



**National Council  
of SPCAs**

# **PROPOSED MINIMUM AMENDMENTS TO THE RULES OF THE NATIONAL HORSERACING AUTHORITY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA**

**Issued by the National Council of SPCAs (NSPCA)**

## **Purpose:**

This document sets out the NSPCA's proposed amendments to the Rules of the National Horseracing Authority (NHRA) as the minimum threshold of changes required. These are not exhaustive nor necessarily sufficient to ensure that horseracing is humane, but represent the basic standards we believe must be urgently implemented to improve equine welfare, consistent with South African law.

## **1. Compliance with Law and Legislation**

1.1. All racing practices shall comply with:

1.1.1. The Animals Protection Act No. 71 of 1962

1.1.2. The Animal Diseases Act

1.1.3. The Animal Improvement Act

1.1.4. Any future amendments made by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) relating to equine diseases and movement, including African Horse Sickness.

1.2. Any act or omission deemed unlawful under the APA, even if not penalised by the NHRA, may be referred to the appropriate legal authority.

## **2. Medical and Drug Use**

2.1. A Veterinary Treatment Register shall be maintained for all horses and made available upon request. Any treatment - especially involving prohibited substances - must be legibly and accurately recorded.

2.2. Any positive drug test where the treatment was not transparently recorded shall be escalated to the relevant legal authorities in line with Section 2 of the APA.

2.3. Any person found in breach of the laws relating to substance abuse, particularly for masking pain, shall receive lifetime bans.

## **3. Microchipping**

3.1. All foals must be microchipped by 6 months of age, and traceable ownership records must be maintained.

## 4. Breeding Standards

- 4.1. Breeding facilities must be compliant with all welfare legislation.
- 4.2. Overbreeding of brood mares is prohibited. Mares may not be used for continuous breeding cycles without adequate recovery and veterinary clearance.
- 4.3. Retired broodmares must have documented retirement and rehoming plans.

## 5. Training and Racing Standards

- 5.1. Horses may only begin competitive racing at three (3) years of age.
- 5.2. No pregnant mare may race after 120 days of gestation, and no mare may return to racing within 240 days after foaling.
- 5.3. All handlers must maintain humane handling and training practices at all times.
- 5.4. Any abrupt pulling up of horses post-race or abuse during a race shall constitute misconduct.

## 6. Equipment Use

- 6.1. Tongue Ties are to be phased out completely by 10 July 2025. No horse may be forced to race using tongue ties after this date.
- 6.2. The use of bitless bridles must be permitted and encouraged where appropriate.
- 6.3. Crops/whips:
  - 6.3.1. Must not be used excessively, on the horse's head, or in violation of Appendix E.
  - 6.3.2. Appendix E guidelines are to be made binding rules within 12 months.
  - 6.3.3. Until such time as this practice is formally phased out, the use of the crop in a downward motion at the front while maintaining both hands on the reins shall be deemed acceptable. Schooling on alternative methods is to commence with immediate effect.
  - 6.3.4. Use of crops in front of the saddle or with one hand off the reins is to be phased out within 24 months.
  - 6.3.5. All use of the crop is to be completely phased out by 1 January 2029.
- 6.4. Repeat offences relating to crop misuse will result in criminal charges and lifetime exclusion from the sport, in any capacity.

## 7. Race-Day Integrity

- 7.1. Any horse that is unable to start on equal terms due to human interference (e.g. by handlers or faulty stalls) shall be eligible for withdrawal, regardless of finishing position.
- 7.2. Rule 62.2.8 (straight-course restriction) and Rule 62.2.10 (celebratory gestures) are to be abolished, as they serve no welfare function.
- 7.3. Riders must maintain control and shall ease up their horses gradually after races. Pulling up abruptly constitutes a violation.

## 8. Retirement of Unsuitable Horses

- 8.1. The NHRA shall be responsible for investigating the post-racing fate of all horses registered with the Authority. In particular, any horse declared unsuitable for racing must be subject to a follow-up check one year after its departure from the industry, to verify the accuracy of the owner's declaration and to ensure that the horse is not participating in unauthorised races.
- 8.2. The NHRA shall impose a lifetime ban on any individual found to have deliberately misrepresented the fate of a horse, as referenced in Clause 8.1.
- 8.3. The NHRA shall impose a lifetime ban on any individual found to be using horses in unauthorised races.
- 8.4. Upon becoming aware, the NHRA shall report all cases involving chronically injured horses being used in unauthorised races to the NSPCA.
- 8.5. The NHRA shall provide the NSPCA with the details of microchip numbers submitted to the NHRA, to enable the investigation of potential abuse involving such horses.

## 9. Penalties and Enforcement

- 9.1. Sanctions for breaches of the Rules shall include:
  - 9.1.1. Immediate suspension or exclusion from racing events
  - 9.1.2. Referral for prosecution under national legislation
  - 9.1.3. Lifetime bans for serious or repeated offences
- 9.2. Suspensions shall take effect immediately upon notice, not the following day.

## 10. International Alignment

- 10.1. South Africa shall recognise bans and suspensions issued by other specified racing authorities.

## 11. Commitment to Welfare and Social Licence

The NHRA must acknowledge:

- 11.1. Its role in restoring and upholding a social licence for horse racing.
- 11.2. That public trust requires demonstrable commitment to equine welfare.
- 11.3. That this proposal shall be regularly reviewed and updated in collaboration with the NSPCA and equine welfare experts.