

# Humane Handling Guidelines for **HORSES**

Standards for the Care of Compromised and Unfit Animals  
Alberta's Equine Industry Promoting Horse Well-Being



The Alberta Farm Animal Care Association (afac.ab.ca) and the Alberta Equestrian Federation (albertaequestrian.com) would like to thank those individuals and equine organizations that supported this initiative.

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# ALERT

**ALERT** is a confidential call line for anyone to report livestock care concerns.

**ALERT** strives to assist before livestock are in distress.

**ALERT** Resource Team includes farmers and other rural community members. They offer solutions to improve livestock care.

**ALERT** has an ALERT veterinarian program that provides knowledgeable counsel.

**ALERT** informs members of the public that farmers do care for their animals.

**ALERT** is available for self-reporting to assist those who may be experiencing problems in caring for their livestock.

**ALERT** works with the Alberta SPCA and RCMP.

## LIVESTOCK CARE ALERT

Help Line & Resource Team

To report livestock care concerns **CALL 1-800-506-2273**

[afac.ab.ca](http://afac.ab.ca) Supported by Alberta's Livestock Industry



**Alberta SPCA 800-455-9003**



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## Humane Treatment of Horses – A PRIORITY

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This document was originally developed in 2006 by the Alberta Equine Welfare Group, a diverse group representing the Alberta horse industry, Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC), enforcement agencies and veterinarians. The reviewed content herein has been created to update and prioritize the need for information that will ensure horse welfare.

Participants involved in the revision of the Humane Handling Guidelines:

- Acknowledge that some horses are no longer serviceable, are infirm, dangerous, or their owners are no longer able to care for them.
- Recognize that the processing of horses is a reality of the equine industry and provides a humane alternative to allowing the horse to continue a life of discomfort and pain, inadequate care or abandonment.
- Encourage, foster and provide education regarding responsible ownership and management that will reduce the number of unwanted horses.
- Support the following position statement in regards to horses:
  - ⇒ treated humanely and with dignity
  - ⇒ transported according to current provincial and national regulations
  - ⇒ euthanized in accordance with Canadian Veterinary Medical Association published guidelines ([www.canadianveterinarians.net/documents/euthanasia](http://www.canadianveterinarians.net/documents/euthanasia)).

## Making Your Decision

*Humane handling of horses is a priority. Responsible animal care decisions must be made — particularly with compromised or unfit animals.*

This handbook provides those directly involved in the handling of horses with the information needed to make humane handling decisions involving the care and transport of compromised or unfit horses. This handbook reflects a recommended standard of care and responsibility that is considered acceptable in the Alberta horse industry and among its partners.

Federal and provincial laws and regulations have been enacted to protect animals from distress and ensure humane transportation. Each person involved in the handling or transportation of horses is legally responsible for adhering to these laws and regulations.

**Compromised Animal:** A compromised animal is an animal with reduced capacity to withstand transportation but where transportation with special provisions **will not lead or evolve to undue suffering**. Compromised animals may be locally transported with special provisions to receive care, be euthanized or humanely slaughtered on the advice of a veterinarian.

**Unfit Animal:** An unfit animal is an animal with reduced capacity to withstand transportation and where there is a high risk that transportation **will lead or evolve to undue suffering**. Unfit animals if transported would endure unjustified and unreasonable suffering. Unfit animals may only be transported for veterinary treatment or diagnosis. See Transport Decision Tree on pages 8 – 9 for examples.

For more information regarding horse health management please refer to the list of contacts on page 3.

**What is distress?** Distress can be used to describe a state in which an animal, unable to adapt to one or more stressors, is no longer successfully coping with its environment and its well-being is compromised.

**Who can be charged under humane transport laws?** The animal owner, custodian, shipper and/or the transporter.

Federal Health of Animals Regulations state that whoever loads or causes to be loaded, or transports or causes to be transported, may be held liable in cases where there are problems with the transportation of animals.

**The Owner/Shipper** is responsible for tendering only horses suitably fit to undergo transport. The shipper may be charged with a violation of humane transport laws.

**The Transporter** must assess the horses tendered by the shipper and only accept those animals suitably fit to undergo transport. The transporter and/or transport company may be charged with a violation of humane transport laws.

- Discretion must be used when tendering or accepting horses for transport. Use solid judgment based on your knowledge of transporting horses. If in doubt, consult an experienced and trustworthy person for assistance.
- It is recommended that horses are not on the truck any longer than 24 hours.

**The Auction Market** should ensure all personnel working with horses are instructed in acceptable, humane handling techniques. Horses must be moved through facilities with patience and as quietly as possible to reduce stress and minimize the risk of injury.



# Transport Decision Tree

IS THE HORSE FIT FOR THE TRIP?

YES ►

LOAD HEALTHY  
ANIMALS

NO ▼

IS THE HORSE UNFIT OR COMPROMISED?

