



Code of practice for the land transport of horses (Victoria)

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Bureau of Animal Welfare, Attwood

1. Introduction

This Code was prepared to provide guidance to persons concerned with the transport of horses in a wide range of situations and should be read with this in mind. It emphasises the responsibilities of the owner of the animals (or his/her agent), drivers, attendants and railway officials. It is intended to encourage considerate treatment so that transport stress and injury are minimised at all stages of the transport operation.

For this Code, transport includes the period immediately before loading including any waiting periods, loading, transit, rest periods and unloading at the point of destination.

This Code emphasizes the need for planning prior to the transportation of horses. Horses can be efficiently and humanely transported by road or rail if:

- care is given to the selection and preparation of horses prior to transportation;
- care is taken in the loading of horses using facilities well designed for horses;
- the trip is scheduled to minimize delays in travel or at the point of disembarkation of the horses.

Vehicles used to transport horses by road vary from single horse floats for road transport to double deck semi-trailers.

Ignorance is no excuse for inappropriate handling of horses. Employers have an obligation to train employees on humane handling, equipment use and care.

Horses should not be transported unnecessarily and any transport that is required should be carried out in a way that minimises stress, pain and suffering.

2. Responsibilities

- 2.1 The possibility of animals being injured or becoming ill must be minimised by transporting them to their destination as speedily as possible, within the confines of any legal requirements.
- 2.2 The owner or manager is responsible for the horses until they are on the transport vehicle. They then become the transporter's responsibility, including loading density, until they are unloaded at the abattoir, knackery or other destination. If a

transport driver considers that the horses presented for transport are not likely to survive the journey or are not fit for transport, loading should be refused. After delivery, abattoir or knackery management (including service abattoirs) assumes responsibility until slaughter. When at saleyards, they are the responsibility of the saleyard superintendent. When at a second property the owner/manager of that property is responsible.

- 2.3 Plans should be made to minimise any delay that could be stressful to horses. The driver must ensure that he/she is provided with the name and telephone number of the owner/agent of the horses, where they are to go and who will receive them.
- 2.4 Persons organising the transport of animals must be aware of any requirements for health certification and welfare of the animals and ensure that approvals and documentation are completed before the planned journey. This is particularly important for interstate and export movements and will minimise delays that may adversely affect the well-being of the animals. Further information can be obtained from local offices of the Department of Primary Industries.
- 2.5 Only fit and healthy animals should be selected for transport. Those most susceptible to disease, stress or injury during transport (sick, lame, weak or young horses) should be loaded last and unloaded first. Separate accommodation for such animals is preferred.
- 2.6 **Owner's responsibilities**
 - 2.6.1 The owner or agent has a responsibility to select only fit and healthy horses for travel. Lame or sick horses should not be transported except for veterinary treatment.
 - 2.6.2 The nature and duration of the proposed journey should be considered when determining the degree of fitness required.
 - 2.6.3 The owner or agent is responsible for the provision of well maintained loading facilities.

- 2.6.4 Proper pre-conditioning of horses, including feeding, watering and paring of feet should be performed by the owner or agent.

2.7 Driver's responsibilities

- 2.7.1 A driver should refuse to load any horse which is not fit and healthy to travel. The driver of a road vehicle is responsible for the care and welfare of animals during transport unless either an attendant or agent appointed by the owner travels with the consignment. Drivers must stop and regularly inspect stock they are carrying and assist a distressed or injured animal immediately they become aware of a problem.
- 2.7.2 Drivers should be trained to ensure the welfare of horses in their charge and be familiar with the content of this Code of Practice.
- 2.7.3 Good driving technique is an important factor in ensuring the welfare of transported horses is protected.
- 2.7.4 Drivers should ensure that the stock carrying part of the vehicle is sound and safe.
- 2.8 The owner of loading facilities including ramps is responsible for their maintenance.

3. Travelling stock reserves (TSRS)

- 3.1 These reserves are important to the welfare of travelling stock in remote areas. All TSRs should be well maintained by the responsible authority and clearly identified. Drinking water should always be available in paddocks. The TSR should be suitably fenced so that the risk of escape or injury to horses is minimised.

