



Photo courtesy of Dr. Laura Buckland



Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre  
ATLANTIC VETERINARY COLLEGE • UNIVERSITY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

# Equine Welfare & The Equine Code of Practice

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[www.derbytelegraph.co.uk](http://www.derbytelegraph.co.uk)



[www.theargus.co.uk](http://www.theargus.co.uk)



[www.horsetalk.co.nz](http://www.horsetalk.co.nz)



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# Horse Welfare

- ▶ The **most significant influence** on the welfare of horses is the **care and management provided by** the person(s) responsible for their daily care.
  - ▶ Shelter
  - ▶ Feed and water to maintain health and vigour
  - ▶ Freedom of movement and exercise for most normal behaviours
  - ▶ The company of other equines
  - ▶ Veterinary care, diagnosis and treatment, disease control and prevention
  - ▶ Emergency preparedness for fire, natural disaster, and the disruption of feed supplies
  - ▶ Hoof care
  - ▶ End of life



[www.thestar.com](http://www.thestar.com)



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# Why do equine welfare problems happen?

- ▶ Owner fails to recognize there is a problem
  - ▶ Owner doesn't know any better
  - ▶ Ignorance vs. malice – is there a difference?
- ▶ Owner fails to act on a problem
- ▶ Owner fails to seek *professional advice*
  - ▶ Established producers, specialists, veterinarians
- ▶ Lack of resources – time, money, knowledge
  - ▶ Business vs. pleasure
  - ▶ 20 Horses vs. 20 cats
- ▶ Mental illness
  - ▶ Hoarding
  - ▶ Depression
  - ▶ Delusion
  - ▶ Addictions



[www.thedailymail.co.uk](http://www.thedailymail.co.uk)



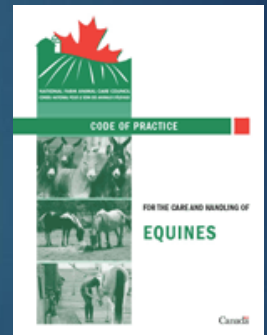
[www.thehorse.com](http://www.thehorse.com)



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# The Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines

- ▶ Equine Canada and the National Farm Animal Care Council 2013©
- ▶ The Codes of Practice are nationally developed guidelines for the care and handling of farm animals
  - ▶ They serve as our national understanding of animal care requirements and recommended practices
  - ▶ Codes promote sound management and welfare practices for housing, care, transportation and other animal husbandry practices



[www.nfacc.ca](http://www.nfacc.ca)



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# Code of Practice

## ► REQUIREMENTS:

- Regulatory requirement or industry expectations outlining “minimum practices” in the care for horses
- Failure to meet requirements:
  - Penalization by industry associations
  - **Enforced** under federal and provincial regulations

## ► RECOMMENDED PRACTICES:

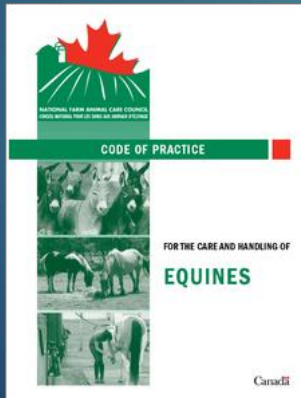
- Generally expected to **enhance animal welfare outcomes**
  - Failure to implement does not imply that acceptable standards of animal care are not met



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# CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE CARE AND HANDLING OF EQUINES

123 Requirements  
272 Recommended  
practices



1 - Duty of Care

2 requirements  
10 recommendation  
practices

2 - Facilities & Housing

25 requirements  
51 recommended  
practices

3 - Feed & Water

14 requirements  
43 recommended  
practices

4 - Health Management

16 requirements  
55 recommended  
practice

5 - Feedlot Management

16 requirements  
22 recommended  
practices

6 - Husbandry Practices

22 requirements  
32 recommended  
practices

7- Reproductive  
Management

10 requirements  
29 recommended  
practices

8 - Transportation

9 requirements  
24 recommended  
practices

9 - Change or End of  
career

1 requirement  
2 recommended  
practices

10 - Euthanasia

8 requirements  
4 recommended  
practices



# Code 2.1.2 - Shade & Outdoor Shelter

## ► Requirement:

- Horses must have access to shelter (constructed or natural) that protects them from the harmful effects of extreme weather conditions
  - Constructed shelter such as shade cloths and stables
  - Natural shelter such as trees and hedges
- Horses are particularly likely to seek shelter during rainy & windy conditions or snowy & windy conditions



