation is absolutely necessary, ensuring that horses are provided with expert health monitoring and supportive care prior to, during and after the journey.
 - 6.1.3. Use of GPS monitoring of vehicle routes and trip duration.
 - 6.1.4. Provision of sufficient water and supportive care to ensure adequate hydration of horses during the journey
 - 6.1.5. Provision of safe, secure rest areas where horses can be unloaded, fed, watered and have an opportunity to get their heads down during prolonged long journeys, when it is safe and practical to do so.
 - 6.1.6. Transport vehicle design that:
 - 6.1.6.1. Provides adequate ventilation, cooling systems and protection from exhaust emissions within the horse compartments.
 - 6.1.6.2. Facilitates easy and effective cleansing and disinfection.
 - 6.1.6.3. Has strong, safe flooring with non-slip qualities.

- 6.1.6.4. Minimises the risks of horse injuries by limiting opportunities for a horse to attempt to escape from a compartment resulting in it being injured or entrapped
- 6.1.6.5. Eliminates overhead hazards in horse compartments
- 6.1.6.6. Eliminates gaps that may entrap a horse's limb as far as is possible.
- 6.1.6.7. Eliminates dangerous projections within the horse area.
- 6.1.6.8. Facilitates gravity drainage of the horse's upper respiratory tract.
- 6.1.6.9. Has secure door closing systems.
- 6.1.7. The use of internal environmental quality measuring and recording systems including temperature, humidity, ventilation, ammonia and airborne particle levels in the horse compartments of vehicles.
- 6.1.8. The use of CCTV monitoring.
- 6.1.9. The use of loading ramps that are secure and safe.
- 6.1.10. Incorporates human safety facilities and design features.
- 6.1.11. Incorporates fire risk minimization design features and procedures.

7. Duration of Travel

- 7.1. Most expert opinion recommends that about eight hours is the optimum maximum period for road travel for horses³ (Regulation 1/2005) and that, if the duration of travel must be extended beyond that period, recommend that appropriate veterinary monitoring of horses including temperature and dehydration checks be performed and appropriate supportive care provided whenever necessary.
- 7.2. Extending travel beyond eight to ten hours is reported to significantly increase the risk of overstress dehydration and respiratory disease.

8. Incident Preparedness by Transportation Operators

- 8.1. Racing Authorities may require that any company or individual involved in the commercial transportation of registered Thoroughbred horses should 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:
 - 8.1.1. Vehicle breakdown.

³ Regulation (EC) 1/2005 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 December 2004 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations and amending directives 64/432/EEC and 93/119/EC and Regulation (EC) 1255/97 [2005] OJ L3/1.

- 8.1.2. Transportation in adverse weather conditions.
- 8.1.3. Injuries to horses that occur during loading, travelling and unloading.
- 8.1.4. Loss of air-conditioning / ventilation.
- 8.1.5. Traffic accidents.
- 8.1.6. Natural disasters such as fires, flooding or storms.
- 8.1.7. Loss of feed and / or water supplies.
- 8.1.8. Driver illness or injury.
- 8.1.9. Injury / illness to the personnel accompanying horses.

9. Emphasizing the Importance of Horse Welfare at Transit Points and Border Crossings

- 9.1. Transit depots and border crossings are potential points of delay in movement that may compromise the welfare of horses during transportation. Appropriate pre-planning by transportation companies should minimize the risks, and it is important that contingency plans are made and documented.
- 9.2. 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.

10. Ongoing Research, Development and Implementation of Practices that Contribute to the Optimal Wellness of Horses during Transportation

- 10.1. Racing Authorities should encourage and support 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.

11. Useful References

- 11.1. This document seeks to provide general guidelines and the expectations of the IFHA for member authorities for the transportation of horses. It does not seek to provide prescriptive instructions that must be followed. The following documents provide excellent information and advice that may be used as resources by authorities to help set local standards and systems to manage horse transportation welfare and safety.
- 11.2. All Internet-based sources were last accessed on 12 December 2022, and were current as of that date.

- 11.2.1. Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines. (2020, July). *Australia Horse Welfare and Well-Being Toolkit*. Australia Horse Industry Council.
<https://www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au/land-transport/>
- 11.2.2. Council Regulation (EC) 1/2005 of 22 December 2004 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations and amending Directives 64/432/EEC and 93/119/EC and Regulation (EC) No 1255/97 [2005] OJ L3/1.
- 11.2.3. European Food Safety Authority. (2022, June 30). *Welfare of equidae during transport*.
<https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/j.efsa.2022.7444>
- 11.2.4. *Practical Guidelines on the Watering of Equine Animals Transported by Road* <http://www.animaltransportguides.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/EQUINE-Watering-Guidelines-ENG-3.pdf>
- 11.2.5. *Practical Guidelines to Assess Fitness for Transport of Equidae (Horse, Ponies, Donkeys and their Hybrids)*
<https://agriculture.gouv.fr/telecharger/88721?token=e5968b478c6a2bec5a3ede0468e9f26fe50bb5b94ff4da7d34717bc822017fd4>
- 11.2.6. WOA. (2018). *Terrestrial Animal Health Code*. Section 7, Chapters 7.2 – 7.4:
https://www.woah.org/fileadmin/Home/eng/Health_standards/tahc/2018/en_titre_1.7.htm
- 11.2.7. WOA. (2022). *Listed Diseases, Infections and Infestations*:
www.oie.int/en/animal-health-in-the-world/oie-listed-diseases-2014/