4. Minimising stress

- 4.1 Stress is a cumulative response of an animal to its surroundings and may result in severe physiological effects.
- 4.1.1 Horses may be stressed during transport by the handling involved in assembling them. They should be handled quietly and carefully so neither they nor other horses nearby are unduly disturbed by the process.
- 4.1.2 This especially applies where surroundings are strange and where mustering in remote areas is involved. Feral horses are most likely to be affected by the cumulative effects of handling and particular care is needed.
- 4.1.3 The animals most likely to be affected by stress are those not accustomed to handling, those in poor condition, the excessively fat, pregnant mares, the young and the old.
- 4.1.4 Excessive stress during transport may lead to parturition problems, failure to come into oestrus, injuries, colic, travel related disorders including pneumonia, scouring, laminitis and dehydration, transit tetany, weight loss, choke and excitable behaviour. For this reason,

horses that have been transported may be difficult to handle.

- 4.1.5 Mares that are more than ten months pregnant and those in early lactation should not be transported for periods longer than eight hours due to the increased risk of metabolic disease and injury. Mares which have given birth should not be transported within seven days of foaling except when travelling for veterinary treatment. Feral pregnant mares should not be transported if visibly heavily pregnant.
- 4.1.6 It is important that transporters realise that animals constrained by transport cannot seek shade, shelter or move away from cold draughts, and that the stress of transport will be increased by inclement weather.
- 4.1.7 Horses being transported to slaughter should preferably be transported directly to the nearest licensed horse abattoir to reduce the time off feed, handling and transport stress.
- 4.1.8 Good ventilation in the transport vehicle is important to minimise the incidence of pneumonia and pleuritis.

5. Pre-transport preparation of horses

5.1 Pre-travel rest period for feral or unhandled horses

- 5.1.1 Frightened horses are difficult to load or transport and they should therefore be given an opportunity to become acclimatised to new surroundings and accustomed to each other before transport.
- 5.1.2 A rest period of at least 12 hours is essential, but at least 24 hours is preferred where feral horses have been mustered by helicopter or light plane.
- 5.1.3 Groups of horses unfamiliar to each other should be segregated during the pre-transport period to avoid stress.
- 5.1.4 There should be provisions made to segregate fractious and dominant animals from the mob.

5.2 Water and feed requirements

- 5.2.1 Drinking water must be provided in assembly yards or pens. Adult horses require 25 litres (5.5 gallons)/horse/day. Double this amount is required in hot weather.
- 5.2.2 Horses kept in yards for more than 12 hours, or if about to travel for more than 12 hours, must be provided with palatable hay or alternate feed. A 'rule of thumb' rate for feeding hay is 8 kg (20 lbs) per adult per day.
- 5.2.3 Feed and water supply systems should ensure that all horses have access to feed and water and that wastage is minimised.

5.3 Shelter

- 5.3.1 Access to shelter from heat, wind and cold should be provided in very hot or cold weather

or where foals or horses in poor condition are involved.

5.4 General exemptions

5.4.1 Providing humane slaughter is not possible without transport, they are fit to travel, and with veterinary advice:

- weak animals may be transported as a salvage operation, eg from a drought area;
- horses that are either ill or injured may be transported for veterinary treatment.

In both of these situations a decision should be made to transport the horses before their fitness to travel has become seriously compromised.

5.5 Horses injured by bushfire

5.5.1 After bushfires, horses assessed by a veterinary surgeon or livestock assessment team as capable of travelling without undue pain or stress resulting from burns, may be transported elsewhere.

5.5.2 In the absence of a veterinary surgeon or livestock assessment team, bushfire affected horses may only be transported for agistment if they meet the following criteria:

- they do not show severe respiratory distress;
- they are not reluctant to walk and do not exhibit undue pain or stress when encouraged to walk;

5.5.3 Distressed horses should be humanely destroyed or treated by a veterinarian without delay.

5.6 Drought affected horses

- If still able to walk, they should be agisted or sent directly to the nearest slaughtering plant. They should not be consigned through saleyards.
- Only animals judged to be capable of surviving the journey should be transported.

