

## Welfare Code of Practice - American Horse Council

Code of Conduct: The Minnesota Horse Council has signed on to the Welfare Code of Practice created by the American Horse Council. We encourage all equine organizations in the state to also support this. Any individual or organization receiving funding of \$500 or more from the MHC should also sign on to this code. Please sign below and submit along with your request for funding.

**Introduction:** American society has grown away from its agrarian roots of only a few generations ago. The horse, which was once a staple of American agriculture and general transportation, is now used primarily for breeding, competition, sport, recreation and entertainment, although there are still many horses used for work on farms and ranches, and in urban areas and exhibitions.

The horse industry is committed to the safety, health, care and welfare of all horses and to always “*Put the Horse First.*”

We address equine welfare and responsible care (1) by supporting a uniform Code of Practice regarding the responsible breeding, training, competing, care, use, enjoyment, health, transportation, and retirement of horses; and (2) by initiating communication with the public, the media, federal and state officials and within the horse community regarding these issues.

**Our Commitment to all Horses and the Horse Industry:** We are committed to the principle that the welfare and safety of the horse is the guiding principle in the decision-making process for all owners, service providers, organizations, events and activities.

*WE ARE COMMITTED* to the dignity, humane care, health, safety and welfare of horses in all our activities and care. These are our highest priorities. We are the stewards of our horses and must be firm in the standards and practices that guide us. Our first principle is:

The welfare, safety and stewardship of the horse is the guiding principle in the decision-making process for all segments for the horse industry.

*WE ARE COMMITTED* to promoting responsible breeding practices and to produce better horses, not just more horses.

*WE ARE COMMITTED* to responsible training techniques. All training should be done with the maturation and ability of the horse considered. Horses should be prepared for competition with proper training and conditioning methods. Excessive disciplining methods, whether in stables, training areas, or during competition, will not be tolerated.

*WE ARE COMMITTED* to educating owners, trainers, veterinarians, competitors, exhibitors and recreational riders to ensure that they know and respect their horse’s abilities and limits, and their own, so as to not push the horse or themselves beyond their ability level.

*WE ARE COMMITTED* to making all competitions fair and ensuring all competitors an equal opportunity to succeed. Performance-enhancing drugs, practices or equipment have no place in competitions or exhibitions. Effective drug testing by accredited laboratories is essential to the safety and welfare of our horses and the public support of competitions, with appropriate penalties levied for violations. The welfare of the horse must take precedence over the demands or expectations of owners, breeders, trainers, sellers, buyers, organizers, sponsors, officials, or spectators.

*WE ARE COMMITTED* to the welfare of the horse as paramount during competition. The horse industry should invest in the infrastructure, environment and facilities to provide a safe environment for all horses in all activities, whether breeding, competing, or simply riding. Any facilities that house horses should be committed to the appropriate care and treatment of all horses while in their facility, and should be designed with the environment and the intended use of the horse in mind.

*WE ARE COMMITTED* to minimizing injuries to horses during training, competition, use, or work. Whenever possible injury data should be collected, documented and reported to the governing body of the competition or any other injury database for analysis in order to ensure a safer environment.

*WE ARE COMMITTED* to the continual review, evaluation and improvement of all rules, regulations, policies and practices in all equine activities, based on science (where indicated). When warranted, they should be refined or changed. This includes existing practices to ensure they are not being perceived as acceptable, particularly if new research has called them into question.

*WE ARE COMMITTED* to providing continuing education on all activities involving horses and eliminate inhumane practices as well as strengthening sanctions for non-compliance.

*WE ARE COMMITTED* to educating all people who own or work with horses to ensure they are knowledgeable in the proper husbandry, care, and handling of horses. Each horse should be observed frequently to ensure that they are healthy. In consultation with a veterinarian, all such individuals should develop a sound health care program, appropriate to the facilities, environment and needs of the horses.

*WE ARE COMMITTED* to providing an environment in which anyone aware of equine cruelty or neglect is willing to report it to the proper local, state or federal authorities. Should an incident occur at an event it should be reported to judges, stewards, responsible authorities or the sanctioning organization.

*WE ARE COMMITTED* to improving the health and welfare of horses through scientific research, collaboration, advocacy and the development of appropriate rules. The industry should continue to support and work with the many individuals, universities, veterinarians and foundations doing and funding equine health and welfare research in order to reduce injuries and improve health.

*WE ARE COMMITTED* to horse owners and caretakers ensuring horses in their care are current on vaccinations and following best practices to minimize infection and disease. When a disease outbreak occurs horse owners and events must act quickly and responsibly, monitor the horses, report the outbreak to, and cooperate with, veterinarians, authorities, facility management and all stakeholders to bring a rapid resolution to the outbreak.

*WE ARE COMMITTED* to ensuring that our horses will have an opportunity to transition to additional careers, uses or activities as the need arises. When necessary, owners and veterinarians may have to consider end-of-life decisions. The welfare, safety and dignity of the horse must continue to be the guiding principle in deciding how and when to provide a humane death.

*WE ARE COMMITTED* to being transparent about our activities in order to ensure the public, the media, federal, state and local officials and the various segments of the horse community understand what we do, why we do it, and support it.

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_ (Name and Title)

For: \_\_\_\_\_ (Organization)