## UNFIT

Do Not Load  
Do Not Transport



Except for veterinary treatment on the advice of a veterinarian

- Fracture or any other severe injury<sup>1</sup>
- Sick or diseased horses (e.g. strangles, herpes virus, pneumonia)
- Lamé (Classes 3,4,5; See next page)
- Fever due to illness
- Acute frostbite
- Colic
- Exhaustion
- Dehydration
- Recent major surgery
- In shock or dying
- Emaciation
- Weakness
- Non-ambulatory (e.g. downer, unable to rise on its own)
- Likely to give birth or has given birth within 48 hours
- Suspected or confirmed nervous disorder (e.g. Rabies)
- Uterine, vaginal or rectal prolapse
- Laboured breathing

<sup>1</sup> Severe injury includes deep or gaping wounds, profuse bleeding, penis injuries, severe head injuries, scrotal hernias, and severe laminitis.

## COMPROMISED

Transport with special provisions  
(Refer to next page for transport regulations)



- Horses that are blind in both eyes
- Very young foals or young orphan foals
- Lamé horses (Classes 1,2; See next page)
- Geriatric horses
- A horse that has any condition that could reduce the horse's ability to withstand the rigours of the trip

### Special Provisions:

1. Compromised horses must only be transported locally and directly to the nearest suitable place where they can receive care and attention, or be humanely slaughtered or euthanized.
2. A compromised animal must be the last animal loaded and the first animal unloaded when using a large semi trailer.
3. A compromised animal must be segregated from all other animals, or it may be penned with one familiar animal.

**Note:** To prevent undue suffering, other special provisions, such as additional bedding, may be required, depending on the condition of the compromised animal. Always ask a veterinarian if you are unsure about the appropriate special provision when moving a compromised animal. Animals that require special provisions must be segregated from other animals.

**What is the Meaning of "Nearest Suitable Place?"** Compromised animals that are fit for transport are not to go through auction markets or assembly yards. If compromised animals are to be sent to slaughter, they must not travel long distances to the slaughter facility, even if the only slaughter facility is far away. If local slaughter facilities are unavailable, animals should either be treated or be humanely euthanized. If an animal becomes compromised during the journey, consider the nearest suitable place (that is, a nearby veterinary hospital, farm, auction market or assembly yard, slaughter plant) where the animal can receive care or be euthanized.

# Guidelines for Dealing with Compromised Horses

Federal Transport Regulations (2012)  
(Intrepreted) [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca)

Lameness Classes

## DO:

Segregate animals of different species or substantially different weights and ages; or if incompatible by nature (i.e., stallions, jacks); mares with suckling foals; and horses with shoes on their hind legs.

Ensure that animals segregated in trucks receive extra protection from cold and wind chill; supply ample bedding.

Provide proper ventilation, drainage and absorption of urine.

Have sufficient headroom for animals to stand in a natural position.

Either strew the vehicle with sand or have the vehicle fitted with safe footholds, in addition to proper bedding.

Ensure that animals unloaded for feed, water and rest remain at the rest stop for a minimum of five hours to ensure all animals receive feed and water.

## DO NOT:

Continue to transport an animal that is injured, becomes ill, or is otherwise unfit to travel beyond the nearest place it can be treated.

Mishandle an animal at loading or unloading.

Use electric goads or prods.

Load or unload animals in a way that would cause injury or undue suffering.

Crowd animals to such an extent as to cause injury or undue suffering.

Transport livestock in trailers not designed for the safe handling of that species or class of livestock.

These categories can be used to determine the status of an animal's mobility, from normal to non-ambulatory.

## Transport as Soon as Possible

### Class 1

Visibly lame but can keep up with the group.

### Class 2

Unable to keep up; some difficulty climbing ramps. Load in separate compartment.

## Do Not Load or Transport\*

### Class 3

Requires assistance to rise, but can walk freely.

### Class 4

Requires assistance to rise; reluctant to walk; halted movement.

### Class 5

Unable to rise or remain standing.

\* Any animal, including Lameness Classes 3, 4 or 5, may be transported for veterinary treatment on the advice of a veterinarian.

Content for the Transport Decision Tree was created by the Equine Code Development Committee and is based on the Health of Animals Regulations. [www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/equine](http://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/equine)





### **Body Condition Scoring**

Rated on a scale of 1 to 9; of importance here 1 to 3 – see the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines* ([www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/equine](http://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/equine)) for more information on body condition scoring.

**1 Poor** – Extremely emaciated. Spinal vertebrae, ribs, tail-head and point of the hip and buttock are prominent. Bone structure of withers, shoulders and neck easily noticeable. No fat can be felt anywhere.

**2 Very Thin** – Emaciated. Slight fat covering over base of spinal vertebrae, transverse processes of lumbar vertebrae feel rounded. Spinal vertebrae, ribs, tail-head, point of hips and buttocks are prominent. Withers, shoulders and neck structure faintly evident.