5.6.1 Under no circumstances should horses be allowed to become so weak that they are not fit to travel. Animals which lie down after limited exercise are not fit to travel and should be fed until strong, or promptly and humanely destroyed.

5.6.2 Weakened horses should be transported to their destination by the shortest practicable route. They should be given special protection against exposure to extremes of weather. They should not be mixed with strong animals.

5.7 Handling horses rejected from transport

5.7.1 Animals which are clearly suffering should be promptly and humanely destroyed. Methods for humanely destroying horses are provided later in this Code.

5.7.2 Humane and effective arrangements should be made by the owner or agent for the handling and care of any animal rejected as unsuitable for loading.

6. Loading

6.1 Supervision

- 6.1.1 Injuries and stress are most likely to occur during loading and unloading.
- 6.1.2 The loading procedure should be planned to allow adequate time for stock to be loaded quietly and without causing them injury.
- 6.1.3 Loading should be supervised by experienced stock handlers who have a basic knowledge of the behavioural and physical needs of horses.
- 6.1.4 Supervisors should ensure that spectators do not impede the smooth loading of animals. Noise, harassment and excessive force should be avoided.

6.2 Sedation

- 6.2.1 Horses should not be routinely sedated for travel and sedation should only be used on horses with specific behaviour problems. Horses should be sedated by a veterinarian or under veterinary instruction and only when this is best for the animal's welfare.
- 6.2.2 Sedated horses require special care to ensure they are not unduly affected by the motion of the transport vehicle or are not trampled on if they become recumbent. Sedated horses should be penned separately in horse floats and not transported on cattle trucks.

6.3 Cleanliness

Horses must only be loaded onto vehicles or railway wagons that have been thoroughly cleaned. Vehicles must be disinfected with approved disinfectants after cleaning if previous occupants have shown signs of contagious disease e.g. nasal discharges, coughs, severe diarrhoea or draining abscesses.

6.4 Protective equipment

Correctly fitted hoods, blankets, blinkers, sheets, knee or hock caps and bandages may be useful to protect parts of the animals that are most likely to suffer abrasion or bruising through the motion of transport. Handled horses with thick winter coats should be clipped before travel in hot climates. Transported horses can generate considerable heat and this can lead to excessive sweating and dehydration if the horse is overrugged.

6.5 Head stalls/halters

Except for young or unhandled horses, head stalls should be applied and in a way that will not cause

injury to the animals. The head stall should be made of a suitable material and be well maintained. The lead of the head stall is to be secured to the vehicle using a quick release knot. Head stalls or halters should only be fitted if the horse is tied up during transport.

6.6 Shoes

Removal of shoes on long journeys may decrease the risk of injury caused by slipping. Hind shoes should be removed where horses travel in groups.

6.7 Facilities

- 6.7.1 Loading should normally take place from a properly constructed ramp or loading bay.
- 6.7.2 There should be no protrusions or sharp edges on the framework, doorways, floors or partitions capable of injuring animals. Hinges and latches must not project into the pathway of animals.
- 6.7.3 Gates should operate smoothly, retract fully from the pathway of animals and not be susceptible to jamming. Gates should also be made clearly visible to animals when shut by providing where necessary a 'sight board' to improve visibility.
- 6.7.4 A flat platform at the top of the ramp should be level with the deck being loaded and should not be less than 1.5 metres in length. A slope of not more than 1 in 3 (about 20 degrees) is recommended for permanently installed ramps.
- 6.7.5 Overhead bars on ramps used for horses are undesirable. Where they are used they should be at least 2.1 m high to prevent head injuries to rearing horses.
- 6.7.6 Side protection should be of sufficient height and covered in at the bottom to prevent injuries. Inner rails should be smooth with no sharp projections. Provision of a removable bottom rail helps in raising fallen horses. Railings should be at least 1.5 m high where the difference in height the animals have to negotiate is more than 70 cm, or the length of the ramp is more than 1.50 m.
- 6.7.7 Ramps and walking surfaces should have an anti-slip design with foot battens or a covering of sand as necessary. Cross cleats, 40-50 mm high should be provided with timber ramps or if the ramp is made from concrete, a cross grooved pattern or steps will provide a good footing when the ramp is wet. Recommended dimensions of steps are 300-500 mm treads and 90-100 mm risers. Solid flaps must be used to cover any gap between the loading ramp and the floor of the stock crate.
- 6.7.8 Horses may object to the hollow sounds resulting from walking on ramps. This can be reduced by using matting or putting earth or sand on the ramp floor.

