

# 3.29 Policy

## Equestrian Safety



**VICTORY**  
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1980  
**COLLEGE**



## Equestrian Safety Policy

<b>Purpose:</b>	The purpose of this policy is to ensure as far as is reasonably practicable, that workers including volunteers and other people are not exposed to health and safety risks arising from the involvement in equestrian activities at Victory College and the use of the provided facilities.	
<b>Scope:</b>	Students and employees, including full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed-term and casual employees, as well as contractors, volunteers and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements	
<b>References:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3.28 Victory College Afterschool Equestrian Program Policy</li><li>• 3.30 Bus Facility and Equestrian Policy</li><li>• 3.40 Health (First Aid)</li><li>• 3.90 Victory College Work Health &amp; Safety Policy</li><li>• Form - Equestrian Team Information and Participation</li></ul>	
<b>Supersedes:</b>	Previous	
<b>Authorised by:</b>	Victory College Committee of Management	<b>Date of Authorisation:</b> April 2023
<b>Review Date:</b>	Biennially	<b>Next Review Date:</b> April 2025
<b>Policy Owner:</b>	Victory College Committee of Management	



## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to ensure as far as is reasonably practicable, that workers including volunteers and other people are not exposed to health and safety risks arising from the involvement in equestrian activities at Victory College and the use of the provided facilities. As far as is reasonably practicable, the College aims to provide any information, training, instruction or supervision that is necessary to protect all persons from the risks inherent in the involvement of these activities.

## DUTIES

The following persons have duties in relation to their involvement with equestrian activities in Victory College's Equestrian Facilities and programs:

Who	Duties	Provisions
A person who conducts a business or undertaking	<p>Ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, workers including volunteers and other people are not exposed to health and safety risks arising from the business or undertaking. This duty requires the person to manage health and safety risks by eliminating them so far as is reasonably practicable, and if this is not reasonably practicable, by minimising those risks so far as is reasonably practicable.</p> <p>Ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the provision of any information, training, instruction or supervision that is necessary to protect all persons from risks to their health and safety arising from work carried out as part of the conduct of the business or undertaking.</p>	WHS Act s 19
A person who conducts a business or undertaking with management or control of plant	Manage risks to health and safety associated with plant including proper use and maintenance.	WHS Regs r 203-226
Designers, manufactures, importers, suppliers or installers of plant, substances or structures	Must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the plant, substance or structure they design, manufacture, import, supply or install is without risks to health and safety.	WHS Act s 22-26
Officers such as company directors	Must exercise due diligence to ensure the business or undertaking complies with the WHS Act and Regulations. This includes taking reasonable steps to ensure the business or undertaking has and uses appropriate resources and processes to eliminate or minimise risks to health and safety.	WHS Act s 27



Who	Duties	Provisions
Workers	Must take reasonable care for their own health and safety and not adversely affect the health and safety of other people. Workers must comply with reasonable instruction and co-operate with any reasonable policy or procedure relating to health and safety at the workplace.	WHS Act s 28
Other persons at the workplace such as visitors, volunteers or customers	Must take reasonable care for their own health and safety and take reasonable care not to adversely affect other people's health and safety. Other persons at the workplace must comply, so far as they are reasonably able, with reasonable instructions.	WHS Act s 29
A volunteer association which carries out activities involving horses	None – the meaning of a <i>person conducting a business or undertaking</i> excludes a volunteer association that does not employ anyone.	WHS Act s 5
A person who carries out activities involving horses as a personal or recreational activity, excluding public events	None – the WHS laws only apply to these activities if Schedule 1 of the WHS Act is enacted. You should contact your regulator for further information.	WHS Act s 5 and Schedule 1

## CONTROLLING RISKS TO NEW OR INEXPERIENCED WORKERS AND OTHER PEOPLE

New or inexperienced workers and others who interact with horses are more at risk of harm. For example, they:

- are less likely to understand horse behaviour
- may be nervous or frightened
- are more likely to be young
- may not understand the significance of instructions and directions, and
- are unfamiliar with the workplace environment

Protecting new and inexperienced workers requires special consideration because:

- they are likely to have limited information to assess their skills and knowledge
- horses of different temperaments and different levels of training will respond differently to them, and
- young people are at different stages of their personal growth and development

Managing these risks involves:

- creating a safe environment
- providing induction and safe work procedures
- ensuring horses are fit for purpose, and
- ensuring supervisors and instructors have suitable skills and capabilities



## SAFE ENVIRONMENT

There are a number of hazards that are important to consider in light of new or inexperienced workers and other people. People new to interacting with horses are unlikely to understand the risks associated with horses.

