

SOUTH AFRICAN POLO ASSOCIATION RULES ON PONY WELFARE

1.0 GENERAL

- 1.1 These rules are published in the interest of ensuring polo pony welfare and ensuring that all polo ponies participating in the playing of polo at both Club practise and Tournament level are fit to do so and in a proper condition of health to play the sport. SAPA acknowledges that the playing of polo is physically very demanding on horses and therefore SAPA takes great interest in pony health, condition and fitness as paramount to the image of polo as an equestrian sport.
- 1.2 SAPA hereby issues these Rules to its Affiliated Players and Club Members in order that they may adjudge for themselves if their ponies are of sufficient condition and fitness to participate in playing polo to SAPA standards. However, SAPA reserves the right at all times to request the intervention of any of its appointed Pony Welfare Officers who may in turn seek the advice of a Veterinarian.

2.0 RULES

- 2.1 These rules are to be read in conjunction with;
 - I. The basic rules on "Ponies, Pony Tack and Pony Welfare" as published in the Hurlingham Polo Association Rulebook. See Annexure "B1" "B2" & "B3".
 - II. Annexure A attached hereto - "Horse Condition and Performance"
- 2.2 SAPA will appoint a National Pony Welfare Officer (NPWO) from time to time.
- 2.3 Each of the five Provinces will appoint a Provincial Pony Welfare Officer (PPWO) and notify SAPA of the appointment at least on an annual basis
- 2.4 Each Club affiliated to SAPA will appoint a Club Pony Welfare Officer (CPWO) and failing this, these duties will be deemed by SAPA to have been designated to the Club Captain. Each Club will be required to notify SAPA, the NPWO and the PPWO of its nominated CPWO at least on an annual basis.
- 2.5 On examination by any of the Pony Welfare Officers, any horse found present at the field of play with the intention of being used to play polo i.e. tacked up and saddled, and in the opinion of the PWO responsible would score a rating of 4 or less as determined in Annexure A attached, the Pony Welfare Officer shall issue a written notice to the horse's owner or player or both, as the case may be, giving his scoring and the reasons for doing so.

Similarly, if any horse has a condition of lameness or injury as deemed so under Section 4 below, then, in the event of the horse being attempted to be played, the responsible PWO shall issue a written notice to the horse's owner or player or both as the case may be.

All such notices must be copied to the PPWO, NPWO and SAPA for the attention of the Executive Director
- 2.6 Should any horse be kept at a Club Ground or elsewhere by any Affiliated Player or Club Member, and on inspection by a PWO, deem to score a rating of 3 and below, and furthermore not be proven to be under the recent care of a qualified Veterinarian, such an owner or player shall be issued with a written notice by the PWO
- 2.7 Should a club, province or SAPA be notified in writing by a recognised horse/animal welfare society or registered veterinarian, that a pony or ponies in the custody of an Affiliated Player or Club Member be in an unsuitable condition for play as determined herein, the responsible PWO must issue a written notification to the offending party accordingly. Any pony that is independently listed on the so called "Watch List" of these organisations shall be deemed to have already been notified by a PWO as a "first" notice

3.0 PENALTIES

- 3.1 The penalties for being in contravention of these rules are as follows
 - I. For the receipt of a written notice from any authorised PWO the player or owner or both so notified shall withdraw the horse in question from playing or exercise until such time as the PWO issues a

written clearance notice to the player or horse owner enabling the horse to be exercised or played again.

- II. For the issuing of a second notice within 12 months from issue of first notice, be it for one or more horses, the player or owner so notified for a second time shall be suspended from all playing rights at both Club and Tournament level and furthermore be charged with a case of Misconduct and subject to a Disciplinary Hearing.
- III. Should an Affiliated Player, Club Member or owner, or either when the player or member is not the owner, be in receipt of a written notice and subject to a suspension as determined in ii)above, he or she may not be permitted to play on the horses of another player or owner during the suspension period ,be it prior or subsequent to the Disciplinary Hearing, until his/her offending horse/s are given a written clearance by the PWO responsible and the outcome of the Disciplinary Hearing is finalised.
- IV. Should a Member Club or any of its Office Bearers permit an Affiliated Player, or other type of player, to partake in any form of play when in contravention of these rules then these penalties as above may be applied to the Office Bearer/s.