6.7.9 Provision of a walkway on the outside of the ramp for use by an attendant will facilitate stock movement.

6.7.10 Manual lifting is permissible for young foals that may have difficulty negotiating a ramp.

6.7.11 During loading, the gate of the stock crate must be properly aligned with the loading race to ensure the smooth movement of horses and to minimise injury.

6.8 Lighting

6.8.1 Artificial lighting to illuminate the loading ramp is useful for loading at night. The interior of the transport unit should also be well lit at loading so that the horses can see where they are going. However, a horse may balk if it has to walk towards the glare from a very bright light.

6.9 Segregation during transport

6.9.1 The following classes of horse should be separately stalled:

- unbroken horses (although these could travel together in a group);
- stallions older than one year;
- heavily pregnant mares;
- mares with a foal at foot;
- horses greatly different in size;
- unfit animals travelling under veterinary supervision;
- vicious horses;
- sedated horses.

6.9.2 Horses must not be mixed with other animal species during transport except in the case of companion animals where separation could cause distress.

6.9.3 Working dogs must not be transported in a stock crate with horses.

6.10 Assisting the loading of horses

6.10.1 Sticks, lengths of heavy plastic, metal piping or heavy leather belts must never be used to beat horses but may be used sensibly to encourage horses to move.

6.10.2 Where horses are not being led by a head stall, the use of 'flappers' (a length of cane with a short strap of leather or canvas attached) or 'metallic rattle' may be used to encourage movement in response to sound.

6.10.3 Dogs and electric prods must not be used during the loading of horses.

6.10.4 Where a horse objects to being loaded, backing the animal into the vehicle, or loading it through the front, may prove easier. Ramps should be as near level as possible as it is difficult to back a horse up a slope.

- 6.10.5 Facing away from the direction of travel may result in less stress for animals that are fractious or difficult to load.
- 6.10.6 When leading colts, stallions or frisky horses, the use of a rearing bit is encouraged.

7. Transport design

7.1 Construction and design

- 7.1.1 Vehicles and their fittings must be strong enough to contain the animals and prevent their escape.
- 7.1.2 Materials used in the construction of transport vehicles must be able to be cleaned effectively.
- 7.1.3 Internal sheeting of the sides of stock crates and of internal ramps should be smooth to eliminate pressure points and reduce bruising.
- 7.1.4 A transport used for horses should preferably have a rigid and substantial roof.
- 7.1.5 Vehicles should be designed to ensure that the bedding is maintained reasonably clean and dry.
- 7.1.6 The parts of the vehicle or wagon through which horses move or are held should be free from obstructions and hazards that could cause injury. Doors should be wide enough to allow easy exit and entry (no less than 900 mm)
- 7.1.7 Deck and floor surfaces should provide a good foothold, and where necessary be fitted with foot battens.
- 7.1.8 Absorbent litter or flooring should be fitted in areas where horses are held for prolonged periods. This may be replaced during rest periods.
- 7.1.9 If necessary, the walls should be padded from a level of about 75 cm above the floor to a height level with the animal's back. Further padding may be required to protect the animals head. Padding should be capable of easy cleaning and disinfection.
- 7.1.10 Vehicles must be kept in safe and roadworthy condition and receive regular maintenance inspections.

7.2 Head clearance

- 7.2.1 Each horse should have sufficient room to stand in its natural position. There should be adequate clear headroom and space above each horse for air circulation.
- 7.2.2 A height of 2 m is adequate for most horses used for sport and recreation. Bows on body trucks and single deck semi-trailers should also be at least 2 m high and padded for their full length to a thickness of at least 2 cm with appropriate soft material.

