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# Monitoring & Assessing Suitability to Race

2021 Victorian Spring Racing Carnival

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## Introduction

The below information outlines the required steps for international trainers and owners seeking to compete a horse in the 2021 Victorian Spring Racing Carnival.

## Background Information

Racing Victoria (RV), together with the Victoria Racing Club (VRC), announced in April 2021 the industry's plan to set a new global safety benchmark for horses competing in the Victorian Spring Racing Carnival.

New safety measures will be introduced this year following an extensive review into the rate of injuries sustained by international horses during the Victorian Spring Racing Carnival over the past decade, with a primary focus on the Melbourne Cup.

The RV Board of Directors endorsed 41 recommendations, many of which centre on enhanced veterinary oversight and screening of international horses seeking to compete in the Victorian Spring Racing Carnival and of all horses – local and international – in the Melbourne Cup.

Racing injuries are a significant safety, welfare and public relations issue for racing, and it is the responsibility of us all to take all reasonable measures to reduce the incidence of such injuries.

Preventing horses affected by pre-existing conditions that may increase the risk of injury during racing from participating in a race is one means of attempting to improve horse and rider safety.

For that reason, we encourage you to read over the following information to fully understand the requirements and expectations of those seeking to send a horse to Victoria for the 2021 Spring Racing Carnival.

## Requirements Overview

- All trainers to disclose pre-existing conditions or poor quality of movement;
- All international horses must undergo a pre-travel veterinary inspection performed by their regular stable veterinarian (including upper respiratory scope at rest);
- All international horses must undergo a pre-travel veterinary Inspection performed by an RV appointed veterinarian prior to entering pre-export quarantine;
- All international horse must undergo full body scintigraphy and distal limb computed tomography (CT) (or magnetic resonance (MRI) where CT is not available) at the expense of their connections;

- Upon receipt of the pre-travel inspections / declaration, RV may require that further reasonable examinations and or diagnostic procedures be performed to investigate any concerns and that a further report be submitted to the RV veterinary services department;
- All international horses must undergo a pre-departure veterinary inspection, during pre-export quarantine, performed by an RV appointed veterinarian;
- All international horses must undergo a post-arrival veterinary inspection with the attending Australian veterinarian and an RV veterinarian;
- All international horses must undergo biweekly veterinary Inspections with the attending Australian veterinarian and an RV veterinarian;
- All international horses running in any race in Victoria, including the Cox Plate, Caulfield Cup, and Melbourne Cup must undergo CT scan as directed by RV before they can participate in that race and each subsequent race;
- Horses may be required to undergo on-course pre-race veterinary inspections;
- The process for requests for further examinations and diagnostic procedures;
- What constitutes an official inspection; and
- Official samples (blood or urine) may be collected 'in-training' and on raceday (pre and or post-race).

RV's aim is to work with stables to establish the baseline condition of the horse. This is to assist RV veterinarians responsible for monitoring horses and performing pre-race inspections to understand any veterinary issues the horse may have so that an informed decision on the horse's suitability to race can be made at the time of pre-race veterinary inspections.

## **Veterinary Inspections**

The objective of veterinary inspections is to ensure, as far as possible, that all horses participating in the Victorian Spring Racing Carnival are in a suitable condition to do so, and that their wellbeing and performance will not be compromised by pre-existing injury, illness or degenerative conditions.

## **Disclosure of pre-existing conditions or poor quality of movement**

RV Stewards require and direct trainers or their representative to inform the RV Veterinary Services team of any horses that have an unusual gait, poor quality of movement, or chronic low grade injury, or any other physical condition that may attract the attention of an RV Veterinarian examining the horse.

In addition, RV Stewards require and direct trainers to inform them of any training setbacks a horse may have recently suffered. This is to ensure that opportunity is provided to consult with the trainer and or the attending veterinarians and if necessary, to perform a preliminary assessment of the horse and or request additional diagnostic tests.

RV Stewards expect transparent reporting with respect to the health and soundness of all racehorses, especially any condition that may affect the racing performance of a horse.

Trainers must report to RV Stewards any injury, deterioration of any pre-existing condition, illness or any other condition which has the potential to affect the racing performance of a horse or, which causes a horse to miss a scheduled training session, as soon as is practicable.

## Pre-travel veterinary inspection

Pre-travel veterinary inspections are undertaken and declarations submitted to ensure, as far as possible, that the horse is not affected by any pre-existing condition and provides an opinion that the horse is, at the time of examination, in a suitable condition to travel and race in Victoria.

### The pre-travel veterinary inspections and declarations include:

1. A medication and treatment declaration, veterinary history declaration and veterinary inspection and certification of suitability to travel and race by the regular stable veterinarian. This inspection is required 42 to 14 days (six weeks to two weeks) prior to entering Pre-Export Quarantine (PEQ) (Part A).

This includes;

- a. Report of an endoscopy of the horse's upper respiratory tract at rest;
- b. Submission of two satisfactory radiographs of each of the horse's four fetlocks. (see Instructions for Veterinarians); and
- c. Submission of two satisfactory videos of the horse trotting towards and away from the camera in a straight line on a firm level surface.

The video of the horse trotting will require suitable lighting, a steady trot, on a loosely held lead and consists of a trot up of at least 20 metres in length. Additionally, it includes a video record of a trot up in both directions on a circle of at least 10 meters radius, with the camera at the centre of the circle. (see Instructions for Veterinarians).