**3 Thin** – Fat built up about halfway on spinal vertebrae, transverse processes cannot be felt. Slight fat cover over ribs. Spinal vertebrae and ribs easily discernible. Tail-head prominent, but individual vertebrae cannot be visually identified. Point of hip appears rounded, but easily seen. Point of buttock evident. Withers, shoulders and neck accentuated.

### **Distress**

Alberta's Animal Protection Act states that an animal is in distress if it is:

- (a) deprived of adequate shelter, ventilation, space, food, water or veterinary care or reasonable protection from injurious heat or cold,
- (b) injured, sick, in pain or suffering, or
- (c) abused or subjected to undue hardship, privation or neglect.

### **Non-Ambulatory Animal**

A non-ambulatory animal is one that is unable to stand without assistance or to move without being dragged or carried, regardless of size or age. It is illegal to load or unload a non-ambulatory animal in Canada, unless the animal is being transported with special provisions for veterinary treatment or diagnosis (*CFIA Compromised Animals Policy*).

### **Pain**

A perceived unpleasant sensation that originates from nerve ending stimulation caused by short term pressure or injury, or long term damage to tissue of a particular part of the body. Pain may be localized to a discrete area of the body or can be more generalized throughout the body. Pain may be caused by physical damage or the result of a local or systemic disease process. Pain may result in changes in the behavioral features of the animal and is always considered subjective. The outward display of pain by a horse may range from subtle alterations in posture, gait, behavior or attitude to violent physical displays of agony.

### **Shock**

A medical emergency resulting from the failure of the horse's circulatory system to adequately supply enough blood to the vital organs. This will result in the horse's body initiating a number of systemic adjustments of its circulatory system to re-establish normal blood pressure and tissue

blood supply. If these systemic adjustments are unsuccessful, shock can result in serious tissue damage and even death of the animal. The causes of shock are many and may result from a disease process or physical injury. The presence of shock is always a veterinary emergency.

## Management Options

**Do Not Transport** – You must not load or haul this animal.

**Transport** – You can load and haul this animal.

**Transport with special provisions (Refer to Regulations tab)** – means special provisions within the transport unit must be made. These may include: extra bedding, loading in the separate compartment, separation from other animals, pen with familiar companion animal, giving the animal plenty of room, or other measures as appropriate. CFIA Compromised Animals Policy states that compromised animals that can be transported with special provisions (see page 10) should not go through auction markets or assembly yards, and they must not travel long distances.

**Direct** – means haul direct to nearest suitable abattoir.

**Short-haul** – For the purpose of these guidelines Short-haul is under 4 hours.

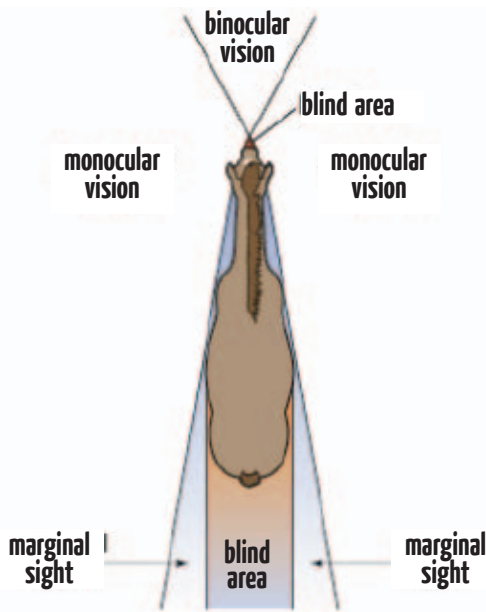
**Long-haul** – For the purpose of these guidelines Long-haul is over 4 hours.

**Euthanasia** – the humane termination of the life of an animal. Must be done using accepted industry practices (see page 20).

## Tips for Handling Horses

The more you understand the nature of horses the easier it will be to handle them.

*Horses have a natural instinct to flee* from danger; in a panic situation even a well-trained horse will revert to their flight instinct.



**Blind spots** – Use caution when approaching because horses have blind spots very close to the front of their face, under the chin and directly behind the horse.

**Loud noises or sudden movements** may startle a horse. Speak to the horse in a calm reassuring tone before approaching.

**Horses are highly sensitive to touch.** DO NOT use any type of electric prod. Horses respond very well to flagging (a stick or whip with a plastic bag tied to the end) to encourage movement without actually touching the horse.

**Always be aware of the potential danger** when working with horses and take precautions to ensure the safety of yourself and that of others.

**Sounds of Horses:** Nickers are usually friendly, soft and most submissive; Neighs are stronger and are more assertive; A horse will call out loudly when panicking; Squeals are most often made when a horse first meets another horse; Mares and foals can identify each other by the sounds they make; Snorts show apprehension or dislike and are often followed by bolting (flight instinct).

