

# Policy

## Caring for Racing Animals in Extreme Heat

Version: 1.00

### 1 Policy statement

The Queensland Racing Integrity Commission (QRIC) is committed to the welfare of racing animals and will work with Racing Queensland (RQ) and racing clubs to ensure that the health, safety and well-being of racing animals is not compromised while racing in hot weather.

### 2 Background and context

The QRIC was established on 1 July 2016 to oversee the integrity and welfare standards of racing animals and participants in Queensland. It is responsible for safeguarding the welfare of racing animals and, in the Queensland climate, ensuring their health, safety and well-being while racing in conditions of extreme heat is a priority.

This policy sets out the key principals for the caring of racing animals in extreme heat and must be read in conjunction with

- the preventing and treating heat stress in [greyhounds](#) and [horses](#) factsheets and
- the [wet bulb thermometers standard operating procedure](#) (internal use only).

While an animal's susceptibility to heat stress can be exacerbated by high ambient temperature and humidity levels, a number of factors contribute to the risk and each horse will handle hot weather differently. Therefore, it is critical that all licensees and Official Veterinarians monitor the animals in their care for signs of heat stress irrespective of the weather conditions.

### 3 Scope

This policy applies to all race meetings and official trials for all approved codes of racing in Queensland.

### 4 Abbreviations, acronyms and definitions

<b>Extreme Heat</b>	Forecast temperature of 35°C or above.
<b>QRIC</b>	Queensland Racing Integrity Commission is an independent statutory body, which oversees the integrity and welfare standards of racing animals and participants in Queensland.
<b>RQ</b>	Racing Queensland is the approved control body for the Thoroughbred, Harness and Greyhound codes of racing.
<b>Wet Bulb Thermometers</b>	Used to measure a safe racing environment including heat stress risk due to the exposure of hot weather conditions.

## 5. Key principles

The QRIC's Animal Welfare Strategy and Standards are based on [Mellor's five provisions of animal welfare](#):

- **Good nutrition:** Provide ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour
- **Good environment:** Provide shade/shelter or suitable housing, good air quality and comfortable resting areas
- **Good health:** Prevent or rapidly diagnose and treat disease and injury, and foster good muscle tone, posture and cardiorespiratory function
- **Appropriate behaviour:** Provide sufficient space, proper facilities, congenial company and appropriately varied conditions
- **Positive mental experiences:** Provide safe, congenial and species-appropriate opportunities to have pleasurable experiences.

A licensee's duty of care is to ensure the health, safety and well-being of racing animal/s in their care and ensuring it is not diminished during conditions of extreme heat.

Responsibility for monitoring the condition and well-being of racing animals in conditions of extreme heat is jointly shared by licensees, race club officials and QRIC staff.

The decision to race in conditions of extreme heat will necessarily require additional effort and resources to ensure the health, safety and well-being of racing animals.

The QRIC can withdraw its resources (including race-day Stewards) if the Chairman of Stewards is not satisfied, on the advice of the official veterinarian, that the health, safety and well-being of racing animals can be assured.

When extreme weather conditions are forecast (heat above 35°C), additional facilities, staff and other resources will be allocated to race meetings, as per the preventing and treating heat stress in greyhounds and thoroughbred factsheets.

## 6 Communication

A copy of this policy will be made available on the QRIC website.

Arrangements made in advance of race meetings to minimise the welfare impacts of extreme heat, including decisions to cancel, postpone or reschedule race meetings and the provision of additional equipment or veterinarians, will be proactively communicated via the [QRIC Twitter](#) account and [QRIC website](#) in order to alleviate public concern.

RQ will continue to advise participants of changes to the racing schedule as per existing arrangements.

## **7 Responsibilities and accountabilities**

### **Racing Queensland**

- Ensure race clubs fulfil their responsibilities, in line with the Racing Queensland's [standard required of licensed venues policy](#).
- Liaise with QRIC regarding any need for changes to the race schedule.

### **Chairman of Stewards**

- Obtain weather forecast conditions prior to the race meeting.
- Liaise with Racing Queensland regarding any need for changes to the race schedule.
- Monitoring the Queensland Thermal Comfort Observations throughout the meeting, as provided on the [Bureau of Meteorology website](#).
- Determine whether the arrangements in place for a given race meeting are sufficient to ensure the health, safety and well-being of the racing animals involved. This decision should be made on the basis of the weather conditions forecast, advice from the official veterinarian and the welfare measures available at and agreed with the race club.
- Provide such assistance as is necessary to ensure that the official veterinarian(s) can properly fulfil their duties in accordance with this policy.
- Issue directions to race club officials and licensees to properly give effect to this policy.

