

Track Veterinarian Emergency Procedures

The California Horse Racing Board

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Preamble

Racehorse injuries that occur on the track during racing and training present a unique set of circumstances that require immediate action contingent upon on well-designed, established protocols to facilitate treatment and management of the injured horse. The intent of this document is to serve as a code of standards or "Best Practices" for treating and managing the injured horse on the racetrack. It is predicated on communication and coordination of protocols by the Track (Regulatory) Veterinarian during an emergency on the racetrack. Track personnel should be trained as part of the overall injury management plan to rapidly respond in case of an incident.

Duties of the Racing Veterinarian

The Racing Veterinarian shall examine each horse when it is first entered to race at the race meeting, and they shall report to the stewards any horse which in their opinion is not of the age or condition which is satisfactory for the type of racing to be conducted at the meeting. The stewards may declare any such horse so reported as ineligible to be entered or started at the meeting until such time as the Racing Veterinarian certifies such horse to be race ably sound. The Racing Veterinarian shall be present in the paddock, on the racecourse, and at the starting gate (except when weather or the racing surface prevent the Racing Veterinarian from getting to the starting gate) during the saddling, the parade, and until the horses are dispatched from the gate for the race, and they shall examine any horse when there is a question as to the physical condition of such horse. They shall report any horse which in their opinion is incapable of physically exerting its best effort to win to the stewards who may declare such horse from the race. The Racing Veterinarian shall examine any horse which appears in physical distress during the race, at the finish of the race and they shall report such horse together with their opinion as to the cause of the distress to the stewards and to the official veterinarian. The Racing Veterinarian has the authority to treat any horse in event of an emergency, accident, or injury, and they are authorized to humanely destroy any horse which in their opinion is so seriously injured that it is in the best interests of the horse to so act, and every horse owner and trainer in participating in a race in this State does consent thereto. The Racing Veterinarian shall recommend to the official veterinarian those horses which by reason of physical disability should be placed on the Veterinarian's List and they may recommend removal from the list of those horses which in their opinion can satisfactorily compete in a race.

The Racing Veterinarian shall have direct reporting responsibility to the official veterinarian and the Board of Stewards and in exercising their duties under this section shall make required reports to the official veterinarian and the Board of Stewards as provided herein. No licensed official or other employee of the Association or fair, or any other licensee, shall have authority to override or interfere with that reporting responsibility or the proper exercise of the duties and responsibilities of the Racing Veterinarian. **(CHRB Rule 1561)**

Equine Ambulances

The equine ambulance must be able to mobilize quickly and be able to maneuver on different types of racing surfaces in all weather conditions. It should have the ability to lower the chassis for easy loading and unloading of the injured horse from the rear of the ambulance. Additionally, a side on/off ramp is useful in certain situations and should be utilized as circumstances dictate. It should also have a sliding center partition to stabilize a horse if needed and a barrier in the front to provide a safe area for personnel. The ambulance should be equipped with a heavy-duty motorized winch to pull in a mat with a recumbent or deceased horse. All supplies and equipment should be checked prior to the race meet, and on a weekly basis thereafter to ensure readiness for use. The equine ambulance shall contain, but not limited to, the following items:

1. Halters and lead shanks
2. Ice, water, buckets, sponges and sweat scrapers
3. Blanket or tarp for covering a deceased horse until transport

4. Mat or rescue sled for transport of recumbent horse
5. Trauma helmet

Emergency Kit

Track veterinarians shall carry an emergency kit with them, or in the chase vehicle, as part of their equipment. An emergency box containing bandages, a halter, and shank should also be placed in the paddock. Screens and a tarp or blanket should be readily accessible in the paddock and in the chase vehicle or horse ambulance. The emergency box, emergency kit, cooling blanket, multiple Kimzey splints, recovery helmet, screens, halter, and shank may be loaded on the utility vehicle for the races. Screens should also be available at the finish line area. All emergency kits containing pharmaceuticals shall be stored in a secure manner according to Federal and State Guidelines when not in use.

Emergency Kits should contain, but not limited to, the following:

1. Sedative (Detomidine, Xylazine, Butorphanol, Ketamine)
2. Short-acting corticosteroid (Solu Medrol)
3. Euthanasia solution (Pentobarbital/ Phenytoin and Succinylcholine). Note: Euthanasia solution should be segregated and distinctly marked without obscuring the manufacturer's label. A large bore needle is recommended for rapid delivery.
4. Needles and syringes (14G, 16G, 18G, 20G needles & 3cc, 6cc, 12cc, 60cc syringes)
5. Non-adhesive pads and vet wrap
6. Stethoscope
7. Vacutainer tubes and needles to collect blood samples
8. Chip ID reader
9. Light Source

Injury Management

When the injured horse is on the racetrack, the track veterinarian oversees all operations and procedures related to the health and safety of the horse. Once the horse is removed from the track, the care and custody of the injured horse should be immediately referred to the horse's attending veterinarian for further care.