7.3 Use of partitions

- 7.3.1 Adjustable partition boards should always be used to help animals maintain their balance

where the animals are placed at right angles to the direction of travel. These will help to prevent injuries resulting from surging due to traffic or road conditions. The density of stock must be assessed for each division in a stock crate.

- 7.3.2 Partitions should be at least 600 mm high and placement at a height of about 600 mm from the floor may reduce scrambling. They should be removable in case an animal collapses.
- 7.3.3 In a two horse trailer, head height partitions should be used at the head of each animal if they are not tethered, to prevent them biting adjacent animals.

7.4 Ventilation

- 7.4.1 The air circulation in enclosed vehicles should be sufficient to provide oxygen to prevent bacterial build-up, remove smells and gases and ensure a comfortable temperature and humidity. A mechanical means of forcing the circulation of air may be necessary for enclosed vehicles.
- 7.4.2 The exhaust system of a vehicle must not pollute the air inside the transport.
- 7.4.3 Horses should not be placed in excessively strong draughts, but adequate ventilation is vital to prevent travel sickness.
- 7.4.4 Solid sided stalls may prevent the loss of heat produced by the animals.

7.5 Two-horse trailers

- 7.5.1 It is usual to pen a single horse on the driver's side of the trailer or place the heavier horse on the driver's side.
- 7.5.2 When large horses are positioned to one side of a trailer they tend to make the trailer unstable. Thus when a single large horse is being transported, the centre partition should be removed or secured diagonally to allow the horse to spread the weight.
- 7.5.3 Some horses have preferred sides of travel in a float.

8. Loading density during transport

- 8.1 The driver is responsible for ensuring that the loading density and penning arrangements are compatible with the welfare of the horses and the capacity of the transport vehicle.
- 8.2 Loading horses either too loosely or too tightly predisposes them to injury. Partitions should be used to reduce the likelihood of injury. Too close packing may result in horses having permanent body contact leading to panic reactions when the vehicle sways.
- 8.3 When calculating space requirements, the size and condition of the animals, the weather and the nature and duration of the journey should be considered.

The objective should be to minimise injury and allow cast horses to rise without assistance.

8.4 Foals and young horses involved in long journeys must have sufficient space in which to lie down.

8.5 Loose penning of horses

| Age | Floor area (m ² /head) |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| adults | 1.2 |
| 18-24 months | 1.0 |
| 12-18 months | 0.9 |
| 5-12 months | 0.7 |

These figures may vary by up to 10% for adult horses and ponies and up to 20% for young horses and foals. The allowance depends on the weight and size of the horses, their condition, the weather and the probable length of the journey.

9. Travel

9.1 General

9.1.1 Transport should be completed with minimum delays. Where delays cannot be avoided, adequate care regarding feeding, watering, ventilation and shelter is necessary.

9.1.2 Drivers should drive smoothly to prevent bruising and the risk of injury.

9.1.3 Distressed or injured animals should be given immediate assistance from the driver or attendant. Veterinary, police or RSPCA assistance should be sought as soon as possible to deal with severely distressed or injured animals. If necessary, injured or ill animals should be humanely destroyed by the driver or drover without delay using the methods specified later.

9.2 Temperature

9.2.1 When transporting horses in very hot or cold conditions, consider the vehicle construction, its ventilation, the speed of travel, the number of planned stops as well as the number, age and condition of the animals to be carried in planning the length and duration of the journey.

9.3 Feeding and watering

9.3.1 All animals must be watered and fed at least once in each 24 hour period. Young animals and lactating mares require feeding and watering every 8 hours. Weather conditions will influence the frequency of feeding and watering requirements.

9.4 In transit inspections

9.4.1 Consignments by road should be inspected within 30 minutes of commencing a journey and at least every 4 hours thereafter.

9.4.2 A suitable source of lighting should be available to carry out inspections at night.

9.4.3 Horses should not be left unattended on stationary vehicles except in an emergency or for a bona fide break. Where transport delays cannot be avoided, adequate attention to the animals, particularly regarding feeding, watering, ventilation and shelter, is required.