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# Code 3.1 – Water

## ► Requirements:

- Horses must have access to safe, palatable and clean water in quantities to maintain health and vigour
- In extreme weather conditions (cold or hot), special attention must be paid to ensure water availability, access and intake
- Water troughs, containers and any automatic watering devices must be cleaned regularly and maintained in working order with no sharp or abrasive edges



[www.thehorse.com](http://www.thehorse.com)



[www.wrappedinhorses.wordpress.com](http://www.wrappedinhorses.wordpress.com)



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# Code 4.5 - BCS

## ► 5 Requirements:

- **Requirement #1** – 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)

- Normal BCS 4-6/9



[www.dailyexaminer.co.au](http://www.dailyexaminer.co.au)

## ► **Important to evaluate:**

- Individual horse BCS
- Herd BCS (average)
- Change in BCS over time with repeated visits
  - Is there an upward or downward trend in BCS
- Obesity is also a welfare concern



[www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk)

# Code 6.7 – Hoof Care

## ► Requirement:

- Hooves must be trimmed and/or shod as often as is necessary to maintain hooves in functional condition. Whether shod or unshod, hooves must not be allowed to grow to excessive lengths causing injury or discomfort to the horse



[www.animalchannel.com](http://www.animalchannel.com)



[www.americanfarriers.com](http://www.americanfarriers.com)



# Vet Involvement

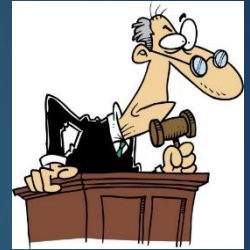
- ▶ You may become involved when:
  - ▶ **Contacted by**
    - ▶ Department of Agriculture (SPCA, police enforcement)
      - ▶ “We require your assistance for an urgent equine welfare concern”
  - ▶ **A horse owner**
    - ▶ The Department of Agriculture was just here and I was ordered to have a veterinarian evaluate my herd of horses within 48 hours”
  - ▶ **You as a veterinarian observe something during an examination**
    - ▶ “I feel that this horse is in distress and immediate danger ....”
- ▶ **KNOW your provincial/state legislation**
  - ▶ **DUTY TO REPORT**



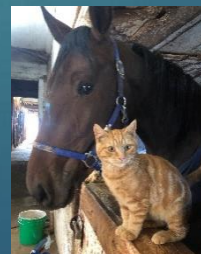
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# Document your findings

- ▶ Don't rely on your memory alone
- ▶ Be very detailed and specific
  - ▶ Court may be 1-2 years away
- ▶ Physical exam and **DOCUMENTATION**:
  - ▶ Identification of animal - markings, scars, **PHOTOS**
  - ▶ Number of animals present and how many are affected
  - ▶ BCS
  - ▶ Signs of injury or abuse
  - ▶ Housing, shelter, bedding, hay quality, water access/quality, dry place to lie down, etc

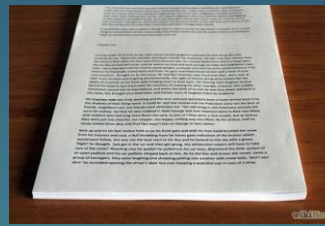


- ▶ **Don't forget about other species ....**



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# The REPORT



## ▶ BE FACTUAL

- ▶ Include date, time, civic address, weather etc ...
- ▶ Acknowledge and **FACTUALLY** describe all findings, pain, suffering, etc
  - ▶ Avoid accusatory language (deplorable, filthy, nasty, etc)

## ▶ BE SPECIFIC

- ▶ Make recommendations for minimum care requirements with specific goals/timelines
- ▶ **DO NOT** leave anything to interpretation by owner or court of law!

## ▶ BE CONFIDENT - YOU are the expert!!!

- ▶ These are your interpretations and recommendations, say it with conviction!
- ▶ Photos and videos speak volumes!
- ▶ **Reference THE CODE OF PRACTICE**




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# You are not alone .....

- ▶ Code of Practice
- ▶ Welfare experts
- ▶ Local enforcement agency
  - ▶ Department of Agriculture
  - ▶ SPCA
- ▶ Law enforcement
  - ▶ Police/RCMP
- ▶ Other veterinarians
- ▶ Mental health professionals



A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a dog's face, focusing on its eyes. The dog has light-colored fur and dark, expressive eyes. The image is used as a background for a quote.

**“Never, never be afraid to do what's right, especially if the well-being of a person or animal is at stake. Society's punishments are small compared to the wounds we inflict on our soul when we look the other way.”**

**Martin Luther King Jr.**



# Who to call for help?

The PEI Department of Agriculture and Land is responsible for the protection and welfare of horses in PEI

If you see a horse in need, please contact them directly at 902-368-4880







Photo courtesy of Dr. Laura Buckland

# References

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