<b>STABLES AND YARDS</b>	
<b>HAZARDS AND RISKS</b>	<b>CONTROLS</b>
Being crushed or trodden on by a horse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit access to the horse keeping areas</li> <li>• Provide supervision and training.</li> <li>• Identify escape routes.</li> <li>• Ensure gates are not blocked by equipment.</li> </ul>
Herd (group) behaviour of horses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train workers and others in leading a horse through a group.</li> <li>• Exclude horses that behave aggressively from the group</li> <li>• Ensure there is enough space for horses to move around without becoming agitated.</li> <li>• Train people on recognising hazardous situations.</li> <li>• Identify escape routes.</li> <li>• Do not allow feeding of horses in groups until trained to do so safely.</li> </ul>
<b>RIDING IN ENCLOSED AREAS (including outdoor arena)</b>	
<b>HAZARDS AND RISKS</b>	<b>CONTROLS</b>
Falling from a horse, being trodden on by a horse and slips and trips.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit the numbers of riders in the area based on its size.</li> <li>• Provide a level riding surface with good drainage.</li> <li>• Provide soft fall.</li> <li>• Ensure riding helmets which comply with AS/NZ 3838:2006 <i>Helmets for horse riding and horse-related activities</i> or equivalent are properly secured.</li> <li>• Supervise the mounting process for new riders</li> <li>• Remove unnecessary equipment.</li> <li>• Equestrian Coordinator or Coach keeps riders together and in their sights at all times - no riders should be out of line of sight.</li> <li>• Position horses around the edge of the arena head to tail with a safe gap between the horses.</li> <li>• Ensure an appropriate ratio of experienced supervisors to inexperienced riders (1:8).</li> <li>• Ensure horses have enough space between them so they maintain a relaxed manner.</li> <li>• Provide exercises to help riders gain confidence.</li> </ul>



<p>Others entering enclosed area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide barriers to prevent unsupervised access e.g. child proof fencing.</li> <li>• Install warning signs.</li> <li>• Exclude other animals like dogs from areas where horses will be present.</li> </ul>
<p>Obstacles in open areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check route before riding out.</li> <li>• Match route to skill level of least capable rider.</li> <li>• Ensure riding helmets are properly secured.</li> <li>• Keep away from main roads and other physical hazards like cliffs.</li> <li>• Individually help new riders to mount.</li> <li>• Avoid low tree branches.</li> <li>• Avoid other animals and vehicles.</li> <li>• Ensure an appropriate ratio of experienced supervisors to inexperienced riders (at least 1:6). There should be at least two experienced riders on all rides.</li> <li>• Provide instruction on riding in different environments.</li> <li>• Ensure inexperienced children are led by a qualified supervisor on a lead rope.</li> <li>• Check riders can stop start and turn their horse before leaving for the trail.</li> <li>• If the route includes public roads, ensure road rules are followed and basic procedures for crossing roads explained to riders.</li> <li>• Provide exercises to help riders gain confidence.</li> </ul>
<p>Horses bolting, becoming restless or shying.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test the horses in the enclosed area to verify they will stay calm and well behaved.</li> <li>• Exclude horses with history of poor behaviour.</li> <li>• Only horses proven to be calm in will be allowed at the Equestrian Facility.</li> </ul>
<p>Rider loses control of the horse.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competent rider adjusts the pace, ensures the lesson is safe and blocks if a horse tries to pass them.</li> <li>• Competent rider never leaves the front of the lesson.</li> <li>• Check before commencing the lesson that riders understand instructions about changes of pace or direction and can control their horse i.e. how to start, stop and turn.</li> </ul>
<p>Heat stress, extreme weather</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce new workers gradually to hot work over a two week period.</li> <li>• Allow water breaks for students during lessons and rest breaks for horses.</li> <li>• Ensure first aid training covers how to respond to heat stress.</li> </ul>