10. Rest room

10.1 Rest stops extend the total time of a journey and subject animals to unfamiliar surroundings. Unloading and loading horses for spelling may impose a greater stress than continuing the journey for a limited period.

10.2 In hot weather rest periods may be disadvantageous to travelling horses. Air flow associated with the movement of vehicle may be conducive to horse welfare.

10.3 Horses should be transported to their destination as soon as possible and delays must be reduced to a minimum. If delays occur adequate care must be given to the animals particularly regarding feeding, watering and ventilation.

10.4 Providing care is taken in planning a journey and the facilities provided are of a high standard, horses can be transported for long periods without any problem. However, every opportunity should be taken to inspect the animals.

10.5 Except as outlined in 10.8 below, after each 24 hours of travel, a spelling period of at least 12 hours should be provided for all horses (including brumbies). Feed and water must be available for at least 12 hours.

10.6 Care should be taken to avoid prolonged deprivation of feed and water beyond the specified limits (see 10.5) when horses are unloaded and spelled before continuing the journey. A calculation should be made of the total period of deprivation of feed and water from the time of initial loading until unloading after the second journey and used as a basis for determining those requirements.

10.7 During every specified spelling period, horses must:

- be unloaded;
- have access to food and water;
- have enough space for exercise and rest;
- be separated in accordance with companion groups.

10.8 It is appreciated that horses used for racing and other purposes may be safely transported from state to state in specially designed floats and under expert standards of horse care and supervision. Horses may be transported for uninterrupted periods in excess of 36 hours and may not be

required to be given post-transport spelling period provided that the following criteria are met:

- Two drivers are in attendance at all times.
- The horses are fed and watered at intervals not exceeding 5 hours.
- The horses are individually stalled in an area not less than 700 mm wide and 2350 mm long.
- Stall partitions are strong and safe and constructed in a manner to promote air flow.
- Stalls are positioned in a way that each horse is easily accessible for feeding, watering and visual inspection.
- Each stall is provided with its own feed and water containers with provision to remove or drain water for cleaning purposes.
- The vehicle to have storage for sufficient water and fodder for the journey.
- The vehicle to be constructed with good ventilation and/or equipped with fans to ensure the entire air content of the conveyance is replaced with fresh air at maximum intervals of 5 minutes.
- Floors of the conveyance are drained sufficiently to remove all urine.
- Sufficient interior lighting to be provided for night feeding and visual horse inspection.
- No horses to be exposed to natural elements.
- Flooring to be rubberised.

11. Unloading

- 11.1 Requirements similar to those listed under 'Loading' apply to the unloading of horses, but note they will be tired and stressed after a journey.
- 11.2 Horses should be unloaded upon arrival at the destination, offered food and water and if possible allowed to rest.
- 11.3 Injuries will be reduced if horses are given the opportunity to walk quietly off the vehicle at their own pace.
- 11.4 Light exercise may be warranted if the horses are stiff from travelling.

11.5 Responsibilities at destination

- 11.5.1 The drover or driver must bring to the attention of the person in charge at the destination any aspect of the journey that might affect the future welfare of the animals, the last feeding and watering times and full details of any treatment given.
- 11.5.2 The drover or driver in charge must not leave the premises of destination until satisfied that a suitable person has taken charge of the horses.

11.6 Access to feed and water

- 11.6.1 All horses should be offered water upon arrival at the destination.
- 11.6.2 Including the total transport time and time held in yards when unloaded, horses must not be denied access to food for a period longer than 24 hours except when they are to be slaughtered the same day.

11.7 Health status on arrival

- 11.7.1 The health status of the horses should be monitored on arrival. Horses should be bright, alert and have a good appetite for food and water. Veterinary attention should be sought for horses that are depressed, coughing, show lack of appetite or have an elevated body temperature. Some cases of travel sickness will not be apparent for 2-3 days after travel so observation should continue for several days after arrival.
- 11.7.2 There should be facilities for the humane unloading or slaughter of horses that are unable to walk off because of injury or exhaustion.
- 11.7.3 Horses that fall ill or are injured should receive treatment as soon as possible.
- 11.7.4 It is unacceptable to delay the humane destruction of severely injured horses. If a veterinarian is unavailable, this should be done by, or at the direction of, the person in charge at the time.
- 11.8 Animals requiring emergency euthanasia should be shot or stunned with a captive bolt pistol and bled without moving them further than is necessary.

