



HORSE WELFARE OFFICER

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

RATIONALE

The welfare of the polocrosse horse is paramount at all times for the continual wellbeing and image of the game of polocrosse. Many people who decide to play the game have little experience with horses and little knowledge of training the equine athlete; therefore it is imperative that the Polocrosse Association of Australia has a system in place to educate prospective players. The system must also cater for the protection of horses from over-zealous riders and those who may at times put their personal plans before the horse's well being after play. The scope of the Horse Welfare Officer's brief is the feeding, exercising, riding and general care of the horse.

THE HORSE WELFARE OFFICER

The person elected to the position at club, zone, state and national level should be a very well respected horse person whose knowledge will be readily sought by fellow players. They should also be good communicators who can explain to people what needs to be done to improve the welfare of their horse. The horse welfare officer also needs to have tact and set a good example by their dealings with their own horses.

HORSE WELFARE OFFICER – CLUB LEVEL

This is where the bulk of the work will be done by horse welfare officers. It is imperative that the club support their horse welfare officer so that the decisions being made don't appear to be one person's ideas but rather the combined thinking of that club. Areas that need to be addressed are: Feeding, exercising, educating, transporting, use of correct gear on the horse, clipping [if required], shoeing, treatment of minor injuries, [any major injury should be referred to a vet], stabling at carnivals, playing the horse at practise and at carnivals and any other areas that may impinge on the well being of the horse. Horses being used to umpire also come under the jurisdiction of the horse welfare officer.

It should be a matter of pride for the club horse welfare officer and the club as a whole, that the club's horses are always turned out in good condition, properly presented for the advancement of the game.

HORSE WELFARE OFFICER – ZONE LEVEL

The Zone Officer will oversee the horses, playing and umpiring, in the zone in the above areas. This person should be available to advise his/her club horse welfare officers in any situation regarding the welfare of the horses.

The Zone welfare officer, when identifying a problem with a player at a carnival, should approach that player's Club Horse Welfare Officer to ascertain what, if any, remedial action has already been taken and then decide the appropriate course of action.

The Zone Welfare Officer also needs to act if he/she considers a club is not using their Horse Welfare Officer in the correct manner.

The Zone Horse Welfare Officer needs to be supported by the Zone and any decisions or penalties that may need to be given, need to be issued from the Zone and followed up by that body.

STATE HORSE WELFARE OFFICER

This person will oversee the welfare of the horses in their state, playing and umpiring, through the Club/ Zone network that has been put in place. This person will give advice to their club and zone horse welfare officers, suggest possible solutions to problems and ensure that these are followed up. For problems that may occur of a general nature from time to time, eg an outbreak of ringworm etc, the State Horse Welfare Officer should be proactive in finding solutions.

For problems that occur, the State Horse Welfare Officer should trace down the chain of responsibility to see what has been previously done before offering suggestions or penalties.

The State Horse Welfare Officer should be fully supported by their state and any penalties that may occur should come from the state body and be enforced by that body.

NATIONAL HORSE WELFARE OFFICER

This person will receive reports from their State Horse Welfare Officers as to the condition and care of horses, playing and umpiring, in their respective states. They will also assist with any problems that may occur. From time to time they may advise on correct procedures in certain circumstances for the general wellbeing of horses. Eg The correct stabling procedure as determined by the PAA etc.

The National Horse Welfare Officer needs to be fully supported by the PAA and any penalties, which may from time to time need to be given, need to come from that body and enforced by that body.

POWERS OF HORSE WELFARE OFFICERS

All club members need to know the roles and responsibilities of horse welfare officers at all levels but particularly at club level.

Most problems that will occur will be because of ignorance and will be easily solved by tactful negotiation.

However, if a problem does occur, that the player is unwilling to address, then a penalty may be given that will be decided by the club, zone, state or national body depending on where the infringement has been made.

A horse welfare officer may apply to the next level in the structure if they feel that they are not gaining support from their club, zone or state.

UMPIRING HORSES

Where umpire's horses are being returned to a common pool, a person or persons will be appointed that is responsible for the proper care of these horses as they are returned to the pool. The number of chukkas umpire's horses are required to umpire also needs to be monitored closely and factors such as climate and speed of the games being umpired must be taken into consideration.

CONCLUSION

The position of Horse Welfare Officer has been set at club, zone, state and national level to ensure that the horse is treated with respect and dignity at all times. The PAA and all its affiliates regard the care of the horse as paramount in the promotion of the game.