Conditions change affecting rider or horse behaviour.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Put in place contingency plans for changes in weather.</li> <li>Coaches have communication available via the College for all information in relation to lessons.</li> </ul>
<b>RIDING EQUIPMENT AND TACK</b>	
<b>HAZARDS AND RISKS</b>	<b>CONTROLS</b>
Tack breaking or failing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check stitching regularly.</li> <li>Clean regularly.</li> <li>Replace worn or damaged tack.</li> </ul>
Tack not operating as intended.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Select tack suitable for horse and rider.</li> <li>Match tack to activity being carried out.</li> <li>Check the tack including the girth/cinch immediately before allowing a new rider to mount the horse.</li> <li>Fit tack to horse and check tack before lessons.</li> <li>Check the width and height of the rider's stirrups before lessons.</li> </ul>
Tack not suitable for new rider.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If required, use saddles with knee and thigh rolls to support rider and help them keep balance.</li> <li>Use boots with heels to prevent foot from moving too far forward in the stirrup.</li> </ul>

## **BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS**

Other environmental hazards include biological and zoonoses. Biological hazards that arise from animals and zoonosis are infectious diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans.

<b>DUSTS AND ALLERGENS</b>	
<b>HAZARDS AND RISKS</b>	<b>CONTROLS</b>
Respiration inflammation, sensitisation or respiratory disease e.g. extrinsic allergic alveolitis or occupational asthma.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remove person from exposure.</li> <li>Reduce dust creation when working e.g. rake and water the arenas.</li> <li>Increase ventilation e.g. groom outside.</li> <li>Use clean or dust free bedding.</li> </ul>

New workers or others at the workplace may develop symptoms within minutes of exposure or be delayed for several hours, for example occurring at night, therefore their association with work may not be immediately recognised. However, relief from symptoms during rest days and holidays often points to an occupational cause. The earlier a sensitised person is removed from exposure, the greater the likelihood of avoiding serious damage to health.



<b>ZOONOSES</b>	
<b>HAZARDS AND RISKS</b>	<b>CONTROLS</b>
<p>Ringworm, leptospirosis, gastrointestinal and other skin infections.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide and maintain hygienic hand washing facilities including running water, liquid soap and hand drying facilities like disposable paper towels.</li> <li>• Use waterless alcohol based hand rubs.</li> <li>• Instruct workers and others to practise hand hygiene:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ after contact with horses, handling horse equipment, removing PPE and on leaving animal areas</li> <li>○ before eating and drinking, and</li> <li>○ following accidental contamination with a horse's blood and body substances.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Provide designated eating areas away from animal areas.</li> <li>• Prohibit workers and clients from eating and drinking in animal areas.</li> <li>• Maintain stables and yards in a clean and hygienic condition.</li> <li>• Minimise build-up of horse manure and soiled bedding.</li> <li>• Regularly clean horse equipment and tools.</li> <li>• Discourage contact with areas such as the muzzle where horse saliva or nasal secretions can be transferred to a person's face.</li> <li>• Cover cuts and abrasions with a water-resistant dressing.</li> <li>• Ensure vaccination and parasite control is maintained.</li> <li>• Isolate horses showing signs of illness from people and other animals.</li> <li>• Implement a pest control program and keep feed bins covered to discourage rats and other pests.</li> </ul>
<p>Hendra virus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vaccination of horses to prevent Hendra virus infection.</li> <li>• Completion of the Biosecurity Health Declaration before participation as contained in the College Equestrian Team Information and Participation Form.</li> <li>• Maintain a high level of hygiene for contact with horses and animal areas as outlined above.</li> <li>• Reduce the risk of horses from interacting with flying foxes e.g.:</li> </ul>





Hendra virus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ place feed and water containers under cover</li><li>○ avoid planting trees that attract flying foxes in or near horse paddocks, and</li><li>○ remove horses from areas where flying foxes roost or feed.</li><li>● Always consider Hendra virus as a possible cause of illness in a sick horse and take appropriate precautions. Isolate the horse and avoid contact until a veterinary opinion has been sought.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ If contact is necessary, consider the horse to be potentially infectious and take precautions to protect exposed skin and the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose and mouth from contact with the horse's blood and body substances.</li><li>○ Cover cuts and abrasions with a water-resistant dressing and wear PPE including disposable overalls, disposable gloves, safety eyewear and a particulate respirator like a disposable P2 respirator.</li><li>○ On completion, remove PPE carefully to avoid contamination, dispose of materials safely and practise hand hygiene.</li></ul></li><li>● Wash off accidental contamination with the horse's blood or body substances with soap and water and change clothing.</li></ul>
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## INDUCTION AND SAFE WORK PROCEDURES

New workers and others at the workplace who have not interacted with horses before including young, beginner riders and parents need support and assistance to develop skills and confidence to safely interact with horses.

