

**Effective 3 November 2020**

## **Purpose**

The objectives of the Harness Code Protocols are to:

- Protect racing industry stakeholders (e.g., licensed persons, officials etc), licensed racing venues and training centres from the potential spread of COVID-19.
- Limit the unnecessary movement of licensed persons and racing animals, as well as other relevant persons into and throughout Queensland to avoid the potential spread of COVID-19; and
- Continue to give guidance and structure to the core racing operations of a race meeting.

## **Background**

The Queensland racing industry has continued to operate with racing at a restricted number of racing venues throughout Queensland in recent months during the COVID-19 pandemic, subject to operational restrictions and protocols, with the approval of the Chief Health Officer. These race meetings have been conducted without Patrons and only racing industry participants deemed as Essential Racing Personnel have been permitted to attend. The core functions of racing have continued under the COVID-19 Racing Code Protocols adopted by RQ. These will continue to operate for the Core Racing Areas used by Essential Racing Personnel.

## **Re-introduction of Patrons to Race Meetings**

With the easing of previous restrictions by Government, and as racing clubs transition to racing with Patrons, identification of Core Racing Areas for the conduct of racing operations and Patron Areas for public attendance is of principal importance.

During Stage 2 of easing the restrictions, racing clubs hosting Patrons operated two distinct and clearly separated areas at the racing venue to ensure minimised risk of contact between Patrons and Essential Racing Personnel.

1. **Core Racing Areas** – areas critical to the conduct of racing and Essential Racing Personnel (as detailed in this document); and
2. **Patron Areas** – includes all areas not critical to the conduct of racing and is accessible to Patrons (refer to the Industry COVID Safe Plan).



From Stage 3, segregation of Patrons and Essential Racing Personnel is not required, albeit Core Racing Areas are restricted to licensed participants and officials, meaning the Core Racing Area for Essential Racing Personnel and racing operations will remain separate from Patron Areas and Patrons.

The Industry COVID Safe Plan for the Queensland Racing Industry and Racing Clubs (the Plan) has been approved by the Queensland Government's Chief Health Officer. The purpose of the Plan is to provide an overarching plan with guidance and structure to facilitate the return of Patrons to race meetings in a staged approach. The Plan deals primarily with requirements for the Patron Areas.

Racing clubs are required to operate under the Industry COVID Safe Plan for the Queensland Racing Industry and Racing Clubs and must publicly display the COVID Safe Statement of Compliance.

### **Harness Code Protocols**

Included in this document are protocols relating to the core functions of a race meeting (i.e., those that relate to the Core Racing Area of the venue and Essential Racing Personnel):

- Attendance – Core Racing Area Access;
- Temperature testing on arrival;
- Participant sign-in;
- Reduced field sizes;
- Race colour/silks restrictions;
- Food and beverages;
- Separation and hygiene;
- Training venues and stables;
- Restriction of entry to Queensland for persons from COVID-19 hotspots;
- Interstate travel for licensed persons and other service providers (no COVID-19 hotspot);
- Inter-state horse transportation from declared COVID-19 hotspots;

Racing clubs conducting race meetings are required to meet the requirements of this document and any additional instruction, direction or advice provided by RQ, as well as any requirements of the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission (QRIC) that may be imposed at a race meeting.

Racing clubs may provide additional information specific to their venue to assist Essential Racing Personnel in adhering to these protocols and all relevant requirements.

## **Attendance – Core Racing Area Access**

To help mitigate the spread of COVID-19, access to the Core Racing Area is restricted to Essential Racing Personnel, which includes:

- Licensed drivers engaged to compete at the meeting;
- Licensed trainers with runners engaged at the meeting;
- Licenced stable hands working for trainers engaged at the meeting (trainers to minimise the number of stable staff in attendance);
- QRIC stewards and veterinarians;
- Barrier attendants, starters, mobile barrier drivers and essential track maintenance staff;
- Clerks of the Course;
- Judges and photo finish operators;
- Race meeting event staff including raceday office secretary and security/gate attendants;
- Ambulance services;
- Farriers and other essential service providers approved by Racing Queensland and the race club such as course electrician;
- Broadcast services providers (SKY Racing & PSP) including race caller;
- RQ accredited media as approved by Racing Queensland and the race club including course photographer; and
- Restricted operational race club management and Racing Queensland management.
- Pony Trot participants and officials from the Queensland Junior Harness Racing Association and the Queensland Mini Trotting Sporting Association\*

In addition to those persons detailed above, a racing club may grant Registered Owners who have a runner engaged at the race meeting access to the Core Racing Area (or parts thereof). The number of owners granted access will be determined by the racing club based on the requirements of the Industry COVID Safe Plan being met. Owners are not to enter the racecourse via the Core Racing Area (where Essential Racing Personnel enter the racecourse). Owners must enter via the Patron entry point, then be temperature tested as directed by the racing club, before entering the Core Racing Area.

