



Hot Weather Guidelines

Pony Club Australia

WHY SHOULD HOT WEATHER BE A CONSIDERATION TO EVENT ORGANISERS?

The welfare of your competitors and their horses should be at the forefront of every event organiser's mind. As the summer months bring increased temperatures and higher humidity the risk of heat stress in both humans and horses also rises. The risks are present not only when physically riding but also when standing around in the heat, recovering from 'work', and travelling to and from the event.

HOW TO PROVIDE THE SAFEST EVENT ENVIRONMENT IN HOT WEATHER

The organiser of the event should ensure that there is sufficient access to all of the following:

- Shade from direct sunlight
- Free access to water
- Ventilation in all enclosed areas to ensure sufficient air flow
- Safe ground conditions (ground that is too hard or cracked can be dangerous to ride on)

WHEN TO CANCEL OR CHANGE THE TIMES OF AN EVENT

If there is a problem supplying any of the above mentioned then the organiser should consider cancellation or postponement of the scheduled event*. If conditions are dangerous for the competitors and / or horses you must consider safety to be the main priority.

If it is the case that the event is easily postponed or moved to an earlier or cooler time, therefore providing more suitable conditions, then all efforts should be made to do so.

*Gow-Gates can offer an insurance policy to protect against financial loss in these circumstances.

If the event goes ahead, what are the signs of a horse in distress?

Heat Exhaustion	Heat Stroke
Weakness	Increased body temperature (41° C +)
Stumbling	Depression
Increased respiration	Typically the horse will stop sweating
Increased body temperature (39 - 41° C +)	Depression
Irregular heart beat (Thumps)	Weakness
Profuse sweating	Stumbling
Muscle cramps	Hyperventilation

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF A HORSE IS IN DISTRESS?

- Stop activity and rest in cool shaded area whilst offering frequent sips of cool water.
- Loosen and remove tack.
- Repeated hosing and immediate scraping of water paying particular attention to the large blood vessels inside the legs (femoral arteries), under the belly (heat sink) and on the neck (jugular vein).
- Walk the horse slowly whilst offering sips of cool water – muscles tend to stiffen up when stood still.
- Call the veterinarian.
- Continued aggressive cooling with cold / ice water application maybe necessary until body temperature returns to normal.

HOW CAN YOU EDUCATE YOUR MEMBERS ABOUT THE DANGERS OF HOT WEATHER?

- Know your horse's normal TPR so that you can tell immediately if something is wrong.
- Acclimatisation – Is your horse used to working in hot conditions?
- Fitness and condition – Is your horse physically fit enough to cope with the added stress of working in hot conditions?
- Keep hydrated with cool clean water, salts and electrolytes.
- Travel – is your float well ventilated and have you factored in sufficient stops for water?
- Cool down horses slowly.
- Clip heavy coats.
- Avoid sunburn on pink noses by using sun cream and / or masks.