12. Emergency euthanasia of horses

- 12.1 Previous sections of this Code have drawn attention to circumstances in which horses may need to be humanely killed.
- 12.2 Where euthanasia is necessary, the person responsible for the animals must ensure it is carried out humanely and results in immediate death. Assistance should be sought from a veterinary practitioner, the RSPCA or the police where necessary.
- 12.3 Persons in charge of commercial transport vehicles which regularly travel to remote areas should ensure that an instrument in good working order and suitable for humane euthanasia is always carried in the vehicle and that they are familiar with its use in horses.
- 12.4 Euthanasia of animals is an unpleasant experience for most people and spectators should be actively discouraged from viewing the destruction of injured animals.
- 12.5 The animal should be handled quietly beforehand to ensure it is not unnecessarily distressed or alarmed.

12.6 Use of firearms

- 12.6.1 The most efficient, safe and widely available method of humanely killing horses during transport is to shoot the animal through the brain at close range.

12.7 Safe use of firearms

- A .22 calibre rifle or a .32 calibre humane killer pistol is adequate for humane euthanasia of most horses. However, use of these calibre firearms must be followed by immediate pithing by destruction of the brain through the bullet hole, or bleeding out.
- Any use of firearms is potentially hazardous;
- Persons other than the marksman and a handler for the animal should be cleared from the area or should stand well behind the marksman;
- Never fire while the animal is moving its head; wait patiently for a quiet interval before firing;
- To provide maximum impact and the least possibility of misdirection, the gun should be fired at a range that is as short as circumstances permit, but not in contact with the animal's head.

12.8 Use of the captive-bolt pistol

- 12.8.1 When used with care this alternative is safer than a firearm.
- 12.8.2 The operator does not have to be an experienced marksman as the instrument's muzzle is firmly pressed against the skull before firing.
- 12.8.3 A captive bolt pistol only stuns the animal and it is necessary to pith by destruction of the brain through the hole made by the captive bolt, or bleed out the animal to ensure death.
- 12.8.4 Blank cartridges for the captive-bolt pistol are colour-coded according to the amount of charge they contain and the manufacturer's recommendations should be followed on the most appropriate blank cartridges for different farm animals.
- 12.8.5 Regular maintenance of the captive-bolt pistol is essential for efficient stunning and avoidance of malfunctions.
- 12.8.6 A head collar or bridle should be put on the animal to enable it to be quietly restrained by an assistant who must stand out of the line of fire. Restless animals should be blindfolded.

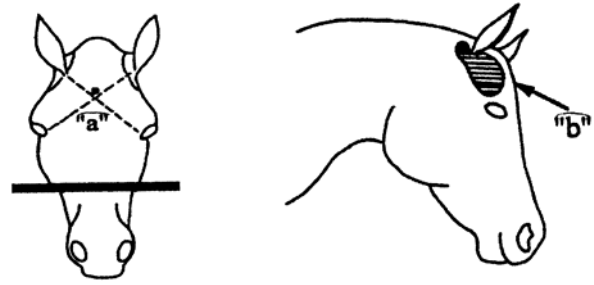


Figure 1: Humane destruction of horses using frontal method

'a' indicates recommended position for frontal method (suitable for firearm or captive-bolt pistol).

'b' indicates direction (shown by arrow) in which bullet should be fired at the target area.

Frontal method: The captive-bolt pistol or firearm should be directed at the point of intersection of diagonal lines taken from the base of each ear to the opposite eye. The bullet should be directed horizontally to ensure the brain is damaged (see Figure 1).

Temporal method: This is only suitable for firearms; the horse is shot from the side so that the bullet enters the skull midway between the eye and the base of the ear on the same side of the head. The bullet should be directed horizontally.

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