When an injury occurs on the track, the track veterinarian shall call the equine ambulance. The track veterinarian shall formulate the proper response regarding medications, transportation, and splinting. The equine ambulance response shall be as quick as circumstances allow. The track veterinarian shall establish control of the horse by chemical and physical restraint to mitigate public view and interference and protect personnel and the horse from further injury. An individual who is experienced with horse handling shall be in attendance with the track veterinarian. Other individuals may be required to assist the situation and their involvement is at the discretion of the track veterinarian. The track veterinarian will direct activities of any individuals assisting in the care of the injured horse. It is paramount that the track veterinarian is the primary source of all communications.

Any horse injured on the racetrack will be loaded into the horse ambulance and transported to a designated location determined by the track veterinarian. In the event of multiple incidents on track, the triage will be determined by the track vet. Two horses may be transported off the track in the same ambulance if deemed appropriate and safe by the track veterinarian. The track veterinarian may stay with the affected horse(s) until the case is transferred to the practicing veterinarian if necessary.

Catastrophic Injury Management

Prompt response to a catastrophic injury is mandatory. The track veterinarian should make every effort to load the injured horse into the ambulance prior to euthanasia provided the welfare and safety of the horse are not compromised. Blood samples shall be procured prior to euthanasia, circumstances permitting, and submitted along with hair samples for analysis. If loading is not possible, screens should be deployed. Horses shall be placed onto a mat and then loaded into the ambulance with the aid of a mechanical winch. Horses that expire on the racetrack shall be screened from public view and covered, if necessary. The designated area for deceased horses shall be enclosed, completely screened, and secured. Transportation of the deceased horse to the necropsy lab shall be completed in a timely manner and is the responsibility of the track operator. Requests for a postmortem shall be filed with the official veterinarian within one hour of the death and shall be submitted on a Necropsy Submission Form.

Multiple Incidents in the Same Race

When there are multiple injuries in a race or an accident involving multiple horses, it is imperative that the track veterinarian take control and communicate to all emergency personnel. A second ambulance shall be prepared to be utilized at the discretion of the track veterinarian. Delegation of duties and injury management is the responsibility of the track veterinarian. Quick assessment of the situation is needed to provide directions for ambulance response, screening personnel, and emergency management of the injured horse. Communication and cooperation of all personnel is critical.

Heat Stroke

When the temperature requires it, the track veterinarian and safety steward should perform a racetrack assessment of supplies to assist in the cooling of horses. Hoses, ice tubs, ice on utility vehicles, a water hose on the ambulance, cooling blankets, and rubbing alcohol should be available. The veterinarian should ensure that equipment and individuals are trained and available to aid horses suffering heat exhaustion/heat stroke. Treatment of horses may be warranted, and necessary medications and necessary supplies should be readily accessible. The symptomatic horse loaded into an ambulance represents a substantial safety hazard to itself as well as the handlers present and should only be loaded once it is deemed safe for the horse and handler. Cooling stations shall be accessible and available on track for horses after unsaddling.

Equine Injuries

Equine athletes must pass a pre-race veterinary inspection. The inspection consists of an extended observation period during which horses are viewed in motion, given a hands-on exam, and observed in the paddock, the post parade, and at the starting gate. The track veterinarian has the authority to recommend scratching any horse to the stewards at any time before the start of the race. In this instance, clear and precise communication must occur with the stewards. Furthermore, all horses in a race are continually observed prior to, and including, the time they are entered into the starting gate.

When a horse experiences an injury on the racetrack, the horse must first be stabilized and examined. A determination of the type and severity of the injury will be made by the track veterinarian when attending to the injured horse. The track veterinarian will determine the action plan based on the injury, and a decision to transport the horse off the track or euthanize a horse on the track is at the discretion of the track veterinarian. The welfare of the horse and safety of all personnel must remain a priority.

Once a horse is transported off the racetrack, the attending veterinarian will assume control of the injured horse. Communication between the track vet and attending vet will enhance treatment options for care and management. All medical and surgical options shall be considered and communicated with the trainer, and owner if available. The care and treatment are predicated on what is best for the individual horse, and that standard is paramount.