### **Race-Day Stewards**

- Provide such assistance as is necessary to ensure that the official veterinarian(s) can properly fulfil their duties in accordance with this policy.

### **Official Veterinarian**

- Closely monitor all animals for signs of heat stress:
  - From the point of their arrival on track
  - In the enclosure pre-race
  - On arrival at the barriers
  - On return to the enclosure post-race
  - While in the swabbing area (pre- or post-race)
  - Prior to leaving the track to ensure they are fit to travel
- If the Official Veterinarian is concerned about an animal's condition pre-race, they shall immediately report their concerns to the Stewards.
- Have an adequate supply of relevant treatments on hand for emergency use.

### **Licensees**

- Monitor the animals in their care for signs of heat stress and inform the Steward or Official Veterinarian if they have any concerns about the health, safety or well-being of the animal.
- Provide such assistance as is necessary to ensure that the official veterinarian can properly fulfil their duties in accordance with this policy.

### **Racing Club Officials**

- Provide such assistance as is necessary to ensure that the Official Veterinarian(s) can properly fulfil their duties in accordance with this policy.

## **8 Compliance**

In order to ensure compliance with this policy by all parties listed under item 7 “Responsibilities and accountabilities”, the QRIC will:

- Formally report race clubs who do not fulfil their responsibilities under this policy, to RQ
- Conduct an annual review of this policy, associated factsheets and data relating to cases of heat stress to ensure that relevant risk factors are being addressed.
- Subject its own compliance with this policy to assessment through formal internal audit arrangements.

## **9 Related and reference documents**

Queensland Racing Integrity Commission, [Preventing and Treating Heat Stress in Horses Factsheet](#).

Queensland Racing Integrity Commission, [Preventing and Treating Heat Stress in Greyhounds Factsheet](#).

## **ATTACHMENT 1 – ADDITIONAL ANIMAL WELFARE MEASURES (EQUINE)**

### **(1A) Forecast Temperature Between 35°C and 38°C**

Where the forecast or ambient temperature is 35°C or above, the following welfare measures will be implemented:

- Where possible horses should be stabled out of the sun and in areas that are breezy.
- Ensure adequate wash bays and hoses are available to enable rapid post-race cooling of horses.
- Ensure adequate horse drinking water is available.
- Race club officials will be informed to have ice, water, scrapers, sponges, towels and extra water hoses available.
- Race club staff will provide chiller bins and ensure that these are continually stocked with bags of ice and water to assist in the cooling of horses.
- Swabbing stalls will be kept as cool as possible, by hosing the roof, allowing adequate ventilation and/or providing fans or air-conditioning.
- Where possible Tie-up stalls should be equipped with water misters and/or fans enable horses to cool down throughout the day.
- Consideration should be given to employing an additional official veterinarian to monitor horses.
- Stewards will minimise the time that horses are required to parade in the mounting enclosure pre-race, be held behind the starting barrier, or in the mounting enclosure post-race.

### **(1B) Forecast Temperature Above 38°C**

Where the forecast or ambient temperature is 38°C or above, the following welfare measures will be implemented:

- Stewards must take advice from the official veterinarian(s) in considering whether the health, safety and well-being of animals scheduled for racing can be assured if the race meeting proceeds or whether the program for that race meeting should be modified (to ease or avoid extreme weather conditions) or cancelled.
- Modification or cancellation of a race program in advance of can only be effected by RQ in consultation with QRIC Stewards
- On race day, the QRIC Chairman of Stewards can decide, in consultation with the race club and RQ to alter, postpone or cancel the race meeting if not satisfied that the health, safety and well-being of animals scheduled for racing can be assured.
- Should the Stewards determine that it is appropriate to continue the racing program, in addition to the measures listed at (1A), they may instruct that:
  - An additional official veterinarian be provided
  - Additional equipment be provided by the race club to assist the comfort of horses
  - An official veterinarian be available post-race to monitor the condition of horses.
  - Riders, if they become concerned at the condition of their mount, proceed to the official veterinarian positioned on the track

- A specific air-conditioned stall be set aside for recovery purposes where available
- The minimum period prior to the race for horses to be required on course be reduced
- Pre- and post-race parades be abandoned or modified and the period horses are required behind the barrier minimised
- The Official Veterinarian(s) will, in addition to the duties described above at (1A), scrutinise horses:
  - Upon arrival on course, in particular horses identified as having travelled in excess of two hours to attend the meeting. Any horse observed to be showing signs of discomfort pre-race should be clinically examined, monitored and consideration be given to its suitability to race
  - Undergoing swabbing procedures (either pre- or post-race) to monitor horses for signs of distress.
  - Immediately post-race
  - Subsequent to the race to ensure all horses have recovered appropriately to permit travel. No horse may leave the course without the approval of the official veterinarian.