4.0 RIGHT OF APPEAL

- 4.1 Any Affiliated Player, Club Member, Owner or Club Office Bearer, shall have the right to appeal against the issuing of a first and/or second notice provided the appeal is lodged in writing to the relevant Welfare Officer and an inspection carried out within 12 hours of the issuing of the notice, by a qualified Registered Veterinarian in the presence of the Welfare Officer. Any direct costs pertaining to the appeal to be for the account of the Party Charged.

5.0 BASIC GUIDE TO PONY WELFARE

- 5.1 Ponies to be used in the playing or umpiring of Polo are to be in good general health and not showing any of the following ailments or conditions;
 - I. Blindness or soreness of the eye that in any way affects the vision of a pony.
 - II. Lameness in any foot or limb such that the gait of the horse is less than perfect. Any noticeable shortness of step or nodding of the horse's head at a trot will be considered as a lame horse. The use of anti-inflammatory or pain killing drugs on horses to overcome lameness in order to have them pass a visual inspection is illegal and is not permitted.
 - III. Bearing of cuts or abrasions that the playing of polo will cause these to re-open or bleed again. Similarly, any abscess or skin infection shall appear to be "well healed"
 - IV. Showing blood or injury within the mouth including cut lips, tongue or gums .Wolf teeth should be removed prior to playing as should hooks on molar teeth. (Note-It is recommended that a horse's teeth be subjected to physical examination at least annually by a registered Veterinary Doctor or Equine Dentist. Players are further recommended to keep written proof of the dental inspection report.)
 - V. Swelling of limbs caused by previous injury or infection even if the horse now shows no signs of lameness or pain. Again, proof of fitness to play from a Veterinary Doctor should be carried if such swelling is likely to cause the attention of the Pony Welfare Officer.
- 5.2 Ponies in the following general "condition" are deemed fit to play. This description must also be read in conjunction with Annexure "A" attached;
 - I. Horses coats should be preferably clipped to avoid excessive sweating and assist in the speedy evaporation of perspiration. If not clipped then brushing shall be done such that the hair of the horse's body is at least equal in appearance to a short summer coat. Horses appearing "woolly" in appearance, such as they appear to have been turned out to grass in winter, are not considered in a fit condition to play. Mouth whiskers and manes must be trimmed and shaven respectively.

- II. Horses shall be well covered in muscle such that they are showing the muscles of their regular athletic training. The flanks of the horse should show good cover on the rib cage and hind quarters must be rounded and not triangular in shape when viewed from behind. Similarly, horses should not have a “grass belly”, nor show signs of over feeding or fat such as may be attributed to a horse out of regular work. The horse’s neck shall be firm and muscled and not thin and loose fleshed. The appearance of the coat should be glossy and not dull or bleached by the sun.
- III. Horses at rest prior to playing should appear attentive with a pricked set of ears and an attentive gaze. Horses with heads hung low and with a disinterested look may attract the attention of the Pony Welfare Officer.
- IV. A horse’s skin when pinched should show elasticity and a quick return to normal. Skin that does otherwise is likely to be as a result of dehydration or malnutrition.

6.0 RECOGNISED ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANISATIONS

- 6.1 SAPA recognizes the following Animal Welfare Organisations but this list is not exhaustive and SAPA reserves the right to recognise the authority of any other entity from time to time;
 - The Highveld Horse Care Unit
 - The Coastal Horse Care Unit
 - The Society for The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals(The SPCA)
 - Any registered Veterinary Doctor or Practitioner
 - Animals in Distress