# Health Conditions – Do Not Transport

## BROKEN LEG

### Check Points:

- Fractured limbs, pelvis, or any other fracture that hampers mobility
- Refusal to bear weight on affected limb
- Limb is held at an unnatural angle

### Management Options:

- Keep horse still and as calm as possible
- **Do not transport**
- Consult veterinarian immediately or euthanize on farm



**Do Not Transport**



## DOWNER (LAMENESS CLASSES 3, 4, 5)

### Check points

- Reluctant to walk, halted movement
- In motion, short, stiff steps as if “walking on eggshells”
- Refuses to put weight on affected limb
- May have obvious physical problem (such as a broken leg)
- Requires assistance to rise
- Too weak or ill to rise and stand
- May show signs of pain (see definition on page 10)

### Management Options:

- **Do not transport**
- Do not move or drag a conscious animal that has gone down during transport
- Consult veterinarian
- Euthanize



**Do Not Transport**



*This horse's inability to stand warrants consultation with a veterinarian*

## POOR BODY CONDITION

### Check Points:

- Has a body score of 1 or 2 (see description on page 10)
- Very thin, weak with obvious signs of malnutrition, old age or disease

### Management Options:

- Do not transport
- Consult veterinarian or euthanize on farm
- **Body score 1 Poor – do not transport**
- Body score 2 Very Thin - transport only with veterinary authorization and special provisions



**Do Not Transport**



Horse Industry Association of Alberta

## SCROTAL HERNIA

### Check points:

- Impedes movement (includes conditions in which hind leg of animal touches the hernia when walking)
- Is painful to the touch
- May cause severe pain and colic symptoms in a mature male
- Foals may have scrotal hernias that are not painful initially, but can become painful

### Management Options:

- Do not transport
- Contact a veterinarian



**Do Not Transport**



Horse Industry Association of Alberta

## SICK, INJURED OR DISEASED

### Check Points:

- Increased rate of breathing
- Fever, slobbering, coughing, thick white nasal discharge
- Dehydration, exhaustion and/or profuse sweating
- Look for loss of coordination, circling, paralysis or aggression
- Bloody diarrhea, blood from the eyes, head pressing or any other suspicious sign
- Has an open skin wound, ulceration or obvious infection



**Do Not Transport**



*Infectious nasal discharge often becomes crusted around the nostrils*

### Management Options:

- Do not move or drag a conscious animal
- Do not transport
- Take appropriate precautions when handling – some diseases are transmissible from animals to humans
- Contact a veterinarian immediately



Horse Industry Association of Alberta



Dr. Emma Davis

## PREGNANT MARES



Do Not Transport

### Check points:

- Obvious signs of pregnancy
- Exhibits late stage signs: Relaxation of the vulva; Udder appears full; Wax-like beads or milk droplets on tips of teats

### Management Options:

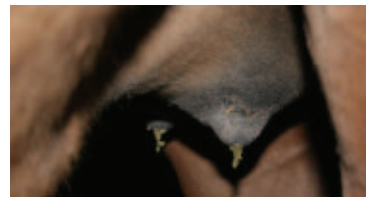
- If mare displays late stage signs, outlined in Check Points, do not transport



Sandra Nielsen



*Mare's teats with wax beads or milk droplets indicate she is only hours away from foaling*



## Conditions – Can be transported with Special Provisions

### MARE WITH FOAL

### Check Points:

- Mare with a suckling foal by her side

### Management Options:

- Must be segregated from other animals
- Transport with special provisions (Refer to Regulations tab)



*Mare and very young foal must be segregated from the rest of the herd during transport*



## VERY YOUNG

### Check Points:

- Very young weaned foals
- Less than 30 days old

### Management Options:

- Must be segregated from the rest of the load
- Transport with special provisions (Refer to Regulations tab)



Dr. Emma Davis

## LAMENESS

### Check Points:

- There are numerous reasons why a horse may become lame
- Perform a visual examination to try to determine any obvious cause of the lameness

### Management Options:

- May be transported only if it can rise, stand and walk under its own power
- Lameness Class 2 (see definition on page 11) may be transported with special provisions in a separate compartment or by itself
- Lameness Class 3 (see definition on page 11) do not load or transport except for veterinary treatment or diagnosis on the advice of a veterinarian



*Typical stance of a horse with severe laminitis (founder). Extreme pain in front feet*



## STALLIONS AND AGGRESSIVE HORSES

### Check Points:

- Flattened ears, excessive aggressive, dominant behaviour
- May try to bite, kick or mount other horses

### Management Options:

- Must be segregated from the rest of the load or herd



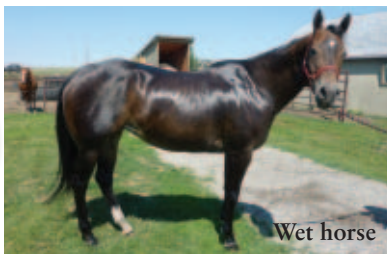
## OTHER PROBLEMS

### Blind Horses:

Blind horses should be haltered, handled individually and transported with special provisions: with a familiar pen mate or with a compatible horse in a separate compartment

### Wet Horses:

Wet horses may be tendered for transport but hauling wet horses in an open truck or trailer on a cold day is not acceptable



# Euthanasia

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Euthanasia is defined as the act of inducing humane death in an animal (American Veterinary Medical Association Guidelines on Euthanasia). To achieve a humane end of life, appropriate equipment must be used by knowledgeable individuals.