#### **(1C) Treatment for Signs of Heat Stress**

Any horse found to be exhibiting signs of heat stress will be given appropriate treatment. Appropriate treatment includes:

- Repeated application of cool water using chiller bins to the entire body of the horse, followed by scraping of excess water from the horse
- Walking the horse in a breezy, shaded area between bouts of hosing,
- Oral and/or intravenous fluid therapy if indicated
- Corticosteroid anti-inflammatory treatment if indicated
- Sedative drugs if indicated
- Use of air-conditioned stall if available
- Use of forced ventilation if available
- Use of chiller bins with cold water applied to the horse's body to reduce core body temperature

## **ATTACHMENT 2 – ADDITIONAL ANIMAL WELFARE MEASURES (GREYHOUND)**

### **(2A) Forecast Temperature Above 35°C**

In hot weather conditions (when the temperature is forecast to exceed 35°C) the following measures will be implemented:

- Where possible, kennels will be opened earlier;
- The air conditioners should be turned on at least three hours prior to the first race;
- Greyhounds will spend no more than ten (10) minutes in a stationary, non-air conditioned vehicle once arriving at the track, before being moved to kennels;
- Barking muzzles will not be used at any time before or after racing as they restrict the ability of the greyhound to pant;
- Greyhounds must spend minimal time outside the kennels;
- Previews are to be conducted in a cool (preferably air-conditioned) area with the veterinarian in attendance before every race to monitor for signs of dehydration, which may lead to heat stress;
- Greyhounds will only be taken to the boxes immediately prior to the commencement of the race;
- After the race, the greyhounds will be hosed down immediately, given a drink and returned to the air-conditioned kennels;
- Greyhounds must remain in the kennels for at least 30 minutes after their event;
- Clubs must provide adequate drinking facilities with cool water for greyhounds and participants;
- Clubs must provide a tap with connected hose for ease of wetting dogs down.

### **(2B) Scratching without Penalty**

- Trainers may scratch greyhounds without penalty if the temperature is forecast to be at or above 35° Celsius at the venue where the meeting will be conducted (on the basis of information from the Bureau of Meteorology website).
- If a trainer wishes to scratch without penalty the trainer must ensure that an application to scratch a greyhound under the QRIC Caring for Racing Animals in Extreme Heat Policy is **made to RQ** before the expiration of the official scratching time.
- If a greyhound becomes distressed after the official scratching time, it should be scratched for “illness” and the normal ten (10) day penalty will be applied.
- Trainers cannot apply to scratch only certain greyhounds. All of the trainer’s greyhounds engaged that day must be scratched if the trainer makes a scratching application under this policy.
- RQ will keep records of greyhounds that are scratched due to the heat.

### **(2C) Cancellation of Meetings**

- Stewards must take advice from the official veterinarian(s) in considering whether the health, safety and well-being of animals scheduled for racing can be assured if the race meeting proceeds or whether the program for that race meeting should be modified (to ease or avoid extreme weather conditions) or cancelled.
- Modification or cancellation of a race program in advance of can only be effected by RQ in consultation with QRIC Stewards.
- On race day, the QRIC Chairman of Stewards can decide, in consultation with the race club and RQ to alter, postpone or cancel the race meeting if not satisfied that the health, safety and well-being of animals scheduled for racing can be assured.

### **(2D) Cooling Vests**

Trainers/Attendants are permitted to use their own canine cooling vests at all times (excluding during the running of the race) on their greyhounds, including when parading greyhounds to the boxes. The decision of whether or not to use a canine cooling vest will rest solely with the Trainer/Attendant, who will also be responsible for the vest at all times.

**Author** Name: Kristyn Miller  
 Title: Manager, Policy and Legislation

**Contributing author/s** Name: Ann-Marie Boyd  
 Title: Manager, Animal Welfare and Veterinary Services

**Endorsed by** Name: Martin Lenz  
 Title: Director, Animal Welfare and Veterinary Services  
 Date: 20 October 2017

**Approved by** Name: Ross Barnett  
 Title: Racing Integrity Commissioner

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