



Horse Welfare Guide

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Introduction.

When we use animals in sport it is vital that we consider how this impacts their welfare. Horses have been used by mankind for millennia as food, transport, for work and for sport. The methods used to handle, train, and house them have been passed down from one generation to the next for hundreds of years.

Some of these traditions no longer align with current animal welfare science. Canadian Pony Club has embraced animal welfare science and incorporated it into their education materials. A horse experiences good welfare if it is healthy, comfortable, feels safe, and is not suffering from unpleasant mental states such as pain, fear, and distress. Every horse should be able to express behaviours that are important for its physical and mental wellbeing - that is, it should experience “a life worth living”.

The Five Domains Model was developed as a tool we can use to assess animal welfare. It allows us to evaluate both the physical and the mental qualities of a horse's life in an objective and qualitative fashion. It will help you to understand how to give your horse the best welfare.



5 Domains Model to Assess Horse Welfare.

This model is a means of evaluating each aspect of a horse's life, including its mental experience. We want to ensure that the horse experiences positive emotions and leads a life "worth living".

Here is a basic outline of the 5 Domains Model. For a more in-depth version of this model, please visit the World Horse Welfare website: <https://www.worldhorsewelfare.org/advice/the-5-domains-of-animal-welfare>

5

Mental Domain.

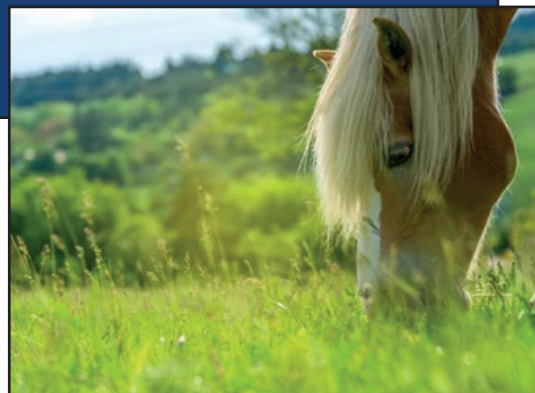
The horse has many positive experiences every day from each of the four domains and lives a life worth living.



1

Nutrition Domain

The horse is given an appropriate amount of good-quality forage and fresh clean water at all times. The horse experiences pleasure while foraging for several hours per day with the companionship of other horses.



2

Health Domain

The horse is in appropriate body condition and is free from disease, injury and pain. The horse has good fitness, vitality, and adequate rest and sleep.



3

Environment Domain

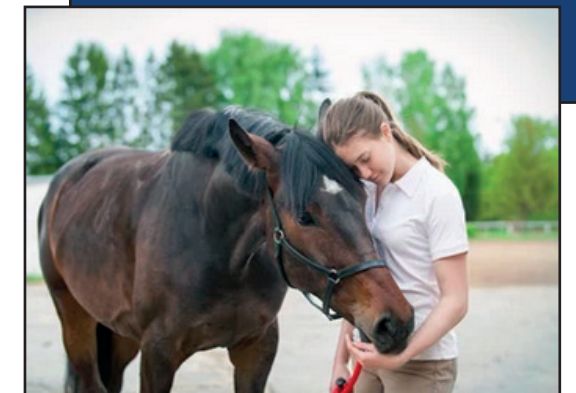
The horse has freedom to move in spaces large enough to canter and has social opportunities for several hours each day. The horse has fresh air, good footing, and appropriate shelter from hot and cold weather.



4

Behaviour and Interactions with Humans Domain

The horse has positive experiences with humans that includes consistent, clear training.



Guidelines for Assessment of Horse Welfare at CPC events.