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*If you have any questions or concerns contact a veterinarian or an experienced horseman to assure humane termination of the animal and safety of all individuals.*

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## Indicators

Indicators for euthanasia include illness, injury, disease, economics and safety. When faced with any of these situations, the caregiver has three possible courses of action:

1. Ship the animals for meat processing if the animal is fit for transport
2. Treat the animal
3. Euthanasia.

## Acceptable Methods

To achieve a humane death, the horse must be immediately rendered unconscious and go on to die without regaining consciousness. Currently, there are three commonly recognized methods of euthanasia for horses.

1. **Lethal Injection:** Can be performed only by a licensed veterinarian and will have limitations on methods of disposal.
2. **Gunshot:** A humane method of killing provided that the shot penetrates the brain and does significant damage to the brain. The shooter must be knowledgeable in the use of firearms (including restrictions in certain jurisdictions), skilled in accurate targeting and knowledgeable of the correct placement of the shot. The degree of brain damage inflicted by the bullet/shotshell is dependent on the firearm, the nature of the ammunition and accuracy of the shot.

Rifles or shotguns are recommended for the euthanasia of horses when using firearms. Shotguns are appropriate for distances of 1-2 yards (1-2m), while rifles are for more long distance shots. Current recommendations are that for an animal over 400 lbs (180 kg), the muzzle energy available must be 1,000 ft lbs (1,356 J) (USDA, 2004). For animals up to 180 kg, it is recommended to use 300 ft lbs (407 J) of muzzle energy (USDA, 2004)

A 20, 16 or 12 gauge shotgun with slugs can be used effectively on all weight classes of horses. Number 4, 5 or 6 birdshot is only appropriate for very close range shots. A .410 calibre or 28 gauge may not be a large enough firearm to effectively euthanize a mature animal.

The more commonly available .22 long rifle only has an average muzzle energy of 100 ft lbs which does not meet the current energy requirements for euthanasia of larger livestock such as horses. The use of high-powered rifles can create additional safety concerns due to the risk of pass through, especially when used at too close of a range, thus the direction of shooting must be considered. The .22 Winchester magnum rounds can deliver 300 - 325 ft lbs of energy and are therefore appropriate for use in animals less than 180kg. (from ABVMAs "A Good Death"). Because .22-calibre loads deliver on average 300 ft. lb. (407 joules) of muzzle energy, their use should be restricted to young, lighter weight animals at a distance up to 25 cm. The .22-calibre magnum increases killing capacity and target weight range up to and including mature animals. The Winchester .22-calibre magnum delivers 325 ft. lb. (440 joules) of energy. The use of a hollow-point or soft nose bullet is recommended to increase tissue destruction and decrease the risk of the bullet passing through the skull (ricochet).

The use of a pistol (handgun), by law enforcement officers or those properly licensed to do so, may be satisfactory, however permanent complete brain dysfunction may not be accomplished with light pistols (e.g. police .38). The more common

handguns do not meet the recommended muzzle energy requirements for animals over 400 lbs. (180 kgs).

3. **Captive Bolt Guns:** Captive bolt guns are becoming a more commonly used and accessible tool for euthanasia. Recent years have seen the development of guns specific to on-farm euthanasia, versus the traditional “stunner” gun designs. Cartridge powered captive bolt guns paired with the appropriate bolt and cartridge are effective for single step euthanasia. If a gun designed only for stunning is utilized, a secondary method such as pithing or exsanguination may be required. Due to the fact that captive bolt guns must be held firm and flush to the head of the animal, they are limited to horses that are down on the ground and immobile or horses that are restrained. The point of entry is the same as the frontal location as with gunshot.

#### In the Trailer

If a horse becomes non-ambulatory during transit, it is unacceptable to remove the animal from the trailer. If the animal must be euthanized, it is to be done inside the trailer, unless human safety is at risk.

#### Confirmation of Unconsciousness and Death

Confirm unconsciousness immediately when it is safe to do so. Each of the indicators listed below should be checked while standing along the spine of the horse to avoid being struck by the horse’s legs during involuntary movement or if the animal was not immediately rendered unconscious.

#### Common Indicators of Unconsciousness

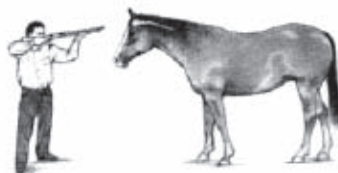
- Absence of rhythmic breathing
- Lack of Corneal Reflex (i.e. no blinking when eyeball is touched)
- No response to painful stimuli (i.e. nose pinch or prick).



