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1. Purpose

The Australian Trail Horse Riders Association is committed to ensuring that a high standard of horse health and welfare is maintained for all horses participating at ATHRA sanctioned events.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all ATHRA affiliated clubs, members and all persons attending a sanctioned ATHRA event as a Day Member or in any other capacity. In this context, "sanctioned ATHRA event" includes trail rides, trail ride challenges, charity rides, special events, regional camps, training days and clinics; and as defined in ATHRA's Code of Conduct. ATHRA events may at times, be held in remote areas of Australia, therefore the need for adequate first aid supplies, suitably trained event officials and effective communications equipment is essential.

3. Policy

3.1 Responsibility

The health and welfare of a horse attending an ATHRA event is the responsibility of the rider/owner. All horses attending events should be deemed fit and well prior to arrival at the ride base or trail head by the rider/owner. Some events will require the completion of a Horse Health Declaration, and in some states, Movement Records are required, both of which further confirm the responsibilities of the rider/owner. Members arriving at events with sick or injured horses, should be offered some assistance and would then be asked to return home if the horse is fit to travel.

Club officials are responsible for providing members with an overall briefing of event base infrastructure, program and trail information. This enables riders to assess their capability and the fitness of their horse, against the distance and terrain of the planned event; and provides them with notice on provisioning for both themselves and their horse.

IMS-F-012 Incident Report should be completed by the Trail Boss, should a horse require any form of treatment during an event. First aid treatment and recording of information including cause, should be undertaken by and/or in consultation with the rider/owner and other witnesses if appropriate.

ATHRA insurance policies respond only to personal human injury and/or property damage caused by members or their horses. Vet costs at ATHRA events are the responsibility of the owner. Members are encouraged to consider private insurance options for their horse, should they feel the necessity.

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3.2 Parameters

Signs of normal health should be evident for all horses when at rest, in reference to the following:

	Normal	Of concern	Comments
Temperature	36.5-38.5 C	Above 40 C	Potential injury or infection
Heart Rate	25-45 beats/minute	Above 60	Potential injury or infection
Respiration	8-16 breaths/minute	Above 30	Potential injury or infection
Skin recoil	Elastic (1-2 seconds)	Delayed	Potential dehydration
Visual/Nasal	Clear eyes and nose	Mucous, coughing	Potential illness
Gate	Even pace at trot	Lop sided, head bob	Lame horse not fit to start
Body	Absence of injury	Swelling, broken skin	Horse likely not fit to start

Should a horse be outside of normal parameters on arrival at a ride base/trail head, event officials should consult with the rider/owner about retiring from the event and next steps to ensure appropriate treatment is provided, i.e. whether first aid treatment would suffice or if a vet should attend the horse for a more thorough diagnosis.

Alternatively, the individual voluntarily does not participate at the event and returns home to seek treatment from their local vet. This option should only be considered if the horse is stable enough to be transported, with consideration given to the distance home and/or proximity of a vet available to attend the event base/trail head.

Refer to ATHRA Biosecurity Policy IMS-P-009 and Biosecurity Guideline IMS-GU-033 as needed.

3.3 Catastrophe

A catastrophe means that a horse has been mortally injured, either causing death or the need to be euthanized. IMS-F-012 Incident Report Form must be completed by the Trail Boss, including witness statements.

Large Animal Rescue Training for members is recommended by ATHRA, therefore those trained individuals, who may also be event officials, could assist in the treatment and movement of the horse.

It is the owner/rider who needs to decide how to proceed, under the guidance of a vet, either on site or via remote instruction if practicable. If a trained vet is unable to attend the site within a reasonable interval of time, it is recommended that the most practical humane solution should be sought utilizing the available resources on site.

Should there be no suitably trained persons amongst the ride officials, to assist the horse owner to remove the deceased horse, external resources would be required. All Clubs would refer to their local area Emergency Contact Card to seek the required assistance.

Consideration should be given to acknowledging the grief of the member for the loss of their horse and the trauma experienced by the members engaged in the management of the catastrophe.

4. Governance

National, State and Territory laws and regulations shall take precedence over any horse welfare decisions and actions proposed by ATHRA and/or an organizing club.

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