Nutrition and Hydration

- ✓ Body condition 5 or 6
- ✓ Access to clean water
- ✓ Access to hay most of day
- ✓ Hydration status (skin tent <3 sec, moist mucous membranes, bright and alert)
- ✓ Glossy haircoat

CAUSE FOR CONCERN:

- ✗ Body condition <4 or >7
- ✗ Signs of dehydration
- ✗ No hay for periods longer than 4 hours
- ✗ Dull haircoat or long even in summer



Physical Environment

- ✓ Pens/stalls are secure and safe
- ✓ Sufficient bedding to encourage laying down
- ✓ Shelter provided from sun, rain, and wind
- ✓ Appropriate (or no) blankets
- ✓ Minimum 8 hours of darkness for appropriate rest
- ✓ Horses in stalls can see and interact with other horses

CAUSE FOR CONCERN:

- ✗ Pen/stall is not secure or safe
- ✗ Insufficient bedding
- ✗ No shelter against sun, rain, and wind
- ✗ Over- or under-blanketing for weather conditions
- ✗ Lights left on in barn overnight
- ✗ Stabled horses cannot see or interact with other horses

Mental state

- ✓ Horse is relaxed and calm (normal breathing, head-carriage, and tail-carriage)

CASUE FOR CONCERN:

Signs of stress and fear:

- ✗ Wide eyes
- ✗ High head carriage
- ✗ Tail raised, swishing or clamped
- ✗ Whinnying and muzzle tight

Coaches and officials have a responsibility to assess the welfare of Pony Club members' horses that attend Pony Club events

Guidelines for Assessment of Horse Welfare at CPC events.

Health and Fitness

- ✓ Fitness is sufficient (horse/pony recovers <20 minutes)
- ✓ No coughing or discharge from eyes or nose
- ✓ Bright and alert behaviour
- ✓ No obvious lameness or wounds
- ✓ Hooves well-kept
- ✓ Horse is eating and chewing normally

CAUSE FOR CONCERN:

- ✗ Horse/pony does not recover from exercise >20 minutes (breath laboured and sweating)
- ✗ Diarrhea or loose manure all the time
- ✗ Hooves long or cracked; shoes loose or raised clenches
- ✗ Obvious lameness or wounds
- ✗ Difficulty chewing