*Following shooting, a horse may lunge forward.*



Not between the Eyes! – but above the eyes as illustrated



Position of handler for an animal standing



Position of handler for an animal in the prone position



This shot is **ONLY** to be made with a shotgun using a slug. The point of entry is on the side of the head, not the frontal part

In order to achieve a humane death, the horse must be rendered immediately unconscious and must go on to die without regaining consciousness. Death does not occur immediately; it may take several minutes.

Use multiple indicators to confirm death:

- Absence of all movement for at least five minutes
- Absence of a heartbeat and pulse for at least five minutes
- Lack of breathing for at least five minutes
- Fixed, dilated pupil
- Absence of all reflexes including the Corneal Reflex (i.e. no blinking when eyeball is touched).

Signs of consciousness include: attempting to right themselves, vocalization after application or the presence of the indicators of unconsciousness as listed above.

**Sporadic reflex muscle spasms may follow the loss of consciousness - this is a normal part of the death process and may last from a few seconds, up to a few minutes.**

Source: J. Woods, [www.livestockhandling.net](http://www.livestockhandling.net)

## Disposal Options

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### Disposal

The owner of a dead animal must store and dispose of the carcass in accordance with *Disposal of Dead Animals Regulation (Alberta) (132/2014)*, empowered by the *Animal Health Act*. On farm disposal methods, including the use of burial, burning, natural disposal, and composting, can only be used if the owner had custody or care and control of the animal immediately before the animal's death, and only on land owned by the animal owner. Disposal options are highlighted below. Please refer to the Regulation for complete information. All of Alberta's legislation, including this Regulation, can be accessed through Alberta Queen's Printer at [www.qp.alberta.ca](http://www.qp.alberta.ca)

### Rendering

Carcass is picked up and transferred to a licensed rendering plant.

### Burial

Burial of equine carcasses will require the use of heavy machinery. There are several conditions that must be met in order to utilize this disposal method, including setbacks from roadways and property boundaries and provisions to prevent ground and surface water contamination. Consult Section 8 of the Regulation for details.

### Natural Disposal

Disposing of a dead animal to allow for scavenging. Requirements relating to natural disposal can be found in Section 14 of the Regulation. Carcasses that have been euthanized with drugs (permitted use by a licensed veterinarian ONLY) cannot be disposed of in this manner as it poses a significant poisoning risk to scavengers (coyotes, birds), pets and drinking water.

### Composting

Horse carcasses may be composted on-farm or taken to a Class 1 compost facility. Consult Section 11 of the Regulation for details.

### Disposal in Landfill

Some landfills accept carcasses for a fee.

### Burning / Incineration / Cremation

Carcasses may be burned in accordance with the applicable provisions in the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act (Alberta)* and in the regulations or codes of practice under that Act relating to the burning in an open fire, or in an incinerator. There are organizations that provide cremation services in Alberta, find them by searching 'equine cremation' on the Internet.

*Any animal that is confirmed or suspected of dying from an infectious or reportable disease must be disposed of in accordance with Alberta's Disposal of Dead Animals Regulation.*

## Appendix I: Code of Practice for the Care & Handling of Equines

Following are a selection of *Requirements* from the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines* (2013) that pertain to the topics covered in this guideline. Visit [www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/equine](http://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/equine) for the full Code.

Code *Requirements* refer to either a regulatory requirement, or an industry imposed expectation outlining acceptable and unacceptable practices and are fundamental obligations relating to the care of animals. *Requirements* represent a consensus position that these measures, at minimum, are to be implemented by all persons responsible for farm animal care. When included as part of an assessment program, those who fail to implement *Requirements* may be compelled by industry associations to undertake corrective measures, or risk a loss of market options. *Requirements* also may be enforceable under federal and provincial regulation.

### SECTION 4 – HEALTH MANAGEMENT

#### 4.1 Health Management Plans

- Horses must be observed as often as required to maintain their health and well-being.
- Purchase medications and veterinary pharmaceuticals from regulated, reputable sources. Refer to provincial and federal regulations.
- Records or receipts of treatments provided must be available.

#### 4.2 Sick, Injured or Compromised Horses

- Equines that are sick, injured or in pain must receive appropriate treatment without delay or be euthanized without delay. Refer also to Section 10-Euthanasia.
- For sick, injured or compromised horses that are not showing improvement, horse owners or caregivers must, without delay,

obtain veterinary advice on appropriate care and treatment or make arrangements for euthanasia.

- Records or receipts for treatments provided must be available.
- Appropriate authorities must be advised of suspected or confirmed cases of federally reportable disease, such as Equine Infectious Anemia. Refer to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency ([www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca)).