It is important for a PCBU to ensure workers and others at the workplace follow the rules and procedures they establish. It is especially important workers with greater experience or advanced understanding follow procedures as those learning about horses are likely to copy their behaviour.

People learn best by seeing something done and when experienced workers demonstrate the proper execution of skills they will make it easier for new and inexperienced workers and others to put the actions into practice correctly.

### **Induction**

Ensuring workers and others receive workplace induction so they know about health and safety risks and control measures is an important step in helping them understand the workplace environment.

Inductions should provide information about:

- horse instincts and their response to fear
- how to behave around horses
- how to use peripheral vision when handling animals
- determining an escape route



- how to recognise a horse's individual characteristics
- what riders and horse handlers should wear
- listening to and obeying instructions, and
- first aid and emergency procedures.

Some people at the workplace may only be present for a short period of time so it is important induction training and the explanation of safe work procedures covers essential information to ensure their health and safety.

An induction should include an assessment of the skills of new workers and others. New workers and others at the workplace should be treated as new to the horse environment unless they can demonstrate otherwise.

The knowledge and skills of new people should be assessed as people may have a history of handling or riding horses but may have developed unsafe habits. People should be assessed in a fenced, level and enclosed area.

New or inexperienced workers should be monitored to ensure they understand the information provided.

Inductions should also include the workplace rules everyone is expected to obey. These rules could include:

- No walking up to a horse in its kicking zone.
- If walking behind a horse, walk close with a hand on its rump.
- A rope which is attached to a horse should not be wrapped around a person's hand.
- The reins of a bridle on a horse should not be wrapped around a person's arm, neck or body.
- No ducking under the neck of a tied up horse.
- No squatting down or sitting in front of or near a horse.
- No rough handling of horses.

### **Safe work procedures**

Developing clear, simple and effective safe work procedures can play an important part in helping people interact with horses safely.

Some safe work procedures will apply to both workers and others at the workplace, for example the safe mounting of horses and PPE to be worn. Other procedures may only apply to workers and the tasks they perform, for example the safe feeding of horses.

There are several essential safe work procedures that new workers and others at the workplace should be instructed in. These procedures should be enforced at the workplace and include how to:

- approach a horse and avoid their blind spots and kicking zones
- access and work around a horse in a stable or enclosed area
- lead horses through narrow places
- tie up horses
- lead horses through a group of loose horses
- stand and hold horses



- tack up horses
- mount and wait while others are mounting (see Figure 13)
- slow and stop a horse by using the reins, legs and body position
- work around a tethered horse
- rug horses
- feed horses.

This induction can be carried out by the Equestrian Coordinator at the Beginners Guide to Equestrian at the Wednesday afternoon Afterschool Equestrian Program. Information in relation to the Afterschool Equestrian Program is contained in the College policy - 3.29 Victory College Equestrian Policy.

Further information around safely moving around the Equestrian Facilities at Victory College is described in detail in the College policy - 3.30 Bus Facility and Equestrian Policy.

## FIRST AID

First aid refers to the provision of first aid facilities, services and personnel required for the initial treatment of persons suffering injury or illness. First aid services refers to any procedure or method associated with the provision of first aid at our College.

Any first aid treatment required in the Equestrian Facilities should be carried out in accordance with the Colleges Health (First Aid) Policy.

## SUPERVISOR AND INSTRUCTOR COMPETENCIES

Supervisors and instructors for new and inexperienced riders need to understand their special needs. Knowing how to ride does not make a person competent to supervise or train new riders. Often experienced riders are not aware of their own poor habits or unsafe practices.

### *Instruction*

Instructing new riders is a specialised skill and requires a formal qualification as an instructor. Instructors should know how to organise and respond to different types of riders.