Behavioural Interactions with environment, other animals and humans

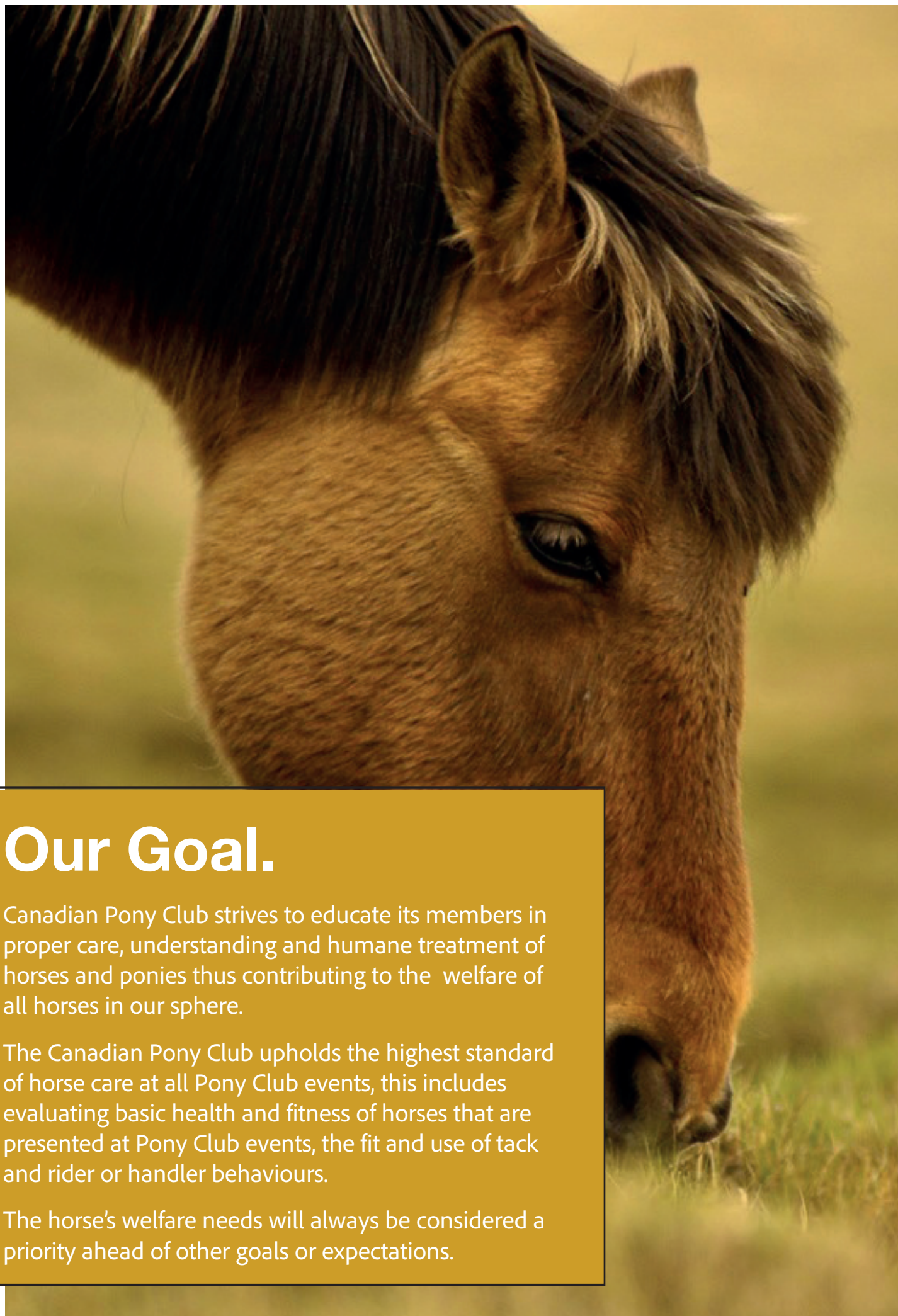
- ✓ Social opportunities provided
- ✓ Rider is <20% of horse's body-weight
- ✓ Horse responds confidently to light rider cues
- ✓ Saddlery is well-fitted
- ✓ If lunged, for maximum 20 minutes
- ✓ Whips and spurs only used lightly for refined cues
- ✓ Rider rewards horse with wither scratches and release of rein pressure

CAUSE FOR CONCERN:

- ✗ Horse is confined in a space where it cannot see or interact with other horses
- ✗ Rider is >20% of horse's body weight
- ✗ Lunging horse >20 minutes
- ✗ Punishment with whips, spurs, reins, or voice
- ✗ Inappropriate bits for rider level or horse capabilities, harsh bits
- ✗ Ill-fitting equipment (saddle pressing on withers; unable to fit 2 fingers under noseband on bridge of nose, martingale too short)

Escape behaviours such as rearing, bucking, spinning, bolting and spooking are signs of stress. If observed, the horse's mental, physical, and environmental states should be assessed and rectified.





Our Goal.

Canadian Pony Club strives to educate its members in proper care, understanding and humane treatment of horses and ponies thus contributing to the welfare of all horses in our sphere.

The Canadian Pony Club upholds the highest standard of horse care at all Pony Club events, this includes evaluating basic health and fitness of horses that are presented at Pony Club events, the fit and use of tack and rider or handler behaviours.

The horse's welfare needs will always be considered a priority ahead of other goals or expectations.

CPC Expectations

It is expected that all CPC members, supporters, coaches and volunteers educate themselves on basic horse care and ethical treatment of horses.

If a welfare concern is raised, the initial intervention will be based on providing support and education. As a last resort sanctions may be considered. E.g. during a CPC competition riders will be excused for excessive use of the whip or other abusive practices. See Equestrian Canada's Horse Welfare Code of Conduct for further examples of abuse.

Cases of perceived animal cruelty must be reported to the provincial agency for animal welfare legislation.



The National Farm Animal Care Council has developed guidelines on how to care for farm animals in Canada, called the **Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines**. It describes requirements and recommended practices for the care of Equines and is a great resource. You can access this code of practice here: <https://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/equine-code>