#### 4.5 Body Condition Scoring

- For horses and ponies: corrective action must be taken at a BCS of 3 or lower and at a BCS of 8 or higher (on the 1-9 scale).  
\*Veterinary advice must be obtained if animals do not respond to the corrective action. Refer to Appendix D of the Code of Practice.
- For donkeys and mules: corrective action must be taken at a BCS of 2 or lower and at a BCS of 4 or higher (on the 1-5 scale). Veterinary advice must be obtained if animals do not respond to the corrective action. Refer to Appendix E of the Code of Practice.
- Veterinary advice must be obtained for geriatric equines that are emaciated (i.e. BCS of 1 or 2 out of 9 for horses and ponies; BCS of 1 out of 5 for donkeys and mules).
- Equines must not be starved or prevented from eating for prolonged periods in order to reduce BCS – the change in feed to reduce BCS must be gradual.  
\* *With the exception of horses in feedlots that are free from health conditions associated with obesity.*

### SECTION 6 – HUSBANDRY PRACTICES

#### 6.2 Behaviour and Handling

- Handlers must be familiar with equine behaviour and competent in humane

handling techniques either through training, experience or mentorship.

- Horses must be handled in a manner that does not subject them to avoidable pain or avoidable injury.

### 6.2.1 Handling and Restraint Equipment

- Corrective action must be taken if restraint devices or equipment cause injury to horses.
- Tethering must not cause injury and must only be used if the horse is under supervision. The person applying the tether must be knowledgeable in its use. Section 6.2.1 provides an explanation of tethers.
- Electric cattle prods must not be used for the routine movement or handling of horses on-farm or during loading/unloading. Discretion must be used in an individual extreme situation when animal or human safety is at immediate risk, but prods must never be used repeatedly or used on the face, anus or reproductive organs of horses.



## SECTION 8 – TRANSPORTATION

### 8.1.1 Fitness for Transport

- Horses must be individually assessed for fitness for transport before being transported.

Evaluate fitness for transport in the context of each trip and all relevant factors (e.g. anticipated total trip duration from farm to final destination and prevailing weather conditions).

- Unfit horses must not be transported, except for veterinary diagnosis or treatment.
- Refer to the Transport Decision Tree.

### 8.1.2 Preparing Horses for Transport

- If the expected duration of the horse's confinement is longer than 24 hours from the time of loading, the horse must be fed and watered within five hours before being loaded.

## 8.2 Loading and Unloading

- The requirements for loading and unloading procedures and equipment as described in the *Health of Animals Regulations* must be complied with.
- Mares and jennets must not be transported if they are likely to give birth during the trip.
- Every mare with its suckling offspring must be segregated from all other animals during transport.
- Every mature stallion must be segregated from all other animals during transport.
- Horses must be individually assessed before loading and upon arrival back to the farm.
- Refer to the *Transport Decision Tree*.

## SECTION 9 – CHANGE OR END OF CAREER

### 9.1 Change or End of Career Options

- The welfare of the horse must be of paramount importance when making change or end of career decisions



## **SECTION 10 – EUTHANASIA**

### **10.1 Timelines for Euthanasia**

- Equines that are sick, injured or in pain must receive appropriate treatment without delay or be euthanized without delay.

- For sick, injured or compromised horses that are not showing improvement, horse owners or caregivers must, without delay, obtain veterinary advice on appropriate care and treatment or make arrangements for euthanasia.

### **10.2 Methods**

- An acceptable method of euthanasia must be used.
- Euthanasia must be performed by persons knowledgeable in the method used for equines.
- Disposal must be in accordance with provincial and municipal regulations.

### **10.3 Confirmation of Death**

- Confirm unconsciousness immediately when it is safe to do so.
- Have a secondary euthanasia step or method available.
- Confirm death before moving or leaving the animal.







# Regulations

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## *Health of Animals Regulations (Canada)*

138(2)(a) – No person shall load or cause to be loaded on any railway car, motor vehicle, aircraft or vessel and no one shall transport or cause to be transported an animal that by reason of infirmity, illness, injury, fatigue or any other cause cannot be transported without undue suffering during the expected journey.

138(2)(c) – No person shall load or cause to be loaded on any railway car, motor vehicle, aircraft or vessel and no one shall transport or cause to be transported an animal if it is probable that the animal will give birth during the journey.

138(2.1) – For the purpose of paragraph (2)(a), a non-ambulatory animal is an animal that cannot be transported without undue suffering during the expected journey.

138(2.2) – Despite paragraph (2)(a), a non-ambulatory animal may be transported for veterinary treatment or diagnosis on the advice of a veterinarian.

138(4) – No railway company or motor carrier shall continue to transport an animal that is injured or becomes ill or otherwise unfit for transport during a journey beyond the nearest suitable place at which it can receive proper care and attention.

141(1) – Subject to this section, no person shall load on any railway car, motor vehicle, aircraft or vessel and no carrier shall transport animals of different species or of substantially different weight or age unless those animals are segregated.

141(2) – Subsection (1) does not apply to a female animal and its suckling offspring.

141(3) – Every cow, sow or mare with its suckling offspring shall be segregated from all other animals during transport.

141(4) – Animals of the same species that are incompatible by nature shall be segregated during transport.

141(6) – Every mature stallion shall be segregated from all other animals during transport.