2. A veterinary inspection and certification of suitability to travel and race, at that time, by a veterinarian appointed by RV from the trainer's local racing jurisdiction (i.e. British Horseracing Authority or Irish Horseracing Regulatory Board ) 42 to 14 days prior to entering PEQ (Part B).

This examination is to be performed under raceday conditions, that is, no raceday prohibited substances are to be present in the horse's system. This is to ensure that horses are presented for examination without medication or other drugs having an effect and so altering the results of the examination.

To establish whether a prohibited substance is present, official samples may be taken from horses presented for a veterinary inspection for suitability to travel and race. Screening findings for any substances detected, will be cross referenced with the appropriate medication declaration form. If a substance which is prohibited on raceday under the Australian and RV's Rules of Racing is identified in an official sample taken from a horse which is presented, the examination findings may be disregarded.

This RV appointed veterinarian inspection will include palpation, auscultation and video trot with the same requirements as outlined above in Item 1.

3. Submission of diagnostic images obtained from full body scintigraphy and CT (or MRI where CT is not available) of distal (lower) limbs, 42 to 14 days prior to entering PEQ. Images will be reviewed by a panel of independent experts appointed by RV (Part C).

Upon receipt of the pre-travel inspections and declaration, RV may require that further reasonable examinations and/or diagnostic procedures be performed to investigate any concerns and that a further report be submitted to the RV veterinary services team.

4. A veterinary inspection and certification of suitability to travel and race by a veterinarian appointed by RV undertaken during the horses PEQ period (Part D). This examination will be in the same format as that above in Item 2.

## Post-arrival veterinary inspection

Post-arrival veterinary inspections will be performed on all horses at Werribee International Horse Centre (WIHC) by an RV Veterinarian and the attending veterinarian. The pre-travel veterinary inspections and declaration will be shared with the attending veterinarian.

This provides an opportunity to consult with the trainer and or the attending veterinarian and if necessary, to perform a preliminary assessment of the horse and/or request further reasonable examinations and diagnostic procedures, including but not limited to lameness examination with nerve blocks to localise the lameness, radiographs, ultrasound, scintigraphy or CT.

## Biweekly veterinary inspections

All horses at WIHC will be inspected by an RV Veterinarian and the attending veterinarian twice a week, where practicable.

This is to ensure that opportunity is provided to consult with the trainer and or the attending veterinarians and if necessary, to perform a preliminary assessment of the horse and or request further reasonable examinations and diagnostic procedures, including but not limited to lameness examination with nerve blocks to localise the lameness, radiographs, ultrasound, scintigraphy, or CT.

## Trackwork monitoring

All horses at WIHC will be required to use a track work monitoring system. Information collected will be shared with the relevant trainer of the horse and the RV Veterinary Service team. This information will not be made public.

Additional examinations and diagnostic procedures

An RV Veterinarian may require that further reasonable examinations and diagnostic procedures be performed to investigate any concerns and that a report be submitted to the RV Veterinary Services team.

The results of any diagnostic tests requested by RV Stewards will be reviewed by a panel of veterinarians appointed by RV constituted by a specialist in equine surgery and a specialist in veterinary diagnostic imaging.

## Pre-race CT examination

All international horses that arrive at WIHC must undergo a CT scan of their distal (lower) limbs prior to each start in Victoria during the 2021 Spring Racing Carnival, before being permitted to compete, with the costs to be met by RV.

## Off-course pre-race veterinary inspections

As a condition of entry for the Cox Plate, Caulfield Cup and Melbourne Cup, all horses accepted for these races will be required to undergo official veterinary inspections for suitability to race.

These veterinary inspections will be performed by an RV Veterinarian prior to raceday (typically Thursday and Friday prior to the respective race). An additional pre-race veterinary inspection of horses engaged to run in the Melbourne Cup will be performed on the day prior to the race.

A representative of RV will contact the trainer (or their representative) in the week prior to the race to arrange a time for the official inspections.

If there is a question as to the suitability of the horse to race, a further examination will be performed by a panel of veterinarians constituted of two RV Veterinarians and an independent veterinarian appointed by RV.

## On-course pre-race veterinary inspections

Horses may be required to undergo an on-course pre-race veterinary inspection for suitability to race. The official inspection will be performed by an RV Veterinarian prior to the time of racing. All boots and bandages must be removed prior to the inspection.

### The official inspection

#### The official inspection will involve:

- A trot-up in hand for 20 to 35 metres on a firm, level surface nominated by the examining veterinarian. Where possible, asphalt or an equivalent surface will be used. A firm, grass surface may be used at the discretion of the examiner who will make the appropriate adjustments to the assessment of the movement of the horse. A trot in hand in a circle in both directions on a safe, firm level surface. This may include a digital symmetry assessment.
- A brief clinical examination which may include palpation, flexion of joints, cardiac auscultation and an assessment of hoof sensitivity.
- An examination of the horse's treatment record, and a consideration of any occurrences, conditions and/or treatments which may affect or impact upon the horse's performance in the race.

### Please note

A suitability to race inspection is not solely a lameness examination. A horse that appears to be trotting soundly may be assessed to be unsuitable to race if a significant musculoskeletal condition is detected during the examination. For example, an inflamed superficial flexor tendon or suspensory ligament or heat, effusion or significant pain on flexion of a joint. RV Stewards may:

- Authorise one or more RV Veterinarians to conduct the official inspection and submit a report to them.
- Request further inspections or examinations at their discretion.



**Racing  
Victoria**

If you have any questions about the requirements outlined above, please contact RV's General Manager, Veterinary Services, Dr Grace Forbes:

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