Beginners can get confused and nervous which may cause horses to become agitated. They often have no natural instincts in how to communicate with or control horses and are likely to have difficulties translating instructions into actions. Instructors should know how to assess and help beginner riders understand the effect their behaviour has on the horse.

Instructors should be qualified to teach riding—not just in horse husbandry or performance skills—and need a good understanding of communication, risk management, horse control, group control, an ability to teach skills in a natural sequence and use safe procedures for every step in riding and horse handling activities.

There are a number of recognised qualifications available for those intending to teach riding skills as part of a business. These include:

- Equestrian Australia which concentrates on the Olympic disciplines: Level I and above, and
- Horse Safety Australia—a multidiscipline organisation providing accreditation for those working with groups of riders and beginners: Instructor/Senior Instructor and Trail Guide.



Depending on the type of workplace, PCBUs should also consider other courses relating to teaching riding available through higher education providers and private training organisations. Courses such as Certificate III and IV in Outdoor Recreation (equestrian units) and Certificate IV in Sport Coaching Equestrian may be suitable for some businesses.

### **Supervision**

Supervision at the workplace is a key responsibility of a PCBU. Supervision is a management function which may be done by instructors or by other workers appointed by the PCBU.

Supervisors need to know enough information about safety in a horse workplace and be able to ensure workers and others are safe. The supervisor of a facility that has a horse riding program should be familiar with limitations and potential problems of riding programs. The safety of the riders should be their foremost consideration.

Supervisors should move around the horse workplace to ensure safe procedures are being followed.

PCBUs should ensure an appropriate level of supervision. The level of supervision will depend on:

- ratios of instructors to horses and learners
- skills and qualifications of instructors or supervisors
- horse temperament and training
- type of riding or horse handling being undertaken
- aptitude and age of workers and others, and
- the environment in which the activity is conducted.

## **FIT FOR PURPOSE HORSE**

### **Suitable horse**

PCBUs should ensure the horse provided for a new or inexperienced rider or other person at the workplace is suitable and safe for that person.

New and inexperienced riders should be riding a quiet, steady horse. The horse should be well trained to slow down in response to pressure on the reins. Incidents can easily be caused by a new or inexperienced rider who may make sudden movements and noises upsetting or frightening the horse, so the horse needs to be tolerant of these behaviours.

Horses used by new or inexperienced riders should be thoroughly tested both in the area to be ridden and for their social behaviour as part of group lessons.

PCBUs should not permit new or beginner riders to ride horses that:

- are nervous or reactive
- have a tendency to rear, buck, pig root, bite people or horses, kick people when being handled or ridden, shy, bolt or any other behaviour which might unseat an unbalanced rider
- are highly trained and sensitive
- are non-compliant and unresponsive
- regularly trip or stumble, or
- are from a race track without extensive re-training.



In relation to the Afterschool Equestrian Program, parents need to carefully match horse and riders to the task expected of it. For example, horse work in enclosed and open areas may require horses with different temperaments and characteristics. Not all horses are suitable for both tasks.

### **Horse selection**

When focussing on the new or inexperienced riders it is important the horses used are properly selected.

When purchasing a horse suitable for a new or inexperienced rider, Parents should consider a number of factors like the temperament and training, age, conformation, action and movement, breed, sex, size, current workload and current condition.

### **Temperament and training**

The horse must be calm and easy to handle. Students need to feel safe around the horse. It is also important the horse is well trained. Some horses appear quiet but if they are not well trained they may not behave well in a stressful situation.

If the horse is deemed unsafe then the parents and/or student will be asked to remove the horse from the Equestrian Facility, whether for a period of time or indefinitely, depending on the assessment provided by the Coach and/or Equestrian Coordinator.

### **Age of the horse**

Young horses should not be handled or ridden by inexperienced people. Horses for new and inexperienced riders should be well trained and preferably over 8 years old so they are not likely to overreact to unusual situations.

### **Action and movement**

A horse should be able to move freely but not energetically, without stumbling and tripping, in all the paces.

### **Breed**

Some breeds are considered quieter than others, however do not assume just because a horse is a particular breed it will be quieter. Thoroughbreds straight off the track are never a good choice for a beginner or young rider.

### **Current workload**

When a horse is not working at the time of purchase it can be difficult to determine what it will be like when working.

### **Current condition**

The temperament of a horse when bought in poor condition may change when its condition improves.