

RWWA Stewards Policy - Equine Major Fractures or Other Major Orthopaedic Injuries

(Thoroughbred and Harness)

Under the provisions of AR 105 and HR 89, where a trainer becomes aware of any condition or injury that may have affected a horse's performance in a race the trainer must report that condition or injury to the Stewards as soon as practicable. This includes where a horse has surgery to address any injury or condition, for example but not limited to arthroscopy and respiratory surgery.

In addition to the above requirements, trainers must adhere to the following policy regarding the return to training and racing of a horse which has sustained a major fracture or other major orthopaedic injury, regardless of whether surgery was conducted to repair the fracture/injury.

Major Fractures or Other Major Orthopaedic Injuries

These include fractures that are repaired with placement of surgical implants, but also includes those that are managed conservatively. Major fractures/orthopaedic injuries relevant to this policy include, but are not limited to:

- Front (metacarpal) and hind (metatarsal) cannon bone fractures.
- Pastern bone fractures
- Carpal (knee) and tarsal (hock) slab fractures
- Midbody and basal fractures of the proximal sesamoid bones
- Long bone and pelvic stress fractures

The treating veterinary surgeon should provide appropriate advice to a trainer on whether an injury should be classified as a major fracture and whether major orthopaedic surgery has been performed.

Trainers' requirement to Report on Injury

1. A trainer must notify the Stewards within seven (7) days of a horse sustaining such an injury.
2. The trainer must submit to the Stewards a clinical report by the qualified veterinary surgeon who performed the surgical procedure or who managed the injury conservatively. The report must include details of the injury and the surgical procedure performed where relevant, post-injury management recommendations and prognosis for a return to racing.

Veterinary Clearance to Race Procedure

3. Following recovery from the injury, a trainer must provide a veterinary certificate of clearance from a qualified veterinary surgeon, prior to the horse returning to training. The veterinary examination must include at a minimum, plain radiographs of the relevant area to assess healing and prognosis for successful return to racing - and the written clearance must state that the horse is suitable to train and to perform fast work at this time.
4. Where a horse has been diagnosed with a stress fracture of a long bone or pelvis, and the trainer and qualified veterinary surgeon are satisfied that the horse is in a suitable condition to return to galloping less than 4 months after being diagnosed, the horse must undergo advanced imaging i.e., scintigraphy, of the affected area and the results reported to RWWA Stewards for consideration.
5. The trainer must lodge a further veterinary certificate of clearance with the Stewards prior to the horse being required to compete in an official trial. This veterinary clearance examination should be conducted within the seven (7) days prior to the nominated trial. The horse's performance and soundness will be assessed at the official trial by both the Stewards and the official trial day veterinarian.

Further Injury Information that may be Required of the Trainer

The RWWA Veterinary Department will review all clearance certificates received in relation to the injury. The Stewards may request any further tests or examinations the RWWA Veterinary Department requires after discussions with the certifying veterinarian, and before the horse resumes or continues in training, trialling or racing following the injury.

Ongoing Responsibilities of the Trainer

The trainer must monitor, together with the stable veterinarian, any lameness or musculoskeletal issues with the horse. The trainer shall direct the stable veterinarian to conduct whatever diagnostic procedures are necessary to determine significance of any such issues identified. This information is to be provided to the Stewards, together with a report by the stable veterinarian as to the suitability of the subject horse remaining in race training.

Effective Date May 2022

Reviewed 1 June 2023 (new thoroughbred rule AR 88B)