\* Pony Trot participants and officials are permitted to access the Core Racing Area solely for the purpose of Pony Trot competition which has been approved by Racing Queensland and the Race Club. A separate stabling area will be made available to minimise contact between Pony Trot participants (and officials) and other Essential Racing Personnel. A register of Pony Trot participants and officials in attendance will need to be provided to the Race Club all of whom will need to be temperature tested unless advised otherwise by Racing Queensland.

Further to the above, a racing club may choose to offer restricted catering services and oncourse wagering services within the Core Racing Area to service the Essential Racing Personnel. Where a racing club wishes to offer these services within the Core Racing Area they should engage in prior discussions with RQ and QRIC.

Additionally, children will not be granted access (unless licenced or competing in an approved Pony Trot competition).

### **Temperature testing on arrival**

Essential Racing Personnel attending a race meeting will be subject to temperature check/s on arrival and prior to entry to the racecourse being allowed.

The testing process and requirements are as outlined:

- Each person is tested upon arrival at the racecourse by an appointed officer;
- A verified test within the normal parameter (below 37.6) is required before the person can enter the racecourse;
- If a person records an elevated temperature, the person will be given the opportunity to have a further temperature test up to 15 minutes following the first test;
- If the person's temperature remains elevated the person is not permitted to enter the racecourse. The person is required to leave the racecourse and should be advised to seek medical advice through 13HEALTH. A medical clearance to the satisfaction of the QRIC may be required before being permitted to attend a Queensland race meeting again; and
- To facilitate the temperature testing process, access to the Core Racing Area should be via a single-entry point.

Where a racing club permits owners to access Core Racing Areas (or parts thereof), owners are also to be temperature tested prior to entering the Core Racing Area as directed by the racing club.

### **Participant sign-in**

RQ has implemented new sign-in practices at all harness racing meetings in Queensland during COVID-19.

Trainers and drivers will need to present themselves to the Acceptance Office at the host racing club and advise the club staff member which horses have arrived on course and the names of their stable hands in attendance.

The club staff member will initial the sign-in sheet and enter a check-in time and check-out time. This will avoid multiple people using the same pen and touching the same sign-in sheets.

A similar practice will be adopted when purchasing molasses, with the club staff member signing the molasses sheet.

### **Reduced field sizes**

- Field size restrictions no longer apply.

### **Race colour restrictions**

- Race colour restrictions no longer apply.

### **Food and beverages**

If the racing club offers food and beverage services to Essential Racing Personnel within the Core Racing Area, it is the racing club's responsibility to ensure appropriate protocols are in place with respect to food service as set out in the Industry COVID Safe Plan.

### **Separation and hygiene**

All racing clubs are required to implement satisfactory measures to ensure the principles of the directions issued by the relevant authorities regarding space and distancing are adhered to. This includes physical distancing requirements of remaining 1.5 metres apart and avoiding physical contact, having no more than one person per four square metres in an indoor space, as well as regular handwashing, sanitisation and hygiene processes.

Personal actions to assist with the community obligation to uphold physical distancing include:

- Participants to leave immediately after their racing commitments once cleared by stewards;
- Face-to-face media interviews restricted to 1.5 metres between participants;
- Covering your coughs and sneezes with your elbow or a tissue;

- Disposing of tissues properly;
- Washing your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based sanitisers, including before and after eating, after going to the toilet, and after using shared equipment;
- Cleaning and sanitising frequently used objects such as mobiles, keys and wallets;
- Avoiding large public gatherings if they're not essential;
- Keeping a distance of 1.5 metres between you and other people whenever possible;
- Minimising physical contact, especially with people at higher risk such as older people and people with existing health conditions;
- Supporting physical distancing enhancements introduced by QRIC, RQ, and Club officials at race meetings; and
- Not attending race venues if feeling unwell.

### **Training venues and stables**

Access to all training venues and stables in Queensland is restricted to licensed persons engaged in the training of licensed racing animals, RQ and QRIC officials, race club staff as required, and essential personnel (e.g., Vets, Farriers, Medical Officers etc.).

Notwithstanding the above, non-licensed persons may:

- Visit stables to meet a Trainer and, if doing so, the Trainer shall assume responsibility for contact tracing; and
- Visit a racing/training venue to watch a trial or jumpout or trackwork, in which case the non-licensed person must be positioned in an area designated by the racing club (e.g., section of a grandstand) segregated from licensed persons, and the racing club shall assume responsibility for contact tracing.