Animal Protection Act (Alberta)

2(1) – No person shall cause or permit an animal of which the person is the owner or the person in charge to be or to continue to be in distress.

2(1.1) – No person shall cause an animal to be in distress.

## *Animal Protection Regulation (Alberta)*

7(1) – The following may not be present at a livestock market:

(a) a weaned foal that is less than 30 days old

10(1) – No person shall load or transport animals that, by reason of infirmity, illness, injury, fatigue or any other cause, would suffer unduly during the transport.

10(2) – Despite subsection (1), a person may transport animals to or from a veterinary clinic, a designated confinement area or the nearest suitable place to deal with health concerns as long as the animal is loaded and transported humanely.

10(3) – No person shall continue to transport an animal that becomes injured, ill or otherwise unfit for transport during a journey beyond the nearest suitable place where it can receive proper care and attention.

12(2) – No person shall load or transport livestock that is likely to give birth during transport unless the livestock is being transported for health reasons.

15 – A person transporting livestock must segregate the livestock during transport as follows:

(a) livestock of the same species that are incompatible by nature and livestock of different species are segregated from one another

(c) cows, sows and mares with suckling offspring are segregated from all other livestock

(e) a mature stallion is segregated from all other livestock, including other mature stallions

(f) livestock of the same species but of substantially different weight or age are segregated from one another

*Reportable Diseases Regulations* (Canada) and *Reportable and Notifiable Diseases Regulation* (Alberta)

- ⇒ There are some diseases in horses that must be reported by law including rabies, equine infectious anemia, vesicular stomatitis and anthrax.

## Disclaimer

The primary purpose of this handbook is to assist producers, marketers and transporters in making responsible animal care decisions. It is important to note that while the authors have made every effort to ensure accuracy and completeness, this should not be considered the final word on the areas of law and practice. Seek the advice of appropriate professionals and experts as the facts of each situation may differ from those set out here. All information is

provided entirely “as is” and the authors make no representations, warranties or conditions, either expressed or implied, in connection with the use of or reliance upon this information. The information is provided entirely at the risk of the recipient and, because the recipient assumes full responsibility, the authors shall not be liable for any claims, damages or losses of any kind based on any theory of liability arising out of the use of or reliance upon this information (including omissions, inaccuracies, typographical errors and infringement of third party rights).

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- Canadian Thoroughbred Society of Alberta
- Horse Industry Association of Alberta
- Horse Racing Alberta
- Horse Welfare Alliance of Canada
- J Woods Livestock Services
- National Farm Animal Care Council
- RCMP (Livestock Investigation)

# Humane Handling Guidelines for HORSES

## Standards for the Care of Compromised and Unfit Animals (2015)

“The Alberta Veterinary Medical Association endorses the standards of humane care practices for horses as set out in these guidelines.”

– Dr. Darrell Dalton, Registrar,

Alberta Veterinary Medical Association 

“We support the standards of humane care for horses set out in these guidelines. The standards will be a valuable educational tool for our peace officers to use in their discussions with horse owners and handlers.”

– Terra Johnston, Executive Director, Alberta SPCA





## Contacts and Resources

Questions on the care of compromised or unfit animals, contact your local veterinarian

<p>Questions on laws, regulations and animal transport</p> <p>All of Alberta's legislation can be accessed through Alberta Queen's Printer at <a href="http://www.qp.alberta.ca">http://www.qp.alberta.ca</a>. The Health of Animals Regulations (Canada) are available from: <a href="http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/C.R.C.,_c._296/">http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/C.R.C.,_c._296/</a></p>	<p>Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)</p> <p>North Region 780-395-6700</p> <p>South Region 587-230-2468</p>
	<p>RCMP (Livestock Investigation)</p> <p>North 780-289-5510</p> <p>South 403-699-2617</p>
	<p>Alberta SPCA 800-455-9003</p>

Report suspected animal neglect and abuse: Alberta SPCA 800-455-9003

## Additional information and resources

<p>Livestock Care ALERT Line – Livestock help line and resource team to report livestock care concerns</p>	<p>800-506-2273</p>	
<p>Alberta Farm Animal Care Association</p>	<p>403-652-5111</p>	<p>afac.ab.ca</p>
<p>Alberta Equestrian Federation</p>	<p>403-253-4411</p>	<p>albertaequestrian.com</p>
<p>Alberta Veterinary Medical Association</p>	<p>780-489-5007</p>	<p>abvma.ca</p>
<p>Horse Industry Association of Alberta</p>	<p>403-420-5949</p>	<p>albertahorseindustry.ca</p>
<p>Alberta Agriculture and Forestry</p>	<p>403-310-FARM  <a href="http://agric.gov.ab.ca">agric.gov.ab.ca</a> (click on livestock / then horses)</p>	
<p>Livestock Identification Services</p>	<p>403-509-2088</p>	<p>lis-alberta.com</p>
<p>Alberta Processors (Rendering)</p>	<p>403-279-4441</p>	<p>wcrl.com</p>

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