### **Restriction of entry to Queensland for persons from COVID-19 hotspots**

- In line with the Queensland Government's current Border restrictions Directions issued by Queensland's Chief Health Officer, persons who have been in a declared COVID-19 hotspot in the 14 days prior to proposed entry into Queensland, are not permitted to enter Queensland except through an exemption available under the Direction.
- Refer to the following link for details of the current Direction and exemptions for entry, and the list of current declared COVID-19 hotspots:  
<https://www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/legislation/cho-public-health-directions-under-expanded-public-health-act-powers/border-restrictions>.
- Where a person has been in a declared COVID-19 hotspot in the 14 days prior to proposed entry into Queensland but receives an entry exemption from the Queensland Government available under the Direction, the person will be unable to attend Queensland race meetings, racing or training centres for a period of 14 days.

### **Interstate travel for visiting and returning licensed persons and other service providers (non COVID-19 hotspots)**

- Licensed persons and other providers who have not been in a declared COVID-19 hotspot in the previous 14 days may enter Queensland in line with the Queensland Government's border entry requirements, and may attend a Queensland racing and training venue for the purposes of carrying out licensed duties (training or racing).

## Inter-state horses from declared COVID-19 hotspots

### *Transport of horses by approved float companies from declared COVID-19 hotspots by Approved Float Companies only*

Where Government regulations allow, standardbred horses will be permitted to travel to Queensland from declared COVID-19 hotspots, however, any licensed or registered personnel, or essential personnel (being those currently approved for access to race meetings and training centres) are not permitted to travel with such horses, other than employees of the 'Approved Float Company'.

The following conditions also apply:

- An 'Approved Float Company' is any float company which is registered as a transport company, and which has sought and been granted approval by Racing Queensland to transport racing standardbred horses to Queensland from inter-state;
- For horses currently trained by trainers in a declared COVID-19 hotspot, the trainer must make arrangements (notified and approved by the QRIC Stewards) for a designated caretaker trainer within Queensland. This arrangement must be made and notified to QRIC prior to transport departure;
- Transport drivers (freight drivers) are to make prior arrangements with drop-off points and are not to access licensed premises when delivering horses (unless otherwise approved by QRIC Stewards). Transport drivers and those involved in the release or collection of transported horses should follow the below protocols headed "Further advice for those involved in Interstate Horse Transport and Collection";
- Horses transported from a declared COVID-19 hotspot must have completed their journey by the time designated as the final scratching deadline for the race meeting; and
- Transport (freight) drivers undertaking travel from a declared COVID-19 hotspot should refer to the Direction and other guidance from the Queensland Government about additional requirements for entry into, and whilst they are in, Queensland:  
<https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19/current-status/public-health-directions/border-restrictions>.

## Further advice for those involved in horse transport and collection

As any movement of a horse necessarily also involves movement of people who are directly involved in the horse's transport, it is vital that protocols are in place to prevent unnecessary contact between the people involved in the horse's transport at either end of the journey.

In order to achieve the desired outcome, horse transport should involve the minimum staff necessary at all stages of the journey (pick-up, transport and drop-off).

Attention must also be drawn towards the potential for gear and other objects (including the animal) that come into contact with a potentially infected person to spread the infection to another person.

Accordingly, the following protocol has been developed by RQ in conjunction with QRIC.

### *Horse pick-up*

- Prior to arrival at pick-up location, horse transporter should be showered and wearing a clean set of clothing. Hand hygiene should be performed just prior to arrival;
- Prior communication with pick-up location should occur to facilitate efficient pick-up of horse;
- Transporter should be met by one allocated person at the pick-up location who has undergone the same level of personal hygiene and hand sanitisation;
- The truck should be made ready to receive the horse (ramps down, dividers open etc); and

- Allocated person at pick-up location to open horse's stable (while maintaining physical distancing from transporter) allowing the transporter to catch the horse with their own head collar and lead and place it in the transport bay on their truck, secure the gate and drive to the destination.

#### *Transport*

- Stops en route should be kept to a bare minimum (fuel stop, toilet stop etc) with close attention paid to physical distancing and regular hand hygiene;
- Travel should be planned to follow the most direct route to minimise travel time; and
- For longer journeys the legislative requirements for rest and watering stops for land transport of horse will need to be adhered to, ensuring the horse's welfare during the journey.

#### *Horse drop-off*

- Prior communication with drop-off location to occur to ensure efficient drop-off of horse at destination;
- Transporter to be met by a single allocated person at the drop-off destination, who has undergone personal and hand hygiene procedures as previously detailed (shower, clean clothes and hand hygiene);
- Transporter to provide access to horse in the transport bay to allocated drop-off person while maintaining physical distancing;
- Allocated drop-off person to undo transporter's head collar and replace with own head collar and lead prior to leading the horse off the truck and into the stable complex;
- Horse to be shampooed in horse wash/detergent before drying off and placing in its allocated stable;
- All head collars, leads and gear (transporter's and drop-off recipient's) to be disinfected prior to next use; and
- Transporter and drop-off recipient to undergo hand hygiene.